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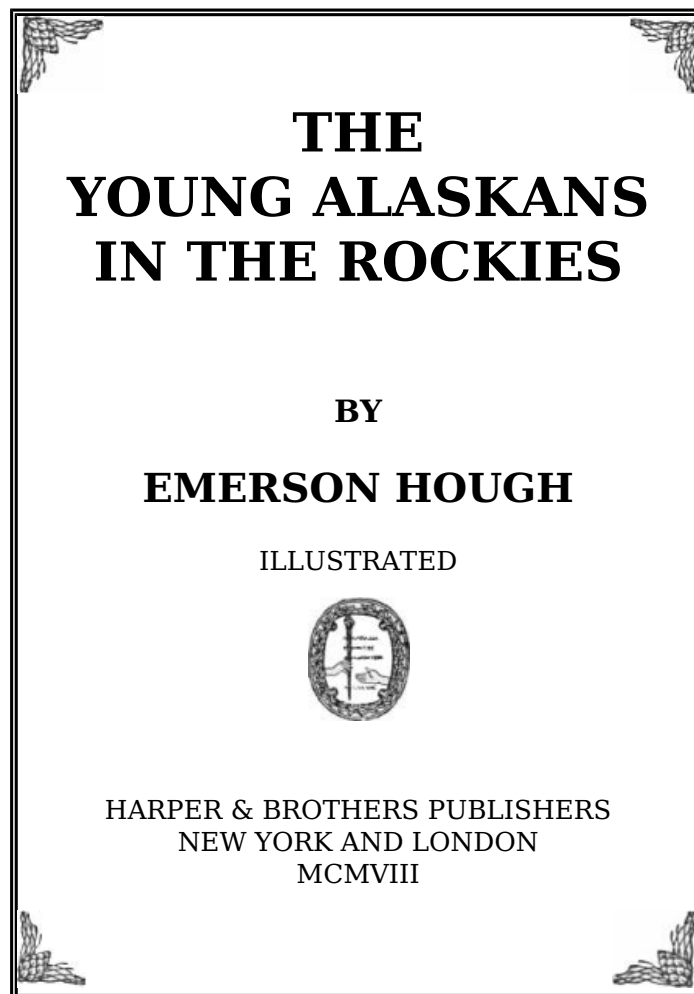
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**A TRAPPER'S SHACK, STANDING AT THE EDGE OF THE BEAUTIFUL MOUNTAIN LAKE WHICH LAY GREEN AND MIRROR-LIKE, SURROUNDED ON ALL SIDES BY GREAT MOUNTAIN WALLS**

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## YOUNG ALASKANS IN THE ROCKIES

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### I

#### ROB, JOHN, AND JESSE IN CAMP

"Well, here we are, fellows," said Jesse Wilcox, as he threw down an armful of wood at the side of the camp-fire. "For my part, I believe this is going to be about the best trip we ever had."

"That's what I was telling Rob to-day," said John Hardy, setting down a pail of water near by. "But I hope I won't have to carry water up a bank a hundred feet high every night."

"We are not as far north this time as we were last summer," said Jesse, "but the country looks something the same."

"Yes," replied John, "but last year we were going east and farther away from home every day. Now we're going west to the Rockies and across them, getting closer to home all the time."

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Rob McIntyre, the oldest of our friends who had made so many trips together in the wilderness, sat silent, as was often his custom, smiling out of his frank blue eyes at his companions.

"What do you think about it, Rob?" asked Jesse.

"I agree with you, Jess," replied Rob. "I've always wanted to get into this part of the Rocky Mountains. The Yellowhead Pass, over yonder, is the place I've always wanted to see. It's an old pass across the Rockies, but no one seems to know much about it."

"Besides," went on Jesse, "we ought to get plenty of game and good fishing."

"Surely we will, for this is a country that no one visits, although we are now on the trail of the old fur-traders who came here often enough more than a hundred years ago. On the high ridges in here you can see the old trail cut down a foot deep. And it was made in part by the feet of men, more than a hundred years ago."

"Besides," added John, "we can see where the engineers have gone ahead of us."

"Yes," said Rob, "they've pretty much followed the trail of the old fur-traders."

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"Didn't they come by water a good way up here?" asked John.

Rob answered by pulling out of his pocket a long piece of heavy paper, a map which they three had worked over many days, laying out for themselves in advance the best they knew how the route which they were to follow and the distances between the main points of interest. "Now, look here," said he, "and you'll see that for once we are at a place where the old voyageurs had to leave their boats and take to the land. We're going to cross the Rockies at the head of the Athabasca River, but you see it runs away northeast from its

source at first, at least one hundred miles north of Edmonton. That used to be called Fort Augustus in the old days, and the voyageurs went all the way up there from Montreal by canoe. Sometimes they followed the Saskatchewan from there. That brought them into the Rockies away south of here. They went over the Kootenai Plains there, and over the Howse Pass, which you know is between here and Banff."

"I know," said Jesse, eagerly. "Uncle Dick told us they used to go down the Blaeberry Creek to the Columbia River." [Pg 12]

"Exactly; and there was a way they could go near the Wood River to the Columbia River. For instance, here on the map is a place near the head of the Big Bend of the Columbia. That's the old Boat Encampment, of which the old histories tell so much."

"You don't suppose we'll ever get there?" said John, doubtfully. "It looks a long ways off from here."

