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TIP TOP WEEKLY
AN IDEAL PUBLICATION FOR THE AMERICAN YOUTH

FRANK MERRIWELL, VICTOR

"HELLO, SILVER! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?" ASKED A FAMILIAR VOICE.

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK.
Frank Merriwell, Victor;

OR,

THE REDEMPTION OF "BABE" SILVER.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

TWO THIEVES.

The man stood at one side of the window, his legs spread wide apart, his body inclined slightly forward, and his keen, glittering eyes riveted on the door. A moment before he had been indolently lounging in a chair perusing the tattered newspaper which lay where it had fallen when he made that swift, silent leap across the room.

Not a sound broke the tense stillness. The fellow seemed scarcely to breathe as he stood there rigid, the veritable personification of suspense. His rubber-soled shoes of black canvas showed the outline of every toe spread out to get a clutching hold on the rough floor. The shabby, threadbare suit veiled, but could not hide, the rigid, knotted muscles, hard and inflexible as iron, which ran from thick bull neck to bulging calf. His eyes shone like sparks through narrowed lids as if they were trying to pierce the planking of the battered door into the dark hallway beyond.

Then the second knock rang through the silent room, loud and peremptory. Kogan quivered a little and a tiny bead of moisture appeared on his low forehead. But still he made no sound, nor did he move a muscle save for a quick, desperate glance toward the window, where the rusty railing of a fire escape showed above the sill.

"He shook his head. It was no use. That way was all well enough at night, but he would be pinched the minute he set foot on the pavement if he tried it in broad daylight.

A third knock sounded, followed swiftly by a quick, impatient rattling of the knob. Somehow, the latter seemed to have a soothing effect on the man by the window. He relaxed the tension of his body, and a look of relief flashed into his dark eyes. That did not sound like the cops. They would have smashed in the flimsy door before now.

"Well?" he snarled, taking a swift step forward.

"Bud!" came in a muffled voice from without. "Let me in. It's Jim."

With a shuddering sigh, Bud Kogan sprang forward, turned the key with a click, throwing the door open.
"Thunder, Babe, you gimme a shock!" he exclaimed, grabbing the caller by one hand and dragging him into the room. "I thought it was all up this time."

He grinned foolishly from sheer relief as he closed and locked the door and turned to the newcomer.

The latter returned the grin and grasped his friend's hand. At the same time there issued from his shapely, sensitive lips a flow of violent language uttered in a pleasant, musical voice which almost robbed it of its grossness, but which intensified the amazing incongruity of their coming from such a quarter.

He was so thundering anxious to see his old pal, he explained, that he had hunted him up the minute he got loose from the pen.

It was all said in a matter-of-fact, chatty tone to the accompaniment of a charming smile which betrayed a row of white, perfect teeth. The deep-violet eyes, fringed with dark lashes, glowed with the light of real friendship, and there was in them a look of innocence which was dumbfounding.

The older man, though decidedly more reticent, seemed equally glad at the unexpected encounter.

"How in time did you locate me?" he asked, as they took chairs and elevated their feet comfortably to the table. "I thought I was pretty snug here."

Jim Silver ran his slim, shapely fingers through a mop of tightly curling golden hair.

"Pete Harrigan," he explained tersely. "I knew he'd know, so I hunted him up as soon as I landed. Gee! but it's sure enough good to get loose again. I near died o' stagnation in that hole. Honest, Bud, I reckon I must have put on ten pounds."

"You don't look it, Babe," Kogan returned, surveying the slim, handsome youth with a speculative eye. "Same lovely peaches an' cream, an' the same baby stare. You're too blamed good-looking for a man, Jim."

The delicate pink on Silver's cheeks deepened, and the violet eyes flashed angrily.

"Aw, cut that, Bud!" he snapped. "Hang it all! I can't help my looks, can I?"

"Help 'em!" exclaimed the older man. "Who wants to help 'em? Why, they're your stock in trade, boy! What in thunder are you talkin' about? Do y'u s'pose for a minute you'd be where you are without them innocent-lookin' eyes, an' curly hair an' nice red cheeks. Why, folks would about as soon suspect the Angel Gabriel o' goin' wrong as they would you o' bein' known as the 'King o' the Picketpockets' in Frisco. Go along with you, an' don't talk no more about not helpin' your looks!"

Silver's face relaxed. He was proud of being considered at the head of his profession. But one thing troubled him, and that was the name "Babe," which had been bestowed on him for obvious reasons. He hated it intensely—almost as much as he hated the characteristics which had brought it into being, though he was wise enough to appreciate the value of the latter and put up with them grudgingly. Sometimes he was called "Slippery Jim," and in that he delighted. It was a good, mouth-filling name which carried with it no hint of weakness or effeminacy; but, sad to say, it did not predominate among his friends. With them, "Babe" was entirely too obvious and fitted far too nicely to be given over.

Bud Kogan continued to watch his companion, his head inclined a little to one side, and that same look of speculation on his hard face.

"You're a sure enough wonder, Babe," he remarked presently. "'Sittin' there, you don't look a day over eighteen an' as sweet an' clean an' innocent as if no mornin's apron string was hitched tight to your belt."

Silver's face clouded again.

"I was twenty-four last month," he retorted sharply; "an' I've been in the business nine years. You don't reckon there's much innocence left by this time, do you?"

"Bless you, no!" Kogan grinned. "I know you. I was jest sayin' how you looked. Smart as they make 'em, too. You'd oughter be pretty well heeled, Babe, if you've had any luck gettin' rid o' th' swag."

Silver swore musically, but with much fervor.

"That be hanged!" he exclaimed angrily. "How can a fellow be well heeled when the 'fences' are such thundering robbers. They give you what they like and tell you to go to blazes if you ain't satisfied. You can go, too, for all they care, 'cause there ain't any other way o' gettin' rid o' the stuff. You gotta sell it to them or hang onto it. Why, if it wasn't for the cold mazuma I slip now an' then, I'd 'a' starved long ago, believe me, Bud. But, gee! You're wise to their game as well as I am, old pal."

Kogan nodded emphatically. No one knew better than he the difficulty of disposing of stolen goods for anything more than a fraction of their value. It was one of the greatest drawbacks of the "business," as he called it, and more than once he had chafed furiously, but impotently, under the impositions of the few "fences" in San Francisco who dared do business with him.
“Yes, it’s a rotten shame,” he agreed; “but what can a feller do? How are you fixed now, Babe?”

The young fellow shrugged his shoulders.

“Up against it for fair,” he returned. “Less’n two plunks in my clothes.”

The older man laughed.

“That don’t worry you a whole lot, does it?” he inquired significantly. “All you gotta do is to take a run down Market Street to git a fresh supply. Goin’ to start in this afternoon?”

Silver hesitated and dropped his eyes. The pink deepened on his smooth cheeks, and, to the alert mind of the watchful man on the other side of the table, he seemed actually embarrassed.

Presently the youngster looked up again.

“I was—thinkin’ of—cuttin’ it out, Bud,” he faltered, “an’ tryin’ my hand—at somethin’ else.”

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CHAPTER II.

A COUNSEL OF DECEPTION.

Kogan bent forward, his lids narrowing and a frown on his low forehead.

“What?” he exclaimed incredulously. “Giving up the game? Leavin’ the perfesh for good?”

Silver nodded, and the older man threw himself back in his chair with a raucous laugh.

“Blazes, Babe!” he chuckled. “You amuse me—you sure do. Think of Slippery Jim, the King of the Pickpockets, turnin’ over a new leaf, playin’ the goody-goody, wantin’ to git a real job. Say, that’s the funniest thing I’ve heard in a month o’ Sundays.”

The youngster winced under the lashing of his scornful voice.

“Well,” he expostulated. “I can’t see as I’ve got far slippin’ wallets. Twenty-four last month, an’ jest two dirty greens in my pocket. There ain’t much in that, is there?”

Kogan sat up straighter on his chair. There was a look of decided uneasiness on his hangdog face. Here was an unforeseen, distinctly unpleasant contingency, which he must do his utmost to combat. He hated to see any good man leave the profession. To tell the truth, he was not often troubled by any such happenings; and, as for Silver, not only was he an old pal, but there was very urgent need for the young fellow’s help at the present juncture.

“You sure do amuse me, Jim,” he repeated. “Mebbe you only have two plunks jest now, but it ain’t goin’ to be much of a trick to git more. Have you figgered out how long you’d have to work to make a fiver? Now, all you’ve got to do is to go out an’ pick it up. What kinda work ‘ud you do, I’d like to know? An’ where in thunder is the bloke in Frisco who’d give you a job? You wouldn’t last a week, kid, before they’d find out an’ give you the grand bounce. Nobody wants no ex-pickpockets around the premises, I tell you those.”

“I don’t have to try here,” Silver protested. “I can go some place where they don’t know me.”

“Yes, an’ how long would you last? This ain’t the first time you’ve got this fool idea in your nut. Member the time you hiked as far as Wyoming an’ got a job on a ranch there? It wasn’t three weeks before you beat it back to the old stampin’ ground ‘cause you couldn’t stand the life. Why, you’d blow up an’ bust for want of a little excitement to keep your blood movin’. Cut it out, Babe—cut it out! You’d oughter know by this time that there’s a pile o’ truth on the old sayin’, ‘Once a thief, allus a thief.’ You can’t git away from it, an’ there ain’t no use tryin’.”

Silver frowned doubtfully. There was some truth in what his companion had said. He recollected very well his last abortive attempt at turning over a new leaf, which had taken him to a cattle ranch in Wyoming. He had found no trouble in getting a job, for he had been brought up on a ranch and practically lived on horseback until he was fifteen. But the monotony of the life, the eternal dullness of every day doing the same thing—or practically so—in exactly the same way, the drudgery of the routine, everything, in fact, was such a contrast to the crowds and lights and gayety, the excitement and risk, the very ups and downs of his criminal calling, that at the end of ten days he could stand it no longer.

One night he quietly “took a sneak,” tramped to the nearest station, thirty miles away, where at daybreak he boarded a freight which landed him, a few days later, on the Pacific Coast. Since then virtue and he had been strangers, and good resolutions conspicuous by their absence until the present moment.

Kogan, watching him keenly, saw that he was wavering, and forthwith he plied the youngster with every persuasive argument he could think of, even to appealing to his sympathy.

“It’s disappointin’ to have you think about such fool things jest at this time,” he concluded, in a sorrowful tone, but with a discerning eye on his companion’s face to watch the effect. “Here I’m up against it for want of a good man to help out on the dandiest crib as was
ever cracked. Naturally, I counted on m' best friend to do the trick, an' here he goes talkin' about quitting the perfesh an' desertin' all his old pals."

The pathetic was a decidedly new wrinkle for Kogan to work. Forty years of age and a cracksman to the very finger tips, he was hard as nails, and the sort of man who let neither pity nor sympathy nor any other emotion interfere with his conception of the main chance. He liked Silver after his fashion, and would stick by him in any emergency—had done so, in fact, at a considerable personal inconvenience. But this loyalty was more the adherence to an ideal, the axiom that the last thing a man must do is to peach on a pal, rather than a personal attachment.

He and Silver had worked together more than once, and had always pulled off the job successfully. It was, therefore, the prospect of losing so competent an assistant, particularly at a juncture when he was most needed, that struck him more than anything else and made him strain every nerve to hold the boy.

Jim was too much interested in the hint conveyed in his friend's speech to note the incongruity of Kogan's manner.

"You got something good?" he asked quickly. "Not a house, I hope?"

Kogan shook his head slowly.

"Nix on that, Babe," he retorted. "Your uncle don't hanker after that kind of a job unless there's jools lyin' around to be picked up easy. No, I had enough o' them; this is somethin' better. Good cold cash here, an' plenty of it. It'll take two men, an' I'd picked on you for the other one; but you can't expect me to open up any more'n this, Babe, until I make sure how you stand. If you git on the straight an' narrant path you might think it your dooty to——"

"Cut that, Bud!" snapped Silver, his eyes flashing. "You know blamed well that, no matter what I do myself, I'm not the sort to peach on a pal."

"Oh, sure; I was jest jokin'," the older man hastened to assure him. "I knows you're all to the good; but jest the same, I'll keep the rest of it to myself until you make up your mind."

The youngster made no reply. His forehead was drawn down into a thoughtful scowl and his hands lay in his lap, the fingers tightly intertwined. He was evidently waverling in his resolve, and Kogan was far too wise to interrupt him. The evil seed had been sown on fertile ground, and there was nothing to do but wait a speedy harvest.

Presently Silver raised his head.

"Mebbe you're right, Bud," he said, in a low tone. "There's a whole lot to what you say."

"Then you'll give up that fool notion an' come in with me?" the other put in eagerly.

Silver arose to his feet. His face was still a little undecided.

"Reckon I'll sleep over it," he replied. "I don't like to decide a thing like this offhand. A few hours won't make no difference to you, I expect. 'I'll think it over and drop in ter-morrer mornin' an' let you know.'"

With an effort the cracksman concealed his disappointment under a pretense of urbanity.

"Sure," he returned carelessly. "That'll be all right, Babe. You think it over, an' you'll see I'm right. Come in ter-morrer an' let me know."

"Any time do?" the younger asked as he moved toward the door. "Ain't goin' out, are you?"

The man's hard, straight lips curved in a grin.

"Hardly," he returned. "Since that job over'n Oakland last week, I've been takin' m' airin' after dark. S'long, Babe; see you ter-morrer."

The lock clicked behind him, and Silver felt his way along the dark hallway to the stairs. The tenement was filthy and squalid, but he was used to that and never gave it a thought. During his somewhat lengthy residence in San Francisco he had been accustomed to little else.

In the deep doorway below he paused and shot a quick glance to right and left before venturing into the street. He scarcely expected to see any unwelcome faces, for the neighborhood was not one much frequented by the exponents of law and order, either in uniform or plain clothes; but one can never tell. He judged from Kogan's words that he must be wanted rather badly, and there were plenty of officers to whom his friendship for the cracksman was well known, and who would instantly smell a rat should they see him coming away from the house.

The coast was clear, however, and Silver darted quickly from the doorway and hastened down the street. He did not slacken his speed nor relax his vigilance until he had turned several corners and put half a dozen blocks between himself and the refuge Kogan had chosen. Then he slowed down and proceeded toward Market Street in a leisurely fashion, both hands plunged deep in his pockets and his head bent thoughtfully.

He was frankly disappointed at Kogan's reception of his resolve; though, to be sure, he might have known that the older man would take it that way. But this did not temper his regret. He had had one or two
half-hearted spasms of reform, but none of them equaled this one in earnestness or intensity.

The year at the penitentiary had given him an abundance of time for thought, and he had employed it by calmly and judicially weighing the pros and cons, the disadvantages and attractions, of the life he had been leading.

The conclusions he had reached were quite untainted by any qualms or squeamishness. Right and wrong did not enter into the matter at all. It was purely a question of materialism, and nothing else.

When he, a boy of fifteen, had drifted into the Western city nine years before, he had fallen into the hands of Bud Kogan and a friend of his named Harp, since dead. They had seen at once the value of this boy, who was bright as a steel trap, but looked as innocent as a baby, and they had at once taken his education in hand. Silver was thus filled with the plausibly pernicious sentiments that the world owed him a living and that it did not make much matter how he got it. He came to understand that most rich men were only thieves and robbers on a far greater scale than he could ever hope to be, and that it was a positive duty for him to relieve them of as much of their ill-gotten wealth as he possibly could.

