

Swipes literally fell into his oldest clothes—and not very many of them, either. He had been through one mill of that sort, and knew just about what to expect, and hence what to prepare for. He was waiting at the door when Stanislaus returned.

“Where is it?” he asked, as they raced down the stairs.

“Over by the barn, on a white oak pole twenty-five feet long and eight inches thick. We’ll never get it down.”

It did look rather improbable, Swipes admitted, when he reached the scene of the coming fray. There were few Sophs about, and those that were in sight were being guyed most unmercifully by the hundred or more Freshies gathered at the base of their flagstaff. A half-hour later, however, there was a marked change in affairs. The news had spread, and a considerable crowd of onlookers had collected, among whom appeared a number of professors and a generous proportion of co-eds. Early as it was—for the bell had just rung seven o’clock—the fascination of a flagscrap was too strong for even a pronounced sleeper to resist. By the time the Sophs had collected their forces for the initial rush, every vantage point of observation had been taken, and there was “standing room only.”

It opened with a flying wedge on the part of the attacking Sophs, in the hope that this mass play would loosen the pole, and even topple it over, were it not properly planted. But though it did sway a little under the impact, the gray and blue pennant at the top still fluttered lazily in the morning breeze.

Then the scrap became promiscuous. It did not take long for the earth to be trampled into a pasty mass, in which many a luckless warrior left the imprint of his noble countenance. Occasionally, a half-clad figure would come flying out of the writhing mass and topple over on the outer edge of the circle, to lie there panting until sufficiently recovered to pluckily re-enter the fray.