"Of course we will," said Rob, firmly. "When we've pushed up to the head of the Athabasca River and gone over the Yellowhead Pass it will all be downhill. We'll go fast when we hit the rivers running south. And we'll come in but a little way from the Boat Encampment, which was a rendezvous for all the old traders who crossed by the Saskatchewan trail below us. But, you see, we'll be taking a new way; and I agree with Jess that it will be about the best trip we ever had."

"Those old fur-traders were great fellows to travel, weren't they?" said Jesse, looking curiously at the deep-worn, ancient trail which ran close by their camp.

"Yes," said Rob, "they weren't afraid of anything. When they got to Fort Augustus they had three choices of routes west over the Rockies. They could go away north to the Peace River—old Sir Alexander McKenzie's trail, which we followed last summer; or they could go up the Saskatchewan the way David Thompson used to go to the Columbia River; or they could strike west by cart or pack-horse from Fort Augustus and cross this rolling country until they struck the Athabasca, and then follow up that to the Yellowhead Pass. I shouldn't wonder if old Jasper Hawse was one of the first trail-makers in here. But, as I was saying, those who came this route had to leave their boats at Edmonton. Here at Wolf Creek we are about one hundred and thirty miles west of there. For a long while they used to have a good wagon trail as far as Saint Anne, and, as you know, it has been pretty much like a road all the way out here." [Pg 13]

"I like the narrow trail best," said John; "one made by feet and not wheels."

"Yes," went on Rob, "perhaps that's why we're so anxious to get on with this trip. The water does not leave any mark when you travel on it, but here is the trail of the old traders worn deep into the soil. A fellow can almost see them walking or riding along here, with their long rifles and their buckskin clothes." [Pg 14]

"That's what I like about these trips Uncle Dick lays out sometimes," said Jesse. "A fellow sort of has to read about the country and the men who found it first."

"Yes," John assented, "reading about these old places makes you begin to see that there is quite a world besides the part of the world where we were born. It seems as though these old fellows in the past weren't making these trails just for themselves."

"Pshaw! I'll bet they just wanted furs, that was all," ventured Jesse. "But, anyhow, they found the paths, all right."

"The Indians found the paths ahead of the traders," said Rob. "I fancy the white men did not have such hard times learning which way to go. The Indians must have worked backward and forward across almost every pass in the mountains before the white men came. It makes me feel kind of strange to be here, just where the great-grandfathers of white people used to travel, and then to think that before their grandfathers were born this country was all old to the red men, who held it long before the white men came." [Pg 15]

"Well," said John, who was of a practical turn of mind, "it's starting in pretty well. We've got some whitefish left that we caught at Lake Waubamun, and the grouse which we killed this afternoon will make up a good supper. I s'pose if we were the first to cross over we might have got antelope in here, or, anyhow, deer."

"I'm glad Uncle Dick is going along," said Jesse. "He went over with the first engineer party, so he knows about all the bad places. We certainly had muskeg enough yesterday and the day before. If it's any worse ahead than it is behind it's going to be pretty tough."

"Look yonder, fellows!" said Rob, suddenly rising and pointing to the westward.

They followed his gesture and for a moment stood silent with him.

"It's the Rockies!" said they, almost in unison.

The clouds had now broken away late in the afternoon, and for the first time they could see across the wide expanse of forest lands which stretched unbroken to the northward and westward, the low white line of the great backbone of the continent—the Rockies, land of mystery and adventure for bold souls since history began in this part of our continent. The boys stood silent for quite a while, absorbed in the vision of the distant hills and the thoughts which the sight awakened in their hearts.

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"I'd like to take the trail again to-night," said Rob, as though to himself. "I can hardly wait."

"They're fine little old hills, aren't they?" said John. "I wish we could go farther toward them, every day. I want to get over to where the water starts west."

"Yes," added Jesse, "and see where old Yellowhead himself made his camp a hundred years ago."

"Well, Jess," said John, "you can go as Yellowhead, Junior, maybe, because your hair is sort of red, anyway. But I wonder where Uncle Dick and Moise have got to; they ought to be in by now, with the extra horses from the village."

"Trust Moise to be in on time for supper," said Rob. "Come on and let's get the rest of the wood for to-night."

They turned now toward the tasks of the camp, work with which they were familiar, Jesse carrying some more wood, and John, whose turn it was to bring in the water, starting once more down the steep slope to the little creek which lay below them. Rob, who had completed his portion of the camp labor, still stood silent, apparently forgetful of all about him, staring steadily at the low broken line of white which marked the summit of the Rockies and the head of the great Athabasca River which lay on beyond to the westward.

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## II

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### AT THE FIRESIDE

"Well, well, young men!" broke out a hearty voice, not long after our young friends had completed their evening's work and were seated near the fire. "How are you getting on? Are the mosquitoes pretty bad?"

"Hello, Uncle Dick!" answered John. "We thought it was about time for you to be coming up."

"And about mosquitoes," answered Jesse, brushing at his face, "I should say they were pretty bad for early spring."

"Well, I'm glad to be in for the day," remarked the tall, lean-looking man they all called Uncle Dick—the friend to whom they owed so many pleasant and adventurous journeys in out-of-the-way parts of the country. He was dressed as the men of the engineers usually were in the rough preliminary survey work. He wore a wide white hat, flannel shirt, loose woolen clothing, and high laced boots. His face was burned brown with the suns of many lands, but his blue eyes twinkled with a kindly light, which explained why all of these boys were so fond of him.

