Dick Merriwell’s plan of campaign was masterly. Quietly and swiftly, board after board was covered with the flaring announcements.
DICK MERRIWELL ON THE BOARDS;

OR,

Fighting the Theatrical Syndicate.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

AS IN A LOOKING-GLASS.

The day was overcast and lowery. It was not actually raining, but the raw wind from the Sound brought with it a heavy mist, damp and clogging, which was almost as bad. The crispness was taken out of everything; the sidewalks were dank and slippery, and pedestrians hurried along the streets with turned-up collars, turned-down hat brims, and a general air of shivery unpleasantness, as if they hated themselves, the people they brushed elbows with, and, above all else, the business which made it necessary for them to be out in such sloppy weather.

Dick Merriwell was no exception to the general rule as he walked rapidly along Chapel Street toward the campus. His long, loose, tightly buttoned coat, with the collar turned above the ears, was covered with a multitude of tiny drips of moisture, almost like hoarfrost. The brim of his soft felt hat was pulled down over his eyes, and now and then a drop of water gathered at the point and splashed to the sidewalk.

He had been out on a rather important errand and, being anxious to get over to the dining hall on time, he did not dawdle, but strode along, gloved hands deep down in his pockets, growing under his breath maledictions on the weather which would effectually prevent any football practice on the field that afternoon.

He was walking on the inside of the sidewalk, close to the shop windows, and had almost reached the corner of Temple Street when he collided violently with a man who came dashing out of a store without a glance to see where he was going.

Both men staggered a little from the shock and the stranger's black derby was knocked off. It was rolling toward the gutter when Dick caught it and turned to restore it to its owner.

"Beg pardon," he said regretfully. "I had no idea—"

He stopped abruptly, his eyes widening with astonishment. For a second he stared in bewilderment at the young man before him.
“Well, I’ll be hanged!” he ejaculated.
The other man looked scarcely less surprised.
“Exactly!” he returned. “You took the very words out of my mouth.”

His keen, dark eyes were surveying Merriwell in much the same way that the Yale man looked at him, and his handsome face wore on it just such a look of whimsical perplexity as distinguished Dick’s countenance.

And smaller wonder. Had the two been twin brothers they could scarcely have been more alike. There was not a fraction of an inch variation in their heights. Both were well set-up, broad-shouldered, slim-hipped, with the little grace of carriage which distinguishes the well-developed athlete. Both had dark hair and equally dark eyes, straight noses, and well-shaped, sensitive mouths.

The fellow who had come out of the shop looked a trifle older than the Yale senior, and there were a number of minor points about his face and figure which would be quite apparent to a close observer when the two men were together; but, taken all in all, the resemblance was quite close enough to warrant the surprise which each one manifested at the sight of the other.

Merriwell recovered his customary poise first.
“IT certainly does give a fellow a queer feeling to run up against his double in this casual sort of way,” he remarked lightly.

“Doesn’t it?” replied the stranger. “You don’t happen to be some long-lost brother that I’ve never heard of, do you?”

Dick smiled.
“I doubt it;” he returned. “I never had but one, and he looks less like me than you do. Perhaps somewhere back in the dark ages our ancestors were the same. My name is Merriwell, by the bye.”

The other gave a sudden start and a look of chagrin flashed over his face.
“Merriwell!” he exclaimed. “Dick Merriwell, of Yale! Of course. If I wasn’t the thickest sort of a blockhead that ever walked, I’d have caught on before.”

The Yale man looked puzzled.
“It isn’t possible we’ve ever met before,” he said quickly. “You’re not the sort of man I’d be likely to forget in a hurry.”

The stranger laughed.
“We’ve never met, though I’ve tried to meet you a number of times,” he laughed. “But I’ve seen you more than once. I can’t think why I didn’t recognize you at once. I suppose it’s because I’ve never had a really good, close look at you before. It has always been a long-distance glimpse from the bleachers or the grand stand out on the athletic field, and you know how football paraphernalia disguises a fellow.”

“By Jove! I’m glad I was Johnny-on-the-spot just now, even if I did nearly knock you down. My name is Austin Demarest, and I certainly am glad to meet you.”

He held out a slim, brown hand with such an air of pleasure and camaraderie that Merriwell could not help a feeling of satisfaction as he clasped it in his own.

“And I you, Mr. Demarest,” he returned quickly.
“I have a notion that I could like you a lot if I ever had a chance. Perhaps that sounds rather conceited, though.”

“Sort of in the nature of self-praise, eh?” chuckled Demarest. “It would be tough if a fellow couldn’t get along pretty well with himself, wouldn’t it?”

Unconsciously they had turned and were walking slowly along Chapel Street. Each one seemed unable to refrain from throwing occasional swift glances at the other, as if to satisfy himself that the odd resemblance was really a concrete fact and not some chance fragment of the imagination.

Presently their eyes met and both burst out laughing.
“It doesn’t seem right,” chuckled Demarest. “I can’t get used to looking at you as if I were gazing at a mirror.”

“Nor I,” Merriwell agreed. “What sport we could have if we were only in the university. I can conjure up all sorts of attractive possibilities.”

“Such as substitution in lecture rooms?” suggested Demarest slyly.

“Not so much that as the fun we could have outside,” Dick answered. “By the way, what was the reason you wanted to meet me so much?”

Demarest did not answer at once. His face clouded and the laughter died out of his eyes. It was as if the question had recalled to his mind something disagreeable which had, for the moment, been forgotten. Twice he glanced hesitatingly at Merriwell in a troubled, doubtful sort of way as one who does not know quite what course to pursue.

“It’s a rather long story,” he said, at length; “and yet I think I’d like to tell it, if you have time to listen. Have you got anything on for a couple of hours? Couldn’t you come in and lunch with me?”

He made a quick gesture toward the New Haven House, at the entrance to which they had stopped an instant before.
"Why, yes," Dick returned readily, "I’ll be very glad to. I was on my way to the dining hall, but this will be much better."

Demarest’s face cleared.

"Good," he said tersely. "I’m in the deuce of a hole, and perhaps you can help me out of it. Even if you can’t, there’s always a certain satisfaction in pouring one’s woes into a sympathetic ear."

Dick smiled as they entered the hotel lobby and walked toward the cloakroom.

"What makes you so sure my ear will be sympathetic?" he asked. "You may get a terrible disappointment."

"I guess not," Demarest returned quickly. "We look so much alike that the resemblance can’t possibly stop at that. And I’m so blamed sorry for myself that sometimes I could fairly weep at my own misfortunes. Haven’t you felt sad sometimes without knowing the reason why?"

Merriwell nodded.

"Once in a while, yes."

"I knew it!" Demarest exclaimed. "Those were the times when I was being more severely mangled by the Goddess of Misfortune than usual. Sort of mental telepathy, you know. But come, let’s not waste any more precious minutes. I fairly pine to let loose the floodgates of self-confession, and over there in the corner I see an empty table which had been saved for us by a special dispensation of providence."

CHAPTER II.

AUSTIN DEMAREST, ACTOR.

As Dick settled down on one side of the cozy little table near one of the windows and unfolded his napkin he felt a pleasant glow of satisfaction stealing over him. Short as was their acquaintance, he already felt a distinct liking for the man opposite him, whose handsome face still impressed him with the odd sensation of looking into a mirror and seeing his own countenance reflected there.

The fellow was very evidently a gentleman by birth and breeding. That had been plain from the first moment of their unconventional meeting. His manners were unexceptionable, and he had a certain air of polished refinement which was manifest to Merriwell’s keen perception in a dozen unobtrusive ways.

But more than all else the Yale man was attracted by the other’s manner of talking. Whimsical, half bantering, almost careless, there was yet about it an undercurrent of seriousness, which gave the barest hint of the real man beneath that disguising mask and made Dick eager for a more thorough knowledge of the character which he felt would prove more interesting by far than that of the majority of men.

Demarest picked up the card and ordered luncheon with the swiftness and taste of a connoisseur. He evidently had the rare art of selecting an attractive meal without spending a half hour at it. Then, folding his arms loosely, he leaned forward.

"Let’s begin at the beginning," he said with twinkling eyes. "That sounds a little unnecessary, I know, but so few people really do begin a story where they ought. Probably you’ve noticed it, though. For instance, I am strongly tempted to plunge headfirst into the maelstrom of my troubles, and it is only by a strong effort of will that I bring myself to begin where I ought to lead you gradually thence to a consideration of the worst."

While he was talking, Dick became conscious of the remarkable beauty and purity of his voice. His tones were rather low, and he spoke with just a hint of the fascinating Southern drawl; but every syllable was clear and distinct, and now and then there was a sudden raising or lowering of the pitch which had a distinctly dramatic effect. Merriwell found himself thinking what an admirable actor the man would make, if his histrionic ability only matched his voice. He was consequently almost startled when Demarest went on:

"Know, kind second self, that I am an actor. From my earliest days I longed to tread the magic boards and pour out my soul to vast applauding audiences through the medium of our immortal dramatists. At the age of twelve I had learned the parts of Hamlet and Brutus. Can you fancy it? Two years later I had built a puppet stage in the attic of our country home and organized a company of which I was, of course, the star. In times of need and scarcity of talent, I have been known to play several parts in one performance. The admission to those matchless performances was, I recollect, a penny. You will perceive that those were the good old days before the trust came upon us and before the régime of the ubiquitous ticket speculator."

Dick smiled appreciatively. There was something fascinating in the fellow’s whimsical, airy manner.

"But why linger on those far-away times?" Demarest went on quickly. "I only touch upon them that you may see beyond peradventure that I was destined for the stage. Sad to say, my esteemed family thought
otherwise. What was cute and cunning in a child became mad folly—in their estimation—when I reached the age of manhood and still persisted in my determination. I haunted the theatre, breathing in the indescribable atmosphere of the place as if it were the nectar and ambrosia of the gods. Then my people became seriously alarmed and packed me off to Cambridge. At first I was in despair and planned to run away, but in the end I stuck it out and I have always been thankful. Unknown to my family, who thought I was following the old-fashioned, stereotyped course, I specialized in elocution, English literature, and the modern languages, which have been of inestimable service to me ever since."

He paused, as the waiter appeared with the first course and deftly placed it before the two men. Dick was much interested in the recital.

"Of course you persisted in your determination to go on the stage," he said quickly. "I imagine you had a rather strenuous time after you graduated."

Demarest sighed and made an expressive gesture with his shapely, brown hands.

"Precisely," he returned. "Over that let us draw a veil. I won out in the end, but it was only by a display of the utmost firmness. My father called it pigheadedness. To this day they are not reconciled, though I fancy they are beginning to be resigned."

"I took a course in the best dramatic school in New York, and, when I left that, got a minor position in the company of one of our leading actor dramatists. It was the merest trifle. I think I had barely half a dozen lines, but I was rejoiced, for it was a foothold. I had reached the bottom rung of the ladder up which I meant to climb to the very top. I worked hard. Before the company left New York I had mastered half a dozen roles and was letter-perfect. I had a fancy that I could not improve on several of them, but my chance did not come until we were playing in Chicago, where the leading juvenile was suddenly seized with appendicitis. He had no understudy—happily for me. I went at once to Mr. Manton and boldly asked for the part. To my astonishment, almost without word, he agreed to try me out at a rehearsal. I found out afterward that he had been keeping an eye on me ever since I entered the company. He was the best friend I ever had."

He stopped, took a few sips of his bouillon, and leaned back in his chair.

"You made good?" Dick questioned eagerly. "But of course you must have."

"Thanks to Mr. Manton, I did," returned Demarest.

"He took infinite pains with me, as he always did with any one he thought worth the trouble. I kept that part for the remainder of the season, and the next fall I had one almost as good, though of a totally different sort. Then came my patron's sudden death. It was a terrible blow to me, quite apart from the fact that I was thrown out of a job; for I had grown to be amazingly fond of him. But I had little time for reproaching. I had to find something to do and it did not prove to be so easy as I had supposed. It was then that I had my first experience with the so-called theatrical trust, the members of which control many of the companies and theatres in this country.

"At last I landed a job, but it was a good deal of a come-down both in salary and importance. But even under their auspices I kept on going slowly upward until I reached a point which would have contented most men. Perhaps it should have contented me, but I knew I hadn't reached the very top, and that I was determined to do, or perish in the attempt.

"About that time—which was last fall, to be explicit—I suddenly decided to write a play. The germ had been in my mind for a long period, but I lacked the time to follow it out. Happily the company disbanded earlier than usual last spring, and I at once set to work on my pet idea. I succeeded even better than I had hoped, for the play was good stuff and the leading part a crackajack."

He paused and smiled at Merriwell.

"This is the point where you step upon the stage," he went on. "It's taken a long time to get there, hasn't it?"

Dick's face was full of puzzled curiosity.

"You are the hero of the play," Demarest explained, with twinkling eyes.

"I?" gasped the Yale man. "I don't understand."

The actor pushed aside his salad and rested one arm lightly on the table.

"It's this way," he said, in his low, musical voice. "Though I had never met you, I had heard a lot about you from mutual friends and had seen you more than once on the diamond and gridiron. Consequently, when I decided that the play should be one of college life with the scene laid in New Haven, I felt that you would make an admirable character for the leading man. Of course, I ran you in under a different name, but I took the liberty of using a good many of your characteristics, and while I wrote I had you constantly in mind. I hope you don't object, for it was rather cheeky."

Merriwell laughed.
"Why, no, I don't mind; but I'm afraid you've been stung. There's nothing of the hero about me."

"Oh, modesty, thou rare and precious quality!" murmured Demarest. "I've made a hero of you, then, against your will. When you've read the play you will see yourself in a different light. But I suppose by this time you are wondering where my troubles come in."

"A little," Dick confessed. "So far your career seems to have been an unqualified success."

"Listen, and you shall hear the dire story. Having the play, it never occurred to me that I could fail to find an opening. Plenty of actors with no more ability than I have been advanced to stellar roles. That sounds conceited, but it isn't. It's a fact. But when I approached my managers, Buffer and Lane, with the proposition, they turned me down. Said the play was all right and wanted to buy it, but wouldn't give me the leading part. They wanted that for one of their pets. Of course, I refused to let them have it and went to another firm, who were not supposedly connected with Buffer and Lane.

