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high. The whole of the Rivertown boys came to the creek to swim, where the water at high tide was warm and nice. The county road bridged the creek near its head, forming a large and deep pool; and here, safe from accidents and intrusion, they sported as free as air. Ike was a famous swimmer, and seldom found any one to excel him. One day after school a large party of Rivertown boys started for the creek to have a swim; and, when passing by Grum's place, they lingered a moment to look over the fence about the patch of green grass which he prized so highly and watched so carefully. He was at his window in an instant, as they expected he would be.

"Come, hurry along," said he; "don't stop here. Your room is better than your company."

"We aren't harming you," replied one.

"Well, clear out; you're not wanted here."

"Can't we play on your grass a little while?"

"No, you young scamp! Clear out."

"You needn't bite our heads off."

"My dog shall do the biting. Here, Towser, Towser! After 'em, Towser."

They merely laughed at the cross old fellow, and passed on, when Sam Sides burst out with,—

"Let's give him a surprise-party when we go back."

"What do you mean?" cried several voices.

"Why, he called us scamps, and we'll wipe the insult out on his grass."

About all of them were ready for a lark, and shouted approval. So it was settled, that when they went back, they would turn their jackets, swap hats, and pretend to be Indians, then jump over on the grass, and cut all sorts of capers; planning more, however, than they could possibly carry out. They had thought it possible he might rush out on them suddenly; but Ike told them not to fear about that,—he'd fix it; and they went in swimming with this luxury in reserve.

Ike was a capital swimmer. Like the man out West, he could "dive deeper, stay under water longer, and come out drier," than any other boy,—at least he said so; and, the tide in the creek being high, there was some fine swimming done, which rivalled the exploits of any frog that ever kicked. There were all sorts of trials,—trials with one another, trials against time, trials in floating, trials in treading water, trials in diving,—until it was proposed, to try who could stay under water the longest. This was eagerly accepted by all

but Ike, who declared that he had had enough of it. He was all "blowed," he said, and didn't believe he could stay under at all. He gave in at last, very reluctantly, and then they prepared to dive.

There was a flat stone just under water, about three rods from the bridge; and it was agreed that the one who went farthest beyond this should be the champion—the "boss diver"—of Rivertown and the surrounding territory.

"You go first, Moody," was the cry; and Moody, taking a long breath to carry with him, and putting the palms of his hands together over his head as if to form a cutwater, plunged in.

The water was deep and turbid, rendering it impossible for any one to follow the track of the diver; and so the boys eagerly watched for the coming up of the submarine navigator. They had no watch by which to note the time he was under water; but Moody was a long-winded fellow, and stayed under a good while. At last he arose beyond the rock, blowing the salt water out of his mouth, and was received with a great shout.

One after another all tried it except Ike, none of them surpassing Moody for endurance or distance. Most fell far short of the flat stone, and none more than reached it. It was surely thought that Moody would be the champion, when Ike, the last one, was called upon to "go in and win." He was sitting upon the bridge, seeing the others, and, when called, responded at once, saying—

"It's no use: Moody's won fast enough."

"You must try it," they all cried.

"But s'pose I should hit bottom, and knock a hole through, and go down to China or somewhere: what'd you do then?"

"Have you sent back by telegraph," replied Sides.

"Well, I'll try, but if I'm drowned you must excuse me to Mr. Grum, who'll be disappointed if I am not at his surprise-party."

"Go it, Ike!" they all shouted.

He mounted the railing of the bridge, which the others had not done, and there went through the same motions as the rest, elevating his hands above his head, with the palms brought together, and plunged swiftly into the water. The water closed over him, and all that was to be seen were a few bubbles where he had disappeared. They waited with the deepest interest to see where he would come up, because they knew he was the only one that could compete with Moody. Where was he? they asked among themselves as he failed to appear after being under water much longer than Moody;