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"Where's Moise?" asked Rob, after a time, assisting Uncle Dick at unsaddling his riding-pony.

"Just back on the trail a way," replied the older member of the party. "Stuck in the mud. Considerable muskeg in here, believe me."

Presently they could hear the voice of Moise, the remaining member of their party, who was to go along as cook and assistant with the pack-train. He was singing in a high voice some odd Indian tune, whose words may have been French; for Moise Richard, as all our readers will remember who followed the fortunes of our young adventurers in their trip along the Peace River, was a French half-breed, and a man good either with boats or horses.

"Hello, Moise!" cried the three companions, as he came into view, driving ahead of him the remainder of the pack-train. They pronounced his name as he did, "Mo-èes".

"Hello, young mans," exclaimed Moise, smiling as usual as he slipped out of his saddle. "How was you all, hein? I'll bet you was glad to see old Moise. You got hongree, what?"

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"Certainly we are," replied John for all three. "We always are."

"That's the truth," laughed Uncle Dick. "Lucky we've got a couple of pack-horses apiece, and lucky the engineers have got some supplies cached over there in the Rockies."

"Well, some of those new horse, she was fool horse," said Moise. "She'll want to go back on his home, or run off on the bush. She's like any fool pack-horse, and don't want to do what he knows is right worth a cent, him."

"Well, never mind," said Uncle Dick, carelessly. "I imagine our train will be like all pack-trains, better when they get settled down to work. It's always a lot of trouble until they get straightened around and shaken down to the work."

"I'll goin' to put some bell on those old gray mare Betsy," said Moise. "Maybe those fool horse will follow him, Betsy. All the time six height hour, I've chase those fool horse where she'll break out and eat grass. They make more trouble for Moise than all his eleven, ten children up on Peace River."

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"I don't believe your children are troubling you very much now, Moise," said Uncle Dick.

"No, my hooman, she'll know how to herd those childrens," said Moise, calmly. "S'pose those baby start out for eat grass, she'll told him, no, not do that, and he'll learn pretty soon. Now if a little baby can learn, why can't a three-year-old horse with white eye—I'm going to talk to that fool yellow horse, me, before long."

"Well," said Uncle Dick, "we'll get all the packs off now and finish the camp."

"Whoa, there!" called out Moise to the offending claybank cayuse which had caused him most of his trouble that afternoon. "Hol' still now, or Moise, she'll stick his foot in your eye."

But Uncle Dick only laughed at the threatening Moise, knowing that in his heart he was kindly. Indeed, he smoothed down the warm back of the cayuse with a gentle hand when he took off the pack. Soon all the packs were in a row on the ground, not far from the fire, each with a cover thrown over the saddle. Our three young companions helped put hobbles on the fore-legs of the horses, and soon all the horse band, twelve in number, were hopping away from the camp in search of grass and water. They found the latter in a little slough a short distance back on the trail, and did not attempt the steep descent to Wolf Creek.

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The three young friends assisted in unpacking the animal which carried their tent and blankets. They had lashed on the cow-saddles of their own riding-horses the little war-bags or kit-bags of soft leather in which each boy carried his own toilet articles and little things for personal use. Their rifles and rods they also slung on their riding-saddles. Now, with the skill of long training, they put up their own tent, and spread down their own blanket beds, on the edge of which they placed their guns and rods, making pillows out of their folded sweaters. Soon they were helping Moise with his cooking at the fire and enjoying as usual their evening conversation with that cheerful friend.

It did not take Moise, old-timer as he was, very long to get his bannocks and tea ready, and to fry the whitefish and grouse which the boys now brought to him.

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Uncle Dick looked at his watch after a time. "Forty minutes," said he.

"For what?" demanded Jesse.

"Well, it took us forty minutes to get off the packs and hobble the horses and get supper ready. That's too long—we ought to have it all done and supper over in that time. We'll have to do better than this when we get fully on the trail."

"What's the use in being in such a hurry?" demanded John, who was watching the frying-pan very closely.

"It's always a good thing to get the camp work done quickly mornings and evenings," replied the leader of the party. "We've got a long trip ahead, and I'd like to average twenty-five miles a day for a while, if I could. Maybe we'll have to content ourselves with fifteen miles a good many days. The best way is to get an early start and make a long drive, and an early camp. Then get your packs off as early as you can, and let your horses rest—that's always good doctrine."

"Well, one thing," said Jesse, "I hope the mosquitoes won't be any worse than they are now."

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"Well," Uncle Dick replied, "when we get higher up the nights will get cool earlier, but we'll have mosquitoes all the way across, that's pretty sure. But you fellows mustn't mind a thing

like that. We've all got our mosquito bars and tents, and very good ones too."

"No good for fight mosquito," said Moise, grinning. "He's too many."

"Oh, go on, Moise, they don't hurt you when they bite you," said John.

"Nor will they hurt you so badly after a time," Uncle Dick said to him. "You get used to it—at least, to some extent. But there is something in what Moise has told you—don't fight mosquitoes too hard, so that you get excited and nervous over it. Don't slap hard enough to kill a dog—just brush them off easy. Take your trouble as easy as you can on trail—that's good advice. This isn't feather-bed work, exactly; but then I don't call you boys tenderfeet, exactly, either. Now go and finish the beds up for the night before it gets too dark."