"It was the same story there. Nothing doing for me. I tried still another man with the same result, and then I got mad. If they wouldn't bring me out I'd produce the play myself. I knew it would make a hit if it got a chance, and I had lately received a legacy from my grandmother, which was enough to cover all initial expenses of the production. So I went blithely on my way, had the scenery done, engaged the company, got the costumes made. I went to one of the independent managers in New York and got him to promise to put me on at his theatre providing the play tried out successfully. And he insisted that the opening performance should be given in New Haven. Of course, he was right. College men are the best critics in the world, and if a play, especially of this sort, succeeds here, it will go anywhere."

Dick nodded understandingly.

"Of course," he agreed quickly. "What's your trouble, then? Why don't you produce it at one of the small theatres?"

Demarest shrugged his shoulders.

"Simply because Buffer and Lane object, and the trust, booking Buffer and Lane's companies, has lent an acquiescent ear. They absolutely refuse to give me a single date at either place. They say every night is booked for the remainder of the season."

"What nonsense!" Merriwell exclaimed. "Surely there must be some open nights."

"Of course there are," Demarest returned quickly. "But not for yours truly. Don't you see their game? If they can prevent my appearing in New Haven, they figure that I won't get a show anywhere, and then they probably imagine that I'll crawl and let them have the play."

Dick's face flushed and his eyes flashed angrily.

"What a lot of sharks they must be!" he exclaimed.

"By Jove! I wish you could find some place they don't control and beat them out at their own game."

"You can't wish it any more fervently than I do," Demarest returned seriously.

"Have you tried the Strand?" Merriwell asked presently.

The actor nodded.

"Yes, and was politely but firmly turned down."

For a few minutes there was silence. Demarest toyed with his ice, while Merriwell gazed thoughtfully at the tablecloth. Suddenly he raised his head and his eyes brightened.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed eagerly. "The old Concert Hall. I'll bet none of the New York managers control that!"

CHAPTER III.

BUCKING THE SYNDICATE.

Demarest looked dubious.

"The Concert Hall!" he echoed. "But that's got a--a--well, a reputation, hasn't it?"

"Yes, it has," Dick admitted, "but I don't see why that should stand in your way. If it was made clear that you were unable to bring out a play at any of the other houses, I don't think people would stay away on account of the reputation of that house. Certainly the fellows wouldn't. They go to see everything in the nature of college plays which comes to town. I admit that, more often than not, they go with the idea of picking flaws in the piece, but if it's what you say it is, it ought to succeed. At any rate, you'd have your audience, and it would be up to you to do the rest."

Demarest's eyes brightened and he nodded emphatically.

"You can trust me for that," he said decidedly. "All I want is the audience. The play's all right. Buffer and Lane would never have made an offer for it if it hadn't been pretty good. I don't know but that idea of yours will prove a life saver, Merriwell. I was just about at my wit's end, but you've put new heart into me."
Summoning the waiter, he paid the check, and they walked out to the lobby.

"I believe I'll go down there right away," Demarest said, after a moment's consideration. "It's the only chance left, and I have got to decide one way or another at once. It isn't fair for me to keep the company on a string any longer if there's not going to be an opportunity of opening here. Won't you come along with me? You've started the thing going, and it's only fair to see me through."

"Of course I will," Dick said quickly. "I'm so keen about it, I don't want to miss a single trick."

Getting into their coats, they hurried out of the hotel and five minutes later had reached the old Concert Hall. It was a house of good size and in its prime had been the scene of many well-known productions, but for years having been given over to vaudeville, moving pictures, and shows of a certain grade, it was in a wretched state of dinginess.

Demarest was almost discouraged as he stood in the centre of the orchestra and looked about him. The place seemed utterly impossible, but presently his trained eye took in the various good points, which included an ample stage, though, at present, it was cluttered with odds and ends and backed with faded, crude, fearfully painted scenery.

"Pretty bad, isn't it?" he remarked. "I can't imagine a high-grade audience consenting to spend three hours here."

"All the same," Dick said quickly, "a little work will make a wonderful improvement. How's the stage? Is it big enough?"

"Plenty. My sets will fit all right, but I shudder to think what that drop curtain looks like."

He smiled wryly as he glanced up at the rolled-up curtain.

"I've never seen it, but I should imagine it was the limit," Merriwell answered. "Couldn't it be painted over, or something like that?"

"I suppose so."

After another searching look around, Demarest led the way through a door back of the boxes to the stage itself. It certainly was dilapidated, and the dressing rooms were cramped and bad, but the young actor was at his wit's end; and when he left the place an hour later he had engaged the house for Thursday night of that week, had signed lease in his pocket and, more than that, had paid the money down. He had learned to leave nothing to chance. He had a feeling that the moment the members of the trust learned of the step he had taken they would do their best to prevent his opening even at the Concert Hall, and he was determined that they should not succeed.

That afternoon was a busy one. Before dark, Demarest had engaged an army of cleaners, scrubwomen, and painters, to report the first thing in the morning at the theatre. He had gone to the printer's and ordered special paper printed in which was stated that, owing to the impossibility of obtaining a date at any other theatre, Austin Demarest, the talented young actor who had done such good work in the productions of the late Richard Manton, and latterly under the management of Buffer and Lane, was forced to bring out his new drama of college life, "Jarvis of Yale," at the Concert Hall, which had been especially renovated and redecorated for the occasion.

These bills were to be spread broadcast on the boards all over the city the next morning, and when Demarest reached the hotel toward five o'clock he had reason to be thoroughly satisfied with the afternoon's work.

Merriwell had accompanied him on his rounds through the city. His interest and enthusiasm were wrought to a high pitch, and his suggestions on various points had been of much service to the actor.

"It certainly was a lucky moment when I ran you down this morning," Demarest said, as they dropped down in some chairs in the lobby. "I was simply up against a dead wall, and now things seem to be coming around all right, thanks to your advice and suggestions. I really think we'll be able to make a halfway decent place out of the old barn. Of course it won't be anything like one of the other houses, but it will be clean."

"And the best part of it is that you will get ahead of the fellows who have tried to keep you under," Dick said quickly. "It makes me hot under the collar every time I think of the way they've tried to keep you down so that they can get the play for themselves. By the way, old fellow, I hope you have a copy of it here. I'm no end anxious to read it."

"And I want you to," Demarest returned emphatically. "I want your critical opinion of it. I expect there's a lot of places in it where you can suggest improvements. I'll give you a copy before you go tonight, and you can read it and let me know what you think of it in the morning."

As he spoke, he picked up a newspaper which lay on the next chair and glanced carelessly down the columns. Suddenly he stiffened and drew a quick breath.

"Blazes!" he burst out the next instant.

"What's the matter?" Dick asked quickly.

Demarest's face was set and a little pale. He was
evidently keeping a grip on himself only by a great effort.

"Look at that!" he cried, extending the paper. "Just look at that, will you? If that isn’t a put-up job, I’d like to know what you’d call it."

Dick snatched the paper from his nervous fingers and bent over the page. As he read the paragraph which the actor had pointed out, his eyes narrowed and a frown appeared on his forehead.

"Friday—Arcadian Theatre," he murmured swiftly, "first production on any stage—John Tennant’s great drama of college life, Fenwick of Yale—management Ralph Bryton."

"Great Scott!" Merriwell exclaimed, looking up swiftly. "They’re trying to get ahead of you! Trying to cut you out by producing a college play with almost exactly the same name! What a dirty trick!"

"Read the rest of it!" Demarest exclaimed angrily.

Unable to contain himself, he took the paper from Dick’s hand.

"Listen: ‘Great football scene. Nothing like it ever shown on the stage.’ My scene, Merriwell, I’ll wager anything! ‘Tremendously strong third act.’ My third act is the climax of the play! ‘The whole play from start to finish is so true to life, and so filled with the atmosphere of a real college town, that the spectator will find it hard to believe he is not watching a concrete segment taken directly from the life in the greatest university in America. The management has been fortunate in securing the services of the following actors and actresses for this important production.’"

Crumpling the paper in a shapeless mass, Demarest tossed it angrily aside.

"I’d be willing to take my oath, Merriwell," he said bitterly, "that those villains have stolen the very plot of my play; or, if they haven’t, they’ve got something which follows as close on the lines of ‘Jarvis, of Yale,’ as they dared, and still be within the law. They open Friday, you see. I did not intend having my first night until next Monday, until we got the Concert Hall to-day, so they thought they’d get ahead of me. Great Scott, man! If they put their play on first, there wouldn’t be a handful come to my opening. It would be the greatest frost you ever saw."

"But you’re all right," Dick said eagerly, "You open Thursday. They’ll be the ones to get the frost."

"I’m not so sure about that," Demarest said, in a worried tone. "People seeing a college play billed at the Arcadian for Friday are not likely to go to such a hole as the Concert Hall the night before for practically the same thing. They’ll think that I am the one who is copying their play, and Ralph Bryton will do his best to have that impression circulated. He hates me like poison and has been the one more responsible than any one else for the trust turning me down."

Suddenly the actor gave a start.

"The paper!" he cried. "I never thought! They’ll get theirs out ahead of ours, and there won’t be a square foot of boarding left by the time mine are printed in the morning."

"But they don’t know about what you’ve done to-day," Dick objected. "They don’t know you’ve hired the Concert Hall."

"They’ll find out quick enough when they go to Lawford in the morning," Demarest said despairingly. "‘He’ll tell them about my bills. The printer won’t have them ready until ten o’clock, and they’ll pay Lawford a bonus to put theirs up instead of mine. I know them and their tricks. And if the town isn’t well papered, we might as well give up on the spot."

CHAPTER IV.

THE POWER OF PERSUASION.

It seemed as if this final catastrophe was the last straw which broke the camel’s back. Austin Demarest had held out bravely against the many blows which fickle fortune had showered upon him. He had deliberately placed himself in opposition to a great power, and, with smiling face and never-failing courage, had resolutely held out against their machinations.

They had shut the doors of most reputable theatres against him, and he had circumvented them... They had threatened members of the theatrical profession with their displeasure if any of them agreed to play for Demarest, but in spite of that, the young actor had gathered together a very fair company, many of whom had signed with him knowing full well that they were spoiling their chances with the syndicate, but trusting to the talented, magnetic young actor-manager to pull things through. The leading lady, Marion Gray, had refused an offer from Buffet and Lane of twice the money Demarest was able to give her, but it was rumored that she was so attached to the latter that she would have played for him without any salary at all. Demarest himself seemed to be the only one of the company who had not observed the significant signs on the part of the very attractive young lady, and had
gone on his way seeming serenely unconscious of the state of affairs.

But now this last blow had utterly unnerved him. It was so totally unexpected and had come at a time when he had at last begun to see light through the dark clouds, that it was no wonder he was discouraged. There seemed to be no way by which he could come out ahead this time, and he sat there in the big leather chair, a feeling of hopeless failure in his heart.

Dick Merriwell was not so easily downed. He snatched out his watch and, with a swift glance at it, sprang to his feet.

"Come on, old fellow," he said incisively. "We haven't got a minute to lose."

Demarest stood up slowly, instinctively. His eyes were puzzled.

"What—" he began.

Dick caught him by the arm and drew him toward the door.

"Hustle!" he cried. "Don't stop to argue!"

"But where—"

"The printer's!" broke in Merriwell. "We've got to get those bills done to-night!"

By this time they were outside the hotel and hurrying down the street. Though he did not quite see what his new friend had in mind, Demarest was unconsciously heartened by the Yale man's decisive manner, and hope began to dawn again in his breast.

"You can't give up now," urged Merriwell, as they dodged around a corner and went down the side street almost at a run. "You've got to beat them. You've got your regular paper ready. We must get this special work printed and placed before morning. It's the only way. It's simply got to be done!"

"But how can you?" objected the actor. "The printers won't stay over hours. Lawford won't put them up in the dark."

"We can try," Dick ripped out. "If he won't put them up, somebody else can. It's a question of your whole future; you can't lay down now."

Little by little, under the dominating influence of Merriwell's personality, Demarest's courage returned and his face brightened. They reached the printing house just as the whistle blew and, dashing upstairs, encountered a swarm of men hurrying down.

"Stop a minute, fellows, will you?" Dick said quickly.

The men paused, a wondering throng, on the stairs. They could see Merriwell's face but dimly in the light from the single flaring gas jet.

"That order for the bills of the 'Jarvis of Yale' production at the Concert Hall which was brought in this afternoon," he said rapidly but distinctly. "Have they been started yet?"

There was a moment's pause, and then a voice from the back of the crowd growled:

"Ain't nor'n half set up."

"They've got to be done by midnight," Merriwell went on swiftly. "It's a matter of life and death to my friend, here, boys. He's simply got to have them then, or he goes under. Won't enough of your fellows stay to-night to get them out? Everyone one who helps us out will get a ten-dollar bill."

"The day's work is done," grumbled one man. "I ain't goin' ter work no overtime."

"Me neither," growled another.

"Why in thunder didn't yer bring 'em in this morning, if yer wanted 'em in such a rush?" snapped a third.

"I wants me supper."

There was a restless, forward movement of the crowd, eager to be gone, and Demarest groaned softly. In that single instant he saw his well-laid plans crumbling into nothingness, his fortune swept away, himself ruined. Then Merriwell began to speak again.

"Just a minute, boys, till I tells you a little more," he said quickly. "My friend is an actor who has got the theatrical trust down on him. He wanted to bring out his play in New Haven, at the Arcadian. They wouldn't let him have that theatre nor any other in town. They shut him out, but they forgot the old Concert Hall. That's why the show is coming off there. And now the trust is going to put a play on at the Arcadian Friday night which is as near my friend's play as they can make it. They think they'll get ahead of him and make him draw a frost. If these bills aren't up before daybreak that's what will happen. Won't you fellow change your minds and help us?"

He had chosen his argument skilfully. The mention of a trust to the average workingman is like a red flag to a bull. They hated the thought of these monstrous creations of modern commerce, and perhaps there was reason for that haste. At any rate, the prospect of foiling a great combination of capital was the only thing which could possibly have induced those printers to work overtime that night, and even at that their consent was rather grudging.

"Well, if yer puts it that way," one said hesitatingly. "I s'pose I kin stay. How about it, Bill?"

"I'll stay if you will."
“Say, mister,” piped up a small boy, one of the devils, “who are you, anyhow?”

“Dick Merriwell,” the Yale man answered.

“Golly!” exclaimed the youngster, open-mouthed.

“The twirler! What d’yer think of dat, Pete?”

He grinned engagingly at Merriwell.

“I’ll help yer out, Dick,” he said impudently.

“Good boy, kid,” the Yale man laughed. “You’re the stuff, all right.”