Crammed with such ideas as these, it was small wonder that he had no moral compunctions. The wonder was that he should have ever come to desire a change in his mode of living, even by the simple, logical reasoning he had used.

In the irksome dullness of his confinement he had faced matters clearly. He was twenty-four years old and far brainier than the average man of his age. He was good-looking, and his manners, when he chose to make them, were prepossessing.

He had been working for nine years—working hard, sometimes. Out in all kinds of weather; up all night, very often; sometimes going hungry to bed; sometimes lying hid for weeks for fear of capture. And what had he got for it all?

Besides the clothes on his back, which happened to be a very decent-looking suit, he had just two dollars in the world. Two miserable, slim dollars to show for nine years' labor!

Decidedly the game was not worth the candle.

That was what he had thought a little while ago, but now he began to wonder whether he was right after all. Kogan's subtle arguments kept recurring to him as he walked slowly toward the center of the city. Who, indeed, would give him work, knowing that he was Jim Silver? Or if he should get a job under another name, how long could he keep his identity a secret?

He might, of course, leave the city, or even the State; but then the question arose, how long could he stay away? How long could he bury himself in the backwoods with the alluring call of the lights and crowds and noises of Frisco ringing in his ears? He had tried it once before, and he had failed.

He found himself wishing a little wistfully that he had held out a while longer. The ranch owner had taken a decided interest in him, and, in his turn, the youngster had been more attracted by this man than he had ever been by any one in all his life before. Perhaps, if he had only stayed, he might be prospering by this time.

However, that was all past and gone, and the present was the only vital thing. He stood at the parting of the ways, and before to-morrow morning he must decide on which of the two widely separating paths he meant to set his feet. For he was getting along in life. With each succeeding year the difficulties of cutting loose would be vastly increased. It was now or never. Which should it be?

Suddenly his reverie was rudely broken into. A hand dropped heavily on his shoulder and a familiar voice sounded in his ears.

"Hello, Silver! How's the boy?"

Glancing up swiftly, with a quick, instinctive tightening of his throat, Jim gazed straight into the twinking blue eyes of Andy Doran, sergeant of the Fourth Precinct.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE BRINK.

With quickening pulse, but outwardly quite calm, Silver smiled pleasantly. He had been in so many tight places that he had acquired a far greater measure of self-control than is usual. If Doran had hoped to surprise him into some signs of guilt he was doomed to disappointment, for the youngster's smooth face showed nothing but pleasure at this unexpected encounter.

His sensitive lips parted over the rows of perfect teeth and his innocent eyes gazed straight into the cold blue ones of the man who stood beside him. Even when he realized, the next instant, that the sergeant could get nothing on him, the amazing relief he ex-
perceived at the thought did not change his expression by so much as a quiver of an eyelash.

"Hello, Andy!" he returned cordially, extending his hand. "You're a sure enough sight for sore eyes."

The sergeant shook hands heartily.

"When'd you get back, Jim?" he asked, as they moved in toward the buildings to be out of the crowd.

"This morning," the youngster returned promptly.

"Just been to see Bud Kogan, I s'pose," Doran hazarded, his eyes fixed keenly on Silver's face.

Despite the amazing accuracy of the officer's guess, Jim was in no wise discomposed. His eyes widened in surprise, and a little wrinkle appeared on his smooth forehead.

"Bud?" he questioned eagerly. "You don't mean to say he's in town?"

For a moment the sergeant was almost deceived. Then he remembered sundry past experiences with the versatile youth, and grinned callously.

"What's the use, Babe?" he remarked calmly.

"That might go with some, but not with me. If you don't know where Kogan is already, I'll bet a month's pay you'll find out before night."

He hesitated and glanced swiftly about them. Then he drew the youth into a near-by doorway where they would not be overheard.

"You'll know before night," he repeated significantly; "and when you find out, I'd like to have you drop in and see me."

Silver flushed angrily, and his eyes snapped.

"You go—"

"Hold on a minute," Doran broke in, placing one hand on his arm. "'Kogan an' you are friendly, I know. But I don't guess you know quite what a bad nut he is. You didn't hear the details about that stunt of his over in Oakland, where he left the old lady trussed up so tight that she near died. She's in bad shape even now. Unless I'm very much mistaken, Silver, that's not your sort. Kogan's wanted for that, an' wanted bad. He'll be nabbed pretty quick, for he can't get away; but I'd kinda like to turn the trick. It'll put me in well with the old man. Understand? So you see there wouldn't be no harm in your passing me the word—"

Silver's face had been growing blacker and blacker during this speech. His shapely, muscular hands, hanging straight by his sides, clenched and unclenched themselves ceaselessly. His lips were pressed tightly together, and his eyes flashed ominously. At length, unable to keep still another moment, he let loose.

"You go to blazes!" he burst out furiously. "Do you think I'm a dirty sneak to peach on a pal? I don't care what he's done, I wouldn't give him up to you. Why don't you hustle around and find him yourself, if you're so smart? Bah! You make me sick!"

Doran heard this outburst in silence, but the good-humored expression vanished from his face and its place was taken by one which was not so pleasant.

"That all sounds very pretty," he remarked significantly; "but you'd be wise to do what I ask, unless you're so in love with the pen that you want to make another trip there."

Silver flung back his head and eyed the officer defiantly.

"Shucks!" he snapped. "You've got nothin' on me. Don't talk rot!"

The sergeant smiled grimly.

"Not just this minute—no," he returned calmly.

"But you can't keep straight long. I'll give you about twenty-four hours to give me a chance to get you good, if I want to. Better take me up, Silver. We'd both get along pleasanter as friends than enemies. I can be easy with you an' shut one eye, you know. There ain't much honor in bringin' in a pickpocket, even if he is the king of 'em. An' you can reciprocate by—— Well, you know what you can do to even things up."

"Yes, I know what I can do!" Silver retorted, his voice quivering with rage. "But you can't make no stool pigeon out of me. Come along an' do your darndest! I give you permission! It'll take more brains to catch me with the goods than you've got, you bloated hunk of blubber!"

With flashing eyes, he snapped his fingers under the other's nose, and, turning abruptly, hurried on down the street, leaving the officer looking after him, an expression of distinct malignance on his face.

"You'll be sorry for this, you young swipe," he muttered. "I'll land you all right, and it won't be the pen this time."

The curly haired youth went on down the street, his face like a thundercloud. But even in anger the seraphic expression still lingered, and he looked precisely like some small boy who has been deprived of a favorite toy.

"The dub!" he muttered. "I'd like to land him some good jolts on the kisser."

This being inadvisable, and no good method of venting his wrath occurring at the moment, he dived around a corner, from sheer force of habit, and continued his meditations on the side street.
These were far from pleasant. Every hand seemed against him. Despite his bravado of a moment before, he realized that he had been the reverse of wise to incur the active enmity of Andy Doran. He might easily have refused the sergeant’s request in a much less violent manner than he had done.

“But, thunder!” he muttered. “I couldn’t stop to pick and choose words, with him asking me to do a rotten thing like that.”

He had no doubt that Doran would keep his word, and he had small doubt, either, of the ultimate result. He would be caught sooner or later, whether he did anything or not. It was always easy to rope in a fellow on general principles, and he was too well known to hope to escape.

What was the sense, then, of good resolutions? He would be pinched anyway, and he might as well get all he could out of life before that inevitable moment came.

“I reckon Kogan was right, after all,” he murmured. “It’s up to little Willie to get busy and do some damage while he can.”

With this idea in view, he squared his shoulders and looked about him. He was walking down King Street toward the water front, and the railroad station was but a few blocks distant. An admirable spot, especially around dusk, for the exercising of his undoubted talent, he reflected, and turned toward it at once.

Five minutes later he might have been observed strolling slowly through the waiting room toward the train shed. More than one young woman beheld him in admiration, scarcely able to credit the fact that such superlative good looks could possibly be combined in a single individual. Elderly persons of both sexes, encountering the casual violet eyes, were moved to wonder at their surpassing honesty and innocence.

But though the Babe moved slowly and looked about with apparent indifference, as if he had plenty of time for his train and was rather bored by the fact, his mind had never been more keenly active.

He saw everything in the single, swift, seemingly casual, glance. Not a detail escaped him. Each individual was weighed in the balance and found wanting. One looked too shabby to be worth while; another’s pearls were palpable imitations. This one’s shopping bag was far too distended—samples, no doubt, or other feminine junk. He disliked bags of that sort from general principles. He had been fooled more than once.

But one and all seemed to be tightly buttoned up, for the day was rather brisk, and so he emerged into the train shed without having picked up anything promising.

Here fortune seemed to favor him. An outgoing train was delayed in backing onto the track, and the impatient passengers, crowded by the gate, mingled at this moment with a crowd belching forth and eager for the street.

Silver’s eyes brightened as if he had recognized a friend. A tall, somewhat elderly gentleman of benign aspect was bearing down upon him. He walked slowly and sedately as became one of his years and apparent importance; also, perhaps, because he could not well go faster through the pushing crowd. He smiled as he came, the ruminant, tolerant smile of one who is at peace with all mankind. His heavy, broad-cloth overcoat was open. A massive chain of gold, girding his ample chest, peeped from beneath it. The Babe’s violet eyes were hidden beneath long lashes as he approached.

A moment and they rubbed elbows. Silver’s hand stole stealthily upward and closed about the links. What a cinch it was! Like taking candy from a kid!

Then, for the second time in one brief hour, a hand touched his shoulder, and a voice sounded in his ears: “Hello, Silver! What are you doing here?”

CHAPTER IV.

FA T E.

Whirling swiftly, the Babe’s eyes widened as they rested on the handsome face of the man beside him, with its dark eyes and equally dark, wavy hair.

“Why, Mr. Merriwell!” he gasped. “Who in the world would have expected to see you here!”

Frank Merriwell smiled as their hands met.

“I might say the same of you,” he observed. “It’s some time since you quietly vamoosed from the ranch without even saying good-by. What was the trouble, Jim?”

The Babe looked a trifle shamefaced. He had found the expression invaluable more than once.

“Well, you see—Mr. Merriwell,” he stammered, “I—just couldn’t stand it—anymore. I’d always lived in—the city, and I got—well, homesick, I reckon. Seemed like I would blow up if I didn’t get back, so—I fit out.”

Frank laughed a little as they drew away from the crowd.
“Quite wise,” he returned pleasantly. “I should have hated to see you blow up.”

He hesitated an instant.

“What are you doing now?” he went on. “Going anywhere?”

“Oh, no. I came down to meet a friend of mine, but he hasn’t shown up. Been waiting pretty near an hour, but I can’t stand around any longer.”

There was a curious, rather thoughtful, look in Merriwell’s dark eyes, but his lips were smiling.

“Since he’s disappointed you, why not come and take supper with me?” he asked quietly.

Silver looked at him in astonishment.

“Take supper—with you?” he exclaimed.

“Yes, why not?”

“Why, I was—only one of your cowmen,” the Babe returned rather lamely.

He was not thinking half so much of their discrepancy in social position as of the innate distaste he had for appearing in public places. He realized that his face was a distinctive one, which was not easily forgotten, and he had always made a point of absenting himself from large restaurants, theaters, and the like.

It almost seemed as if Frank read his thoughts.

“Is that all?” he smiled. “Well, I’ve been worse things than that in my time. We won’t bother with a big dinner unless you’d rather. Just at present I feel remarkably like indulging in one of Stephano’s steaks.”

The Babe stared. What in time did he know about the little Polish chop house just around the corner? It was not at all the sort of place where men of his stamp congregated. Why, it was almost—

“Well, what do you say?”

“Sure, I’ll go,” Silver returned promptly.

There being no way out of it, he acquiesced with good grace and a very creditable show of enthusiasm. But as they made their way through the darkening streets, jostled by the home-going throngs of workers, he allowed himself the luxury of a perplexed frown. It could not be seen, and it was a decided relief to be able to relax the hold he had kept upon himself, if only for a moment.

What was Merriwell’s object in taking him to supper? What did the older man want of him? The Babe’s philosophy of life was nothing if not materialistic. If a man did him a favor he generally wanted some return for it. No one was ever really disinterested. But just what Merriwell could want from him he could not fathom.

Stephano’s restaurant was an obscure little place set below the level of the sidewalk. The floors were covered with sawdust and the tables showed plain deal boarding, ungraced by linen of any description. But the little Pole kept things moderately clean and knew how to cook, so that his place had acquired something of celebrity among those who had to make a dollar bill do double duty.

Silver knew it well, for he had often taken a meal there in company with one or more of his companions at those odd moments when it was safe to venture forth into the public eye; but he might have been excused from wondering how Merriwell ever came to have such a familiar knowledge of the joint, for it was not at all the sort of place where men of his class congregated.

He did not know that Frank found here a more varied, far more interesting, study of human nature than the swellest, most exclusive restaurant on the coast could afford.

There is a certain sameness about the frequenters of the latter resorts. The idle rich, and many of them who are not idle, seem, somehow, to live in such petty, narrow circles. Constantly on the go and eternally, feverishly active in search of enjoyment and freedom from boredom, their doings are, nevertheless, extremely dull to contemplate. Like a flock of sheep, with no invention or initiative, they follow their leader through purposeless, idiotic swings of the pendulum, from one extreme to another. They are ready to do anything to find relief from the monotony of their lives, and yet they do so little that really counts.

It was vastly different among the crowd who frequented Stephano’s. Here were men who had done things. Their actions might not always be commendable, but at least they had brains and used them. That slim, rather elderly man in the corner, with the mild face and thinning hair, who looked exactly like a clerk grown old in respectable service, happened to be one of the most daring, versatile “con men” in Frisco. His neighbor, tall, lean, lank, with face brown as a berry, baked by the sun and seamed like ancient parchment, was the man who had discovered the great Tulane gold mine in central Nevada. He had made millions for sleek, clever manipulators, who had left him practically penniless.

And so it went. Thieves, miners, prosperous and otherwise, ranchers, cattlemen, cracksmen, all mingled together on terms of perfect equality; and their faces, bearing the imprint of their strenuous lives, were full of a subtle interest for Merry, who delighted in the study of human nature under any circumstances.
“I like this place more than any other I know in Frisco,” he remarked, as they settled down at a table halfway down the room.

Silver, by this time nonchalant and smiling, looked politely interested.

“Yes, they do give you pretty good stuff—what there is of it,” he commented. “I come in now and then when I’m hard up. But there sure ain’t any frills to it.”

Merry smiled a little.

“That’s one of the chief attractions. The men who come here are a good deal more interesting to me than any amount of frills.”

The Babe raised his eyebrows questioningly.

“Yes?” he drawled.

The violet eyes were gazing straight into Frank’s dark ones. The expression of puzzled innocence in them was a work of genius. One would have felt sure that he was blissfully ignorant as to the calling of many of Stephano’s habitués, and that he would have been shocked beyond measure had he been told that the man behind him had just finished a five-year term in State’s prison.

“Yes,” Merriwell repeated quietly, “they interest me intensely. How about a porterhouse, Silver—a good, big one, with coffee and pie to follow?”

“Bully!” returned the Babe promptly. “That would sure go to the spot.”