Jesse crawled into the back part of the tent and fished out three specially made nets, each of cheese-cloth sewed to a long strip of canvas perhaps six feet long and two and one-half feet wide. At each corner of this canvas a cord was sewed, so that it could be tied to a tent-pole, or to a safety-pin stuck in the top of the tent. Then the sides, which were long and full, could be tucked in at the edges of the bed, so that no mosquitoes could get in. Each boy had his own net for his own bed, so that, if he was careful in getting in under the net, he would be pretty sure of sleeping free from the mosquitoes, no matter how bad they were. Uncle Dick had a similar net for his own little shelter-tent. As for Moise, he had a head-net and a ragged piece of bar which he did not use half the time, thinking it rather beneath him to pay too much attention to the small nuisances.

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"You'll better go to bed pretty soon, young mans," said Moise, speaking to his young friends after they had finished their supper. "If those fly bite me, he'll got sick of eating so much smoke, him. But those fly, he like to bite little boy." And he laughed heartily, as he saw the young companions continually brushing at their faces.

Uncle Dick drew apart from the camp at the time and went out to the edge of the bank, looking down at the water far below.

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"You can bet that's a steep climb," commented John—"two hundred feet, I should think. And I don't see how we'll get the horses down there in the morning."

"At least one hundred and fifty feet," assented his uncle. "But I reckon we can get across it somehow, if the engineers can get a railroad and trains of cars over it—and that's what they're going to do next year. But, as I have told you, never worry until the time comes when you're on the trail. The troubles'll come along fast enough, perhaps, without our hurrying them up any. Take things easy—that's what gets engineers and horses and railroads across the Rockies."

"How long before we get to the Rockies, Uncle Dick?" inquired John, pointing to the west, where the clouds had now hidden the distant range from view.

"All in due time, all in due time, my son," replied the engineer, smiling down at him. "A good deal depends on how quickly we can make and break camp, and how many miles we can get done each day through muskeg and bush and over all sorts of trails and fords. For instance, if we lost half our horses in Wolf Creek here to-morrow, we might have to make quite a wait. But don't worry—just turn in before the mosquitoes get you."

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### III

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#### HITTING THE TRAIL

"Look on the tent, fellows!" exclaimed Jesse, the first thing next morning, just as dawn was beginning to break. "It's almost solid mosquitoes!"

"About a million," said John, sitting up in his blankets. "All of them with cold feet, waiting for the sun to come up."

They were looking at the top of the tent, where in the folds of the netting a great cloud of mosquitoes had gathered in the effort to get through the cheese-cloth.

"Did any bite you in the night, Jesse?" asked Rob, from his bed.

"No, but I could hear them sing a good deal until I went to sleep."

"Well, come ahead; let's roll out," said Rob. "All those mosquitoes will come to life when it gets warm."

They kicked off the blankets, slipped into their clothing, and soon were out in the cool morning air. The spring night had been a dewy one, and all the shrubs and grasses were very wet. [Pg 29]

"Hello there, young mans!" they heard a voice exclaim, and saw Moise's head thrust out from beneath his shelter. "You'll got up pretty early, no?"

"Well, we've got to be moving early," said Rob. "Anyway, we beat Uncle Dick up this morning."

"That's right," called out the voice of Uncle Dick, from his tent, "but the quicker we get started the quicker we'll get over Wolf Creek. Now you boys go over there where you hear the gray mare's bell and see if you can round up all the pack-train. You'll learn before long that half the campaign of a pack-train trip is hunting horses in the morning. But they'll stick close where the pea-vine is thick as it is here."

Our three young Alaskans were used to wet grass in the morning, and after the first plunge, which wet them to the skin, they did not mind the dew-covered herbage. Soon, shouting and running, they were rounding up the hobbled pack-horses, which, with the usual difficulty, they finally succeeded in driving up close to the camp, where by this time Moise had his fire going. The wilder of the horses they tied to trees near by, but some of the older ones stood unhitched with heads drooping in the chill morning air, as though unhappy, but resigned to their fate. Moise, as usual, rewarded old gray Betsy, the bell-mare, with a lump of sugar as she passed by. The others, with the strange instinct of pack-horses to follow a leader, grouped themselves near to the old white mare. The boys put the blankets over the backs of some of the horses while waiting for Moise to finish his breakfast. [Pg 30]

"Grub pile!" sung out Moise, after a while; and soon, in the damp morning air, with white mist hanging over the low land about them, they were eating their morning meal.

"Tea for breakfast," said Rob, smiling. "Well, I suppose it's all right up here, but in our country we mostly have coffee."

"We'd have it here if we could get it good," said Uncle Dick; "but, you see, we're a good ways from home, and coffee doesn't keep as well as tea on the trail, besides being much bulkier."

"Now," said Jesse, his mouth full of bacon, "as soon as I get done breakfast I'm going to try that diamond hitch all over again. Moise says the one I did yesterday slipped on him." [Pg 31]

"That's happened to many a good packer," said Uncle Dick. "Sometimes a pack gets snagged in the bush, or all sorts of other things may happen to it. They tell me that a mule will look at two trees and not try to go between them if it sees the pack won't squeeze through, but with some of these northern cayuses I think they try to see how many times they can crowd through between trees and scrape off their packs. But finish your breakfast, young men, and eat plenty, because we're going to have a long trip to-day."