That seemed to be the turning point. Many of the men knew Merriwell, who was a popular idol among all classes of baseball fans, and the prospect of doing him a good turn, and at the same time thwarting a trust, so appealed to the men that the majority of them turned about and went back to the printing rooms.

The foreman was won over without a great deal of trouble. He was a thrifty Scotchman, and the prospect of the twenty dollars which Dick promised him considerably more than overbalanced the inconvenience of going without his supper and curtailing his night’s rest.

Consequently, when Dick and the young actor left the place half an hour later, the men were all busy setting up the bills, which would be ready for the presses in very short order.

The two stopped at a near-by restaurant and ordered a good supply of sandwiches and coffee sent up to the printers, and then hustled off to find Lawford, the billposter.

“By Jove, old fellow!” Demarest said, as they turned into Chapel Street again and walked swiftly past the green. “You certainly did that trick to perfection. I shall be your debtor all my life for having saved the situation.”

“We’re not out of the wood yet, by a long shot,” Merriwell returned. “I have a notion that this Lawford will be more of a proposition to bring around. By this time he must have the bills of the Arcadian play, and your friend Bryton has learned about your leasing the Concert Hall. He’s probably paid Lawford well for running his bills in ahead of yours.”

“I’m afraid so,” Demarest agreed. “But it’s the limit, when I made the bargain with him first.”

“Still, Lawford gets all of his business from the trust, and he can’t afford to have them down on him,” Dick said. “However, I think we can manage it some way.”

Reaching the billposter’s place of business, they found that the proprietor had gone, leaving one of his men to shut up the place.

“You don’t know where he can be found, then?” Dick questioned.

The fellow shook his head.

“He didn’t say. Likely he’s home, though.”

“Where does he live?” Merriwell asked.

“Down to West Haven.”

Dick considered a moment. That was a good ways off, and it was extremely questionable whether the results of a trip down there would repay the effort. He had a pretty accurate notion that the billposter had been primed by Ralph Bryton. As he hesitated, he looked swiftly about the office, and his eyes lit up suddenly as they fell upon the great piles of paper stacked in one corner. On the top sheet he caught a glimpse of the words, “Fenwick, of Yale.”

That was enough. Bryton had been here, and it would be quite useless to approach Lawford.

CHAPTER V.

WHILE OTHERS SLEPT.

After his discovery of the syndicate bills, Merriwell turned back and bestowed a brief, but comprehensive glance at the man before him. He was a young fellow of medium height, with a rather pleasant face and fiery-red hair. He was roughly dressed and his faded overalls were smeared with paste. Dick decided that he was one of the laborers who did the actual work of billposting. He seemed like a pretty good sort, and the Yale man seldom went wrong in sizing up a man. Still he hesitated, wondering whether he had better put into execution the plan which was in his mind.

At last he determined to risk it. He could think of no other way, and the bills must be on the boards before daylight.

“Do you want to earn ten dollars?” he asked presently.

The fellow grinned all over his freckled face.

“That’s me, guv’ner,” he replied promptly. “I sure do.”

“Would you be willing to stay up all night to do it?” Merriwell went on.

“Sure, Mike!”

The Yale man’s eyes wandered to the big buckets of paste which ranged along the wall.

“How long would it take you to mix up a lot of paste like that?” he inquired.

The billposter looked puzzled.
"About an hour or so" he returned. "What yer after?"

Dick smiled.

"I want about that much ready at twelve o'clock sharp," he returned. "I also want three or four big brushes that you put it on with. Where do you suppose I could get those?"

The fellow waved his hand to where a lot of them hung in rows against the wall.

"What's the matter with them?" he inquired. "I'm just lookin' for them, you know.

"He's goin' to start at six."

"I don't want to use his brushes," Dick said quickly. "Isn't there some place around town where I could buy some?"

The billposter shook his head.

"Not as I know of," he answered. "Them brushes is made special."

Merriwell hesitated for a moment. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

"All right," he said, "we'll use those, then. I can pay Lawford well for the use of them after the business is over. Got that straight, now? Have the paste and brushes ready for me at midnight. We'd better take a couple of those small ladders, too. And you are to stay here till we bring the things back. See?"

The fellow nodded.

"Yeh. But, say, guv'ner, this nere ain't goin' to do me no harm with the boss, is it?"

"Not unless you tell him yourself about it," the Yale man answered. "I promise you no one will ever get it from me, but I'll be frank with you——"

He paused, and looked inquiringly at the fellow.

"Brown's me name," the latter informed him. "Bill Brown."

"Well, Bill," Dick continued, "I may as well tell you that if Lawford ever found out that you had made paste for me, and loaned me his brushes, he would probably fire you on the spot. But, as I say, I don't see how he's going to find it out. I'll leave the money for the brushes, and all the rest, in his desk, and he'll have no way of knowing where it came from."

Brown hesitated, apparently turning the matter over in his mind. Presently he looked up.

"Make it fifteen, and I'm your man," he said.

Dick smiled.

"I'll go you one better. It's worth twenty to me, and here's half of it now."

He handed the fellow a ten-dollar bill.

"Tanks, guv'ner," Brown said fervently. "You're a sure-enough gent. I'll have the stuff ready fur you at eleven. Might a bloke ask what you're goin' to do with it?"

"I reckon I'd better not tell you, Bill," Merriwell smiled. "Then you won't be forced to hide anything more than necessary."

As soon as they were out of the building, Demarest gave vent to his enthusiasm.

"By Jove, Merriwell!" he exclaimed admiringly. "You certainly have got a great head. You remind me of a general laying out the details of a campaign. What's the next step?"

Dick chuckled.

"Get enough of the fellows to put up the bills," he explained.

Demarest roared with laughter.

"Great," he gasped; "simply great! That's a master stroke, getting Yale students to turn billposters! But, say, will they do it, do you think?"

"Do it!" Dick echoed. "They'll fairly fall over themselves to get the chance. Perhaps you Cambridge boys were too staid for this sort of diversion, but I don't think I shall have any difficulty persuading some of my friends, especially when it's in such a righteous cause."

It took but a short time to reach the campus, and Dick led the way up the stairs of Durfee, taking the steps three at a time, while Demarest followed him more slowly. Bursting into his room, he found quite a crowd of fellows there, who at once set up a shout at the sight of him.

"By thunder!" Brad Buckhart, his roommate, exclaimed. "It's about time you showed up, you old maverick. Had us worrying our heads clean off wondering whether Harvard had roped you."

"Yes," put in Eric Fitzgerald, a slim, flyaway chap, who was always on the alert for excitement. "We were just about to organize a posse to hunt you up. Where've you——"

He broke off abruptly, his eyes fastened with a look of horror on the entering Demarest, while he threw out both hands as if to ward off something unspeakably awful.

"Take him away!" he gasped, rolling his eyes ceilingward. "This is dreadful! I haven't had a drink in weeks, and yet I see two Merriwells. It's worse than snakes! For heaven sakes, somebody take one of 'em away!"

Exclamations of astonishment arose from the other
fellows at the sight of the amazing resemblance between the two men.

"Stop your nonsense, Fitz!" Dick admonished. "Fellows, this is my friend, Austin Demarest, who is going to bring out a corking Yale play here next Thursday."

"What's the relation, pard?" Buckhart grinned, as he shook hands with the actor. "You sure had me guessing for a minute."

"Me, too," put in Rudolph Rose, a big, handsome sophomore. "It's the greatest thing I ever saw."

"None whatever," Dick explained. "I met Mr. Demarest for the first time this morning, but I can assure you he's the goods, all right."

Fitzgerald withdrew his gaze from the ceiling, with a profound sigh of relief.

"Delighted to meet you," he said fervently, as he clasped Demarest's hand. "For a moment I had a horrid thought — however, we won't dwell on that. Jove! I can't get used to the two of you yet."

After everybody had met the stranger, and the crowd settled down to comparative quiet, Dick took the floor.

"We've got a ticklish job on hand to-night, boys," he said earnestly, "and I want your help. Demarest has a dandy play, which he has got to bring out in New Haven. He's up against the trust, and they won't let him have a decent theatre, so he's taken the old Concert Hall. We thought everything was settled all right this afternoon, but now it appears that the trust has a play as nearly like Demarest's as possible, even to the name, which they are going to shove into the Arcadian on Friday. It's a put-up job, you see, to give him a frost. They've hired Lawford to cover the boards with their bills to-morrow morning, though Demarest had a previous understanding with the fellow that his paper would go up as soon as it was printed. We've persuaded the printers to work overtime, and the bills will be ready at midnight. Now, what I want to do is to get them on the boards before daylight. Also every dead wall we can get the privilege on. Catch on?"

"You bet!" exclaimed Fitz joyfully. "You want us to turn billposters."

"Exactly," Dick nodded. "How about it?"

"Of course we will!"

"Great!"

"Gee! What a circus that will be!"

"Bring on your bills, pard, and we'll get 'em up or perish in the attempt."

The assent was perfectly unanimous. Every one seemed to think it a great lark, and was eager for the fun to commence. But there was still two hours before the bills would be ready, so Dick took the opportunity of giving the boys a more comprehensive sketch of what Demarest was up against, and the troubles he had had to get a hearing for the play.

The fellows were all much interested, and then and there they resolved themselves into an informal committee of six to spread the news throughout the university, and collect as large an audience as possible for Thursday night.

About eleven o'clock they all sauntered forth in high spirits, and made at once for the printing establishment. Here they found that the presses were all running full blast, and the bills close to completion. The foreman assured Dick that the last one would be run off in about half an hour, so the latter dispatched Buckhart to see if he couldn't find some sort of a vehicle in which they could transport the paper. That was the one point on which he had slipped up. He had expected that they would be able to carry the bills, but a sight of the volume already printed showed him at once that this was impossible.

While Buckhart was gone, Merriwell and Demarest paid all the men off, and thanked them heartily for the help they had given, besides presenting each of them with two tickets for the show.

Precisely at half-past eleven the last bill was run off, the great presses stopped, and the printers grabbed up coats and hats, and hurried out of the place. The foreman remained a few minutes to show Dick which were the large bills to be posted up, and which the smaller pasters to attach to the colored lithographs for the store windows, which they proposed distributing the moment the shops opened in the morning. They were really counting more on these than the announcements on the boards, for they felt pretty certain that the latter would not remain uncovered long; once Lawford got started with his work for the trust in the morning. They would be up long enough, however, to attract considerable attention, and Dick had a little scheme by which he hoped to circumvent Lawford if the latter did cover them.

Presently Brad appeared, with the announcement that he had a cab below, and all hands turned to to carry the bills downstairs. In the street outside they found a rather dilapidated specimen of four-wheeler, which the Texan had picked up at the station, into which they piled the paper until there was room for nothing else.

The driver seemed to take it as some college prank,
and, assured of his money, which he had obtained in advance, looked upon them with a tolerant eye.

At the billposter’s, they found Brown on the alert, and the paste and brushes ready for them. His eyes bulged a little when he saw the cab full of paper, but he asked no questions. He rather hoped that the night’s work would hit his boss hard, for Lawford was a hard man to work for, and was cordially hated by the fellows under him.

Several buckets of the paste, the brushes, and two ladders were wedged into the cab somehow, and then the fun commenced.

Merriwell’s plan of campaign was masterly. He avoided carefully the central part of the town, in which the cops were apt to be more or less wide awake, and proceeded at once to the outskirts, where they could work undisturbed.

Quietly and swiftly, board after board was covered with the flaring announcements. Many of them were slapped on crooked, and several times they got the different sections misplaced, so that the bottom part came first, but Demarest was rather pleased at that than otherwise. He thought it would attract more attention than if they had been put on with the customary skill and regularity.

The fellows were having the time of their lives. Before long they were smeared with paste from head to foot, but that did not matter. They slathered the bills on as if their lives depended on their speed, and the little spice of risk—for the cops were pretty sure to question such proceedings if they got onto the game—only added to the enjoyment.

Working with the utmost method, they slowly circled the town, approaching nearer and nearer to the central zone of danger. Several times they had narrow escapes, but they always managed to pull out before the cops actually caught them, though more than once they were obliged to run, leaving only the top section of the bill affixed to the board. It is safe to say, however, that those incomplete sections, breaking off abruptly in the middle of the announcement, attracted more attention from the passers-by in the morning, and stimulated their curiosity to a much greater extent than anything else.

At last they reached Chapel Street, just opposite the campus, and here Fitz conceived the audacious scheme of putting one of their bills on the board in front of the Arcadian Theatre. This was carrying the war into the enemy’s camp with a vengeance, but Dick at once perceived the advertising value of such a thing, and they proceeded to plan it with care.

An officer’s heat took in Chapel Street between York and Orange, a matter of five blocks. Merriwell stationed the cab well around the corner on High Street, and then carried the paste and one of the bills into a doorway nearer the corner. There they thoroughly pasted the first part of the bill, while Buckhart, keeping watch at the corner, gave the word when the cop was well away from the front of the theatre.

As soon as the coast was clear, Dick and Fitz dashed out, carrying the pasted sheet between them, while Rudolph Rose came along with the brush. A few deft dabs with the latter served to fix the paper to the board, and then they darted into concealment again, to await another round on the part of the officer.

He passed the billboard the first time without noticing the change, but on his return trip, he seemed to be attracted by the unfinished look of the thing.

“Begorrah!” the listening fellows heard him mutter. “It’s careless Johnny Lawford’s min is gettin’ to be. Runnin’ off an’ lavin’ the board half done. ‘Jarvis of Yale.’ A foine show, I doubt not.”

The moment his back was turned, the next sheet was added to the board, and the announcement completed. The fellows did not stay to hear the officer’s comments on his return trip. But they laughed gleefully as they pictured his astonishment when he saw the bill of a Concert Hall production before the Arcadian Theatre.

It was nearly five o’clock when the empty pails and brushes were returned to the billposter’s establishment. Bill Brown promptly hung the latter in their place, washed out the pails, and put them away. Then, locking the door, he departed with a hearty good night, one hand clutching two crisp ten-dollar notes, thrust deep in his trousers pocket.

The Yale men accompanied Demarest to the hotel, and helped him carry in what remained of the bills. Then they left him, and made their way to their various quarters in high glee at the success of the night’s work.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RAGE OF RALPH BRYTON.

A good many people in New Haven were surprised next morning when they read the bills announcing the production of an apparently decent play at the old Concert Hall. Some of the older inhabitants harked back to the good old days, when that was the only
theatre in town, and were thereby moved to read the bill to the very end, thus becoming interested in the contest between the young actor-manager and the trust, which was exactly what Demarest wanted.

