

**FRANK
MERRIWELL'S FOES**

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Frank Merriwell's foes by Burt L. Standish

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BURT L. STANDISH

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BY

BURT L. STANDISH

AUTHOR OF

"Frank Merriwell's School Days," "Frank Merriwell's Chums," etc.

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FRANK MERRIWELL'S FOES.

CHAPTER I.

THE START.

One day the mail for Fardale Military Academy brought Frank Merriwell a letter from his uncle. Tearing open the envelope, he was soon reading the following brief and rather surprising message:

MY DEAR NEPHEW—Come home without delay. Strange things are happening here. I am not very well, and the end cannot be far away. I wish to make arrangements concerning your future. I have written Professor Gunn, asking that you be given a furlough, and requesting him, if possible, to allow one of the professors to accompany you. Come as soon as possible, for, since the visitation of last night, I fear what the return of another night may bring forth. My nerves are severely shaken. I am not superstitious, but I have begun to believe that there are actually "more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy."

Your affectionate uncle,

ASHER D. MERRIWELL.

Having read this, Frank gave a long whistle, expressive of the state of his feelings.

"What in the world can be the matter with Uncle Asher?" he muttered, perplexed. "He was the picture of health when I saw him last, and he has not mentioned being ill in any of his other letters. Then he says strange things are happening there, and speaks of a 'visitation.' If there was a streak of insanity anywhere in our family, I might think Uncle Asher off in his mind, but I know

better than to fancy anything of that sort, so I do not know what to imagine."

He read the brief letter over and over, but the more he studied it the greater became his bewilderment, and so he finally abandoned the task as hopeless, knowing all would be explained when he arrived home.

As Frank anticipated, Professor Gunn sent for him, and he went to the head instructor's tent, the letter from Frank's uncle having been received during the first week of the summer encampment at Fardale Academy.

"Mr. Merriwell," said the old professor, carefully adjusting his glasses on the end of his nose, and peering over them with an owl-like expression, "I have received a very surprising request from your uncle—very surprising. He asks that you be sent home on furlough, and that one of my assistants accompany you. Both Professor Scotch and Professor Jenks are anxious to embrace the opportunity to get away from their duties for a short time, and, as your esteemed uncle has offered to pay liberally for the privilege of having you come home in charge of a careful and painstaking tutor, I have decided to comply with his wishes—yes, sir, I have decided to do so."

Frank remained silent, waiting respectfully for the professor to proceed.

Professor Gunn cleared his throat, pressed his thumbs and the tips of his fingers together, and, still staring owl-like over the glasses, which were recklessly perched on the end of his long, thin nose, continued:

"I presume you will understand that this concession on my part is quite unusual. Never in the history of Fardale Military Academy has such a request been made before, and I have concluded to ask you a few questions—a very few questions."

Frank bowed.

"I am listening, professor," he said.

The head instructor seemed uneasy. He cleared his throat again, and, still keeping the tips of the fingers of both hands touching, began patting his thumbs together.

"Er—er—I do not wish to seem too inquisitive," he hesitatingly declared; "but I would like to inquire if this uncle, with whom you have been living since your parents' death, is in any way—er—er—eccentric?"

"Well, I don't know," replied Frank. "He is rather bluff, and he may be slightly different from the common run of people."

"Er—er—exactly. But is he—is he—mentally sound? Is his mind all right—quite well balanced?"

"It has always seemed so. He has had mind enough to make a very large fortune, for neither Uncle Asher nor his brother, my father, had a dollar with which to start out in life, and uncle is a very rich man now. He started in with the determination to buy back the family homestead, which my grandfather lost by speculation, and he now owns the old place, and a great deal of adjoining property; and his income is such that, for all of his expenditures, which are not light, his wealth is steadily increasing."

Professor Gunn coughed, nodded, and said:

"Very well, very well! Such a man has a right to be eccentric—a perfect right. But his letter to me was peculiar—I did not understand it. He may be ill—something may be troubling his mind."

"It is possible, sir."

"Well, I will permit you to make your choice between Professor Scotch and Professor Jenks. Both desire the outing, and I have decided to spare one of them for a short time. Which do you prefer as a companion during your furlough?"

Frank hesitated. It was difficult for him to tell which