After they had finished breakfast Rob led up the big roan Billy, which always went next to the gray lead-mare with the mare, and on which they usually packed their blankets and small tent. Billy stood quite calmly, but with his head and ears depressed, as though feeling very sad.

"Ready with those blanket packs now, boys," called Uncle Dick; and soon they had them alongside, each bed rolled in its canvas covering. [Pg 32]

"Now up with the saddle, Rob."

Rob threw the sawbuck pack-saddle on top of the padded blanket.

"Cinch tight—that's half in packing, to have the saddle firm."

And, following Uncle Dick's instruction, Rob made the cinch as tight as he could.

"Now get on the off side," said Uncle Dick; "and Jesse, you watch us, how we work. You can all help if you want to."

"Are your sling-ropes all ready, Rob?" he inquired next. "Of course, you see, the sling-ropes simply act like baskets on each side the pack-saddle. They only support, and don't make fast."

"Now then, up with your side packs into your sling-ropes—so—that's all right. Then the top pack on over the saddle, fitting well between the two side packs. Shake them all down so to fit tight together. Now throw the canvas cover over the top, and see that nothing is where it will get busted when you cinch up."



"There, now, that's all right as far as it goes. Next we come to the one part of packing more important than anything else. It is the hitch which holds everything together. We're going to throw the diamond hitch now. Without that, folks couldn't have settled this western country or built railroads over the Rockies, maybe."

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"Who first invented the diamond hitch, Uncle Dick?" queried Rob.

"Nobody knows, but it's Spanish, that's sure, and not Canadian. It got up this far north on both sides of the Rockies, brought by miners and packers of all colors and nationalities. Originally it came from Mexico, and it came there from Spain, and perhaps it came to Spain from northern Africa—who knows?—along with the cow-horse itself."

"But they don't always throw it the same way."

"No, there are several different throws of the diamond hitch, all of them good. The one I'll show you was showed me by an old *cargador* in California. Now watch carefully how it is done, for it is easier to see it than to tell about it.

"Now, here we have the long rope which makes the hitch. Some packers throw the loose end out over the back of the horse. We'll just let it point the other way—leave it tied to the horse's neck if you want."

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"At the other end of the rope is our cinch-band, and the cinch-hook at the other end of the band or girth. It's made out of wood or horn sometimes. Now, Rob, I am going to pass the belly-band under the horse. Catch the hook when it comes through. Are you all right now?"

"Yes, I've got it," answered Rob.

"Very well—you're the off-side packer, for it takes two to pack a horse. Now watch closely, all of you, at what comes next. You see Rob has the hook in his hand and I have the rest of the rope in my hand. Now I double the rope and throw it over the top of the pack to Rob, and he hooks the bight of the doubled rope over the cinch-hook. Got that all right now?"

"Yes, sir," said Rob, "I've got it hooked. That's easy so far."

"Well, now it isn't going to be quite so easy. I've known lots of intelligent men who never could get this thing straight in their heads at all. Now watch how I pull this doubled rope toward me across the top of the pack. The long end, on the left, is free, and I tighten the right-hand leg of the rope. Now, you see I pass the left-hand leg under the right-hand in another long loop, or bight—this way, see. Now I can enlarge that loop by pulling some of the free end of the rope through, can't I? I leave it all loose, because we don't pull things up until we get the whole hitch thrown and set."

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"Now I pull my big loose loop out toward the rear of the pack on my side. And I just twist the loop over, side for side, until you see it bind or twist in the middle on top the pack. That's the important thing. Now I run the right-hand side of my loop on the right-hand lower corner of my side pack. Then I carry it under the bottom of the side pack and around the lower corner in front. I just tighten it up a little, as I do this."

"Now, Rob, it's your turn. You take hold of the free end of the rope which I have tossed over to you. It runs from the twist on top of the pack to your left-hand lower corner, and under your side pack and up to me around your right-hand lower corner."

"Now you might say that your diamond is laid, and that you are ready to cinch up. The ropes will bind first where they cross on top, and tighten all the way back to the end of the cinch-hook on the off side. When everything is made fast, the last end of the rope—which, by the way, we will have to untie from our horse's neck—comes over, finishes the diamond hitch, and is made fast at my cinch-ring on the near side. We begin at the cinch-hook and finish at the cinch-ring, on the other side."

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"Now then, we begin to cinch. I begin when you call 'cinch!' That means that you have put your foot into old Billy and pulled the first leg of the rope up right in the cinch-hook. I gather up your slack and I tighten it all the way around the corners of my pack and back over the top. It is now up to you to cinch again, with your foot in the pack, as I did here just a little. That tightens all the slack clear to your corners. Now when your rope comes back to me for the last tightening I haul it hard as I can and tie off at my cinch-ring. I use a knot which I can jerk loose easily if I want to tighten or loosen the pack on the trail. So, there you are, all set." And Uncle Dick slapped old Billy on the hip as he stood groaning in great pretense of suffering, at which old Billy walked forward a few steps and stood still, awaiting the next victim in the train.

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"That's tight as a drum," said Jesse, pushing at the loaded packs.

