

**THE HIGH SCHOOL
FRESHMEN; OR, DICK
& CO.'S FIRST YEAR
PRANKS AND SPORTS**

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The high school freshmen; or, Dick & co.'s first year pranks and sports by H. Irving Hancock

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H. IRVING HANCOCK

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FRESHMEN; OR, DICK
& CO.'S FIRST YEAR
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“TAKE THAT, MUCKER!”

Frontispiece.

The High School Freshmen

OR

Dick & Co.'s
First Year Pranks and Sports

By

H. IRVING HANCOCK

Author of The Motor Boat Club Series,
The High School Pitcher, Etc., Etc.

Illustrated

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The High School Freshmen

CHAPTER I

"THE HIGH SCHOOL SNEAK"

"I SAY you did!" cried Fred Ripley, hotly. Dick Prescott's cheeks turned a dull red as he replied, quietly, after swallowing a choky feeling in his throat:

"I have already told you that I did not do it."

"Then who did do the contemptible thing?" insisted Ripley, sneeringly.

Fully forty boys, representing all the different classes at the Gridley High School, stood looking on at this altercation in the school grounds. Half a dozen of the girls, too, hovered in the background, interested, or curious, though not venturing too close to what might turn out to be a fight in hot blood.

"If I knew," rejoined Dick, in that same quiet voice, in which one older in the world's ways might have detected the danger-signal, "I wouldn't tell you."

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"Bah!" jeered Fred Ripley, hotly.

"Perhaps you mean that you don't believe me?" said Prescott inquiringly.

"I don't!" laughed Ripley, shortly, bitterly. "Oh!"

A world of meaning surged up in that exclamation. It was as though bright, energetic, honest Dick Prescott had been struck a blow that he could not resent. This, indeed, was the fact.

"See here, Ripley——" burst, indignantly, from Dick Prescott's lips, as his face went white and then glowed a deeper red than before.

"Well, kid?" sneered Ripley.

"If I didn't have a hand—the right hand, at that—that is too crippled, to-day, I'd pound your words down your mouth."

"Oh, your hand?" retorted Ripley, confidently. "The yarn about that hand is another lie."

Dick's injured right hand came out of the jacket pocket in which it had rested. With his left hand he flung down his cap.

"I'll fight — you — anyway!" Prescott announced, slowly.

There were a few faint cheers, though some of the older High School boys looked serious. Fair play was an honored tradition in Gridley.

Ripley, however, had thrown down his cap

at once, hurling his strapped-up school books aside at the same time.

"Wait a moment," commanded Frank Thompson, stepping forward. He was a member of the first class, a member of the school eleven, and a husky young fellow who could enforce his opinions at need.

"Get back, Thomp," retorted Ripley. "The cub wants to fight, and he's got to."

"Not if he has an injured hand," retorted Frank, quickly.

"He hasn't," jeered Ripley. "And he's got to fight, if he has four lame hands."

"He can fight, then, yes," agreed Thompson. "But remember, Fred, it's allowable, when a fellow's crippled, to fight by substitute."

"Substitute?" asked Fred, looking uncomfortable.

"Yes; I'll take his place, if Prescott will let me," volunteered Frank Thompson, coolly.

"You? I guess not," snorted Ripley. "I won't stand for that. I'm a third classman, and you're a first classman. You're half as big again as I am, and——"

"The odds wouldn't be as bad as you're proposing to take out of this poor little freshman with the crippled hand," insisted Thompson. "So get ready to meet me. I'll allow one of my hands to be tied, if you want."