John Lawford, the billposter, was more than surprised. He was puzzled, perplexed, and furiously angry. He saw at once that Demarest had stolen a march on him, and he did his best to nullify the advantage gained, by covering the boards as swiftly as possible with the announcements of the Arcadian production. Although he had made a verbal agreement with the young actor to give his paper space, he was able to slide out of it because there had been no written contract, and he dared not disobey the emphatic commands of Ralph Bryton, on whom his bread and butter depended.

But all this took time. It was nearly noon before he had obliterated the greater part of the work of the Yale students last night, and a good many people had seen the original bills, and read them through. Their interest was only stimulated when they noticed them, one by one, being covered by the announcements of the trust. It seemed to bear out Demarest’s statement that he was being hampered, and a good many citizens decided on the spot to attend the performance of “Jarvis of Yale,” and see what it was like.

While Lawford was working so hard, Austin Demarest was putting in some equally effective licks. Bright and early he started out with two boys and a quantity of lithographing, his regular paper, and in a very short time had obtained points of vantage in all the important shop windows, for which he paid on the spot, and about eleven he returned to the hotel empty-handed, but with a feeling of intense satisfaction at having circumvented Ralph Bryton effectually.

He had scarcely entered the lobby before his eyes fell upon that gentleman himself, and he saw at once that the representative of the trust was not in the best sort of humor. He was striding up and down the floor, pulling his heavy mustache, and scowling fiercely under beetling brows.

He was a man of about forty, heavily built, and a little inclined toward corpulence. His features were good, but his expression was domineering, as if he were accustomed to have his own way, and would fly into a passion when thwarted.

He had slept late that morning, secure in the consciousness that he had done a good day’s work, and effectually prevented the man he hated from having any sort of a success in New Haven, even if he once secured a foothold.

After a leisurely breakfast, he took a stroll down the street, and his astonishment and anger can better be imagined than described when his eyes fell upon the announcement which graced the board in front of the Arcadian Theatre. Lawford had not yet reached that part of the city.

Bryton stormed and raged, and even went so far as to try and tear the paper off, but the paste had been well mixed, and his efforts were in vain.

Fairly foaming at the mouth, he dashed back to the hotel, and tried to get Lawford on the telephone, but no one answered him. He had just come away from the booth after a second attempt when his eyes fell upon the smiling face of Austin Demarest, and he promptly crossed the lobby, and confronted the young actor.

“You young blackguard!” he roared. “How dare you put up posters in front of my theatre? How dare you use any of the boards which I control for your rotten paper?”

Demarest’s eyes narrowed.

“Just keep a civil tongue in your mouth, Bryton,” he said coldly. “I suppose it is rather difficult for you to behave like a gentleman, but a little more of such talk as that, and I’ll have to hand you something.”

The older man glared at his antagonist, and his face grew purple, but he managed to keep a grip on his temper, for he realized that his anger had carried him farther than he had meant.

“You’ve no right to use the boards in this city, which I control,” he said, in a calmer tone.

“I wasn’t aware that you controlled any of them,” Demarest returned coolly. “I labored under the impression that they were the property of John Lawford, with whom I made arrangements early yesterday afternoon to post my paper.”

Bryton gasped.

“But I told him not—” he began, and then stopped abruptly.

“Exactly,” put in the actor. “You ordered him to throw me down after he had explicitly agreed to do my work. That’s like you, Bryton. You can’t blame me for taking things into my own hands.”

Bryton’s eyes flashed angrily.

“Much good it will do you!” he snapped. “By noon your stuff will be covered.”

“Just the same, my purpose will have been accom-
plished," Demarest smiled tauntingly. "People will have all morning to see the announcements, and then they will wonder why your paper is plastered over them. I shall take care that they find out. I have a friend or two on the New Haven press. You slipped up on the shop windows, didn’t you?"

His voice held a note of malicious satisfaction. The older man gave a sudden start.

"Lawford was to go around after——"

"Too late," the actor returned quickly. "I have the best locations cinched. They’re paid for, and an agreement signed. If any of them try to take out my lithographs, or cover them up with yours, I’ll sue for breach of contract."

If looks could kill, Demarest would have been slain on the spot by the ferocious glare from the older man’s eyes. Bryton knew that he had suffered a serious check, for the window advertising had always been considered of equal or greater importance than the billboards.

He realized, however, that he could accomplish nothing by going off his head, so he made a great effort, and managed to get control of his temper.

"After all, I don’t know why I’m going to all this trouble," he said sarcastically. "You’re a fool if you think anybody will go to the Concert Hall. Why, the place is rotten!"

"That’s my business," Demarest retorted. "I rather think if you drop in to the opening Thursday night you’ll be surprised. But I really must tear myself away. This has been a great pleasure, and I trust I shall see you again."

Without waiting for an answer, he turned on his heel, and started toward the door. The next minute he stopped and looked back.

"Can’t I give you a couple of seats for Thursday?" he smiled. "I should be delighted to have your critical opinion of the performance."

"Bah!" snarled Bryton, his face purpling dangerously.

The young actor shrugged his shoulders.

"Too bad you’re feeling that way this morning," he said airily. "You really ought to take something—a bromo seltzer might do."

Bryton gazed loweringly after the graceful figure of the young man as he disappeared through the door.

"I’ll get you yet, my young cockerel!" he muttered fiercely. "You think you’ve got the best of Ralph Bryton, but you’re mistaken. You won’t crow so loud before I’m through with you."

CHAPTER VII.

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM.

Happily his work was so arranged that morning that Dick Merriwell was through for the day at eleven o’clock. Truth to tell, he might just as well have absented himself altogether for all the good the lectures did him, for his mind was so full of the brave struggle his new friend was making for success that he gave little thought to anything else.

Chancing upon G. Grossman, editor in chief of the *Comet*, he took the opportunity of giving him a full account of Demarest, his play, and the trouble he was having to get a hearing. Grossman was much interested, and promised to write the matter up for the paper, which was exactly what Dick wanted.

The moment he escaped from the Chemical Lab, he made his way as quickly as he could to the Concert Hall, which he found a scene of the utmost bustle and confusion.

An army of scrubwomen were busy in the auditorium and balcony; painters were at work on the boxes, and in various parts of the house, while from the flies came the sound of sawing and hammering.

Demarest seemed to be everywhere at once, directing, advising, joking with the workmen, and generally hustling things along. His eyes brightened as he saw Dick.

"The top of the morning to you, Richard!" he cried from the stage. "You’re a sight for sore eyes. Come up and hear the news."

Vaulting over the orchestra space, the Yale man leaped lightly to the stage, and joined his friend.

Demarest narrated with gusto his success in placing the lithographs, and then went on to tell about the interview with Bryton.

"It was a bitter pill for him to swallow," he concluded. "He looked as if he could have knifed me with all the pleasure in the world. He’s always hated me like poison, you know, ever since I came to Buffer and Lane."

"What’s he got against you?" Merriwell asked curiously.

"Search me," Demarest returned. "The only reason I can think of is that I played opposite to Marion Gray all last season. He’s stuck on her, you know, and I suppose he got jealous seeing me make love to her every night, and twice on Saturday. They said he nearly went off his head when she refused to sign with them this season, but came to me instead. Marion’s a
TIP TOP WEEKLY.

jolly good sort, and one of the best leading women in the country. I was mighty lucky to get her. She'll be here with all the rest of the company this afternoon.”

Dick was about to inquire further about Bryton, when the drays appeared at the stage entrance with the scenery, which had, up to this time, been left in the cars on a siding.

“I couldn’t rest till I got them safely here,” the actor explained, as he hurried over to direct the unloading. “It would be just like Bryton to hire somebody to slash them up, and ruin them. He’d do anything to prevent this performance, but I think we have him in a hole. I’ve got the stuff here before he’s had time to think.”

The arrival of the sets added considerably to the general confusion, but nothing could daunt Demarest. In spite of the fact that he had had practically no sleep the night before, he was in the highest of spirits over his success, for which he gave Merriwell every credit, and all afternoon he did not stir from the theatre, with the result that a tremendous amount of work was done before the workmen left the place. The young actor was confident that another two days would see a remarkable transformation in the dingy edifice.

On account of football practice, Dick could not be with him after three o’clock, but he stopped at the theatre on his way back from the field, and found Demarest on the point of leaving.

“Jump in, and I’ll take you back to the hotel,” he said, without leaving his seat at the wheel of his car.

“How have things gone?”

“Splendidly!” Demarest exclaimed enthusiastically, as he stepped into the tonneau. “Another two days will see everything in first-class shape. The men have caught on to what I want, and are going at it with a will, for they understand the need for haste. I shan’t have to spend so much of my time looking after them to-morrow.”

“Company come yet?” Dick inquired.

“Yes; they arrived at four-fifty,” the actor returned.

“Haven’t seen them yet, but they phoned me from the hotel. Yes, thanks to you, I think we’re going to pull through in fine shape.”

The car drew up before the New Haven House, and the actor leaped out.

“Come in, won’t you?” he urged. “I’d like to have you meet the people. They’re a nice lot.”

“Guess I’d better wait until to-morrow,” Merriwell said. “We’ve got a football meeting on hand right after supper, and I’ll have to hustle to get through in time. I wish you’d let me have that manuscript of the play you spoke about, though. I want to read it tonight, if I can manage to stay awake.”

“Oh, of course!” Demarest exclaimed. “I’d forgotten all about it. Just wait a second while I get it.”

He disappeared into the hotel, returning five minutes later with a square, flat parcel, which he handed to Dick.

“Thank Don’t hesitate to blue pencil it wherever you find any faults,” he said. “We’ll have the dress rehearsal Thursday morning, and can introduce any changes then. We’ve rehearsed so much that the people are all letter-perfect, and there isn’t any need for holding one until Thursday to give them an idea of this stage. Well, good night. If you feel as weary as I do, you’ll sleep like the dead. See you to-morrow.”

Merriwell and Buckhart returned his greeting, and he stood for a moment on the sidewalk, while the car slid down the street. Dick had a last, swift glimpse of his handsome, happy face, with the sensitive lips curved in a smile of perfect friendliness, and then the car rounded a corner, and the picture vanished.

If the Yale man could have had any conception of the extraordinary events which were to take place before he set eyes on Austin Demarest again, he would have been amazed beyond measure.

Luckily, however, he was troubled with no premonitions of evil. He ate his usual hearty supper with his customary appetite, took part in the football meeting afterward, and helped decide several important points relative to the great Yale-Harvard game, which was coming off the following week. Then he went promptly back to his rooms, and, getting out the manuscript of “Jarvis of Yale,” settled himself by the table, and commenced to read.

Here Buckhart found him an hour later, oblivious to everything but the typewritten sheets before him. His lips were parted, his eyes bright, and a faint flush of excitement was on his cheeks.

The Texan paused in astonishment.

“By the great horn spoon!” he ejaculated. “What in thunder is the matter with you, pard?”

“Don’t bother me!” muttered Dick, without raising his eyes. “I’m almost through.”

“Humph!” grunted Buckhart, dropping into a chair. Ten minutes later his roommate looked up, with a sigh.

“That’s a dandy play!” he exclaimed, with satisfaction. “A perfect corker! If that don’t go with the people hereabouts, it’ll be because they’re a lot of dead ones. The part of Lance Jarvis is a peach, but I don’t see where I come in.”
"Huh?" questioned the Westerner.
"Oh, nothing," Dick said hastily.

He did not want even Brad to know that Demarest had taken him as a model for the hero of the play. Excepting in a few minor points, he could see no resemblance whatever to himself. The clever young actor had made Jarvis a wonderfully attractive character, fascinating, wholly sympathetic, and lovable. It was what actors term a "fat part," and, strangely enough, Demarest had succeeded in hitting Merriwell off to a T, in spite of the fact that he had never actually met the Yale man. But Dick, keen as he was in sizing up the character of another man, would never see the resemblance in a hundred years. He was too modest. It seemed to him the height of conceit to imagine for a moment that he was anything like this fellow in the play, who had interested and fascinated him. Consequently he evaded Brad's question.

"So you think it will go, do you?" the Texan inquired presently.

"I certainly do," Merriwell answered. "You want to get all the fellows you can to see it. We must fill the house full for Demarest."

Buckhart looked a little doubtful.

"It's got to be pretty darned good, you know, pard," he said slowly, "for the boys to keep from guying. You know how many performances have been broken up that way."

Dick stood up, and laid the manuscript on the table.

"I know," he agreed; "but you do your best to fill the theatre, and I'll guarantee they won't waste much time guying. They'll be too much interested in the play."

He yawned. Now that the tension was over, he felt desperately sleepy.

"I'm going to bed," he announced. "I'd have to prop my eyelids up to keep them open five minutes longer."

CHAPTER VIII.
MARION GRAY PLAYS FAIR.

Marion Gray was a very charming young woman. Slight, and rather tiny, she had a piquant face which was fascinating. Taken separately, scarcely one of her features would be found quite perfect, but one never scrutinized Marion Gray's face that way. The ensemble disarmed criticism.

Some one had once said that had she been posi-
getting a New York date depend on him, and yet it’s
deedly inconvenient with so much here to look
after.”

Marion Gray hesitated an instant.

“How very provoking,” she agreed presently. “But,
of course, you must go. It would never do to offend
Hemingway, and you know how erratic he is some-
times. Is there anything here to do except keep an
eye on the theatre?”

“Not much,” Demarest returned. “They have a
good start there, and know what to do next, but I had
expected to run over two or three times to be sure they
were getting things straight.”

“Why don’t you ask that nice Mr. Merriwell you
were telling me about to look after things for you?”
she suggested.

Demarest’s face brightened.

“That’s a good idea,” he returned quickly, “only it
seems cheeky. However, I know he’ll do it if he can,
and it’s the only way out. I’ll phone him.”

He pushed back his chair, and stood up.

“Well, I’ll be off. Just about time to make the train.
Don’t worry if I’m not back to-night. There might be
something to detain me, but I’ll make the first train out
in the morning at the latest. Dress rehearsal at eleven,
you know. Look after that for me, will you? And be
sure everybody understands. By-by.”

She nodded gayly to him, but her face sobered as
she went on with her breakfast. The success of this
venture meant almost as much to her as it did to
Demarest, and she was wrapped up in it.

Presently she finished, and arose from the table.
She meant to go for a little stroll, and for that reason
she wore her hat, and carried a long fur coat over her
arm. One of the bell boys held this while she slipped
into it, and then she turned toward the door, drawing
on her gloves as she made her way slowly toward it.