"Humph, you mean that old Billy's tight as a drum," said Uncle Dick. "An old pack-horse

will groan as though you were killing him, and will blow up like a horned toad. Then maybe a half-hour later on the trail all his ropes will be as loose as if he had lost a year's growth. We'll have to go over all these packs just before we start down that bank, or we may lose some of them. That's why we fastened the last end of the hitch with a loop easy to pull out.

"A good pack-master," said Uncle Dick, "is worth as much as a colonel in an army. He never has sore-backed horses, because he makes up his packs well and keeps them tight. A shifting, wabbling pack is bad for the horse. Why, you can pack almost anything on a horse—they even took pianos on slings between four pack-horses in some of the mountain mining-camps in Montana. And what do you suppose was the hardest thing the old pack-train men had to carry in those days?"

"I don't know," said Rob, curiously. "What was it?"

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"Quicksilver. That made more sore backs than anything else. They carried it in flasks, and the jar or blow of the heavy liquid shifting from side to side was bad on the horses. Finally they used to nest these iron flasks in sideboards, which they could lash tight to the saddles. This kept the sloshing of the quicksilver from hurting the horses so much. Oh, they had all sorts of curious ways of packing curious things. But a good pack-train would carry almost anything, from a cook-stove to a chandelier, and not break either. They used different hitches, but the one I have showed you is about as simple and useful as any. Well, drive up the next horse now, Jess."

Thus, one after another, they finished loading up their pack-train; and, Moise having put his camp outfit and his personal equipment on the last horse, they stood ready for the trail.

"It'll be pretty bad getting down here," said Uncle Dick, "so I'll go ahead with old Betsy. All you others had better stay behind and drive the loose horses down over the bank. Don't let them break back on the trail. Are you ready? Just watch how I take it, and don't be afraid."

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So saying, setting spurs to his saddle-pony and pulling on the lariat of old Betsy, Uncle Dick disappeared over the edge of the steep bank. His hardy little animal clapped its feet close together and almost slid down the long muddy incline. Old Betsy calmly followed, and by the time the first horse was at the bottom of the deep and narrow valley the boys with much shouting and urging had started others of the band down the incline also. Uncle Dick boldly plunged into the stream, which was not very wide or very deep at that time. By the time he was struggling up the opposite bank the last of the train, followed by the young trailers, was making its way down the first slope. One by one, the horses splashed methodically across the little stream and began the long and slow ascent up the farther side, a climb of more than a hundred and fifty feet, which Uncle Dick made easier by two or three zigzags, turning at points where little trees made it possible. So at last they all found themselves on the farther side of the steep Wolf Creek valley.

"Hurrah!" said John, pulling off his cap and waving it about his head as he rode up. "That was fine, wasn't it? I was a good deal scared about it, but we got through all right."

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"And I call it mighty well done for you young men," said Uncle Dick, approvingly. "We've got every pack with us, and now we'll see if any of them need tightening up. We'll not have many crossings worse than this, I'm thinking. For two or three days we'll be among these steep valleys, where the rivers have cut regular troughs, mostly north and south. But I don't think there will be any worse muskeg than we've had already."

"Well," said Rob, "this wasn't nearly as bad as the Pembina crossing back yonder."

"No, that was three hundred feet down and a hundred yards of water. Lucky the water was low, or we'd be there yet. And, you may believe me, the engineers will have a considerable bridge to build before they get over that river and a lot of these others. If we were two months later we'd have to swim a lot of these streams, and that's something I don't want with a pack-train."

"Well," said John, "when are we going to eat lunch?"

They all laughed at John, who was always anxious about times and places for eating.

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"We don't eat lunch, young man, until we get our breakfast settled, anyhow," said Uncle Dick.

"And where is the next bad crossing?" inquired Jesse.

"Ten or twelve miles ahead, I suppose," said Uncle Dick. "That's the McLeod River, and I confess I'll be happy when we get beyond it. The railway survey runs on this side, but the old trail crosses it and runs on the north side, and we have to follow the trail."

"Suppose we get to Moose Creek in two or three hour," said Moise. "Then in about one or

two hour we come on the McLeod where we'll ford it. Then seven or eight mile good trail, we'll come on those Big Eddy. Those was good place for camp to-night, s'pose we'll all get there and not any of us drowned."

"I don't think any of us'll drown, Moise," said Uncle Dick, quietly; "we're not going to take any chances unless we have to. Well, if you're all ready we might push on."

Uncle Dick now once more led the way, followed close by old Betsy, Billy following her close and next in order. The young claybank horse, which made Moise so much trouble, now undertook to usurp a place just back of Betsy instead of falling to the rear of the train where he belonged. But as he approached meek-looking old Billy, the latter laid back his ears and kicked violently at the claybank, hitting him in the shoulder a resounding thwack.

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"Aha! you fool horse," said Moise to the offending claybank, "that's what you'll get for not know your place on the train. S'pose you got back now where you belong, eh?"

By this time the horses for the most part, however, were learning their places on the trail, and in a very few days later each horse had his own place, of which he was very jealous, resenting any attempt to take it away from him by vicious bites or kicks. How or why pack-horses regulate their own affairs in this way no one can tell, but our young friends had occasion to see it proved in their own travel.

Their trail now led through rather sharply rolling country, covered with poplar or jack-pine groves, with now and then a bit of soft bog at the foot of little valleys. At times from little heights of land they could get a glimpse of the wide flat country extending on either side, for the most part covered with dark forest growth. Not meeting any serious trouble with muskegs, they were all pretty well used to the trail by the time they had crossed Moose Creek.