Inwardly he was murmuring:

“What’s he after? What’s he driving at? What in thunder does he want?”

Frank gave the order to the waiter, and, leaning back, unfolded the paper napkin.

“To me it’s one of the greatest tragedies in life,” he went on slowly, his eyes roaming about the well-filled room, “to think of the cleverness, the brainwork, the genius which is wasted by some of these men. Take Blancombe, over there——”

The Babe gave a slight start and narrowly escaped glancing at the quiet little con man. Just in time he managed to summon quite a plausible look of inquiry to his open, candid face. He was not supposed to know who Blancombe was, though an instant before he had surprised a veiled gleam of recognition and curiosity in the fellow’s pale eyes, which he returned by a barely perceptible lowering of his own long lashes.

“Over at the corner table,” Frank explained tolerantly. “The slickest con man in Frisco. Why, if he’d devoted his energies to legitimate business he’d have been rich long ago. It’s a pity—a great pity; but they never seem to realize the truth.”

Silver felt something like a shiver running down his spine. The man was positively uncanny. How under heaven did he know so much? And how much more did he know? His unuttered question was answered swiftly. Merriwell suddenly bent forward across the table. His face was serious and his dark eyes caught the violet ones and held them in thrall.

“Jim,” he said, in a low, earnest voice, “why don’t you give it up, boy?”

CHAPTER V.

THE PROMISE.

For an instant the Babe sat silent, his eyes unwavering. So that was it. Had he not been, in a measure, prepared for the blow by Merriwell’s amazing knowledge of the men at the tables near by he could not possibly have retained his self-control. As it was, though no muscles of his face changed, he found it utterly impossible to speak at once.

“Why, what do you mean?” he questioned at length.

“Give what up, Mr. Merriwell?”

Frank smiled patiently and a little sadly. Even to him, knowing what he did, it seemed impossible that the face before him was nothing but a mask. How could such eyes—open, candid, like deep wells of truth—be so false?

“Why won’t you be honest with me, Jim?” he asked quietly. “I’m no spy or informer. You know perfectly well what I mean. Did you think I’d never seen you before you came to the T-Bar two years ago? Did you fancy for a single moment I didn’t realize why you left so suddenly? Did you really think I was ignorant of why you were in the station a little while ago and what you almost did there?”

Silver sat like a statue. His eyes, wide open and unwavering, were still fixed intently on Merriwell’s face; but his own cheeks were pale and he had caught one corner of his lips between his teeth and held them tight.

“Why don’t you give it up, boy?” Merry went on presently. “Surely you must realize how little there is in it, even materially. Just look about you. Look at your friends, your pals, your comrades. What are they? What will they become? What will be the end? You’re made for better things than that. I say of you exactly what I said of Blancombe a moment ago. A tithe of the cleverness which you throw away every day bestowed on some legitimate work would
make you somebody. A fraction of the effort—the hard, laborious effort—which every day you put forth, sometimes to no purpose, would carry you on through life, respected, looked up to—honest.”

The long lashes drooped defendingly over the violet eyes. The slim, shapely fingers were clenched so tightly on the table before him that the knuckles showed as white as the rustling napkin they crumpled between them. The cheeks, no longer pale, framed with crimson. The curly, yellow hair clustered damply above the wide forehead.

There was a quality in Merriwell’s voice—a desperate, intense pleading—which showed the earnestness of the purpose that moved him, and cut Silver to the very quick. Abuse he could stand and return in kind. Threats moved him only to scornful laughter. But this was something different. Something which he had never known before. Friends of a sort he had always had in plenty, for his was the nature to make them easily and to hold them without an effort. But never had there been any one who wanted him to be straight for his own sake alone. Somehow, he felt that Merriwell was not asking this thing because of an impersonal, general desire for reformation, but because he liked the boy and hated to see him waste himself on unworthy things.

Silver would have given much could he have shut his ears to that pleading voice which hurt him so. It made him feel ashamed as he had never felt before. It made him wish desperately, incoherently, that his life had been different and that he might have been worthy the liking of such a man as this. But he could not shut it out. He had to listen, though every word was like the stab of a knife.

“To be honest! Doesn’t that move you a little, Jim? Isn’t there some appeal in the thought of being able to look every man in the face without flinching? Can you picture no satisfaction in making a real place for yourself in the world—a place which no one can take from you? Think of the joy of being free, unshackled, respected, liked. Wouldn’t you rather be the man God intended you to be than the man—you are?”

Something like a strangled sob came from the parted lips, and, with a swift upward movement of his chin, Silver shot a pleading glance at Merriwell from eyes which were black, almost, with emotion and glittering with tears. Then the lids drooped again.

“Don’t!” he protested faltering.

Merriwell said no more. Presently the steak appeared and he set about carving it. The waiter brought the coffee and potatoes, and departed to take another order. Still Silver sat there silent, his eyes downcast, his face flushed and his sensitive lips trembling. When at last he began to speak, he did not raise his head, and the words came slowly, almost brokenly:

“I made up my mind—to stop—when I was in the—-the pen. But it wasn’t—for that reason. It was just because—-the game—-didn’t pay. I was twenty-four last month, an’ I’ve got—-jest—-two dollars in my clothes—this minute. I never thought till now about it’s being—wrong. I never wanted ‘specialty to be—honest. Of course, I knew it was against the law, but everybody done it. Why, even the rich blokes I sting get their money by robbin’, somehow. It seemed like it was only right for me to swipe it back from ‘em.”

Frank was pouring the steaming, fragrant coffee from a battered tin pot. He seemed more intent on the process than on anything else.

“What if they do?” he asked quietly. “Even if they do rob wholesale and only escape through quibbles in the law, is that any reason why you should follow their example? Do you suppose they have any self-respect? Do you think they’re happy with their ill-gotten gains?”

Silver was absently breaking a slice of bread into crumbs and rolling them between his fingers.

“No, I reckon not,” he returned slowly. “I was tellin’ a guy this afternoon as I was goin’ to break away, an’ he asks where I’d get work—who’d give it to me, knowin’ what I was? There’s something in that, you know. Who would?”

“I would,” Merry answered promptly.

Silver looked at him in doubt.

“You?” he muttered. “And knowin’ what I was?”

Frank laughed.

“You crazy kid!” he exclaimed. “Didn’t I take you on before, knowing what you were? Is it likely that I’d be doing my best now to put you straight, and then drop you like a hot cake? I’ll put you on at the ranch, or take you down to the mines in Mexico next week; or, if you’d rather not leave Frisco, I think I can get you some sort of a job right here.”

Silver did not speak for a moment. With both elbows on the table and his chin resting in his cupped hands, he sat devouring Merriwell’s face with his eyes.

“Why?” he asked suddenly. “Why would you do that? Why have you done—what you have done?”

Frank, in his turn, hesitated for a moment. From the moment of that chance meeting at the station things had moved with such a rush that there had been scarcely time for him to analyze his own feelings and
motives. He only knew that he wanted desperately to save Silver from himself and pull him out of the slough in which he had been wallowing. But now, looking across the table at the youngster's face—handsome, lovable, full of an impalpable, but no less powerful, charm and fascination—he realized the reason.

"I think it is because I like you, Jim," he answered quietly. "And, liking you as I do, and knowing that you are worthy of better things, I cannot bear to see you go on to the inevitable end. One always hates, I think, to see a man waste himself and fail to make the best of what is in him; but it would be a hopeless task to go about the world trying to right the numberless failures one sees on every hand. It is only when some other motive joins forces with that impersonal desire for mankind's betterment that we accomplish anything."

"But why do you like me?" Silver asked, in a puzzled tone. "I don't understand."

Merry smiled broadly.

"Now you're getting into deep water?" he returned. "Why do we like anyone? Why does one man care for some one while another hates the same person? That's one of the questions that are difficult or almost impossible to answer. You'll just have to take it on faith without any reason. And, having taken it, don't you think you'll be able to—"

Silver threw up his head with a quick, determined gesture. There was a strange light of indomitable resolve in his eyes.

"Yes," he broke in swiftly; "yes, I swear I will! If I didn't, I'd be the biggest scoundrel on the face of the earth."

CHAPTER VI.

HOW KOGAN TOOK THE NEWS.

Silver arose early the next morning, and while he dressed he whistled merrily. This was not his habit by any means. Usually he had too much to think of and worry over to waste time whistling, but somehow to-day seemed different. It was a gloriously clear day, to be sure, and the sun streamed in at the single window, filling the squalid, narrow room with a golden, glowing warmth. But had the clouds been leaden or rain poured down, the Babe would still have been in the same mood, for his cheerfulness came from within.

He was free—free as the air. Thanks to Frank Merriwell, he had broken with the old life, and already he was tasting the sweets of a clear conscience and a peaceful mind.

Suddenly he threw back his head and laughed, long and loud. He was thinking of Andy Doran.

"Gee!" he chuckled. "This is where the old son of a gun gets stung. He'll give me twenty-four hours to get myself into trouble, will he? Going to land me in the jug to-day some time, I s'pose. Ha! ha! He'll have to wait a great sight longer than that, I reckon. The dirty lobster, to think he could make a stool pigeon out of me!"

The very natural sequence of thought led him to a consideration of his old pal, Bud Kogan. A split between them was inevitable, but his new-born enthusiasm made him view even that with equanimity.

"I s'pose Bud'll rant around and raise merry thunder," he chuckled. "He ain't the leastwise keen about my leavin' the perfesh, but he'll have to swallow it somehow. If I wasn't such a crackajack I don't guess it would bother him much."

From which it will be seen that the Babe, besides having sized up his friend's character with remarkable conscientiousness, was troubled with no notions of false modesty. He knew his own worth and ability at the thieving game quite as well as any one else, and perhaps a little better.

"Reckon I'll feed my face and then slip over an' break the news gently," he murmured, as he drew on his coat and clapped a brown derby on his head.

He had parted with Frank Merriwell at the hotel entrance about nine o'clock the previous night. They had dined very leisurely and talked over a great many matters. Silver decided that he would rather not stay in the city. He was wise enough to realize that here he would be constantly meeting old friends and acquaintances, and would be continually subjected to temptations which might make it decidedly hard to stick to his newly formed resolutions.

It had been finally decided, therefore, that he would accompany Frank on a forthcoming visit to the property of the Mystery Pablo Mining Syndicate, in which the latter was a director and large stockholder; and if there were no jobs to be found there, he would return to the T-Bar Ranch or Merriwell's newly purchased 3-B outfit near by.

Merry's business would keep him in San Francisco for three days at least—possibly four. He had supplied Silver with enough money to keep him during that time, and the latter was to be at the hotel on the evening of the third day to find out just when they would depart.
Having made a substantial breakfast, the Babe stalked forth and proceeded by devious ways to Bud Kogan’s hiding place.

Reaching the building unobserved, he ascended the stairs with a rush, and knocked gently on his old pal’s door.

It was opened at once by Kogan, who greeted him cordially and drew him quickly into the room, at the same time searching his face keenly for any signs of his decision.

He viewed with suspicion the extreme cheerfulness of the Babe, and when the latter perched himself on a corner of the table and began to whistle, the older man scowled.

“Turrble chopper this mornin’, ain’t you?” he growled. “I’ll thank ye, though, not to be makin’ quite so much noise. I ain’t crazy about advertisin’ myself that way.”

The Babe ceased his trilling and smiled urbanely.

“Little touchy, ain’t you, Bud?” he inquired.

“Touchy!” snapped Kogan. “Bah! I got a little sense left in me nut, that’s all.”

He glowered fiercely at the smiling youth, and then went on:

“Well, let’s git down to business. Are you goin’ to join me, or not?”

“No,” Silver returned cheerfully. “I had a hunch last night that the straight and narrow path is the best one, after all, for little Jimmy to walk on. “I’m goin’ to be an angel, an’ with the angels stand.””

The last words, blithely hummed to the tune of a popular air, together with Silver’s nochalance bearing, drove Kogan into an outburst.

“Bah!” he snarled furiously. “You fool! You young fool!”

The Babe’s very palpable amusement, made evident by a hearty, care-free laugh, completed the demoralization of the older man, and for some moments the air assumed a sulphurous tinge.

Silver listened, his head a little on one side, in a critically interested manner and with perfect good humor, until the cracksman was obliged to pause for lack of breath.

“Fair—really very fair, Bud,” drawled the Babe, smuggling one knee up under his chin. “I must say, though, that your range is a bit limited and some of ’em are awful back numbers. Keep your ears open next time you run against Johnny Casey and you’ll see what I mean. You might learn a few new ones from him. He’s got a couple of corksers that——”

“Blazes!” foamed Kogan, purple with rage. “Shut your face, you young cub, or I’ll——”

He broke off abruptly, evidently realizing how utterly purposeless his behavior was, and also how injudicious. Silver’s mind was palpably made up, and nothing which he could say would change it. The youngster’s whole air of care-free determination proclaimed that fact as clearly as if it had been print. But in his disappointment at losing so capable an assistant, mingled with rage at having his advice so completely ignored, Kogan had given full rein to his temper.

Now he pulled up suddenly as the thought came into his mind that it would be wise not to anger the boy who knew so much and had it in his power to do an infinite amount of damage.

“You’re a fool!” he growled again, though with not quite so much venom. “You won’t last a month. I bet you can’t even get a job.”

Silver smiled in a tantalizing manner.

“Ah, ha, bucko!” he chuckled. “That’s where you fall down, old boy. I’ve had one offered me already.”

Kogan scowled in annoyance.

“Humph!” he sniffed. “You won’t hold it long when they find out who you are.”

“Wrong again,” retorted Silver triumphantly. “He knows already—knew before he offered it to me. What’s more, he’s the same gent I worked for in Wyoming two years ago. What do you say to that, Skiezicks?”

Kogan’s bushy eyebrows were lifted in astonishment.

“Merriwell?” he exclaimed incredulously.

“The same,” answered the Babe enthusiastically; “and the dandiest man that ever walked. Bunches of money, and yet he takes the trouble to give me this chance to make something of myself. Why, only last night——”

He stopped suddenly and bit his lips. He had been on the point of mentioning the supper at Stephano’s and a little incident which occurred just before they left the place. Merrriwell had found his wallet empty, and, in paying for the supper, had drawn a perfectly huge roll of bills from an inner pocket. He had not done it in any foolish, open manner, for he knew perfectly well the danger of displaying money in a place like that; but Silver had seen it—had been the only one, in fact, to do so—and his eyes bulged at the mere thought of so much wealth as that. Happily he caught himself up just in time to refrain from telling Kogan about it. That was one of the things he realized instinctively that the cracksman had better not know.
"Well?" snapped the latter impatiently; "last night he——"

"He took me in and gave me a supper at Steph's," the Babe explained readily.

Possibly the innocent look on his face was a little overdone. Perhaps it was only his momentary hesitation of an instant before. But, at all events, Kogan instantly decided that Silver was keeping something back, and at once proceeded to exercise all his cunning to learn what that something was.

He did not succeed, however. The Babe was too much on his guard, and though, before he left, he mentioned casually the Pacific Hotel, at which Frank was stopping, he let slip nothing further.

On the point of departure he stopped suddenly and turned back from the door.

"Oh, yes, I near forgot to tell you somethin', Bud," he said quickly. "Andy Doran braced me yesterday an' wanted I should tell him where you were. Of course I didn't, but you want to look out for him."