All at once she gave a quick little gasp, as her eyes
fell upon a man standing by the desk, and turned her
head swiftly the other way. But she was too late.
The next instant Ralph Bryton had spied her, and
stepped to her side.

“Good morning, my dear,” he said, with an attempt
at geniality. “I saw by the register that you had ar-
ived last night.”

The girl did not glance at him, but went steadily on
her way.

“Good morning, Mr. Bryton,” she returned frigidly.

There was a disagreeable note in the man’s laugh.

“How very formal we are,” he said sarcastically.

“I can remember the time, not so very long ago, when
it was Ralph.”

“You know perfectly well that was on your father’s
account,” she retorted. “Brought up as I was in his
house, I could scarcely have called you anything else
while he was alive. Now I can follow my own inclina-
tions.”

The man’s face darkened. They had reached the
door, and, as she was about to pass out, he put out one
hand swiftly, and held the knob.

“One moment,” he said shortly. “I must have a few
minutes’ talk with you before you go out. Oh, it’s
about business,” he went on bitterly, as a repugnance
flashed across her face. “I want to talk to you about
Demarest and this fool play of his.”

She glared at him.

“What is it you wish to say?” she inquired briefly.

Bryton indicated with his hand a couple of chairs in
a corner near by, and, after a moment’s hesitation, she
took one of them.

“You’ve got to pull out of this company of his at
once,” he said, in a hard voice, as he dropped down be-
side her.

Marion Gray’s eyes widened, and a little color crept
into her face.

“You’re a cool proposition,” she remarked, “to tell
me what I must, or must not, do. Do you imagine for
an instant that I would break a contract, and desert a
man the very day before the opening? I thought you
knew that I always played fair.”

“Yah!” snarled Bryton. “You—play fair! A lot
you do! Where’s your gratitude? Tell me that! You
owe everything you’ve got—the very clothes on your
back—to my father. Didn’t he take you in when you
were starving, and treat you like a daughter? Didn’t he
give you his name, which wasn’t good enough for you
when you took to the stage? Didn’t he leave you a pile
of money, which kept you till you got a job with Ros-
kenbaum? That was my money! It should have come
to me! You practically robbed me of it. And now
you stick by Demarest, who doesn’t care a hang about
you, and let me go——

“Stop!”

The girl’s face was pale, but her eyes flashed angrily.

“You’ve said quite enough, Ralph Bryton,” she went
on, in a cold, cutting voice, “to show me what sort of
a man you really are, even if I hadn’t a pretty good no-
tion of it before. A good deal of what you have said
is true, but no one but a contemptible hound would
have said it in the way you did. Your father did adopt
me, and as long as he lived I loved him. He was more
of a man than you'll ever be. The money he left me wasn't much, but it enabled me to live until I found something to do. The reason I didn't take your father's name was because it was yours, too."

Bryton winced at the contempt in her voice. She caught her breath, and went on swiftly:

"Now, not content with pestering me to marry you, when you know I loathe the very sight of you, you want me to do a dishonorable thing which would make me hate myself all my life long. But I won't do it! You knew that long ago, didn't you? I'd play my part to-morrow night if I was dying, and I mean to play it for all that is in me. If 'Jarvis of Yale' isn't a success, it won't be because Marion Gray hasn't done her best to make it so."

With the last word, she sprang swiftly to her feet, and, before the angry man realized what had happened, she reached the door and disappeared.

CHAPTER IX.

OUT OF A CLEAR SKY.

Dick Merriwell was rather surprised to get a note from Demarest—the latter had not been able to reach him on the telephone—saying that he had been unexpectedly called to New York for the day, and asking Dick if he would not keep an eye on the workmen at the theatre that afternoon, if possible.

This Merriwell was, of course, very ready to do. He made three trips down there before going to the field, and found matters progressing as well as could be expected.

He was amused, and, for an instant, surprised, at being mistaken for Demarest, but he did not disabuse the men of their error. It would be just as well for them to think that he was the actor. They would perhaps work the better while he was looking on. Knowing the work which had to be done, he was able to straighten out several doubtful matters, and when he stopped again on his way home from practice, he was more than pleased at the strides they had made during his absence. The place was neat as a pin, and only a few more hours' work was necessary to finish everything up.

He rather expected that Demarest would call him up that evening, but no message came. Finally, about half-past eight, he got the hotel on the wire, and found that the actor had not returned.

"He'll probably get the early train in the morning," he said to himself. "I'll hear from him then."

Having no lecture until ten o'clock, he spent the time getting up back work. He was just slipping into his coat to leave the room when the telephone bell rang insistently, and, stepping over to the instrument, he took down the receiver.

"Is this Mr. Merriwell?" came in a woman's voice. "Yes."

"This is Miss Gray—Miss Marion Gray. I'm dreadfully worried about Mr. Demarest. Two trains are in, and he hasn't appeared. The rehearsal is set for eleven, and I don't know what to do. I phoned Hemingway's office, and they said he hadn't been there since last night, late. Could you—would you come over to the hotel for a few minutes? You see, there's no one I can get to advise me what to do, and I knew you were Mr. Demarest's friend, so I thought—"

The sweet voice trailed off in a questioning silence.

"Certainly, I'll come, Miss Gray," Merriwell answered promptly. "Be over in three minutes."

Hanging up the receiver, he took up his hat and left the rooms.

"I don't understand it," he murmured, as he ran downstairs. "He should have been here two hours ago. Great Scott. I hope nothing's happened to him. If he didn't show up in time for the performance, everything would be ruined. But he must show up—he will!"

Flinging open the outer door, he almost fell over a telegraph boy. His heart gave a sudden throb of fear.

"Merriwell live here?" inquired the boy.

"Yes," Dick said quickly. "That's my name. Give it to me."

He snatched the ominous yellow missive from the other's hand, and tore it open in breathless haste. The boy saw his face pale suddenly, and heard him draw his breath swiftly as his eyes flew rapidly over the crowded lines on the single sheet. But experience had taught him to such sights as these, and, eager to be gone, he drewl out:

"Any answer?"

"No," Dick said, in a strange voice; "none."

The boy departed, whistling carelessly, but Merriwell still stood on the stone steps, gazing blankly at the paper in his hand. Presently he drew one hand across his forehead in a bewildered manner.

"I can't!" he breathed. "I could never do it in this world! What is he thinking of?"

He turned mechanically and went back to his room.
Dropping down in a chair, he spread the telegram out on his knee, and read it aloud.

"Arrested here on absurd charge. Cannot be tried until to-morrow. Put-up job to hold me, and ruin performance. You must take my part, and save play. Otherwise I shall be ruined. Jarvis is really you... If you can only learn the lines it will be all right. Business will take care of itself. Do this as you love me, Richard, and I shall be your debtor forever. Don't tell a soul where I am. I can't afford to have my name smirched, even by false charge.

AUSTIN."

For a moment or two Dick sat looking at the paper blankly. Then he suddenly crumpled it into a ball, and thrust it into his pocket. At least, that was what he meant to do, but, instead of going into the pocket, it slipped through the slit in his overcoat, and lodged in the chair seat, close against one of the arms.

The next moment Merriwell had sprung to his feet, and was striding back and forth across the room.

The prospect which had at first appalled him was gradually becoming more reasonable, more possible, as he recovered from the suddenness of the shock, and swiftly regained his poise and self-control. He had a remarkably retentive memory, and felt that if he put his mind to it, excluding every other thing, he might be able to get the part before night, or possibly even in time for a hasty dress rehearsal that afternoon.

As for doing anything more than that, he would have to trust to luck. He had no idea what Demarest's conception was of the character of Lance Jarvis. All he could do would be to forget that he was acting, and simply be himself. It was the only way by which the young actor's reputation could be saved, and his success assured; for, if the performance did not come off on Thursday, Dick had a feeling that Ralph Bryton would see that it was indefinitely postponed. He had seen enough of the man's methods not to realize that no stone would be left unturned to thwart Demarest.

Presently he yanked off his overcoat, and tossed it on a chair.

"I'll do it!" he muttered. "I've got to do it! There's no other way out!"

Then, springing to the telephone, he called up the New Haven House, and asked for Miss Gray. In a moment he heard her voice at the other end of the wire.

"This is Mr. Merriwell, Miss Gray," he said quickly. "I've heard from Austin. He's unavoidably detained, and cannot get here before two o'clock. Can the dress rehearsal be postponed until then, do you think?"

She gave a gasp of relief, which was almost a sob.

"Yes, of course," she said swiftly. "That will give us time enough to get through before the evening performance. Oh, I'm so glad everything is right with him! I was so afraid something had happened. You know, Bryton would stop at nothing to prevent this opening."

"Yes, I understood that from Austin," Merriwell returned quietly. "But I don't see what he can do now. You'll have every one at the theatre at two, will you?"

"Surely. Thank you so much, Mr. Merriwell, and do forgive me for putting you so much trouble."

"It hasn't been any trouble at all," Dick assured her. "I was terribly worried about Austin myself, but everything will be all right now. If you don't mind, I won't come over just now. I have some rather important work to do, but I'll meet you later, I hope."

"Of course. You must come behind the scenes to-night, and meet the company. Thank you again. Good-by."

As he hung up the receiver, a whimsical smile flashed into Merriwell's face.

"Yes, I certainly expect to come behind the scenes, and meet the company," he murmured. "I'm glad she didn't ask any more questions. As it was, I escaped without telling an actual untruth. I suppose Demarest is wise in not wanting any one to know. It would probably break them all up; but I wonder if I can possibly keep up the deception. Gee! It makes me cold all over to think about it! Just have to trust to luck, I reckon. 'Now for it.'"

Snatching up the manuscript of the play, he dragged a chair close to the window, and started to work.

In something over an hour, he got up, and, dropping the play, began to walk the floor, reeling off the part at lightning speed. When he came to the end of the first act, he gave a sigh of relief.

"One gone," he muttered. "Pretty superficial, but it will have to do. I must see that the prompter is on the job to-night."

When he next came to himself another act had been memorized, and it was half-past twelve. He had expected Brad to come in and interrupt, but happily the Texan did not appear. He must have gone directly to the dining hall from his last recitation.

By a quarter of two the last words had been committed, and Dick snatched overcoat and hat, stuffed the manuscript into his pocket, and flew downstairs.

Not ten minutes later the door was flung open, and Brad Buckhart entered hastily.

"Not here!" he exclaimed, with a swift look about the room. "Where in thunder is he? Cut everything
this morning, without a word of explanation! Didn’t even show up to dinner! It sure beats everything, the bad ways he’s getting into!”

He plumped down in the chair beside the table, his brows drawn down into a scowl. A moment later he slid his hand down the arm of the chair, and drew forth a crumpled wad of yellow paper.

“Humph!” he grunted. “What’s this?”

Smoothing it out, he saw that it was a telegram, and, scarcely realizing what he was doing, his eyes took in the first line. After that nothing could have prevented his reading it to the very end, so interested was he.

“Suffering catamounts!” he exclaimed. “If that don’t beat all! Arrested! Wants Dick to take the part! Great tarantulas! That’s what the old galoot’s been up to all morning—learning the stuff. It’s sure it!”

For a moment he sat there in thoughtful silence. Then a slow smile broke out all over his face, and the next moment he threw back his head, and laughed till the tears came into his eyes.

“By the great horn spoon!” he cried. “That’s the best thing I ever heard. Think of old Dick going on the stage, and half of Yale College looking on, and not knowing it’s him. Gee! If we don’t have a circus to-night with Richard I’ll eat my hat!”

He broke off, and glanced again at the telegram.

“I can’t tell ’em, though, can I?” he muttered. “Dick never meant I should see this. But you bet the Untamed Maverick of the Pecos will have his share of joy out of it. You hear me talk!”

CHAPTER X.

THE CURTAIN RISES.

Dick slipped cautiously into the stage entrance of the Concert Hall, and went directly to Demarest’s dressing room. No one must see him until he was made up, or the fat would be all in the fire.

Swiftly lighting the gas jets, he locked the door, and opened the make-up box, which stood on a bare table underneath a large mirror. It was not the first time he had disguised himself so that his best friend did not know him, but he found that the very strength of the likeness between Demarest and himself was more a hindrance than a help.

His keen sense of observation, however, had taken in the several important differences in their faces, and he proceeded to skillfully make his own an exact dupli-

cate of the actor’s. It was delicate work, but he did it well; and, ten minutes later, after he had rearranged his hair in the manner Demarest wore it, it would have taken an amazingly keen eye to see that he was not the actor himself. He had scarcely put down the brushes, when there came a light, quick knock at the door.

Inwardly a little nervous, but to all appearances perfectly at ease, he stepped across the room, turned the key, and flung the door open. Marion Gray was standing on the threshold, her face worried and anxious, but, as she saw him, her eyes brightened, and she gave a gasp of relief.

“Oh, Austin, I’m so glad!” she cried. “What a fright you have given us! I’ve been worried nearly to death for fear you wouldn’t get here in time. What in the world kept you?”

“I’m sorry, Marion,” Dick returned, “but it really couldn’t be helped. There isn’t a question now about Hemingway giving us a show if we make good here.”

Putting all his powers of mimicry into play, Merrickwell reproduced the tones of Austin Demarest’s voice with an accuracy which surprised even himself. The girl evidently had no suspicion of the substitution, for she went on quickly:

“Austin, I’m afraid of Bryton. I’m afraid he’ll try to prevent the performance in some way. I saw him in the street outside just now, and yesterday he did his best to persuade me to throw up my part.”

“What a scoundrel he is!” Dick exclaimed. “But, of course, I have no fear of his succeeding. You’d never throw me down that way.”

Marion Gray caught her breath suddenly. Her eyes were full of tears, and she was evidently in a very nervous condition.

“I’m glad you realize that much,” she faltered. “I couldn’t do such a thing as that, though sometimes it’s dreadfully hard——”

She broke off abruptly, and Merrickwell looked at her questioningly.

“Hard?” he repeated.

Her face was turned away from him.

“Yes—hard to have you—make love—to me—on the stage,” she whispered chokingly.

Dick drew a quick breath. Great heavens! The girl was madly in love with Demarest, and she was as much as telling him so. There was no mistaking the tones of her voice. He had not thought of this complication, and for a moment he did not know what to do or say. He had no idea what the actor’s general attitude was toward this extremely attractive young
woman, and, even if he had, he could never bring himself to behave in a sentimental manner toward the girl who was mistaking him for another man.

"There, my dear," he ventured presently, in Demarest's whimsical tones, "you're worried sick over this fellow Bryton. There's nothing to be afraid of. He can't stop the performance now. Come, it's time we started the ball moving. The stage must be waiting for us."