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"We won't stop here," said Uncle Dick. "Get up, Danny," and he urged his saddle-horse forward. "I want to see about that McLeod crossing."

It was afternoon, and in truth every one was a little tired when at length they came to the deep valley of the McLeod River, the next stream to run north into the Athabasca. They found the banks steep, more than one hundred feet to the narrow valley below; but, thanks to the earliness of the season, the river itself was not very deep, and the point of the ford was so well chosen by the old trail-makers that they got across the river without having to swim and scarcely wetting the packs. Uncle Dick was exceedingly glad of this, for he knew the sudden rises which come in all of these streams. "Now," he said, "we're all right, and it's good going to the Big Eddy—not more than eight miles, I think."

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They found the trail easier here for a time, passing over grassy glades, where the horses very much wanted to stop to eat, but after a long and a rather hard day's drive they finally pulled up in the early evening at the double bend of the McLeod River, known as the Big Eddy.

"Now then, John," said Uncle Dick, as he swung off his saddle at the camping-place, "you hustle out your fishing-rod and go down there to the eddy and see if you can get us a trout for supper. The rest of us will take care of the camp."

"Yes," said Moise, "those bull-trout, she'll got big in that eddy, him—sometimes we'll caught him seven, eight, eleven pound long."

"Well, that'll suit me," said John, "I don't care how big they come." So saying, he picked up his rod from the saddle of his riding-pony and, feeling for the reel in his pocket, began to joint and string the rod as he passed down the bank.

The others had not been working very long at fixing the camp before they heard a shout from John, far below them. Uncle Dick chuckled. "Shouldn't wonder if he'd got hold of one of them," said he. "Better go and see, Rob—you and Jesse." The other boys ran out of cover into an open place from which they could see John at the side of the deep eddy where he had begun fishing. Rob gave a big shout. "He's got one, sure!" He could see John's rod bending strongly, while John himself was walking up and down, making excited motions, looking back over his shoulder. The two ran down to him as fast as they could. "What's the matter, John?" demanded Rob, laughing, as he saw his friend's excited actions.

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"Well, by Jiminy! I've got a whale, near's I can make out," answered John, excitedly. "I just threw in over in that slack water—baited with a piece of grouse, you know, not having anything else—and pretty soon he nailed it. I've been walking him around in there for quite a while, and can't do anything with him. He seems as big as a salmon up in Alaska."

"It's partly the current makes him pull so hard," said Rob. "Work him over here toward this bank in the quiet water, if you can."

"He don't cut up much," said Jesse.

"No," said John, "he just goes down and chugs with his head, like he wanted to break something. But I've got on a big hook, and we'll pretty near get this fellow before we're done. I wish I hadn't forgot my landing-net. But I didn't know there'd be any as big as this one." [Pg 46]

"Well, lead him in, John," said Rob, bending down at the water's edge and waiting for the fish to approach.

John tried several times to comply, but whenever the big fish saw his captors he would rush off again for deep water. They could see his big olive-green back, broad as a hand, as the fish broke water close to them sometimes. At length, after a long and hard fight, John succeeded in leading the fish close to the shore, where Rob lay waiting. It did not seem to mind the touch of Rob's fingers as he ran his hand under it. At length, with a quick clutch, he caught it by the gills and flung it out on the bank.

"Bull-trout," said he; "they used to call him *Salmo malma*, I think, down in the States. He'll weigh eight pounds, anyhow. Well, John, you certainly got supper enough for us all this time."

"Well, that's what they told me to do," said John, proudly, "and I'm hungry enough to eat him all by himself." [Pg 47]

"We'll just clean and wash him down here at the water," said Rob, "so that he'll be all ready to cook." And for boys as much acquainted with large fish as these young Alaskans were through their experience with large trout and salmon in their own country, this was a matter of no more than a few minutes' work; so soon they were climbing up the bank with their fish all ready for the pan.

"Well done, you boy!" said Moise, smiling when he saw their success. "She was good big bull-trout, yes, and she'll fry good in the pork to-night."

"Yes, young men," said Uncle Dick, "I think you've done very well to-day. We've got over two bad crossings, made over twenty miles of hard trail, and caught fish enough for supper, all between sun and sun. If we do this well every day we'll go through in great style."

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## IV

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### WESTWARD HO

It was very early in the morning when the boys heard Uncle Dick calling from his tent.

"Hello, there, young men! Are you awake?"

"Yes," answered Jesse, but so sleepily that Uncle Dick laughed.

"It's a shame to wake you up so early. How are you?"

"All right, except my knees are a little sore from riding so long yesterday."

"Well, if you'll all roll out, I'll explain why I'm anxious to make so early a start."

"Yes, Uncle Dick," grumbled John, rolling over in his blankets; "you always want to make an early start, and you've always got some reason."

Uncle Dick laughed and called Moise from his tent. "Well, I'll tell you," said he. "We've got to make the Leavings to-day."

"The Leavings—what's that?" asked Rob. [Pg 49]

"I'll tell you at breakfast," said Uncle Dick. "Now hustle out and get the horses up."