The older man's face was hard, and there was a fierce glitter in his eyes.

"Thanks," he returned gruffly. "I'll keep me eyes open. Hang that bull! One o' these days he'll go too far, and then——"

He made a quick, stabbing motion with one hand, which Silver saw just as he was stepping into the hall. But after the door had been closed and locked and the cracksman was left alone, he dropped down by the table, and, resting his chin in his hands, gazed frowningly at the wall.

It was not a pleasant face. Relieved of all need for self-control, it mirrored the spirit of the man with horrible clearness. Hard, cruel, and sensual, there was a predominating expression of ruthless purpose which showed that he would stop at nothing to gain his ends. There was a touch of real fear, too, which did not add attractiveness to the whole.

Presently he moved uneasily and shifted his position a little.

"Wanted him to peach, did he?" he muttered. "An' he wouldn't. Oh, no, of course he wouldn't. Not he! How long, I wonder, is it goin' to last? This here Merrithew'll pull it out o' him. Curse him for an interferin' meddler! He'll get the boy under his thumb, an' then what'll happen?"

He got up and shambled toward the window, where he stood looking down into the empty street below.

"The old cat's still in th' Oakland hospital," he muttered viciously. "It'd be jest like her to go an' die to spite me. Then what?"

Turning restlessly back to the table, he fingered a dirty newspaper thoughtfully.

"The Pacific Hotel," he muttered, in a low tone. "I wonder, now—I wonder."

CHAPTER VII.

WAITING.

Toward five o'clock that afternoon a man of about forty quietly entered the lobby of the Pacific Hotel and took his seat on one of the settees ranged against the wall.

There was nothing particularly noteworthy about him which would distinguish him in any way from the throngs passing to and fro or lounging about on the leather-covered chairs and sofas. He was well dressed in clothes of a quiet tone. His lean, smooth-shaven face had a sort of keenness about it which is often seen in stockholders or other business men, who are subject to a nervous strain. His eyes were gray—a cold, steely gray; but he kept them fixed on the newspaper he had drawn from his pocket, and in which he seemed to be absorbed.

For perhaps ten minutes he sat there reading, with now and then a swift, casual glance about the lobby. Then he arose slowly, stifled a yawn behind a gloved hand, and sauntered over to the desk, where he carelessly turned the pages of the register.

Hundreds of people did that same thing every day, and he passed quite unnoticed. No one paid any attention to him, either, as he strolled away from the desk and stood hesitating in the middle of the floor.

It was all quite natural. He was apparently there to meet some friend whose nonappearance seemed to annoy him a little. But, had any one been watching him closely, he might have observed a curious thing. As he hesitated, facing the main entrance, the door opened to admit a tall, burly man with a ruddy, clean-shaven face and keen blue eyes.

As the stranger saw him a sudden glitter came from his gray orbs, and he turned his back abruptly. Without a moment's hesitation, and also without quickening his pace in the slightest, he strolled through the branch corridor leading to the side entrance, and thence to the street.

Once there in the safety of comparative darkness, his expression changed.

"Doran!" he muttered, hurrying along the street. "Doran in plain clothes! Blazes, that was close!"
Diving swiftly around the next corner, he turned toward the bay and kept steadily on, twisting, turning, taking short cuts through apparently blind alleys, keeping close to the buildings, darting quick glances in every direction, until at last he began to near the squalid tenement which housed the genial Bud Kogan.

Here the stranger’s vigilance was redoubled, but he gained the entrance safely and hurried up the rickety stairs.

Following a light tap on the door, it was swung open instantly and as quickly closed after him. A single smoky oil lamp flared smokyly on the table and the cracked chimney rattled as the stranger dropped into a chair with a sigh of relief.

“Well?” questioned Kogan impatiently. “D’you git it, Slick?”

Slick Jackson nodded.

“Sure, but I had a narrow squeeze. Jest as I was thinking of leaving the fellow who should pop in but Andy Doran in plain clothes. If ’d been a little quicker going out, he’d have nailed me cold.”

A look of vindictive fury flashed into the cracksman’s hard face.

“He’ll git his pretty quick if he butts in much more,” he snapped. “But the number—what is it?”

“It is four hundred and thirty-two,” Jackson returned, bending over the lamp to light a cigarette.

Kogan stepped to the mantel and took up a folded paper, greasy, soiled with much handling, which he spread out on the table. For a moment there was silence as he bent over it and trailed a dirty forefinger down the sheet.

“Number four hundred and thirty-two,” he muttered. “That’s the end room on the side. Room with a bath. Winder o’ bath opens on court, eh? An’ a fire escape.”

He folded the paper again, a look of grim satisfaction on his hard face.

“Couldn’t be better, Slick,” he remarked. “Every-thin’ nice an’ handy. Only hope th’ bloke’s got enough coin to make it worth th’ trouble. But whether he has or not, it’ll do th’ trick. Nobody but th’ Babe knows he’s in town, an’ when he wakes up an’ finds his wallubles gone he’ll think th’ kid’s done him dirt. That’ll put a kibosh on that fool idea o’ throwin’ us over an’ bein’ straight—eh, Slick?”

Jackson yawned, exhaling a cloud of smoke as he did so.

“Sure,” he drawled. “But what gets me is why you’re so dead set on going to all this trouble to hold him. What d’you care——”

“Ain’t you got no sense, man?” Kogan broke in swiftly. “Can’t you see he knows too much? Why, he c’d send a bunch of us up as easy as rollin’ off’n a log, if he felt like it.”

“The Babe ain’t that sort,” protested Jackson. “He wouldn’t peach.”

“Don’t you believe it,” the cracksman retorted. “Wait till he gits some guy like this Merriwell pumpin’ him. I tell you it ain’t safe, an’ I’m goin’ to stop it.”

“Maybe you’re right,” returned Jackson, rising and buttoning his overcoat. “It won’t do no harm, anyhow. Well, you don’t want me no more, do you?”

“No; I’ll put this through alone. That’s the best way in a place like this. Th’ more you have around, the more risk there is. Drop in ter-morrer, Slick, an’ we’ll divvy up.”

Jackson grinned.

“That’s me. I’ll be here. By-bye.”

Kogan closed the door after him, locking it. There was an expression of sly cunning on his face as he returned to the table and dropped into a chair.

“You’re a confidin’ soul, ain’t you?” he muttered. “Wonder how much you think you’re goin’ to git outer this? I kinda have a hunch I won’t find much in this here Merriwell’s clothes. Leastwise, if I do, you won’t hear nothin’ of it.”

With which amiable conclusion, quite disproving the old adage about there being honor among thieves, he hunched lower in the chair, elevated his feet to the table, and prepared to wait.

The flying minutes turned to hours; the noises of the street grew less and less. A stealthy footstep or two passed his door as the late comers crept to their squalid rooms. The lamp burned lower and lower, and finally, with one last futile flicker, went out completely, shrouding the room in darkness; but still he sat there, silent, motionless, patient, waiting—waiting.

CHAPTER VIII

A SHADOW OF THE NIGHT

It was that brief space between night and morning when the city seems to sleep at last. No sound broke the silence of the deserted streets save now and then the chugging of a lone taxi bearing home a belated reveler, or the occasional echoing tramp of a patrolman on his beat.

The houses were dark and silent, the black windows lifeless and empty as the eye-holes of a skull. And
The door into the adjoining bedroom was almost closed. He peered through into silence and utter darkness. A moment later he was on hands and knees. Inch by inch, foot by foot, he crept over the soft carpet, and the regular, peaceful breathing of the man on the bed was louder far than any noise he made.

A single momentary flash of the light showed him the clothes hanging on a chair by the dresser, and presently his practiced fingers were stealthily exploring them.

The wallet came first and was conveyed to his own pocket. There was nothing else worth while in coat or trousers, nor in the outer pockets of the vest. His hand strayed to the inner pocket and encountered a roll of crisp paper. He knew it instantly by the feeling; he did not have to see. His heart leaped triumphantly as he stowed that swiftly away.

It was better than he had expected—far better. This made the game worth while and enabled him to kill two birds with one stone.

He crept back to the bathroom and drew the door to behind him. It took but a moment to slip through the window and draw it gently shut after him.

The man on the bed had not once stirred. Why should he? There had been no sound to rouse him, though he were the lightest sleeper in the world for Kogan was an adept in the art he had practiced all his life. One single gleam of light along the floor, well away from the sleeper’s eyes, and that was all.

Again the shadow slunk through the silent streets, creeping forward, stopping suddenly or vanishing completely at a suspicious noise, only to reappear presently and slip forward again.

More than one policeman, walking his monotonous beat, passed it at twice arm’s length and never knew.

At last it reached the squalid tenement in the squalid street, and as it passed momentarily in the doorway there came the first, faint muttered of a city wakening.

Along a distant, cobbled street a milk wagon rattled. Somewhere, closer by, a window was shut noisily and a light leaped up, cleaving the gloom and bringing life to the cold, drab front of the grimy building.

A little breeze from the bay sprang up, stirring the street lamps and making the shadows writhe and cringe and cut up capers like a company of acrobats. But one of them had vanished and would appear no more; for the night was over and a new day had begun.
CHAPTER IX.

A PICTURE IN THE ROGUES’ GALLERY.

Frank Merriwell stirred uneasily, opened his eyes, and sat up with a yawn. A glance at his watch, which he drew from under the pillow, showed that it was nearly eight o’clock.

“And quite time to be up and doing,” he mumbled, as he sprang out of bed and made for the bath.

The next moment he saw the window and understood.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed aloud. “Well, wouldn’t that kill you dead!”

Returning swiftly to the bedroom, he snatched up his coat and slipped his hand into the pocket.

“Gone!” he muttered, in a tone of annoyance. “It’s lucky I left the papers with the lawyers.”

Having discovered that the roll of money was also missing from his vest, he flung that garment back on the chair.

“It’s the limit!” he exclaimed. “Pretty near a thousand. And I slept through it like a log. Bah! I must be getting into my dotage!”

Returning to the bathroom, he carefully examined the next cut which had been made in the window, and his face cleared.

“Professional job,” he commented; “and a mighty good one at that. Whoever did it was no slouch. Well, I feel a bit better. I don’t mind so much being done by a top-notch; there’s not much discredit in that. The fellow’s probably been at it all his life and ought to know how by this time.”

With which reflection he proceeded with bath and dressing. When that was completed, he got the manager on the telephone and asked him to kindly step up to the room.

The latter was astonished—not so much so. He was also puzzled, bewildered, and chagrined. Nothing of the sort had ever happened in the house before. He could not understand it.

Neither could the hotel detective. Frank left them in conference and went down to breakfast. The more he thought over the matter the more determined he was to follow it to the very end. The loss of such an amount of money was bad enough, but he felt even more the humiliation of having it stolen from under his very nose, and at the end of the meal he set forth for the nearest police station.

He had small faith in the ability of the hotel detective to accomplish anything, and he decided, therefore, to take matters into his own hands.

Merry was extremely puzzled to account for the whole matter. It was difficult to believe that the burglar had picked him out by chance as the object of his kind attentions. The coincidence of the robbery happening at the precise moment when he was carrying considerably more than the usual amount of money—in anticipation of his forthcoming Mexican trip—was too extraordinary to be credited. And yet, if the job had been deliberately put up on him, how was he to account for that?

Few people, except his lawyers and the employees of the hotel, knew of his presence in San Francisco. And even they had no means of knowing of the large amount of money he carried.

He gave a slight start as a thought flashed into his mind.

Jim Silver knew!

“Pshaw!” muttered Merry, shrugging his shoulders.

“I won’t believe that he’s had anything to do with it. If I’m any judge at all of human nature, the kid would as soon cut his own throat as rob me. Even if he had no intention at all of turning over a new leaf, I should feel perfectly safe with him. He’s not that sort of a double-faced sneak. I won’t consider it!”

But despite this resolution he could not keep the idea out of his mind. The boy knew of the money, and was the only one in Frisco who did. Silver had been a crook to his very finger tips. This sort of thing was not his specialty, to be sure, but still there was a possibility.

The consideration of this possibility was still in Merry’s mind when he entered the police station and made his way at once to the desk. He knew the sergeant by sight, though not by name, and nodded to him.

“Good morning, sergeant,” he said pleasantly.

“Good mornin’, Mr. Merriwell,” returned the burly, blue-eyed officer promptly. “It’s a long time since I’ve laid eyes on ye.”

Frank smiled.

“You’ve got the advantage of me as far as names go,” he said. “I know your face perfectly, but I don’t believe I’ve ever heard your name.”

“Doran—Andy Doran,” the man explained. “I used to be up around the Pacific Hotel. That’s where I seen you first.”

“I thought it must be that. Well, Mr. Doran, I have a little business which I think will interest you. It has to do with the Pacific, by the way.”

A look of interest came into Doran’s face.
TIP TOP

"Say you so?" he asked quickly. "Jest slip around this side of the desk an' take a chair. Then we can talk it over comfortable."

Accepting his invitation, Merry plunged at once into a brief but comprehensive account of the robbery, to which Doran listened with an eager intentness which left room for no other thoughts in his mind. A couple of patrolmen approached the desk, but he waved them away with an impatient frown. When Frank finished he drew a long breath.

"Pretty neat!" he exclaimed. "Pretty blamed neat, I call it! Tell me about the window again, will you?"

Frank complied, describing accurately the method by which entrance had been gained to the bathroom, and Doran played a tattoo on the desk with his pencil while he listened.

"Humph!" he grunted, with a thoughtful frown wrinkling his forehead. "You sleep light or heavy?"

Frank smiled.

"I'm usually a very light sleeper," he returned, "and apt to wake up at the slightest sound. This time seems to have been an exception to the rule."

He must have shown a little of his annoyance on his face, for the sergeant's blue eyes crinkled and he grinned broadly.

"Sore, eh?" he queried. "Well, you needn't be. If I don't miss my guess, the guy that done this is one of the slickest cricksmen in the country, an' you don't need to be ashamed to let him get off with th' goods. You didn't hear him 'cause he didn't make no noise. That's one of his great tricks. You might even have been awake and not known he was in the room."

"You know who he is, then?" Merry questioned.

"I don't know, but I'm pretty blamed sure it was Bud Kogan. I can tell better after I've looked the place over, but it's got all the signs of one of his little jobs."

"Kogan?" Frank mused thoughtfully. "I don't believe I've ever heard of the gentleman."

"You wouldn't be likely to. He keeps hisself mighty close. He's wanted this minute for a trick he turned over'n Oakland a couple of weeks ago, and I'd sure like to lay my hooks on him."

Doran arose and stepped to a big filing cabinet which stood against the wall back of the desk. After a moment's search he drew a photograph from one of the drawers and handed it to Frank.

"That's the gent," he explained. "That's a duplicate of his mug in the Rogues' Gallery."

It was a picture of a man of middle age with a low, retreating forehead and close-cropped, stubby hair. The thin-lipped mouth was writhed into the semblance of a grin which was palpably forced for the evident purpose of spoiling the likeness, but the eyes were more truthful. Sullen, cruel, revengeful, they were the eyes of a man who would let nothing stand between him and the object of his desires.

Merriwell studied the picture carefully, impressing each feature upon his retentive memory, and then handed it back to Andy Doran.