Drawing her arm gently through his, he led her out of the dressing room, and a moment later they were upon the stage, which was thronged with the members of the company, who greeted him enthusiastically, and in tones of distinct relief. They, too, had been worried, and with good reason. Capable actors as they were, they well knew that if Demarest's play failed to make a hit, many of them would be in a pretty bad way for a job. Unlike Marion Gray, they were far from being indispensable to the trust.

It was a trying moment for Dick. He did not even know one name from another, though he had thoroughly memorized the cast, and as soon as the rehearsal commenced, he would find out their various identities from the parts they took. Consequently, he plunget at once into the business at hand.

"Howdy, everybody," he began cheerily. "Beastly sorry to have kept you all on the fence this way, but it couldn't be helped. We'll have to make up for lost time by hustling things along. Let's get busy at once. Clear the stage for the first act."

Once the plunge was taken, things came easier. The first act went through with a rush. Dick made few slips, and covered them so skillfully that no one noticed them. The cast was letter-perfect in their parts, and had rehearsed so often that they had the business at their finger ends.

Merriwell made several changes in the latter, which were all improvements. It was evident that Demarest knew Cambridge, and the ways of Harvard men to perfection, but he had slipped up a number of times in transplanting those ways to New Haven and Yale. They were little things, but Dick knew that the boys would notice them and probably josh, so he took it upon himself to do a little altering.

The big scene in the third act came with a dash which brought exclamations of enthusiastic appreciation from the actors. It was a scene which the star practically carried on his own shoulders, and they had never seen Demarest do better.

The last act followed swiftly, and, with a sigh of thankfulness, Dick realized that this ordeal was over.

He had decided not to go back to his rooms. In fact, he could not separate himself from the company now without creating suspicion. There was barely time for a hurried dinner before they would have to be back at the theatre, so every one made a swift rush to their dressing rooms, and in ten minutes they began to leave by the stage entrance.

Merriwell waited for Marion Gray. He felt that Demarest would have done that, and while she was changing her gown, he stepped out to the box office to see what the chances for a good house that evening were.

The ticket seller was enthusiastic. With the exception of a few seats in the rear of the orchestra and balcony, the entire house was sold out. Applications were constantly coming in over the phone, and he predicted that in half an hour only standing room would be left.

"By Jove!" Merriwell muttered, as he went back to the stage. "I've got to do it now!"

A moment later he was sitting beside Miss Gray in a cab, being borne rapidly toward the hotel. The girl did not say much, but she seemed to have recovered her self-control, and was rejoiced when Dick told her of the splendid audience they would have to play to.

Entering the hotel, they went directly to the dining room. As he passed the desk, Merriwell saw a tall, dark, rather imposing-looking man start suddenly, and glare at the Yale man with open mouth and swiftly paling face, as if he could not believe the evidence of his eyes. At the same moment he heard the girl beside him draw her breath quickly, and in that instant he felt intuitively that the man must be Ralph Bryton. No wonder the manager was astounded to see Demarest here, if, as the latter supposed, he was responsible for the actor's detention in New York.

Dick raised his head, and sent a taunting, irritating smile toward the fellow. Then he passed on into the dining room.

From that moment things went with such a rush and dash that there was no time at all to grow nervous. The meal was hurried along at breakneck speed. The actors were all more or less nervous, for any first night is an ordeal, and this one particularly so.

Dick did his best to cheer them up, as he knew Demarest would have done. He told them of the sold-out house, and kept up a continual string of whimsical, amusing comment all the time they were at table.

Dinner over, they returned to the theatre again, and at once dressed for the first act.

Presently the doors opened, and the house began to
DICK had finished dressing, and was strolling about the stage, resolutely trying to keep his thoughts from what was coming. Seat after seat in the auditorium without banged down. The low murmur of conversation gradually grew louder as the house filled. Presently he heard the sound of tramping, followed swiftly by jest and laughter, as a crowd of college fellows made their way to the front.

He shivered a little. They would do their best to break him up, he knew. They always did. Then suddenly a wave of obstinate determination swept over him. He would not let them guy him. He would spit them all, and play the part so well that they would have no time for that.

Presently the musicians began to tune up, and a little later the first bars of a popular air crashed out. Demarest had had the forethought to secure an especially fine orchestra, and he was wise. The boys would have hooted into silence anything less good. As it was, they contended themselves with keeping time with their feet, and when the chorus of the song began, they joined in, singing the words.

The thunderous burst of voices was awe-inspiring—almost terrifying. Those of the company upon the stage shivered, and several turned pale under their rouge as they realized what they would have to face.

Dick noticed it, and turned swiftly toward them.

"You mustn't mind them," he said reassuringly. "They may josh a little at first, but don't pay any attention to them. Play your parts for all that is in you, and they'll stop pretty quick. We can't fail, you know, with such a play as 'Jarvis of Yale.'"

A moment later he realized that this must sound decidedly conceited, but apparently the others did not notice the break. They were too much intent on their own feelings to think of anything else, but Merriwell's cheery words put heart into them, and braced them up.

The music stopped with a crashing bar, and was followed by loud applause.

"Clear the stage!" Dick said swifly. "All ready for the first act?"

The first set was on the campus, with Farnum Hall on the drop, and Battle Chapel looming to the left. A crowd of fellows were sitting on the steps of the hall, singing in the moonlight. The men took their places, while the other actors scurried into the wings. Dick was with them. He did not appear until after the curtain was up. He raised his hand in a signal, and instantly the trained voices of the quartette broke the stillness. Softly, at first, they crooned the words of the familiar college air. Gradually it grew louder and louder, until the volume filled the wings. Dick felt his heart beating unevenly.

There was another signal, and the curtain slowly lifted, and revealed the stage.

CHAPTER XI.

THE THIRD ACT.

A prolonged burst of genuine applause greeted the beautiful set, which had been painted by one of the best artists in New York. The fellows had found nothing so far, to say. They were fair enough according to their lights. They never jeered a performance simply for the sake of breaking up the play. It was only their method of showing displeasure for inferior acting.

The quartette finished the last verse of the song, and, taking a quick breath, Dick walked quietly onto the stage.

He spoke the first few words of his lines uninterupted. Then there came a prolonged burst of hand-clapping, which seemed to continue indefinitely. Either this was simply a mode of expressing their approval of the actor who had produced the play under such disadvantages, or else the fellows were trying to break him up.

But they did not succeed. Dick waited until the applause had died away, and then continued his lines as if there had been no interruption.

After a first swift glance at the audience, which seemed to him like nothing else but a sea of faces rising, tier upon tier, to the very roof, the Yale man had not felt a particle of nervousness. And with his first lines he plunged himself into the part he was taking, and from that moment there was not the least sign of hesitancy in his manner.

In truth, he was not acting at all. He was simply himself, and the college fellows in the audience became instantly plunged into a controversy as to whether it was Dick Merriwell or some one else, which lasted off and on to the end of the play.

Once the plunge was taken, the first act went smoothly, gathering interest as the plot developed. At first Dick's lines were punctuated by bursts of applause, which usually started from a certain quarter of the orchestra where Buckhart was seated, but, as the play progressed, these became less frequent, until
at length the Texan sat gaping at the stage, growing more and more certain that there had been some mistake, and this was not his chum at all.

The first act finished with a brisk round of clapping, which did not cease until the curtain had risen upon the stage several times, and was only stilled by Dick's leading Marion Gray before the footlights. Evidently the boys were very well pleased. That was plain from the buzz of talk and favorable comment which arose after the curtain finally dropped.

"You were splendid, Austin!" Marion Gray exclaimed, as they hurried off the stage. "I never saw you do better. Oh, I'm so glad! It can't help but go now."

"They seemed to like it, all right, didn't they?" Merritwell smiled. "We must keep up the good work."

"Wait till they see the third act," she smiled, as she slipped into the dressing room. "I'll fetch them."

The next act went with rush and vim. Demarest had written better than he knew. There was not an unnecessary word. The plot unfolded swiftly and naturally, with an ever-increasing interest. The business was splendid, thanks to Merritwell's blue-pencil work of the afternoon, and more than one burst of applause greeted some particularly aptly sally. The scene ended with a dramatic encounter between the heroine, played with grace and spirit, by Marion Gray, and the villain, in which the girl heard the latter plotting to have Jarvis thrown off the team by means of false statements that he had betrayed signals to Harvard, and vowed that she would save Jarvis, whom she loved, by going to the captain of the eleven with what she had just learned.

The curtain fell to a prolonged burst of applause, and again Dick had to go before it with Miss Gray. Then he hustled back to get into his football rig for the great scene.

This took place in the track house on the field. Through a great window at the back could be seen one end of a tier of seats crowded with spectators, in which the real actors blended into the figures painted on the drop so perfectly that the effect was one of a vast, shouting, flag-waving mob of people.

As the curtain rose, the entire football team was on the stage, receiving final instructions from the coaches before the game. Hicks, the villain, accused Jarvis of selling their signals to Harvard. The latter indignantly denied it, and was only restrained from pitching into his enemy by the efforts of the other men.

Hicks produced his forged proofs, and Jarvis was thrown off the team. The team rushed off to the field, and Jarvis, left alone, threw himself into a chair, and dropped his head on his arms, outstretched across a table, in an agony of heartbroken despair.

It was a thrilling moment. The whole vast audience was so still that one could almost have heard a pin drop. Then a shrill whistle from the field outside the window split the silence, and the mimic crowd on the grand stand burst forth into a roar. Still Jarvis did not raise his head.

Then came the sounds of the game. The thudding of many feet upon a mimic turf, the shrill cries and shouts of the excited spectators, the waving of many flags.

Slowly Jarvis lifted his head, and looked toward the window. The game was going on, and he was out of it. He would not look! He did not want to, but little by little, against his will, he crept to the window. The game was in full swing; his blood was thrilled as his eyes were riveted on the field; unconsciously he followed the progress of the struggle aloud.

Dick Merritwell's work in this scene was masterly in its simplicity. He had forgotten that he was playing a part—had almost forgotten that he was on the stage. For the time he really was Lance Jarvis, and his expression of the heartbreaking agony of the man ruled off his team at the crucial moment, watching the progress of the game with straining eyes and sweating brow, seeing the weakness of his team, and yet not able to help, was something which could never be forgotten.

The crowded house was thrilled into silence. Men sat on the edges of their seats, with eyes riveted on that single figure at the window, scarcely daring to breathe, for fear they would break the spell.

Presently the game began to go against the Yale team. Slowly the line was forced down the field. The vivid words of the unconscious actor painted the scene for the excited audience as clearly as if they had been looking on the game itself.

"They're gaining!" he cried desperately. "They're going through the line with every rush! Lawrence is groggy! They're hammering him! Another ten yards and they'll make a touchdown!"

As if unable to longer watch the failure of his team, Merritwell turned from the window, and put one hand over his eyes.

This was the cue for the newsboy to rush in with word that the heroine had been intercepted by the vil-
lain’s friends while on her way to save Jarvis, but to Dick’s surprise the boy did not appear. He waited a moment, and then, turning back for an instant to the window, improvised a line or two.

Suddenly the door burst open, and the belated boy appeared. His face was white, his eyes shining with excitement, a smear of blood trickled from a cut on his face.

Leaping across the stage, he caught Dick’s arm. “They’ve got her!” he shrieked. “They’re trying to get Miss Gray into a cab. Hurry! Hurry, or you’ll be too late!”

CHAPTER XII.
AN OVERWHELMING TRIUMPH.

These were not the proper words at all, but they seemed very appropriate to the audience, who burst into applause. Dick, knowing full well that something was wrong, rushed from the stage, with the boy at his heels.

Outside he stopped, and faced the actor. “What is it?” he demanded. “What are you talking about? What’s the matter?”

“They’ve got Miss Gray!” gasped the boy. “Down at the stage door. They’re carrying her off. One of ‘em hit me a crack——”

He found himself talking to empty air. Merriwell rushed through the wings, flung himself down the short flight of stairs, and burst out into the street.

The boy was right. A cab was drawn up close to the curb, into which two men were trying to force Marion Gray. The girl was struggling desperately, and trying to drag away the hand of one of them, which was pressed close against her mouth to prevent her crying out.

Like a panther, Merriwell sprang at them. With a grip of iron he seized the collar of one, and tore him away from the girl, planting a smashing blow on his face as he did so. The next minute the other was stretched on the ground, and Marion was free.

The Yale man would like to have stayed to complete the job, but he knew that there was not a moment to lose. They must get back to the stage. Half lifting, half supporting the girl, who was sobbing hysterically, he carried her through the stage door, back to the wings.

“H’m all right,” he soothed. “You must brace up, Marion. You’ve got to think of the play. We’ll have to go on in a minute.”

She caught her breath, and brought all her will to bear to calm herself.

“You’re right,” she faltered. “I mustn’t fail. That’s what he wanted to carry me off for—to spoil the play.”

“It was Bryton, I suppose?” Dick questioned.

“Yes.”

She put her hand up, and mechanically smoothed her hair. As she did so, Dick heard their cue to enter. “There’s the cue,” he said quickly. “Can you go on?”

“Yes, I’m all right now.”

They hurried to the entrance, and stepped onto the stage. Luckily the situation in the play was enough to account for any signs of emotion which Marion Gray displayed, but she was very soon herself again.

The first half of the game was over. The men came into the track house, worn and exhausted by their struggles, discouraged by their failure—for Harvard had scored. Marion Gray told her story swiftly, dramatically. The villain was unmasked, and Jarvis restored to the team to play out the second half.

The curtain dropped to the sound of thunderous applause. The audience fairly broke loose. Yells and cat-calls made bedlam of the place. Time and time again Merriwell came before the curtain with Miss Gray. At length he was forced to appear alone, and shouts of “Speech! Speech!” rent the air.

This nearly broke him up, but he managed to say a few words of thanks before he backed out of sight.

The last act was a short one, which simply rounded things out, and tied up loose ends. The game was over. Jarvis had won a victory for Yale by a phenomenal play, and appeared on the stage, borne on the shoulders of his enthusiastic comrades. The play ended with a pretty bit of love-making between the heroine
and Lance Jarvis, which Marion Gray played with all the fascination and art she possessed. It fairly brought down the house, and Dick found himself wondering how Austin Demarest could go through that every night of the week without falling head over heels in love with the attractive actress.

