

# HOW THE QUICK BROTHERS DEFENDED FORT FROLIC

By ARTHUR MORGAN LANGWORTHY

**T**HE Quick Quartet (as they are nicknamed) consists of four of the liveliest most "up-to-the-minute" boys you'd ever want to meet. First, there is Austen Quick, the eldest, aged 15, and the leader of the Quartet, by virtue of seniority, strength and pluck—if not always pure intellect. He leaves the last qualification to 14 year old Pliny Quick, whose bulging forehead, rather long brown hair and large, dreamy blue eyes denote him as the thinker of the Quartet. Then follow Anthony Wayne Quick and Bonaparte Wellington Quick, who are sturdy 12 year old, black haired twins. You'd think their names sounded differently enough, but even these have been reduced to like sounding titles—Toney and Boney!

Any one might suppose this a Chinese story, because there are so many "Q's" in it—but the next "Q" is an Irish one—being Dennis Quinn, the stout, young leader of the "Lowers," as the crowd of brawny, young boys is called who live in Lower Oakdale, where the big steel mills are located.

There is also one more similarity between the head of the Quick Quartet and the leader of the Lowers—each has the same color of curly, fiery red hair, which may account for the fact (as Mr. Quick says) that every time they run across each other it's like two red headed friction matches being rubbed together. And this usually touches off the two rival gangs, for the Quick Quartet is the leading spirit of the "Uppers," as the boys of Upper Oakdale call their crowd.

Both the Uppers and Lowers had until recently a tacit agreement concerning one thing, no matter how much they disagreed on others. This was about Frolic hill, the only perfectly suitable coasting hill about the town. Each had its own carefully laid out course and many were the races between the Uppers and the Lowers on these parallel courses.

This winter the double runner bob sled races were particularly close and had finally narrowed down to two leaders—Pliny Quick's Reindeer and Denny Quinn's Beats All. Each had won several heats and only one more remained to be run.

The Frolic hill course was a long one and Pliny found the return trip very tedious. To save as much walking as possible and have some fun, too, Pliny constructed two immense tandem box kites. The heavy kite line was wound on a small windlass nailed to the sled front. When the wind blew in the right quarter Pliny would send these kites up, and as the return lay over almost level ground for more than half way the tremendous pull exerted by the kites would pull the Reindeer back in fine style. Pliny called the tandem kites his "aerial reindeers."

At the close of the afternoon on the day before the final heat of the coasting contest Pliny used his aerial reindeer to drag him back home, as the wind was just right. He reached a lonely spot along the treeless road when suddenly half a dozen figures sprang from behind a snowbank, threw Pliny off his sled and seized the kites.

Their faces were muffled, but Pliny needed no identification when they wrecked the Reindeer with axes.

This could be the work of only one person, Denny Quinn, who was most interested in getting rid of the Reindeer, his only real competitor in tomorrow's race. Pliny arrived home bruised and heartbroken, and the brothers sat up until after 10 making their plans of vengeance.

And here is what confronted the Lowers when they came to race the next afternoon:

A dazzling, snowy citadel built breast high on the summit of Frolic hill frowned down upon the advancing throng, which quickly halted and fled when its batteries suddenly unmasked and poured a storm of snowballs on their unprotected heads. There would be no more coasting until Fort Frolic was captured!

The siege was on! For two days did General Austen Quick and his forces valiantly defend the hill. His watchful pickets were always ready for surprises, one being



on duty all day and evening, taking turns staying at Sandy Wilton's house, which stood on an even higher hill and commanded a view of all the Frolic hill approaches. So most of the defenders of Fort Frolic could be assembled at a minute's notice by phone, as this happened during the holidays. And it looked as if the enemy was to be baffled in spite of his snow shields, ammunition, trains and other implements of modern snowball warfare, for no boy, however tough, could stand the pitiless shower of snowballs delivered by the besieged.

Not but that negotiations for peace were tried. Generals Quinn and Quick met under a flag of truce and Austen made this proposal:

"Denny, give up the kites, pay us for the damage to the Reindeer, and we'll give up the hill. Pliny has rebuilt the Reindeer and he wants to beat your old snowsow yet!"

"I know we didn't act square," admitted Denny, "but things have gone too far. Yer sharp shooters have nearly killed me an' my gang—an' we've got to git even!" he ended angrily, and as he retired yelled this mysterious taunt:

"Sure, we'll return the kites!" And General Quinn kept his word.

The Fort Frolickers were astounded to see the besiegers calmly launch the "aerial reindeers" into the sky the next day. They also viewed with some alarm the maneuvers by which the big tandem box kites were anchored in the air less than 100 feet, directly over the fort. Pliny now discerned that there were two small extra cords running parallel with the kite line. Closer examination proved these two extra cords were really one, being supported at the kite end by a small pulley.

And then came the explanation. The extra cord was seen to move, serving as a trolley for the strange, ominous looking object that hung from it as the operator on the ground pulled it up into the air until it reached the kite.