"He looks as if he were quite all you say of him," he remarked quietly. "I should fancy he must be a pretty tough character, isn't he?"

The sergeant nodded emphatically.

"He is that!" he exclaimed. "It's a wonder to me he ain't been up for murder before now; but it'll come to that sooner or later. The old lady he tied up in Oakland and pretty near scared to death is in a bad way and may croak yet. If I were you I shouldn't be so awful sorry I didn't wake up last night an' git him cornered."

Frank smiled a little, but made no answer. He would rather like to have a chance at this desperado.

"Him an' Jim Silver are great pals," Doran went on suddenly. "It's funny, too, 'cause you never see two such different men in all your life."

CHAPTER X.
THE POWER OF TREACHERY.

The casual words beat upon Merriwell's conscious- ness like a physical blow. Silver—Jim Silver! The fellow he had trusted and believed in. The boy who had sworn a solemn oath that he would live straight. It could not be the same—it simply could not!

Something of the shock he felt must have shown on his face, for Doran asked quickly:

"Never run up against him, did you?"

"I've heard of him," Frank answered slowly. "He's—a pickpocket, isn't he?"

"Yep. Slickest one I ever saw. Got his photo here."

He rummaged in another drawer and placed a sec- ond picture in Merry's hand—the picture of that hand- some, laughing youngster with the candid, honest eyes and truthful mouth which Frank knew so well. It was the same. There could be no doubt.

He, and only he, knew of the money. He must have gone straight to Kogan with the story—gone with those fervent vows fresh on his lips and the tears of re-
pentance and self-abasement—scarcely dry upon his cheeks, deliberately betraying the man who had tried so hard to win him to the right. It was monstrous—hardly to be believed, and yet there was no other explanation. How could any human being be so treacherous—so false?

A scornful laugh was wrung from Frank before he realized it.

Doran looked a little puzzled, but Merry recovered his self-control instantly and handed back both pictures together.

"He doesn't look like a thief, does he?" he remarked, with perfect self-possession.

"He sure don't," returned the sergeant promptly. "You'd think he was jest a kid that was so innocent he oughtn't hardly be trusted out alone; but there ain't no innocence left in him, let me tell you. There ain't a more sophisticated little devil in Frisco. Why, he'd rather lie than tell the truth; an' he does it so blamed nachural, with them big eyes of his lookin' you straight in the face, that if you ain't pretty sharp an' onto all his little tricks, you'll git stung good an' proper. He's slick, all right."

Frank arose rather wearily. He had scarcely heard the sergeant's words.

"Well, you'll take this matter up, won't you, Doran?" he asked. "I'd rather like to see this fellow Kogan where he belongs."

"You wouldn't like it half so well as me," retorted the officer. "I'll send a couple of detectives around right off, an' slip over myself as soon as I can. We'll go our level best to catch him, you can bet on that, Mr. Merriwell."

Frank thanked him and left the station house. He was late already for an appointment with his lawyers, and the haste necessary to reach their offices, together with the need of concentrating his mind on the matter at hand, gave him no time to think of Silver's treachery.

But when the other business was over, late in the afternoon, it came back with renewed force and presently ached in him a cold determination to make the fellow pay. A man who could do what Silver had done was no longer worthy of consideration. There could not possibly be a tithe of decency left in him. He was hopeless—abandoned. Kindness was wasted on him, and there was nothing left to do but hand him over to the law, where he would get his just deserts—no more, no less.

But first, Frank meant to make a determined effort to recover the money of which he had been robbed. The police had the matter in hand, to be sure, and would probably succeed far better than he. There was nothing to prevent, however, his hinting up Silver and forcing him information as to the whereabouts of Kogan.

Merry did not know exactly where the boy lived, but, from things the latter had said, he had the general location in his mind. Consequently, about dusk, he made his way toward that squalid, disreputable part of town situated a little way back of the bay, beyond the railroad station.

He had not gone far when he began to realize what a hopeless undertaking he had embarked upon. The odds were very much against his casually encountering Silver in the streets, and he could not well enter each house or gin mill to inquire for the fellow.

But he had been shut up indoors nearly all day and could as well take a walk in this direction as any other. So he kept on, casting searching glances to right and left as he walked, in the hope of lighting on that one familiar face.

Swiftly the darkness came. The street lamps glowed forth in great globes of light. Whistles sounded, and presently he was shoved and jostled by throngs of hurrying workmen, eager for their homes and suppers.

Suddenly a man brushed past him, hurrying with the crowd, and Merry, catching a brief glimpse of his face under the shadowy hat brim, gave a start.

It was Kogan—Bud Kogan, the cracksman. There could be no mistake. He had photographed the fellow's features too carefully upon the film of memory to be wrong.

With a feeling of exultation, and quite without thought of the danger he might subject himself to, he started in eager pursuit.

The chase did not last long. Two minutes later the thief dived into the side door of a particularly disreputable-looking saloon and slammed it behind him.

Merry paused a moment on the sidewalk, and then followed him quietly. The door led into a short passage which terminated in a small, square room. The man he was seeking stood in the center of that room, his evil eyes fixed upon the door. Evidently he had heard it open, despite Frank's cautiousness.

There was no time to think or parley. Already the fellow's hand was going to his hip pocket. Apparently his suspicions were aroused, but the passage was so dark that he could not see clearly who the intruder was.

Before he could make a move, Merry had cleared the
few intervening feet and caught his wrist in a grip of iron.

"None of that, Kogan!" he ripped out sternly. "You just come with me and answer a few questions at the police station."

The cracksman's face grew suddenly purple with rage, and his eyes flashed dangerously. Throwing all his strength into the effort, he tried to yank his arm from Frank's grasp. Failing at that, he gave vent to some choice epithets.

"Cut that out and come along!" Frank put in swiftly.

"Who in thunder are you, anyhow?" demanded Kogan furiously. "What in time are you after?"

"I'm the man you robbed last night," Merry returned significantly. "What I want of you should be rather self-evident."

The fellow's jaw dropped, and a look of astonishment mingled with the alarm in his face. He ceased his struggles instantly and became ominously calm. His whole bearing was so unnatural, the look in his evil eyes so peculiar, that Merry felt intuitively that it was the calm before the storm. Impelled by he knew not what impulse, he sprang swiftly across the room, dragging Kogan with him, and whirling at the same instant so that he faced the door.

He was just in time. Crowding in from the bar were half a dozen men, evidently bent on taking a hand in the game. The light of a single flaring gas jet, falling upon their brutish faces, showed fierce eyes gleaming with the lust of combat; lips set with determined firmness or parted in a snarl over discolored teeth; muscular fists clenched tightly.

And in each one of those faces was an underlying look of fear, almost obliterated sometimes by the other passions which moved them, but still unmistakably the power which had stirred them to action.

Unwittingly, Merrivell had stumbled upon the refuge of a gang of criminals, and they, seeing this well-dressed stranger struggling with one of their number and evidently getting the better of him, came rushing to his rescue. Their action was not caused by any especial liking or regard for Kogan, but sprang simply from that wonderful power of self-interest which binds such men together with bonds of steel and turns enemies into allies in the twinkling of an eye.

Too late, Merry saw the seriousness of his position. The instant his eyes fell upon the crowd which barred the doorway he knew what he was in for. There was no hope now of capturing Kogan. He would be extremely lucky if he could escape alone from this den uninjured.

The knowledge sent the blood racing swiftly through his veins and brought a sparkle to his eyes. Every nerve tingled with a sense of approaching combat, but it was with a calm, cool brain that he threw back his head and surveyed his enemies appraisingly, laughing outright.

There was something ominous in that strange laugh and the fearless, clean-cut face which made the men hesitate, their eyes ranging over the tall, muscular figure. No one seemed anxious to strike the first blow.

"Knife him, Bill!" shrieked Kogan furiously. "If he gets out o' here, we're all done for! Git busy!"

At the same instant he renewed his struggles to escape by twisting, squirming, and pulling back with all his power.

Frank turned on him suddenly, loosening the fellow's wrist as he did so, and, like the stroke of a sledge-hammer, his fist landed on the side of the ruffian's jaw, sending him across the narrow room to strike with a crash against the wall, from which he crumpled in a heap to the floor and lay still. Then, with both hands free, Merry faced the other men.

He was just in time. With a roar of fury they rushed at him, fists clenched, hands clutching, bent on revenging the fall of their comrade. One fellow brandished a hastily drawn knife—apparently the only weapon in the party—and it was upon him, as the most dangerous of the lot, that Merry concentrated his efforts.

A swift spring forward, an unerring lunge at the uplifted arm—the crackling of wrist bones and a yell of pain. Then came the splintering of glass as the knife flew through the window, and Frank leaped back against the wall again.

He had still five to deal with, and they were on him in an instant. The room vibrated with heavy, thudding feet, with gasping, labored breathing, and muttered curses. A blow was struck, muffled and dull; another, and another yet. A man reeled out of the tight-packed group, staggered across the room, and collapsed into a chair. Another crashed backward across the flimsy table, which gave way under the shock, carrying the fellow to the floor among its splintered fragments.

But still Merry's face loomed up in the flaring, flickering light, and at least once again he laughed in that remarkable mirthless way.

Then came a sudden forward lunge. Another man went down, and through the opening Frank leaped down with the swiftness of a panther and reached the door.
He did not pause. His fingers caught the knob and turned it. But before it swung open out of the shadow of the narrow passage appeared a hand, clutching a heavy oaken stick, which descended on Merry’s unprotected head with unerring aim.

Crash!
A blinding shower of stars leaped before his eyes. He reeled against the wall, and threw up one arm instinctively.
Crash again!
Then blackness, total and complete.
Slowly the tall figure wavered, tottered, and fell forward across the narrow hall, face downward. The man who had faced such heavy odds—faced them fearlessly and won out—was conquered at last by treachery.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BABE CHANGES HIS MIND.

For a moment not a sound broke the tense stillness save the labored breathing of the men in the little room. Then the bartender—for it was he who had dealt the fatal blows—threw down his stick and wiped the perspiration from his low, mottled forehead.

“He won’t try no more funny tricks,” he exclaimed, in attempted bravado.

But his voice quavered a little in spite of himself. He had joined the fracas on the impulse of the moment, and now he was sorry—bitterly so, and desperately afraid.

What had he done? What had he let himself in for? He glanced shudderingly at the silent figure on the floor, and then turned to the others, his very lips white.

“What’ll we do with him?” he asked tremblingly.
“I didn’t mean to kill him. They’ll be after us! They’ll find him! What are we goin’ to do?”

He did not notice the outer door swing softly open a few inches nor see the face peering through the crack. It was a smooth, boyish face, with pink cheeks and a shadowing of curly golden hair; but as the violet eyes took in swiftly the body on the floor, the trembling bartender, and the lowering, undecided faces in the room beyond, they grew slowly darker and narrowed to mere pin points—the rosy cheeks paled suddenly, and the lips became a narrow, straight line. Then the whole picture disappeared, and the door was drawn to silently.

It was at this moment that Kogan staggered to his feet, his face distorted with rage, and a tiny thread of blood from a broken tooth trickling down one corner of his ugly mouth.

“A good job!” he rothed. “A fine job! He’s where he belongs, an’ won’t meddle no more. We can put him away safe. Nobody’ll know. Then we can scatter. Who’s to find out he come here, I’d like to know? He ain’t got any partners, ’cause they’d have showed up before this, an’—”

“The cops! Cheese it, the cops! Beat it quick, boys!”

Not one of those men could remember afterward where that voice came from. It was not loud, but there was in it a thrilling, insistent note of swiftly approaching peril which struck terror and dismay to every heart and blanched the brutal faces to the color of chalk.

So instantaneous is the working of the human mind that before more than one of them flashed a picture of the police court, the trial, the electric chair itself, in that brief moment of paralyzed waiting.

Then the spell was broken. One flung himself bodily through the single window, carrying sash and all along with him. Another followed him into the friendly darkness. The bartender dashed along through the passage, flung open a door, and slammed it behind him in the face of the two frightened wretches who followed on his heels, and to whom it seemed hours before they could open it again.

Not one of them thought of the two unconscious men in the room behind. These were left to the tender mercies of the law with as little compunction as one drowns a superfluous kitten. They were filled with the madness of self-preservation—that madness which, at times of peril, sometimes wipes away the thin veneer of civilization and casts a man below the level of the brutes.

Kogan was the last to leave. For an instant he hesitated in the middle of the room, his face a pasty drab from which gleamed, through narrow slits, the roving, terror-stricken eyes. He half crouched, his fingers spread out like claws, and then he, too, vanished through the window.

He had scarcely disappeared before the side door
was flung open and Jim Silver dashed in and dropped on his knees beside the unconscious Merriwell. His mouth quivered, and the hands which sought the fallen man’s heart trembled like leaves.

“Why didn’t I come sooner?” he muttered, struggling with the buttons of the coat. “They’ve killed him—they’ve killed him! What was he doing here? Why did he come? I can’t find it—I can’t! There’s no pulse!”

The last words were uttered in a low wail which was the very essence of heartbreaking despair. But the next instant a gleam of hope shot across his anguished face as his sensitive finger tips caught a little throbbing flutter from underneath the linen shirt.

He held his breath, and the veins on his forehead stood out like cords.

Merriwell was not dead, after all—at least, not yet.

Swiftly on the heels of this realization came another fear. The men would come back. They would find out quickly that a trick had been played on them, that there were no cops, and would return to finish the job.

“I must get him away—quick!” the youngster muttered, with a fearful glance around. “They’ll be back—they must come back! But they won’t find him.”

The Babe was nothing but bone and sinew—live muscle strung on steel wires. It was one of the essentials of his calling that he should have no superfluous fat about him; but how he lifted the inert body of the unconscious man and got him out into the street he never knew. He simply made up his mind that he must do it, and somehow he did.

Once there, he staggered against the wall of the building and looked despairingly around. It was the supper hour, and there was at the moment not a soul in sight on the street. The Babe did not know whether to be glad or sorry for this fact. He was thankful to have escaped so far, but he knew that was not enough.

“I got to get him away,” he muttered feverishly. “They’ll be back, an’ Kogan won’t stop at nothing. I got to go on.”

Getting a fresh grip under Merriwell’s arms with both hands, he managed to lift him and struggle on for a dozen steps or more. Then he stopped and leaned against the wall again.

“I can’t do it!” he groaned. “Why ain’t I stronger? Why’s he so heavy? I can’t go on, an’ I can’t stay! If I’d only see a cop I’d be thankful.”

Which showed the stress of the young fellow’s mind more, almost, than anything else. He could not recall the time when he had been in the least anxious for the presence of an officer. He had always been at considerable pains to avoid them, but now he would have welcomed the sight of blue coat and brass buttons with the most fervent thanksgiving.

Of course none came. A couple of workmen, hurrying along on the other side of the street, paid no attention to his eager hail, but passed swiftly on with a jeer or two for his supposedly drunken comrade.

Desperately Silver struggled on again until he had almost reached the next corner; and then he stopped, utterly exhausted, and let Merriwell slip gently to the sidewalk.

The next instant the sound of a wagon jolting over the rough cobbles sent new hope thrilling through him, and he sprang out to the curb.