When the curtain dropped it was past eleven o'clock, but no one made a move to leave the theatre. They simply sat in their seats, thundering on the floor with their feet, clapping their hands sore, and raising such a din that the actors on the stage could not hear a spoken word.

The curtain rolled up again and again, revealing the long semicircle of smiling faces, happy in the knowledge that they had helped score a phenomenal success. Already they saw themselves booked for a long run at a Broadway playhouse.

Up and down the curtain went, almost continuously, and still the crashing bursts of sound reverberated from orchestra to gallery, and back again.

Presently there was a momentary pause, and then came the deep, thunderous, blood-stirring roar of marshaled cheering, from a thousand throats:

"Demarest! Demarest! Demarest!"

As he stood in the centre of the stage, with Marion Gray at his side, Dick felt an odd lump in his throat, and something like a mist came before his eyes. He had never known such a sensation before.

"Aren't you happy?" whispered the girl.

Dick looked down into her eyes, which were bright with tears.

"Yes," he said simply.

And he was. He had won out for his friend. He had also done a piece of good work which Demarest would find it hard to equal, but the Yale man did not realize that at the time. He had simply done his best, and had succeeded.

At last, after Merriwell had appeared alone before the curtain eight or ten times, the enthusiastic audience seemed to be content, and, leaving their seats, began to file slowly out of the theatre. But throughout the college buildings that night, and in a good many other parts of New Haven, "Jarvis of Yale," and the superb acting of Austin Demarest, were the sole topics of conversation.

* * * * * * * *

About eleven o'clock next morning Merriwell sat alone in his room, waiting for Demarest. A wire had come two hours before, saying that he was at liberty, and would take the next train to New Haven, so that Dick momentarily expected to see him.

He was feeling a little of the mental strain which he had undergone, but otherwise was in splendid shape. His one reply to the inquiries as to where he had been last night was to tell the fellows that he had had a chance to go behind the scenes, and had stayed there throughout the play. One and all, his friends had commented on the amazing resemblance between himself and the author of the play, and he had agreed with them that it was most extraordinary.

He was a little annoyed to find out that Buckhart knew the truth, but, after all, it mattered very little now, especially when he knew that the Texan would never divulge the secret. Brad's utter astonishment when he found that Dick really had played the part of Jarvis was very funny. He pronounced the performance as the very "corkingest" thing he had ever seen.

Suddenly Dick's quick ear caught the sound of hurried feet on the stairs, a moment later the door was burst open, and Demarest, his face aglow with joyous enthusiasm, dashed into the room.

With a sweep of his arms, he caught Dick about the shoulders, and gave him a great hug.

"Oh, you brick!" he cried. "I didn't know there was such a bully fellow alive! As long as I live I'll never forget what you did for me last night. It was splendid! But what an old bluffer you are."

He took a step backward, and gazed at the Yale man affectionately.

Dick looked a little puzzled.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Why, pretending you couldn't act, of course."

"But I can't," Dick objected. "At least, I didn't think I could."

"That's good!" laughed Demarest. "Why, your performance last night is the talk of the town. Have you seen the papers yet?"
Dick shook his head smilingly, and the actor raised his eyes to the ceiling.

"Great Scott!" he cried, in astonishment. "Not looked at the papers! What do you think of that!"

He dragged a large bundle of newspapers from his pocket and held them up.

"Notices in every decent New York daily!" he cried triumphantly. "And such notices! Listen to this!"

Swiftly unfolding one, he found the right place and read unctuously:

"'Jarvis of Yale,' produced last night—um—um
The acting of Austin Demarest in the title part was a treat which has not been our privilege to witness in many moons. His rendering of Lance Jarvis was masterly in its simple directness, its naturalness and truth, while at the same time his emotional range was wide and his pathos quite distinguished from bathos. He seemed, more than almost any actor which we can at present recall, to get under the skin of the character he was portraying. He was the typical college man. Manly, true-hearted, generous, full of the eternal joy of youth. One would almost have supposed that he had stepped directly on the stage from the college campus so near at hand. A tremendous, and widely enthusiastic audience crowded the old theatre to the very doors. It is quite safe to predict that 'Jarvis of Yale' will settle down very shortly for a long Broadway run. Certainly it would be hard to find a more clean-cut, dramatic, thoroughly wholesome play, without a dull moment from start to finish, than this maiden effort of the most popular and able leading man of the past season, who received much of his early training in the company of the late Richard Manton."

Demarest tossed the paper aside and turned to Dick.

"There! What do you think of that? There's a lot more about you and the rest of the company that I skipped. Not act, indeed!"

Merriwell's face was serious and his eyes very bright.

"But I didn't act at all," he said quickly. "I just learned the lines and left the rest to luck. All I did was to try and imagine what I would feel like and what I'd do if I were in Lance Jarvis' place."

The young actor laughed.

"That's what we all try to do," he returned; "but we don't always succeed. It's a shame, though, that I should get all the credit of this! It doesn't seem a bit fair. People ought to know that I wasn't the fellow who played last night. I tell you it makes me feel pretty mean to take another man's laurels."

"But that's the only reason why I did it," Dick objected. "It was to save you."

"And you succeeded," the other put in quickly. "I built better than I knew when I sent you that wire. Now tell me all about it. How did everything go off? Did any one suspect? How did Marion take things?"

* * * * *

Two months later, when "Jarvis of Yale" was at the height of its metropolitan success, Dick Merriwell received the following note:

"DEAR OLD BOY: Perhaps you won't be awfully surprised when I tell you that Marion and I have agreed to travel henceforth through this weary world in double harness. She knows the secret of my first performance in New Haven, and when I told her that you took my place she was perfectly horrified. She won't tell me anything, but I gather that something happened that night which wasn't on the program. She did say she'd never be able to look you in the face again. If I didn't know you so well, I should be writhing in the grip of the green-eyed monster. As it is, I'm only curious. Perhaps you'll put me wise next time you see me. Yours ever,

AUSTIN."

But Dick never did.

THE END.

Another rattling good football story for you next week: "Dick Merriwell, Peacemaker; or, The Split in the Varsity." It deals with the big Harvard-Yale game, and tells how the hot, unreasoning temper of one man made him come near to losing the game for his team. It shows how wise it is to consider well the advice of old friends, even when it is bitter medicine to take, instead of lending a willing ear to the smooth talk of flattering, wheedling new acquaintances. It is No. 763; out next week.
A Short Story by Your Favorite Author.

IN A NORTHER.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

Old Misery cocked his one good eye up at the sky and grunted. That grunt expressed volumes. The old horse herder had a way of talking by grunts, and any one who knew him well could understand what he meant as well as if he used words on all occasions.

"I don't see anything," declared Jack Bruce, a manly-looking lad of seventeen. "What's the matter?"

The old man grunted again. This time the grunt expressed contempt and compassion, mingled in equal quantities.

"We're goin' ter ketch it purty soon," he avowed.

"Catch what?"

"A he-roarin' ole twister of a blow, boy. Reckon it'll snow afore midnight."

Jack was astounded.

"Snow!" he cried. "You can't mean it! Why, this is a perfect Indian summer day, warm as mid-June!"

In truth, a twister seemed folly to predict the near approach of a storm, especially a snow storm. But Old Misery had not spent two-thirds his life on the border for nothing, and he was able to "read sign" as well as the next one.

He was a rough old fellow with a kindly heart, but given to whining and telling of the woes and troubles he had endured, for which reason he was generally known as Old Misery, although his real name was Edward. An Indian's arrow had destroyed the sight of his right eye, but the left optic remained undimmed and did duty for two.

Jack Bruce had left a comfortable home in the East to rough it on the plains. He had not grown away, but finding he had a thirst for adventure and the life of a cowboy, Jack's father had sent him out to the ranch of an acquaintance who was raising horses in the Texas Panhandle. Jack had written to his friend telling him of the boy's romantic notions concerning life in the West, and asked that his son might be given all he wished of it.

The horse raiser had taken the hint, so Jack was sent out with Old Misery, who had charge of a large drove of half wild ponies. It was a rough life, indeed, but Jack showed there was good "stuff" in him, and Misery rather "took" to the boy after a little. They slept and ate in a dark little dugout and lived in the saddle most of the time.

Looking up the smiling valley from the dugout, the great herd of horses could be seen grazing. The feed was good there, and the horses had been easily cared for during the few days they were gathered in that spot, as the upper end of the valley finally narrowed to a pass that was easily blocked. This arranged it so it was necessary to guard only the lower end.

Old Misery grunted again.

"I warn enough now," he admitted; "but we'll ketch it soon. I've been through enough tornadoes in my time to know their sign. Like ez not their critters'll take a notion ter run. Ef they do, good-by ter any more comfort fer a good two weeks. Oh, Lord, hain't I suffered enough?"

Despite the ominous words of the old man, Jack could scarcely believe it possible a storm was impending. The air in the little valley was soft and balmy. Sometimes he noticed the breeze would be laden with a sultry breath, but he was not weather-wise enough to interpret that as foreboding a storm.

But Old Misery had made no mistake. Before sunset an ominous bank of clouds began to thrust itself up against the northern sky, and there seemed to be a great hush in the air, as if nature were waiting for something. It was now more sultry than ever, but the boy could see the clouds, and he began to think it not unlikely the veteran herder had prophesied correctly.

The old man smoked his pipe, squinted at the clouds, grunted angrily, and finally arose to his feet, observing:

"Scrape tergether all thar wood ye k'n, lad, fer we'll hev ter run a good fire ter keep from freezin' this night. Lord hev mercy on us! I'm goin' out an' bring our critters round inter thar lee of thar shack here, so we kin git at'em on thar clean jump ef thar herd takes a notion ter run. Gracious knows I hev suffered enough 'thot hevin' ter go through another stampede in a norther!"

Even while Jack was gathering wood he observed it was becoming dark with alarming swiftness, and, glancing upward, he saw the black bank of clouds had mounted to the zenith. In the
arms with his blanket firmly clapped in either hand. This blanket was stretched across the herder's back and served as a sail.

In as short time as possible, Jack followed the example set by the herder. He was forced, of course, to wear his shirt and trousers, which were wrinkled close in the lee of a bluff. The sleet soon changed to snow, and the temperature fell nearly to zero.

Old Misery fastened the blanket at the door of the dugout, but Jack, remembering what the old man arranged it so he could tear it away with one strong jerk.

"Critters won't run long as wind holds in that quarter," he said, as he lighted his pipe again. "Mountain air will take a rest while we kin. Lord knows we'll see sorfer ef we hev ter hustle out inter this blizzard!"

A good fire was kept burning, but the cold air crept into the dugout and the snow sifted around the blanket door. Old Misery smoked and grunted, occasionally peering out at the storm. After one of these inspections, he suddenly said:

"You see the blanket? I reckon we'll hev ter go out purty soon an' see ef we kin hold their horses, fer their wind is sneakin' round inter ther nor'west. That'll let it sweep clean through their valley. Critters'll shore run ef they hain't held."

He set the example by donning another suit outside the one he wore, and Jack did as directed without a word.

"Hang the blanket," advised the veteran. "Ye'll need that, too, an' we mayn't hev ter do nothin' but git out an' chase their restless critters back inter ranks. Et one on 'em breaks away——"

Astute as the old man was, he had been a trifle slow in getting out, and the horses were already on the move. The trampling of their feet made a jarring sound that could not be mistaken.

With one swoop of a backskin-gloved hand, Old Misery ripped down the blanket that served for a door, and then he shot out into the stormy night.

Jack followed.

The picketed animals heard their mates, and they were surging and pulling at the picket lines. With remarkable celerity Old Misery, like a wildcat, was gone, and the horses, which had been routing, now increased in speed. The old man, swinging the blanket, shot through the herd that was rushing down the valley before the storm.

It was bitter cold. Jack realized how difficult it would have been to face that terrible storm. In a moment he saw Old Misery plunging into the midst of a dark mass of horses, and he followed. Remembering the old man's advice, he had kept hold of his blanket, and it soon served a double purpose.

It was Misery's object to reach the head of the horses. Under ordinary circumstances this might have been impossible, with every horse running in its own direction and in different speed. But now the wind struck the backs of the riders, and their horses were actually helped along.

Jack was forced to lean back in the saddle to keep from being blown over his horse's head, while he gripped the animal's sides with his knees. His whole attention was given to that and to keeping sight of Old Misery, so he did not observe it was ceasing to snow, although the wind blew fiercer than ever. In less than twenty minutes after the stampeade started snow was no longer falling.

The valley was left behind and they were on the open plain. Mile after mile was covered, and still the leader of the stampeade was in advance. Until he could be turned, there was no hope of stopping the run.

Steadily Old Misery and his boy purred forged ahead. Jack could feel that the wind in his back aided his horse in making terrific leaps over the ground. To the boy it all seemed like some strange, hazy dream. He lost all idea of time or space. A wild exhilaration filled his soul, and he seemed to be flying through the air with the sweep of a bird.

Looking far ahead, he suddenly saw a dark rift in the plain. At first he could not imagine what it was. It was a break in the snow, plainly revealed by the light of the cold, white moon that had come out with the disappearance of the clouds.

Then, of all a sudden, he knew what it was. "The Devil's Gash," a cut, a cañon, from thirty to three hundred feet wide and from fifty to several hundred feet deep! His heart leaped to his lips. Surely they were doomed to plunge headlong into the Devil's Gash.

He looked at Old Misery and saw the man spreading out his
"Powder! powder!" shouted the gunners, for many minutes had elapsed since they had received a supply from the magazine.

"Give us powder!" they ordered. "I'll go below and solve the mystery," said our lieutenant, hastily disappearing.

A shot whistled past, as he sprang undismayed from the deck.

"What are you doing, William?" said he sternly, as entering the magazine, he found Billy, with features pale, sitting upon a powder barrel.

"I am not; but see!" and he pointed to the lurid flame that was broadcasting over the apartment. "No, I'm not afraid! A shell burst near the powder, and I knew if it once ignited the vessel was lost. I care not for my own life, but wished to save that of the others, and have guarded this barrel. Beg pardon if I've done wrong."

"What's this?" asked Reynolds, as he beheld a large pool of blood upon the floor.

"This is a scratch I received," said Billy, trying to appear cheerful; but the effort was vain, and he felt fainting into the lieutenant's arms.

 Tenderly they carried him upon deck; the surgeon came, and then for the first time we beheld the death wound of the daring youth. "No hope," said the skillful doctor, as tears flowed from grief's fountain. "The wound is incurable, and he has but a few hours to live."

Sorrowfully we gathered around the couch of the dying hero. For hours we lingered near, our heart-felt sorrow too strong for words.

