

to his feet on a rail of reasonable flatness (for a fence rail) he steadied himself with his rod, and accomplished with celerity the trip to the angle where the rail terminated.

'Hurrah, Matt!' he shouted, 'look here!' and he walked along another rail.

Matt saw and was glad, and following Jack's example, he made some excellent time himself.

'We'd never have learned that trick if it hadn't been for the overflow. How glad I am that I came, and—Ow!' Jack's abrupt termination was due to his own course having temporarily terminated, for the third rail upon which he ventured, not having been designed for the particular object which Jack had in view, had been split triangularly, and one of Jack's shoes had slipped to one side, the other slipping in an opposite direction, and the young man came down astride the unyielding oak with a thud whose sound was something inaudible when considered in the light of the anguish which it caused. No new word presented itself for use just then; Jack continued to remark 'Ow,' with a variety of long drawn inflections, while Matt precipitately lowered himself to a position of safety, and manifested no inclination to go farther. After some movements devoted strictly to facial contortion, Jack succeeded in changing his position so that both legs hung upon the same side of the fence, then he examined the rail closely, as if to see if the tip of his spine had not driven a hole through it, and remarked,

'We'd better do this in our stockinged feet.'

Matt thought so too, so both boys removed their shoes, tying them together with the strings upon which the fish were to be strung, and slinging them across their shoulders. Their progress thereafter was considerably more rapid, but a sudden shriek and a splash of voluminous sound and displacement announced that Matt had fallen entirely from his rail, and when Jack came to view the scene, Matt was swelling the flood with his own tears.

'I declare,' exclaimed Jack, 'that's too bad, o'd fellow! And you had the worms in your pocket, too—I hope the water has not got into the box and drowned them so they can't wiggle when they're on the hooks. Say, it's warm; your clothes will dry on you, before we reach the dam. Oh, I'll tell you what,—we'll take them off and wring them out, and go swimming at the same time.'

At the prospect of an unlooked-for sport, Matt dried his tears, and a broad flat rail having been found the boys disrobed and took whatever comfort could be found in

water eighteen inches deep with a field of corn stubble at the bottom of it. Matt's clothes seemed rather clammy as he again resumed his normal position inside them, but Jack described so delightfully the assortment of fish which he wished to catch, that damp clothing became a mere thing of the forgotten past. Started again, Jack moved rapidly for some moments, but suddenly stopped and shouted,

'Hurry up, Matt; here's the splendidest thing that ever was.'

Matt obeyed orders, and while yet twenty rail lengths behind he heard Jack shout.

'Here's a bridge that floated away from one of the little brooks; we'll just make a raft of it and reach the dam in less than no time.'

Matt eyed the bridge with manifest favour; it was simply two logs,—mud sills—connected by three cross-ties, upon which the planking was laid.

'Won't the current trouble us when we reach the river road?' he asked.

'We won't go that way,' said Jack. 'We'll go through the fields and then along a wood road that goes through the timber. It's half a mile the shorter way, besides being the safer. Come ahead; we'll use our rods for poles to push the raft with.'

'Then we've got to knock down fences,' said Matt.

'Well,' said Jack, who had a conscience in hiding somewhere about him, 'we'll come back in a few days, when the flood has gone down, and put them up again. And we'll play the raft is a ram—a regular Merrimac, you know,—and the fence's are an enemy's fleet, or a chain stretched across the river. Let's back out and get a good start.'

The bridge, which did not draw a foot of water, was backed across the road, one boy stood at each side, and at a signal from Jack it was driven against the fence, through which it crashed most gloriously, sprinkling a dozen fence-rails about the surface of the water.

'Hooray!' shouted Jack, 'now for the next one! The Union forever!' and then Jack, while *en route* for the next fence, finding himself unequal to the task of extemporizing a stirring address to his command, began to quote from 'Rolla's Address to the Peruvians,' which was considered the gem of that much-used book, 'The Comprehensive School Speaker'—'My brave associates, partners of my toils, my feelings and my fame, can Rolla's words add fresh vigour to the—'