It was an empty delivery wagon, coming probably from one of the factories near by, and the driver pulled up with a jerk and a sharp exclamation of annoyance at the sight of the determined figure standing in the middle of the road.

“What in thunder, do you want?” rasped the stranger.

“A friend of mine’s hurt, an’ I got to get him to the hospital quick,” Silver explained hastily. “Give us a hand, cully, and take him there in your wagon.”

The driver laughed sarcastically.

“The deuce I will!” he retorted. “I’m on me way to th’ stable, an’ late at that. What d’you take me for, anyhow—the ambulance? Jest take your hand off’n that bit, an’ do it quick, or you’ll git a lick with this.”

He brandished his whip threateningly, but the Babe did not move. His eyes narrowed and his free hand stole to his hip pocket.

“You do as I tell you!” he returned, in an icy voice. “It’ll be five bones in your pocket if you do it quick; an’ if you don’t——”
He did not finish the sentence, but the amazed driver, finding himself gazing straight into the barrel of a very serviceable-looking revolver, at once decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and descended from his perch with remarkable celerity.

"Where is he?" he growled sulkily. "You sure got a noise flashin' a gun on me. Wait till I repo this to the perlice, an' you'll wish you hadn't."

"Never you mind that," retorted the Babe calmly. "I can take care of myself with the cops. Talk less an' git busy. Over this way."

Together they lifted Merriwell into the body of the wagon; Silver got in after him, and the driver whipped up his horse and started for the City Hospital.

All the way thither—and the short distance had never seemed so long—the youngster held Merry's head carefully in his lap, with the fingers of one hand constantly against the older man's wrist.

He scarcely dared let himself hope, but it really seemed as if the pulse was stronger, though there were no signs of returning consciousness.

Presently they drew up before the entrance to the hospital, and the Babe, darting in, explained the situation with such emphasis that attendants hurried forth instantly with a stretcher. Then he handed the driver of the wagon the bill which Merry had given him two days before, representing his last cent, and hastily followed the stretcher.

What followed seemed like a dream to the boy. He followed the stretcher as far as the door of the operating room and there, further progress being barred, he sank down in a chair in the hall.

The relaxation of the tremendous strain, mental and physical, which he had been under made him feel a little queer. He had given up wondering and worrying so desperately now that the matter was in other, more competent, hands. He could do nothing now but wait.

But as he sat there all sorts of thoughts began to fly through his overtaxed brain. How had Merriwell come to be in Casey's place? What was he doing there? Kogan was there, and those others; but why had they set upon him.

It was all very puzzling and bewildering, but out of that mental chaos one fixed idea took root and grew and grew. Bud Kogan was responsible for it all. Silver had heard those last words of his pal which showed the venom of the older man's nature and the hatred he held for Merriwell.

Kogan had betrayed him. The matter could not have been the result of chance, for Bud knew perfectly well who the man was that had given Silver a helping hand and tried to make him straight. It was quite possible that this was his revenge for the loss of so competent an assistant.

The Babe's face hardened, and into his mind came a cold, pitiless determination that Kogan should pay—pay to the uttermost farthing—for what he had done. He had been a pal, to be sure, but he was that no longer. He should suffer as he had made Merriwell suffer, and the thought of being an instrument of retribution filled Silver with a fierce joy.

All at once he heard the murmur of voices in the operating room, and discovered that the door had been left ajar.

"Queer case," said one. "Brought in a delivery wagon, you say?"

"Yes, by a curly haired youngster who seemed almost out of his head. There's something wrong about this. He should have been held. I don't know what Harrington was thinking about to let him get away. But, of course, it's too late now."

"Yes, he's slipped off by this time, no doubt."

Then the door opened and two doctors appeared. At the sight of the Babe, sitting quietly by the door, his hands clasped tightly in his lap and a look of anxious inquiry in his eyes, they gave a simultaneous start.

"By Jove!" muttered one of them.

"Will he live?" Silver gasped. "Will he get well, or is he dead?"

"He'll be all right in a day or so," the younger doctor explained. "No fracture, though it was a pretty bad whack. He's come to already."

Silver gave a long sigh and turned quite white with the relieving shock. Both doctors were watching him curiously. In spite of the suspicious circumstances
surrounding the whole case, it did not seem possible that this boy with the honest, candid eyes, could be at fault. Still, one could never tell, and they had to do their duty.

“You'll have to stay here, you know,” the younger man said presently, “until an officer is summoned. We can't let you go until you have explained satisfactorily who this man is and how he came to be in this condition. Of course, I don't mean necessarily that you're to blame, but that's the law. I'll call up headquarters and have them send some one over right away.”

The Babe's eyes gleamed with a curious, incongruous ferocity.

“I don't want to go!” he exclaimed emphatically. “I want to see the police. And while you're about it, I wish you'd get Andy Doran, sergeant of the Fourth Precinct, on the wire, and tell him that Silver wants to see him right away; that he has—changed his mind.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE HONOR OF A THIEF.

Andy Doran was just leaving the building for a rather late supper when one of the men called him.

“Phone, Andy.”

The sergeant gave a muttered exclamation of annoyance. He had had an extremely busy afternoon and was hungry. Stepping over to the instrument, he took up the receiver with a scowl.

“Yes,” he snapped. “Yes, this is him. Who are you? . . . Oh, well, go ahead.”

As he listened to the voice at the other end of the wire the frown swiftly vanished and his eyes gleamed with interest.

“What's he look like?” he asked quickly. . . .

“Dark—handsome—a gentleman? . . . . What—Merriwell! By Jingo! . . . What's that! Jim Silver—changed his mind! . . . All right; I'll be over right away.”

Slamming up the receiver, he dashed out of the door to the street, buttoning his coat as he went.

“Well, what do you think of that?” he muttered.

“Merriwell knocked on the head and Jim Silver with him. Want's to change his mind! What's he mean by that? He can't be going to give up Kogan? I can't think of anything else, though. Well, I'll be hanged!”

Leaping on a passing car, he reached the hospital in a few minutes and hurried into the office of the superintendent, where the first person he laid eyes on was the Babe, sitting near the door.

To his astonishment, Silver sprang up as he appeared, a look of suppressed excitement on his face.

“Haven't you got no men, Andy?” he asked eagerly. “We've got to hustle to catch him. He'll be beatin' it after this, sure.”

“Easy, now,” the sergeant said suspiciously. “Take it slow, boy. What kind of a game is this you're up to?”

The Babe felt a rush of despair come over him. He was reaping as he had sown. He had lied so often to Doran, and pulled wool over his eyes, that now the man would not believe him.

“It's Kogan!” he explained feverishly. “He's near killed Mr. Merriwell, an' I'm goin' to give him up. That's the truth, Andy—I swear it is. You must believe me.”

Evidently the sergeant did not. His brain was in a whirl of bewilderment. What had Silver to do with Merriwell? How had Kogan nearly killed him?

He caught Silver by the arm and gave him a shake.

“Now look at here, you young devil,” he said sternly. “You brung Mr. Merriwell here in a delivery wagon, knocked on the head an' unconscious. Where'd you get him? How'd he get hurt? Quick, now.”

“That's what I'm tryin' to tell you,” protested the Babe. “You make me sick, Andy. He was in Casey's—back room. I was passin' an' heard a rumpus. When I looked in I seen him on the floor, an' Pete standin' over him. Kogan was in the little room sayin' as how they'd put away the body an' beat it before they was found out. There was some more there—Krantz an' Belder, an' some as had been knocked down. The place was a wreck. I thought he was dead, an' I near went crazy. Then I yelled, 'Cheese it, the cops!' They all beat it, so I got him out in the street an' found he was still alive. I had to hold up the guy with
the wagon to make him come here. There's the gun I did it with."

He drew out his revolver and handed it to Doran, who took it instinctively, his eyes still riveted on Silver's face.

"What do you know about Merriwell?" he asked quickly. "Where'd you ever meet him?"

"I worked for him two years ago in Wyoming," the Babe returned swiftly. "Two nights ago—just after I threw you down—I seen him in the station. I was jest goin' to lift a feller's watch when he spoke to me. I'm tellin' you everything, Andy. I don't care what you do to me, so's you git that skunk, Kogan. Mr. Merriwell took me to supper at Steve's. He wanted me to turn straight. He offered me a job, Andy. He's the best man I ever saw, an' now my old pal has done this. He ain't a pal no longer. I'll make him pay for what he's done, 'cause it was done a-purpose. He never wanted me to be straight. He wanted me to stay crooked 'cause I was useful to him. He's a dirty, sneakin' skunk, an' I'll give him up this very night. I'll show you where you can find him now—now—this minute. For God's sake, Andy, believe me! Every minute you waste is so much more chance for him. I'll go down on my knees to you if you'll only believe I'm tellin' the truth."

He did not have to, for Doran believed at last. There was a note in the boy's voice and a look in his eyes which could not be counterfeited.

"Casey's, is it?" the sergeant ripped out as he sprang to the phone.

Silver's eyes were gleaming.

"Near there," he answered.

Doran got the station house instantly and issued half a dozen orders in a terse, crisp voice. Then, slamming up the receiver, he hurried to the door with Silver at his side. Halfway down the hall he stopped suddenly.

"Merriwell's all right, ain't he?" he asked quickly. "Not dangerous, I mean?"

"They said he'd be up in a day or so. There's no fracture."

"All right; come ahead."

Out into the street they went, side by side. Silver was silent, thinking of what he was about to do. He had always looked down on a fellow who peached on a pal with the utmost contempt, but this was different. From the very beginning Kogan had been no friend to him. He could see that clearly now. Little things, unnoticed at the time, recurred to him with new force in the light of his recent discoveries. He knew the man as he was—hard, cruel, thinking of self, and self, only. The very times when he had seemed disinterested, putting himself to considerable inconvenience to help Silver, were merely instances of cunning selfishness. He had thus bound the lad to him by ties of gratitude, as well as those of self-interest.

Suddenly Doran's voice broke the silence.

"S'pose you know how Merriwell was robbed last night?" he commented casually.

Silver looked puzzled.

"Robbed—no!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

When the sergeant had explained the incident briefly and voiced his suspicions of Kogan, Silver was speechless. Words had not been coined in which to express his feelings, and he did not try. He only hastened his steps, filled with a fierce, furious desire to make the fellow pay.

He understood now Frank's connection with the cracksmen. No doubt he had seen Bud in the street and followed him to Casey's, intent on capturing him. He understood, too, Kogan's attempts at pumping him yesterday. What could he have said to arouse the fellow's suspicions and cupidity? At last he gave up thinking and turned his mind to what was before them.

At Casey's saloon—dark and deserted—they met the officers just coming up, and, without a pause, they followed the Babe around the corner and halfway down the block to the frowsy tenement.

Up the stairs they crowded—there had been no time to give the alarm—and straight toward the door the Babe pointed out. The hall was dark, and none of them noticed the shadow crouching in a corner a little way along it, in the opposite direction from the room.

The cracksmen had been some time discovering that the alarm which had sent them scattering in all direc-
tions was a false one. But he found it out and came creeping back, only to find that the body of Merriwell had disappeared. He was puzzled and alarmed, and instantly resolved to leave the city that night.

Knowing nothing, however, of Silver’s connection with the affair, he deemed it quite safe to venture back to his room for the money he had stowed away there.

It was a fatal move. The bills were safely in his pocket, and he was just closing the door when he heard the tramping of many feet in the entry below. Like a flash he had leaped past the stairway and reached the shadow beyond, where he crouched in the darkness, scarcely daring to breathe.

One by one he saw the burly blue-clad officers pass quickly toward the room, but none of them saw him. He would wait till they were all out of sight and then slip downstairs and away. There might be one left on guard, to be sure, but he could manage him.

He felt for his revolver, and finding it handy, breathed easier.

How had they found him out? Had some one played the traitor? Then he saw Silver and understood, and almost at the same moment the Babe saw him.

To be strictly accurate, he saw only the shadow, but as his keen eyes fell upon it, there was not the slightest doubt in his mind that it was the man he wanted. The officers were all inside the room, but, quite without hesitation, the Babe made a flying leap through the air and landed on the cracksman.

The shock brought them both to the floor with a jarring thud, but Kogan, recovering first, struck the youngster a stunning blow in the face with his clenched fist, and, wrenching himself free, sprang for the stairs.

He was not quite free. One clinging hand still clutched his ankle and hung on tightly, like the grip of a bulldog. The Babe was dragged over the floor to the head of the stairs, a little dazed, but hanging desperately, determined that Kogan should not escape. Down over the rough treads he thumped to the very bottom, bumping his head, bruising his body, growing more and more dazed, but the tenacity of that grip was unabated.

With a furious oath, the cracksman whipped out his revolver, seized it by the barrel, and poised the heavy stock for a crushing blow at that helpless face beneath.

The Babe smiled foolishly, but still hung on. He was still hanging on, in fact, when Andy Doran reached the scene a moment later and found the criminal struggling against the brawny muscle, backed by a very serviceable night stick, of Barney Galligher, who had been left to guard the door.

It was the night stick which terminated the scuffle rather abruptly. After that, all they had to do was to pry the Babe’s fingers loose from Kogan’s ankle and tumble the limp cracksman into the patrol wagon backed against the curb.

*

Toward noon the next day Frank Merriwell was sitting up for the first time in a private room of the City Hospital. His head was swathed in bandages, and he felt a little weak and dizzy from his encounter of the night before. He was by no means too weak, however, to see Sergeant Doran when his name was announced, nor to listen with a vast deal of interest to the story he had to tell.

When it was finished Merry sat silent for a moment, his eyes drooping.

“So I was right, after all,” he murmured presently, half to himself.

Doran raised his eyebrows inquiringly, and, glancing up, Frank caught the questioning look on his face. “Right—and wrong,” he went on quickly. “You see, Doran, I liked the boy. He spent a little while on my ranch, and I came to understand him pretty well. He’d been pointed out to me once here in Frisco, so I knew what he was. But it seemed to me he was a very decent sort at heart and worthy of much better things.”

He paused a moment, and Doran nodded emphatically.

“You’re right there, sir,” he agreed. “He’s a tantalizing little devil, but there’s something about him you can’t help liking. It’s funny, but he always seemed to me—well, kind of square, and like a fellow as could be trusted. That sounds nutty talking so about a chap like that, but I can’t seem to find the right word.”
Merry smiled quickly.

“You’ve got exactly the right word,” he said swiftly.

“That’s precisely the idea which struck me. He’s naturally square and loyal and trustworthy, but he’s gone wrong. I wanted him to take a brace and pull out. He promised that he would, and then—I thought he—”

He hesitated and his face grew serious.

“He knew I had that money with me, Doran,” he went on slowly. “He saw it. He was the only one who knew. How do you suppose I felt when you told me he and this Kogan were pals?”

The sergeant’s eyes widened.

“You thought he’d gone an’ put Kogan up to swipin’ it! It looked that way, didn’t it? But, of course, he didn’t.”

“Of course not. That’s where I was wrong. That’s where I misjudged him fearfully. It shows that a man’s intuition is sometimes better than cold-blooded reasoning. I should have stuck by my first impression of him and let nothing change it. You’ll keep this to yourself, won’t you, Doran? I’d a little rather he didn’t know. It’s something which will never occur again, you may be sure, after what he did for me yesterday.”

“Never a word will anybody get out of me,” the officer agreed heartily.