At length, as the rays of the setting sun crimsoned the western hills, his eyes slowly opened, and incoherent mutterings escaped his lips. "What ails you, sir?" said one, as he heard the words around him. "Have you come to my patient?"

"Yes," said the doctor, "I am come to comfort you."

"You do me a coward longer; and, oh! do not let mother know that you have called me thus. Tell Sister Carrie I longed to see her, and to hear from her own lips that she forgave me for inflicting. Tell mother I've done what I could for my country, and died a hero."

A film crept over his eyes; his cheeks assumed a marble paleness, and amid the writhings of that devoted crew his pure spirit passed to the court of paradise.

The city surrendered! We carried his body on shore and laid it to rest in a beautiful cemetery. But we can never forget that death, which so earthly power can dispel the love we bear for our departed shipmate.

THE FIGHT AT "HOLE-IN-THE-WALL."

"For faithfulness, daring, endurance, and good judgment he is the superior of any scout and guide I have ever known." In these words General Sheridan, of the American army, once paid tribute to the bravery and prowess of Mr. Fred M. Hans, the famous scout and Indian fighter, whom the Sioux named Wa-sa-la—Lone Star—owing to his custom of scouting alone. He accomplished all but incredible feats, and had many hairbreadth escapes; but it is doubtful if he was ever in a good chance of single-handed, he tackled a band of desperadoes in the notorious "Hole-in-the-Wall" retreat. Wyoming—which, by the way, to this day remains a favorite retreat for outlaws—killed two, captured three, and smashed up the gang.

At the time he was attached to Fort Mead, and one day the commander, General Crook, a famous Indian fighter, said to him: "These outlaws in central Wyoming are causing too much trouble. Can you put a stop to it, and capture or kill them? How many men do you want, and when can you start?" "I don't want any men at all, and I can start at once," Lone Star answered. He had ridden half an hour had passed he was in the saddle and had left the fort behind him to go into the den of the worst set of men in the West.

The leader of the gang was one "Shacknasty Jim." as thorough a ruffian, thief, and murderer as the frontier ever produced. He, together with his gang, had robbed overland stages and mails, and never hesitated to kill men in cold blood. Their headquarters was the "Hole-in-the-Wall," or "Loose-string," as the Indians called it. It was located in the mountains of central Wyoming, and was reputed to be so safeguarded by nature that one man with a Winchester could prevent any number of persons from being able to approach it.

Lone Star's plan was to endeavor to fall in with some of the outlaws, posing as a fugitive from justice, and ask to be allowed to join the band. Then, at the first opportunity, he intended to either arrest the leader or to kill him, and then fight his way through to the mountains. Having thus learned the route to the rendezvous, he intended to return later with a company of soldiers to break up the nest.

Three days after leaving Fort Mead, Lone Star came in sight of the famous "Hole-in-the-Wall" itself—a narrow gateway, seeming scarcely wide enough for a horse to force through, but which led to a large valley, surrounded on all sides by inaccessible cliffs hundreds of feet high. Apparently the outlaws considered themselves quite safe from interference. Lone Star passed through the gateway unchallenged. With his field glasses he carefully scanned the valley, and soon located two men who were eating lunch at the foot of a great tree. "These men saw me about the same time as I saw them," says Lone Star in his account of the incident, "and, hastily mounting their horses, they rode toward me. As they drew closer I recognized them from the descriptions which had been given me; the gigantic man in front could be none other than the redoubtable Shacknasty Jim himself, while his companion was his chief lieutenant, Bill Cole.

"My quarry were actually coming to me, and I determined at once to either capture or kill them both."

Jim and Cole got within twenty yards of Lone Star, when the former called out savagely, "What the dickens are you doing here?" "Instead of answering," says the scout, "I whipped out a Colt in either hand, and called upon the astonished pair to surrender. By way of reply both men slid like lightning from their horses, and from under the tree shot at me. Before either could fire, however, I got in half a dozen shots. Jim's horse fell dead at my first shot, and his master went down with two bullets in his breast. I seconded the firing at the firing and jumped from in front of him, leaving him exposed to my fire. The man lost his nerve at this, and instead of shooting me, which he could easily have done while I was engaged with his companion, ran to cover behind Jim's dead horse. Before he reached it, though, I sent a bullet through his arm, and his weapon dropped to the ground. At the same time his left arm went up and he surrendered."

Not content with this, Lone Star determined to see what other bandits there were in the Hole-in-the-Wall; and after hand-cuffing the two outlaws to a tree outside the entrance to the valley, he rode for ten miles down the valley. Then he suddenly came in sight of a large tent, but as he could not discover how many men were within, and daring to ride up without seeing his opponents, he dismounted and made as though he intended to go into camp. After just had he built a fire three tough-looking characters came from the tent, mounted their horses, and rode toward the scout. They were three more members of Shacknasty Jim's gang—Tom Lawton, Jack Hawkins, and a stranger to Lone Star.

Knowing these men to get within twenty yards of him, Lone Star whipped out his guns and demanded their surrender. Instead of complying, all three wheeled their horses and attempted to escape. With three shots, however, he killed the three horses, and the bandits remained where they were. To surrender at all was difficult. They were not the kind to surrender easily, however, and as quickly as their horses fell each man rose with his gun ready for use. Then ensued a thrilling scene. Lone Star fired at the pine behind a pine, while the bandits took refuge behind the carcasses of their dead horses.

"We were only a few yards apart," says Lone Star, "and every time a part of my clothes showed—and my tree was a small one, not half large enough for my comfort—it was promptly riddled with three bullets."

"Then I heard them planning a rush at my tree, expecting in the resulting mix-up to get me excited and so manage to kill me. Suddenly, with a whoop and a hail of lead, all three men jumped from behind the dead horses and started for me at a run. Two of them carried a revolver in each hand, and all five guns were working as fast as they could fire."

"Jack Hawkins' second leap was his last one, for he dropped with a bullet through his head. As his body fell dead, I started from behind my tree and covered the other two bandits, who were only a few yards away at this time. They hesitated, lost their nerve, and promptly dropped their guns and surrendered.

"Having the part of the trail by the rear of the pine, I passed through the gateway to the valley to the place where he had left "Shacknasty Jim" and Bill Cole. There he found that Jim had died, his wounds being mortal. He started for the fort, three surviving bandits together and started for the fort, one hundred and fifty miles away, and as no horses could be found the outlaws were compelled to walk the whole distance. One
EASED HER MIND.

She was young and fair, and a tear glistered in her eye as she laid her early head upon his shoulder, and exclaimed, "Oh, George! I think if I found that you did not love me I should die."

"My darling!" he answered, passing his hand gently around her dimpled chin, "I will always love you. Do you think I would marry you if I did not feel sure of it? In a few days, at the altar, I shall vow to love you all my life, and I will keep my vow."

A lovely kind of beattic happiness played for a moment like sunshine on her lips, and then she whispered, "Oh, George, I like to hear you talk like that; you have been so good to me.

You have given me a diamond locket and a gold watch and chain, and rings that an angel might wear outside her gloves and not be ashamed of; and if I thought that one day you'd be sorry you'd given me all these nice things and want them back again I should break my heart."

He held her gently against his manly breast and answered, with a quavering voice, "Oh, my darling, there is nothing on earth that could harm that would make me repent giving you a few tokens of my love or make me want them back again.

She sprang from his arms as a joyous deer, she shook back her sunny curls, and, with a whole poem in her hazel eyes, exclaimed: "Oh, George, you have taken a load from my heart! I've come to say I can't marry you, after all, because I've seen somebody I like better, and I thought you'd want your presents back again."

"MENTION MY NAME."

The other evening two gilded youths went into a restaurant in Newcastle. They were received with marked deference by the waiter, who handed each a menu card, and deferentially awaited their order. After a lengthy interval one said:

"Waitah, bring me a steak, rather underdone, and—er—waitah, just—er—tell the chef who it's for."

"Yessir."

"And, waiter," said the second one. "I'll have a steak, not too underdone, and you might just tell the chef who it's for."

"Yessir."

There was a gentleman a few tables off who had had a quiet laugh at these instructions. Determined not to be out of it, he said in resonant tones to the waiter:

"Bring me a dozen oysters, and mention my name to every blessed oyster."—GORDON BELL, Gilsland House, Birtle S. O., co. Durham.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS.

An economical father asks:

"How can I prevent my little boy from wearing out the knees of his pants?"

That conundrum has been before the world ever since Eve asked Adam the same thing about young Cain. We only know three sure ways: You can kill the boy, or you can make his pants without any knees; but perhaps the best way would be to get some little boy about the same size to wear the knees out, if you have such objections to your own boy's doing it.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Percy Adolphus Trane was once staying with a friend of his, a doctor, who was rather deaf, and one evening when coming home from the theatre rather late, every one being in bed, he ran into the hall and addressing the door to the window not in a very amiable mood. The following dialogue took place:

"What do you want?"

"Nothing, in.

"Who are you?"

"Mr. Trane."

"Missed a train, have you? Well, catch the next, and be hanged to you!" and the doctor shut the window.

The war ending in the independence of the United States commenced with the battle of Lexington, April 19, 1775, and was ended by the Treaty of Paris, 1783. This war cost $435,193,700.
Talks with your chum

TIP TOP WEEKLY.

So many inquiries reach us from week to week concerning the veiled and poetical design by which we publish, that we have decided to keep a list of them standing here. Any number can be had by mail by remitting 10 cents, and 3 cents postage, for each copy, to the publishers.

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

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**The Violin.**

Prof. Fourmen: Will you please tell me what I must do and how to get, as violin player, in a theatre orchestra?

Apply to the leaders of the orchestra in the various theatres of your city. If there is an opening, and you are really a good performer, you ought to stand a chance of obtaining a position. Then, from that, try to secure an opening in one of the great orchestras of the country, those controlled by Thomas or Sousa, for instance. There is always an opening for genuine talent. But, remember that music is a jealous mistress, and there are plenty of mediocre performers. The great players of the violin, one of the most difficult instruments by the way to thoroughly master, are rare, but the emoluments are proportionately large.

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**Elucution.**

Prof. Fourmen: I am eighteen years old, and have won several prizes for declamation at school. My friends tell me that I have a good deal of talent for declamation. Would I like to become a professional elocutionist? Can you give me any advice on the subject?

B. S. STEELE.
Dedham, Mass.

I don't think that there would be very much chance for you to earn a living as an elocutionist. Fifteen or twenty years ago, when every town of any size had its course of lectures, good elocutionists were in demand, but it is different now. Traveling theatrical companies have usurped the place formerly occupied by the village lyceum, and I don't believe there are half a dozen readers in the country who make their salt. Even if you have extraordinary talent, it is a hard road to hoe. People will not go to hear elocutionists who have not made a reputation. I advise you to seek some other method of making a living.

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**Zinc Etching.**

Prof. Fourmen: Can you describe to me the process known as zinc etching? Is it a good trade to learn? And about how much would I receive a week?

P. F. CARTER.
Altoona, Pa.

Zinc etching is a very good trade, and a good workman can always command a position at from eighteen to twenty-five dollars a week.

The process is as follows: A piece of finely polished zinc is coated with a sensitizing solution and exposed beneath a negative. It is then rolled up with a special ink and placed in a shallow pan filled with water. Where the plate is not exposed to light the ink can easily be washed away, leaving a reversed print of the drawing on the zinc. The back and large spaces of the zinc plates are protected from the acid by varnish, and the surface of the design dusted with resinous etching powder, the latter adhering to the inky lines. Heat is applied to melt the powder, and the plate is placed in a trough where it is subjected to the action of diluted nitric acid. When the acid has had sufficient time to work, the plate is removed, dried, and again dusted with powder. The melting powder not only protects the surface of the line, but runs down the sides, protecting the bevels and preventing undercutting. This procedure is repeated until sufficient relief is obtained, but it is customary to etch but a small relief and route the large white spaces in a router. The plate is then mounted on wood or metal, and is ready for the press. The advantages of this over other photographic processes are its comparative simplicity, cheapness, and speed. A zinc plate will stand even a greater number of impressions than an electrotype, and the process can be successfully applied to almost all classes of work, including newspaper illustration on a large scale.

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**Electrical Engineering.**

Prof. Fourmen: Will you kindly inform me if there are any institutions in the West in which electrical engineering is taught; and do you think it is a good trade to learn?

R. S. LEE.
Pearsia, I11.

Electrical engineering is taught in many State universities. Practical experience can be obtained in any electrical works. There is one in your city. It is well for you to know that a thorough electrical engineer must also have a knowledge of civil engineering, and that the electrical part of it is only an offshoot or branch of civil engineering. You can read the articles at the head of this department with advantage.

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**Hudson River Pilot.**

Prof. Fourmen: I am sixteen years old, 5 feet 3 inches in height, and weigh 120 pounds. I would like to be a pilot or engineer on the Hudson. Where would be the best place to go to get a position? Am I the right age now?

H. H. WEST.
Troy, N. Y.

To realize your ambition—that of becoming a pilot or engineer on a Hudson River steamboat—you will have to undergo a long apprenticeship. The only road leading to the former is by way of the forecastle deck, as it might be called. You would have to ship as a roustabout, and carve your way upward by hard work. It would be at least ten years before you could hope to take the wheel as a pilot. To become a marine engineer requires an equally severe apprenticeship. The best plan is to enter some marine engineering works as a "boy," or helper, and acquire a practical knowledge of machinery. You are not too young to commence in either field. If you have the taste for mechanics, you could do worse than become a marine engineer.

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**Playing in an Orchestra.**

Prof. Fourmen: I am 17 years of age, 5 feet 8 inches in height, and weigh 150 pounds. I have worked at the butcher business for about five years, and know it well. I am also a musician—can play solo cornet, and double on violoncello. Father thinks of selling out, and I will have to go some place. What would you advise me to do, stay here and get work for board and clothes, or get out and work and save? I think I could with my trade and music.

T. BENSON.
Stuart, Iowa.

Good butchers are always sure of positions in any city. It is a trade that pays well as a rule. We believe that you would scarcely fail to get along if you struck out for yourself, but think it well over, in all its points, before leaving home.

Your musical talents would certainly add to your income in a large city. The theatre orchestras are made up of men who labor at various trades during the day. Band organizations also are plentiful, and, during a political campaign, musicians are in demand at from three dollars to five dollars a night. If you decide to leave home, why not take a trip to St. Louis, or Chicago, and make an effort to secure a position? Personal applications are more productive of success in such cases than any amount of letters.
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