Pliny suddenly realized its dread meaning and shouted:

"They're sending up a bomb! See the smoke from the fuse at the bottom. That's a time fuse and connects with the round box, which is full of powder—and when the fuse burns down it'll explode and break the cords holding those big snowballs!"

"An' they'll drop right on us! Gee! We haven't a place to get under!" shouted Austen despairingly.

The brave garrison felt doomed. The new terrible engine of war was pulled up to the kite and now hung directly over them.

"Get ready to duck!" commanded General Quick, as the garrison crouched with frightened, upturned faces.

Bang! The box end of the aerial

bomb disappeared in a flash of flame. The six big snowballs dropped whistling through the air and burst into glittering pieces inside the intrenchments. The defenders all ducked safely, but the next discharge did damage. General Flint had his shoulder badly bruised and Walter Armstrong was "knocked out" for five minutes, one aerial ball striking him on the head. But dusk put an end to General Quinn's aerial war operations. Some wanted to give up, but the Quick Quartet stood firm for defense. Pliny Quick, as military engineer, said:

"We'll board over this corner of the works and whenever an aerial bomb explodes we'll just duck for the bombproof." This plan was adopted, and when General Quinn next sent up his aerial destroyers the garrison easily dodged out of harm's way.

Then General Quinn resorted to strategy. He made a grand attack just at the moment the garrison was driven under the bombproof on the next aerial bomb discharge. This plan was tried again and again, but the garrison managed to hold out after terrific fighting.

The following afternoon General Quinn flew the kites in half a gale. The big aerial reindeer tugged hard at the heavy sled they were tied to. General Quinn sent up a bomb, and as the garrison watched it some one shouted:

"Look! She got away!" Sure enough, the high wind had given the kites such a tremendous pull that they tore the poorly fastened sled loose from its fastenings and away they raced with it across the level snowfield, the whole Lower army in yelling pursuit.

The tandem kites headed straight for Crawford's violet farm. Now, you'd think such a dainty sounding industry as that would be run by very nice and gentle people, probably ladies. But it wasn't. The meanest man in the county ran it, and he had a standing feud with all the boys, who just couldn't resist "plugging" his acre or so of glass topped greenhouses. For it was a very large farm and employed a big force of men.

General Quinn finally caught the runaway kites, but not until the sizzling bomb hung right over the greenhouses. And before he could yank it back—bing!—the aerial bomb exploded—crash!—those big, heavy snowballs dropped on a greenhouse roof and smashed it to smithereens!

General Quinn instantly returned to the fight now that he had recovered his aerial war engine. Perhaps if the lust of battle hadn't been so strong the general would have noticed shortly afterward what the Fort Frolickers instantly saw from their high perch.

"Whew! And Quinn's never caught on! Say, but there's going to be a circus!"

For the hill toppers could see what

Quinn couldn't. Crawford had assembled his whole force of violet gardeners and they had quietly managed to entirely surround the hill. When the besiegers suddenly found themselves ambushed there was no escape. They fought as hard as they could and tried to break through the line of angry farmers, but were gradually driven up the hillside.

Some of the more bloodthirsty Uppers wanted to slaughter the hemmed in Lowers. However, this was too much for Austen Quick's big heart. Bad as the Lowers were, he could not stand seeing them fall into Crawford's merciless hands. He conferred with his brothers and they finally won the others to their plan. All firing ceased. Austen jumped over the breastworks and waving a white flag shouted to General Quinn:

"Come up—we won't hurt you—it's your only chance!"

The Lowers hesitated at first, but General Quinn, with one look at the advancing circle of violet growers, decided on the lesser of the two evils. The Lowers swarmed into the fort, and now the combined force showered a pitiless snowball fire on the foe, driving them back down the hill.

Another assault was repulsed, and then Pliny Quick got his great escape idea—and also his chance for revenge on Denny Quinn. He pointed to the Reindeer, which was doing duty as an ammunition sled; then to the Beats All, which Denny had dragged up the hill and saved, although the aerial reindeer were captured.

"Now we'll make our grand getaway and we'll have our match race at the same time."

Pliny's scheme was to coast to safety; nothing short of a house could stop a "bob" going a mile a minute, so a little later the violet farmers were astounded to see the Reindeer and the Beats All poke their bows over the hilltop. Down they shot, each on their respective courses, followed by half a dozen sleds, bearing the rest of the boys. Some of the farmers foolishly tried to stop the Reindeer. There was a great upheaval—the Reindeer whizzed through and dumped the obstructors head first into the snow. This slowed her up a bit and gave the Beats All a slight lead. On they went, the Beats All still leading, but the Reindeer crept steadily up as the yelling violet farmers were left far behind.

A hundred yards from the finish line—two posts, a mile from the start—the Reindeer was level with the Beats All. There wasn't a foot's difference until within fifty feet of the finish, when suddenly the Reindeer forged ahead and passed the finish posts two yards in the lead.

And thus was a double victory won for the Quick Quartet—one of kindness and one of swiftness.