He arose to take his leave, and Frank thanked him again for what he had done, and shook hands.

“I’d like to see Silver,” he said suddenly. “Have you any idea where he can be found?”

Doran grinned broadly.

“That’s easy,” he chuckled. “He’s been settin’ in the hall outside since seven o’clock this mornin’.”

Merry’s eyes brightened.

“Send him in, won’t you?” he asked quickly.

A moment later the Babe slipped into the room and closed the door behind him. His face was flushed and his eyes sober as he stood there hesitating, his slim, muscular fingers twining and intertwining nervously.

“Aren’t you going to let me shake hands with you, Jim?” Merry asked quietly. “I owe you a good deal, you know.”

The youngster advanced swiftly to the bedside, a look of distress on his face.

“I—you don’t,” he stammered. “I was to blame—for the whole thing. I told Kogan that you—were going to give me a chance—and—all about it.”

“Except that I had so much money with me,” Frank put in quickly.

“No, not that, of course. But if I hadn’t told him the rest, he’d never have known about you, and all this would never have happened. I ought to be kicked all around the place for a fool who can’t be trusted with—”

“Hush!” interposed Merry swiftly. “Don’t talk that way. Don’t even think it. You can be trusted to risk your life for mine, Jim. What more can a man ask or receive from—a friend?”

He held out his hand and Silver gripped it tightly. Because they were men and self-restrained, they uttered no spoken word. But to the Babe, gazing with wistful eagerness into the dark eyes before him, words were unnecessary. He saw that Merry had not used that last term lightly, and with this realization there opened up before him glimpses of a future of which he had never dreamed.

It was to be a future in which he could face men like this without fear and without shrinking; a future in which he would have his own place, made by his own effort—real, honest effort—and of which he need never be ashamed.

**THE END.**

There is a strong dose of the spice of excitement in the story for the next issue: “Frank Merriwell’s Wit; or, Thwarting a Governor.” Frank Merriwell runs down to Mexico to see how his mining interests are running, and takes with him, as traveling companions, Park Davis and Jim Silver, two young men recently added to his army of friends. They find a certain section of Mexico in the throes of a budding revolution, and through unexpected circumstances they get mixed up in the thickest of it, with the results which usually follow the actions of just and fearless men. Don’t miss it! No. 776. Out February 25th.
FOND OF RECREATION.

All animals, from man downward, love to indulge, at one time or another, in leaping or dancing or some other form of play. The most eccentric dancers among men are the Arab derivatives, with their huge skirt dresses, who work themselves into a state of religious frenzy.

Of little animal dancers the waitling mice are most peculiar. They are often kept as pets in Japan, and their waitling consists of a curious habit they have of spinning round after their own tails, which they do frequently. The young mice, soon after they leave the nest, indulge in this waitling, and the inclination to have a spin appears to seize them all suddenly, and round they go. If a captive mouse is let free he will not run far before he must have a whirl. Among dancing birds may be specially mentioned, as high up in the art, the American grouse. These birds prepare their ballroom by beating down the grass with their wings, and then proceed to dance a figure suspiciously like the lancers. They dance by twos and threes, bowing and drooping their wings; then, receding and again advancing, they turn about upon their toes, swelling their feathers and clicking gently meanwhile.

There are many species of dancing or leaping insects, from the grasshoppers to the leaping beetles known as the turnip flies.

Although elephants are not known to engage in the sportive dance, no animal probably better appreciates humor, as is testified now and again by his sideshaking with laughter while he is chuckling over something that has tickled his fancy.

BLESSING THE BEASTS.

A quaint ceremony is that still obtaining in some parts of Normandy—the "benediction des bestiaux."

The oxen, the asses, and the draft horses are assembled in front of a church. There may also be a bullock or two, and perhaps some cows. The procession of peasants, clad in their very best, issues from the church to the sound of a chant that is droned by the priest. The venerable curé sprinkles a few drops of water on the heads of the beasts, and when all the animals have received the benediction the next feature of the ceremony is to place at the pedestal of the cross facing the church certain bundles tied in a coarse linen. These bundles contain bread and salt, which are to be given to those beasts not able to attend the ceremony.

THE CLAIM JUMPER.

By HOWARD BROWN.

It was New Year’s Eve in the camp, and the Gold Nugget Saloon was doing a heavy business all along the line. Drinks were being rapidly dispensed over the counter, and in the rear faro, roulette, and draw poker were flourishing. “Pete” was in high humor. He had “bucked the tiger” successfully to-night, and had quite enough ahead to work his claim in Corkscrew Gulch.

True, he had not done his assessment work this year, and by law anybody could “jump” the “Lone Star” that very day at midnight. But Pete was not the man to be fooled with, as he already had two graves to his credit in Doc Turner’s ranch—the name applied to the cemetery in honor of a local doctor—which contained the bodies of two “tenderfeet” who had “differed” with him and were accidentally shot. So the inhabitants of Galenville concluded he was a safe man to let alone, and he laughed at the idea that anybody would be so foolish as to “commit suicide,” as he termed it, by attempting to jump his claim.

The old year had but a few minutes to live when Hank tied up his horse among the tall, snow-laden pine trees near the “Lone Star,” and loosening the thongs which fastened a pick to his horse’s saddle, and transferring a couple of sticks of dynamite and a candle from his pocket to his pocket, he shouldered the pick and slowly mounted the tortuous trail.

He had long awaited this moment. Four years ago he had owned the “Lone Star” himself, but sickness came and he could not work his assessment, and when he returned to the prospect and found Pete, armed to the teeth, in possession, he had accepted his hard luck with a good grace, but had “laid” for Pete ever since. But now at last his opportunity had come, and he determined to regain his property, and defend it at the risk of his life if necessary.

The tunnel was soon reached, and the moonlight, streaming astil its black mouth, easily disclosed to his eyes Pete’s location stake.

He looked at his watch. It marked exactly midnight. Reaching down, he fiercely wrenched the stake from the ground, and flung it far from him down the mountain.

He then lit a candle, and, finding a board, quickly sharpened one end of it, and smoothing off the broad end, wrote his location notice on it—rechristening the claim the “Bright Hopes”—and planted the stake firmly in the ground.

Thinking he would go into the tunnel and “see how she looked,” he took up his candle and pick and started in.

Just as he did so he thought he heard a whistle. He paused and listened; some one was coming up the trail below whistling softly. Quickly dousing the light, he crept behind a big bolder just at the mouth of the tunnel, and drew his revolver.

A few moments later Pete stepped in view, with a week’s supplies in a sack slung over his shoulder.

Before he could put his burden down, Hank suddenly rose up before him with the muzzle of his pistol almost touching the other’s face.

“Hands up!” he cried; “I’ve got the drop on yer now.”

Pete, seeing the other man had a full band, promptly threw up his, while Hank deftly relieved him of his firearms.

“ ‘Tain’t worth fighting about, anyhow,” said Pete carelessly.

“ ‘There ain’t a pound of ore in the full claim.”

“ ‘Oh, come off!’ said Hank; ‘how about all that ore you shipped last summer?’

“That was out of a pocket I struck, which peters out mighty quick, but if you don’t believe me I’ll go in the hole and show you,” and taking a candle, Pete started into the tunnel, Hank following, but keeping his hand within easy reach of his gun.

The breast of the tunnel was soon reached, and Pete, holding his candle up before it, said:

“ ‘There now, what did I tell ye? It’s nuthin’ but dead rock.”

Hank took his candle and carefully examined the breast, roof, and sides, but not a trace of mineral could he see.

“You’re welcome to it then, Pete,” said Hank; “I’m blown in all the money I want to; you can have a blast at her now, if you want to.”

Hank did not reply, but appeared to be lost in thought; finally he said:

“Hold my candle a minute, Pete,” and taking up his pick in
both hands, he struck the breast a heavy blow, and the rock and mud with which Pete had plastered it to fool curious and un-welcome visitors fell away, exposing a vein of glittering white marble.

Almost at the same instant there was a deafening report, and Hank fell to the ground with a bullet through his heart.

Pete, with a smoking revolver in his hand, which he had snatched from Hank's hip as he struck the blow, stood over him with a grim smile, as he muttered:

"Another accident!"

But retribution was close at hand. The reverberations of the shot had speedily died away among the neighboring peaks when a rock, which had long been loose, started by the sudden shock, fell from the roof, bringing tons of earth with it, and Pete and his third victim were crushed into a shapeless mass.

THE CHEAPEST THING IN THE WORLD.

"I am employed in an office," writes a correspondent, "and have been told by friends I would get on better if I were less independent and more courteous. My own feeling is that if one is really courteous in an office he or she is considered a bit soft, and 'sat upon' accordingly."

"Courteous is the cheapest thing there is in the world. Because it is so cheap is perhaps the reason that it is so infrequently used. It costs absolutely nothing, therefore one would think it would be used by the desk or at the hand of every man and woman in the world."

Yet the fact remains that there are few really courteous men. Yet if you would know what a man really and truly is you must study him as he deals courteously or discourteously with his brother man.

The man who is discourteous to the man under him, and servilely cringes before his superior with obsequious courtesy, may be a great worker, a splendid result getter, but he is not a gentleman.

Courteous opnens many doors of opportunity where rough and rudely spoken would stand knocking vainly demanding entrance. Courteous is oil upon the troubled sea of life, and saves many a good ship of manhood from going to pieces on the barren shores of failure and bankruptcy.

Courteous has won many a battle in the world than bullets. Courteous uses no cannon to force its measure, yet courtesy wins a thousand thousand times where cannon and mortars win once. It plants a seed of self-respect in the underling which makes the superior feel that he is in the presence of man.

Happy, indeed, is that man to whom courtesy is a blessed birthright. He shall find that his path in life is smoothed before his feet, and that difficulties he has dreaded melt at his approach.

DIAMOND BEDS.

"What're ye readin' "bout?" asked Mrs. Hayseed.

"'Mund beds in Africa," replied her husband.

"Deary me! It does heat all how much luxury these people manages ter crowd inter a lifetime. But I don't envy 'em. Not a bit. I don't ask for no greater comfort in the way o' sleepin' than plain, old-fashioned leather beds in winter, an' straw mattresses in summer.""}

HAD TO BE POLITE.

Elderly Gentleman (strolling through the park)—"Are there any lines hereabouts?"

Park Constable—"Oh, yes; close by, near that clump of trees a few minutes later:

"Well, have you found any?"

"Yes, quite a nice little bunch."

"Indeed! Then you'll please walk with me to the station. You're likely to pick any in the park."

"But you showed me the spot yourself!"

"Well, of course, we have to be polite, you know."

A SHREWD JUDGE.

Judges in the criminal courts frequently have impostors brought before them, and it requires shrewdness and strategy to expose their deceptions. The following will show how a pre-tender was dealt with by Justice Patters. The charge against him was that of begging in the streets. Suspended from the man's neck was a placard, bearing the inscription in black and white: "I am deaf and dumb."

The magistrate eyed both the prisoner and the placard long and sharply.

"What have you to say to the charge?" he suddenly exclaimed. The prisoner paid not the slightest attention, but stood looking vacantly before him.

"Come now, plead to the charge," repeated the magistrate, in crescendo tones.

The prisoner peered at the magistrate's moving lips, and then touched his ears and moved signally with his forefinger.

"Oh, that will do!" said Justice Patters impatiently; "step forward and plead, I tell you!"

The prisoner continued to peer into the magistrate's face, and as the official lips stopped moving he drew a little slate from his pocket, upon which he scrawled the words:

"I cannot hear a word you say."

The magistrate was apparently buried in thought for a moment. Presently he murmured in a low tone, as if communing with himself:

"I don't know what to think about this case. Thought he was a fraud at first, but he does seem to be pretty hard of hearing. I think I'd better let him go. Yes, I will. Prisoner," raising his voice suddenly, "you may go."

As the magistrate uttered these words, the prisoner's little slate suddenly disappeared into the depths of his ragged pocket, and with great alacrity he turned from the bar. Then he suddenly recollected, and checked himself.

"Too late!" cried the magistrate triumphantly. "You may go—that is, to jail for sixty days."

LACK OF SPACE.

A man who had been fighting got two black eyes. Next morning he met a friend who exclaimed: "Why, Jack, where have you been? You've got two black eyes!"

"That's nothing," he replied. "I could have got plenty more, only I had no place to put them."

IN A DEEP HOLE.

By F. J. MEAGHER.

When I was a young man, years ago, accompanied by an old scout and hunter by the name of John Mulshine, I set out upon a hunting excursion up among the headwaters of the Yellowstone. It was the fall, and game was plenty, and for three weeks we had it all our own way, enjoying ourselves hugely, and not seeing a single sign of Indians all the time.

I had been out in a heavy rain the day before the incident I am about to relate occurred, and on the following morning, feeling somewhat indisposed, had remained at the shanty, doing some little odd jobs, leaving John to inspect our traps and bring in our spoils alone.

He had been absent some time, and I was expecting him every moment, when suddenly the sharp report of his rifle rang out upon the still morning air. It was immediately followed by three or four others, while a series of wild yells told me that John had been surprised by a party of Indians, and was, perhaps, even now fighting desperately for life.

To seize my rifle, tear the accoutrements from the pegs where they hung, and dash out, and down toward the river; from which the firing seemed to proceed, was but the work of a moment; but what a sight greeted my eyes!

The old trapper, his hat off, his long, gray hair flying on the wind, his powerful form exerted to the utmost, a score of hideously painted, half-naked savages close behind, yelling like so many demons, and striving to their utmost to overtake him, came dashing toward me, and, as he caught sight of me, he exclaimed:

"Cut an' go it, youngster. We'll have to do some tall runnin', or our hair won't be worth much by night, I reckon. Jist imagin' yerself a race hoss, and do yer liv'lyest fur the big oak!"

The last words just caught my ear as the scout dashed wildly past me, and, starting off in a direction that turned abruptly to my left, and sprang forward at the utmost speed of which I was capable, while John kept on at nearly right angles to the course he had been pursuing.
imprisonment were enough for a lifetime. And here I to live a hundred years, the awful sufferings endured would still be as fresh in my mind as it was at the time it occurred.

**HIS WANTS.**

Tramp—"Please, mum, would yer be so kind as to let me have a needle and thread?"

Mrs. Suburb—"Well, y-e-s, I can let you have that."

"Thank you, mum. Now, you'd oblige me very much if you'd let me have a bit of cloth for a patch?"

"Well, here is some."

"Thank you, mum; but it's a different color from my travelin' suit. Perhaps, mum, yer could spare me some of yer husband's old clothes that this patch will match."

"Well, I declare! I'll give you an old suit, however. Here it is."

"Thank you, mum. I see it's a little large, mum; but if yer'll kindly furnish me with a meal, maybe I can fill it out."

**DIVISION OF LABOR.**

Bedtime had come, and five-year-old Tommy had been sent upstairs. The younger boy was tired, and went readily up "the wooden hill."

Jack was not so willing to leave his play, and accordingly sobbed, and screamed, and shouted with all his youthful energy. Even after they had been left, well tucked up in their cots, the noise continued for some time. At last there was silence.

Mother crept to the foot of the stairs, and as she listened, she caught the tones of a voice, in which traces of the storm still lingered, as Jack said:

"You cry a bit now, Tommy; I'm tired."

**A SORT OF COUSIN.**

The lawyer eyed the woman in the witness box in patient despair. Then he rallied visibly.

"You say, madam," he began, "that the defendant is a sort of relation of yours. Will you please explain, what you mean by that—just how you are related to the defendant?"

"Well, it's like this," replied the witness, beaming upon the court. "His first wife's cousin and my second cousin's first wife's aunt married brothers named Jones, and they were cousins to my mother's aunt. Then, again, his grandfather on his mother's side and my grandfather on my mother's side were second cousins, and his stepmother married my husband's stepfather after his father and my mother died, and his brother Joe and my husband's brother Harry married twin sisters. I ain't ever figured out just how close related we are, but I've always looked on him as a sort of cousin."

"Quite right," assented the lawyer feebly.

**WHAT HE NEVER SAW.**

Inquiring Boy—"And have you seen avalanches in the Alps?"

Great Traveler—"Yes, my son."

"And elephants in Asia?"

"Yes."

"And tigers in Africa?"

"Plenty of them."

"Ever see a polar bear?"

"Several."

"Ever see any wild monkeys?"

"Thousands."

"Did you ever see a polar bear chasing a elephant with a tiger on his back, and a lot of monkeys laughin' to see a avalanche comin' after 'em?"

**A CAREFUL BOY.**

The Sunday school needed money, and Mr. Smith, the superintendent, had a new way of getting it. He proposed to give each boy a dime. At the end of a month the ten cents, with what it carried, was to be returned to the superintendent.

The fourth Sunday found the superintendent ready to audit the profit and loss accounts, and he commenced with Johnnie's class.

"How have you done, Johnnie?"

"My dime has earned another one," said Johnnie, with the air of one deserving a halo.
A FUNERAL IN THE GOLD DIGGINGS.

In the old Californian days, one of the miners having died, and being much respected, it was determined to give him a regular funeral. A digger in the vicinity who, report said, had once been a powerful preacher in the United States, was called upon to officiate, and, after "drinks all round," the party proceeded with becoming gravity to the grave, which had been dug at a distance of a hundred yards from the camp.

When the spot was reached, the officiating minister commenced with an extempore prayer, during which all knelt round the grave. So far all well; but the prayer was unnecessarily long, and at last some of those who knelt began in an abstracted manner to finger the loose earth that had been thrown up from the grave. It was thick with gold, and the excitement was immediately apparent in the kneeling crowd.

Upon this the preacher stopped, and inquiringly said:

"No gold?" exclaimed Goldy. He continued, "and the richest kind of diggings! The congregation is dismissed."

The poor miner was taken from his auriferous grave and was buried elsewhere, while the funeral party, with the parson at their head, lost no time in prospecting the new diggings.

FOLLOWED HOME.

A farmer, walking along a lonely country road on a dark night, anxious to reach his family circle, was suddenly conscious of the fact that somebody was following him. As he looked back every now and then a man's figure could be seen approaching. The farther the farmer went the faster the stranger went, until they came to a churchyard.

"Now, sir, do you always go home like this?" asked the farmer to himself. "I'll find out if he's after me," he entered the churchyard.

The man followed him. Vague visions of revolvers and gazrotes grew upon him. He made a detour of a splendid mausoleum. Still the man was after him, round and round. At last he turned and faced the fellow, and asked:

"What does he do you want? What are you following me for?"

"Well, sir, do you always go home like this?" I am going up to Mr. Brown's house with a parcel, and the porter at the station told me that if I'll follow you I should find the place, as you live next door. Are you going home at all tonight?"

AN EDITOR'S DODGE.

The Western town was infested by gamblers, whose presence was a source of annoyance to the citizens, who told the editor that if he did not come out against them they would not patronize his paper.

He replied that he would give them a smash next day.

Sure enough the next issue contained the promised smash, and on the following morning as the redoubtable editor, with scissors and paste, was seated in his sanctum, in walked a large man with a club in his hand, who demanded to know if "the editor was in?"

"No, sir," was the reply, "he has stepped out; take a seat and read the paper; he will return in a minute."

Down sat the indignant man of cards, crossed his legs, with the club between them, and commenced reading a paper.

In the course of the reading the editor dozed off, and, at the landing he met another excited man with a cudgel in his hand, who eagerly asked if the editor was in.

"Yes, sir," was the quick response. "You will find him upstairs reading a paper."

The latter, on entering the room, at once commenced a violent attack upon the former, which was resented with equal ferocity. The fight was continued till they both rolled to the foot of the stairs, and pounded each other to their hearts' content.

This is the "Get Together" Department. Here, every week, the "Tip Top" friends chat with the editor and with each other. The "Tip Top" family knows no geographical boundaries: all over the great round earth, from North to South, the members stand shoulder to shoulder with Burt L. Standish for truth, honor, strength, courage, and clean living. Many letters are received—letters of comradeship, praise and friendly criticism—and while we have not sufficient space for their immediate publication, they are all welcomed, in turn, to their place by the fireside.

Can Hardly Wait for Friday.

My brother bought home some Merrilliwell books, and I became interested in them. I have read them all. I can hardly wait till Friday for the next issue. Since I began reading them I have become interested in outdoor sports.

Chicago, Ill.

RYL. BLOMBERG.

Cured of Tobacco Habit.

I love Tip Top because the stories are all clean and are ideal stories for the American boy. By reading this magazine it has caused me to abolish the use of tobacco, and I loan all my weeklies to other boys in my town, and a great number are at present reading them. They think they are great. I extend my sincere regards to your famous author, Burt L. Standish, and also to "good old Tip Top" and its publishers.

R. S. HUGHES.
Hampton, N. J.

Good Specimens.

I am a reader of the Tip Top Weekly, and have been reading it for nearly two years. I have become more interested in baseball, football, and other such games since reading about Dick and Jock Merrillwell. They are good specimens of manhood.

Dorchester, Mass.

LESTER MYERS.

Can't Say Enough.

I read Tip Top all the time, and think there is no better book printed. I used to keep a bookstand, and while keeping it got a number of my friends to read it. Now they won't read anything else. I think. Dick Merrillwell, Rerd Buckhar, Tommy Tucker are all good, true, lively fellows, who always look to the right side of everything. Frank Merrillwell and Bart Hodge are also fine, manly fellows. I can't say enough in praise of Tip Top.

Parksburg, W. Va.

JAMES R. BERRY.

From Old England.

I have read a good many of your beautiful tales of Frank Merrillwell, and have some as far back as 1890. I think that they are the cleanest and most healthy tales ever written, and that if there were a few writers like yourself in England this country would be in a much better state than it now is. Some of the most filthy books ever written are now being published, but, though the law fines the sellers hundreds of pounds, it is powerless to stop the sale of them. Your stories I first read when I was thirteen years old, and at that time I was a victim of that degrading habit mentioned in your "Frank Merrillwell's Book of Physical Development;" but, by putting before me the picture of pure manhood as represented by Frank, you made me wish to be a man, also, in every sense of the word. I conquered myself, and to-day I think I can say my mind and body are pure. My ambition is to have a school like the one Frank had, and I mean to (D. V.). Please accept my thanks for what you have been instrumental in doing for me, and please send me an answer to this letter if you have any spare time when you are not writing Tip Top, and make many more copies.

E. T. HOBBS.

60 Park Avenue, Barking, Essex, England.
Talks with your chum

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

Frank Merrill'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.

Weight Lifting.

Prof. Fourmen: I am a constant reader of Tip Top, having read it for about five years, and have induced a number of my friends to read it also; so I take the liberty of asking a few questions as to my physical development. What are my good points, and what are my poor ones? My measurements are as follows: Age, 17 years 5 months; height, 5 feet 8½ inches; weight, 148 pounds; chest, 37½ inches; neck, 16 inches; waist, 30 inches. I can lift 300 pounds at a strain. I think my letter is getting pretty long, so I will say good-by and good luck to Burt L. Standish and all of the characters in Tip Top. I would like to have this letter escape the wastebasket, and would also like to exchange cards with some of the Tip Top boys and girls.

Buffalo, N. Y.

Leonard Plain.

Your measurements are very good, but the chest should show at least six inches more expansion. Exercise regularly with the weights, dumb-bells, etc., and take systematic breathing exercises. Do not try to lift 300-pound weights until you are more fully trained for such work. The more gentle exercises are better developers. A man who essays such "stunts" as heavyweight lifting is liable to get a strain which will put him out of the running for good.

A Negro Architect.

Prof. Fourmen: I have a friend, a colored lad, who is now going to trade school to fit himself to become an architect or a mechanical draftsman. As both he and I are ardent readers of Tip Top, I desire you to tell me through that magazine if there are any positions for a colored architect open to-day. Does the government employ colored architects? You see that an architect is an industrious and all-around good fellow. I hate to see him waste his time studying to fit himself for something at which he cannot make a living. You have my thanks if you will furnish me with this information.

A "Tip-Topper."


It is safe to say that no profession in this country is closed to the colored man on account of his color. The government is conspicuously impartial and is continually putting colored men into responsible official positions. The same things are required of all young men, black or white, for recognition and success: industry, honesty, and intelligence. There are to-day many colored men, all over the country, making names for themselves as teachers, lawyers, physicians, and workers in the arts and sciences. Tell your friend not to have too much fear of the prejudice against his race. The negro who shows ability, honesty of purpose, and energy, will find opportunities awaiting him, and he will enjoy the respect of his fellow citizens of all races.

There is scarcely a man, of any color, in the world to-day that enjoys a higher degree of esteem than the great colored man, Booker T. Washington.

Measurements from Oklahoma.

Prof. Fourmen: I have been a reader of Tip Top for 2 years, and I take the liberty of sending you my measurements. Please give me your opinion on them. I am 16 years old; weight, 108 pounds; height, 5 feet 5 inches; chest, 34½ inches; waist, 30 inches. I play baseball, football, and box and box. Am I up to the standard? Wishing success to Tip Top, I remain a loyal "Tip-Topper."

N. Pauls Valley, Okla.

Your chest should show at least ten more inches, and you can stand about twenty pounds more weight. The latter is quite important in the sport of boxing. Take breathing exercises, eat nourishing food, and keep good hours and good habits. Your waist measure is good.

Phrenology.

Prof. Fourmen: I am going to high school, and am 15 years old. Do you think I should inquire of a phrenologist with an established business about my life work? Is root beer harmful? Can you put me on a diet to rid myself of pimples? Or can you suggest something? Is 14 seconds good for a 100-yard dash? My chest expansion is only 1½ inches. How can I increase it? Three hundred yards almost wins me.

Star City, W. Va.

James Phillips.

Phrenology is a very interesting study, and is without doubt a great help in some cases, but a young man should not put too much reliance in it. Personal ambition is the best guide to the life work. A phrenologist, being a mere human being, cannot be infallible. Consult your own tastes and try to learn from yourself what trade or profession most appeals to you. The work of a man should be that which is never irksome, but which it is a pleasure to do. A man who is really interested in mechanics or engineering could never be truly happy or successful as a lawyer; and a man with a keen taste for the fine arts would be a very poor merchant. The man who loves his work is bound to be a success. No, root beer is not harmful, except as all cold, sweet concoctions are harmful to the digestion. For the young man of doubtful health, pure, cold water is the only advisable drink. Pimples come from impure blood and poor digestion. Drink nothing but water, eat as little sweet and starchy food as possible, and confine your diet to sound, nourishing things, such as meat, vegetables, fruits, and cereals. Then help along your digestion with regular exercise, get plenty of sleep, and give attention to your habits, and you will have no further trouble. You can increase your chest expansion by taking breathing exercises. The present college record for the 100-yard dash is 9.5 seconds.

Wrestling.

Prof. Fourmen: Please tell me how my measurements are for a wrestler. Age, 15 years; height, 5 feet 5 inches; weight, 128 pounds; chest, 30 inches; waist, 30 inches; neck, 13 inches; calf, 14 inches.

St. Paul, Minn.

Your measurements are very good, but you should put on a little more weight and develop your muscles generally for the difficult work of wrestling. The exercise of wrestling, if followed regularly, will develop you very rapidly and increase those muscles which are most important.

Records.

Prof. Fourmen: My age is 19 years; weight, 147 pounds; neck, 15 inches; chest, 30 inches; waist, 28 inches; calf, 15 inches. I can do a mile in 6 minutes; standing broad jump from heel to heel, 9 feet; pole vault, 8 feet. I have made 100 yards in 10½ seconds. Are my records any good? What are my weak points, and is bag punching a good chest developer? Hoping to see this in print, I am a loyal "Tip-Topper."

Kentwood, La.

Ben Lowell.

As you fail to give your height it is impossible to judge the other measurements fairly. Your records are very creditable. The present college records are as follows: One mile, 4 minutes 17½ seconds; pole vault, 12 feet 6½ inches; 100-yard dash, 9.5 seconds. Bag punching is a very valuable exercise for general development.
EARLY NUMBERS OF THE TIP TOP WEEKLY WILL BE FOUND IN THE NEW MEDAL LIBRARY

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

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

150—Frank Merriwell's School-days. 362—Frank Merriwell's Auto. 503—Dick Merriwell's Western Mission.
189—Frank Merriwell Down South. 515—Frank Merriwell's Nomads.
197—Frank Merriwell's Bravery. 518—Dick Merriwell on the Gridiron.
207—Frank Merriwell's Hunting Tour. 521—Dick Merriwell's Disguise.
201—Frank Merriwell in Europe. 524—Dick Merriwell's Test.
205—Frank Merriwell at Yale. 527—Frank Merriwell's Trump Card.
240—Frank Merriwell's Champions. 410—Frank Merriwell's Set-back.
244—Frank Merriwell's Return to Yale. 413—Frank Merriwell's Search.
251—Frank Merriwell's Danger. 419—Frank Merriwell's Trust.
262—Frank Merriwell's Vacation. 428—Frank Merriwell as Coach.
265—Frank Merriwell's Cruise. 431—Frank Merriwell's Brother.
276—Frank Merriwell in Maine. 437—Frank Merriwell's Support.
284—Frank Merriwell's First Job. 440—Dick Merriwell at Fardale.
292—Frank Merriwell's Hard Luck. 446—Dick Merriwell's Promise.
300—Frank Merriwell on the Road. 452—Dick Merriwell's Narrow Escape.
304—Frank Merriwell's Own Company. 455—Dick Merriwell's Racket.
308—Frank Merriwell's Fame. 458—Dick Merriwell's Revenge.
312—Frank Merriwell's College Chums. 461—Dick Merriwell's Ruse.
316—Frank Merriwell's Problem. 464—Dick Merriwell's Deliver.
324—Frank Merriwell's New Comedian. 470—Frank Merriwell's Honor.
328—Frank Merriwell's Prosperity. 476—Frank Merriwell's Diamond.
332—Frank Merriwell's Stage Hit. 476—Frank Merriwell's Winners.
344—Frank Merriwell on the Boulevards. 484—Dick Merriwell's Trap.
352—Frank Merriwell's Double Shot. 491—Dick Merriwell's Model.
359—Frank Merriwell's Confidence. 502—Dick Merriwell's Backstop.

Published about January 10th, 1911

602—Dick Merriwell's Five.

Published about January 31st, 1911

605—Frank Merriwell's Tigers.

Published about February 21st, 1911

608—Dick Merriwell's Polo Team.

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