In half an hour they were all at breakfast, the better for some warm food and a cup of tea. "Now I'll tell you," said Uncle Dick, "why I'm in a hurry to-day. If we can make the Leavings by night, we'll have a good camp-ground with plenty of grass for the horses. Besides, it gives us a good starting-place for the next day's march."

"But the 'Leavings'—what is that or what are they?" demanded Rob.

"It's the old traders' name for the place where the trail leaves the McLeod River and starts west for the Athabasca."

Rob fished his map out of his pocket. "I see," said he. "The river bends south from here, and I suppose we go up the Sun Dance Creek and cut across to the other end of the bend—the place they call White Mud Creek. Then we hang to the McLeod straight on to the Leavings?"

"That's right. It's the best part of twenty-five miles, but it's a good trail and not much muskeg."

"Well, what is a muskeg, anyhow," asked Jesse, "unless it's just a mud-hole?"

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"That's precisely what it is—just a mud-hole," answered Uncle Dick. "Under a muskeg there is clay or hardpan which won't let the water through. So it is always full of mud. Drain the water off a muskeg, and it soon gets dry. They'll have to do a lot of that work up here one of these days. But now I've told you why I want to make an early start this morning; and I want you to help hustle with the packs too. It's time you're learning about that diamond hitch."

"All right," said Rob, "we'll take half the horses, and you and Moise take the other half. Mollycoddles are no good on the trail."

"They're no good anywhere. And the way to learn to do a thing is to do it. Rob, take the off side of the first horse, and let John see if he can remember how to throw the hitch on the near side."

"I'll tell you what you are, Uncle Dick," said John, leaving the fire with a piece of bannock still in his hand.

"Well, what then?" smiled Uncle Dick.

"You're not an engineer—you're a contractor! That's what you are."

"It comes to the same thing. You'll have to learn how men work in the open and get the big things done through doing little things well."

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The boys now busied themselves about their first horse. After a while, with considerable trouble and a little study, Rob turned to Uncle Dick. "How's that for the cinch, sir?" he asked.

Uncle Dick tried to run his finger under the lash-hook and nodded approvingly.

"Didn't it hurt him awfully?" asked Jesse. "He groaned as though it did."

"Don't believe all the groans of a pack-horse in camp," said Uncle Dick. "Try the girth a half-mile out on trail. But now hurry up with the next ones. That's right, John, you're throwing the cross loop all right. That's right—just remember to fix the hitch so it draws every way—and don't forget to pull it tight."

The boys got on very well with their packing until they came to the claybank horse which had given Moise so much trouble. This one proved still rather wild, snorting and jumping about when they tried to put a blanket and saddle on him.

"What are we going to do with him, Uncle Dick?" asked Rob. "The three of us can hardly hold him."

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"Oh, that's easy. Tie him to a tree and put this blinder over his eyes." He kicked toward Rob a heavy piece of leather semicircular in form and with a thong tied at the corners. Rob picked it up, and after studying it for a moment dropped the blinder over the claybank's face. To his surprise the horse now stood quite still.

"Well, what do you know about that? He thinks he's blind!" said Rob.

"Never mind what he thinks. Just go ahead and pack him."

Very much to their surprise, the boys found that as long as the claybank had the blinder over his eyes he stood quite patient and docile, not making any protest against the saddle or packs, although when they removed the blinder he snorted and kicked about quite a bit, testing thoroughly the hitch-rope by which he had been made fast. When the time came to start, however, he had once more changed his mind, and took his place meekly at the end of the train.

Meantime Moise had started up all the saddle-ponies, and the boys, slinging their rifles and other gear to the saddles, all were soon mounted and on the trail even before the sun was fifteen minutes high.

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"Well, that's what I call work," said John. "I don't know but I'd rather travel in a boat than

go this way. You don't have to saddle up a boat every morning and hustle around to keep from getting tramped on."

"Ah, but there's nothing like the mountains, fellows," said Rob; "and a pack-train will take us right into the middle of them."

"Well, the nights are so short away up here north in Canada and Alaska that a fellow has to go to bed in the daylight and get up in the dark. If you don't watch out you'll get fooled out of your night's sleep."

"You will if you don't watch Uncle Dick," said Rob, smiling.

"Well, anyhow, you've done several good days' work already. From this time on we'll have it easier—maybe."

"What do you suppose he means by that?" asked John of Rob.

"I don't know," said Rob, "but we'll find out to-morrow—maybe."

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## V

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### HIGHER THAN THE ROCKIES

"How far to-day, sir?" asked Rob of the leader of their party, when, having left their camp on the bank of the McLeod at the spot known as the Leavings, they had headed straight west toward the steep divide which rose before them.

"That all depends on luck," said Uncle Dick. "We've got to climb that divide and get down off the top of it. By noon we'll be higher than the Rocky Mountains!"

"That isn't possible, of course."

"I didn't say higher than the highest peak in the Rocky Mountains. But as a matter of fact on top of the divide between the McLeod and the Athabasca we are four thousand six hundred and forty feet above sea-level, and that is nine hundred and seventeen feet higher than the summit of the Yellowhead Pass where we cross the Rockies."

"It doesn't look like a very easy trail," said Rob.

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"No, on the contrary, it is one of the most dismal and desolate parts of the whole march, with its burned forests and its steep grades. Besides, some of the worst muskeg in the country is on each side of this Athabasca divide—it just runs in terraces all up and down both sides."

"When does the first one come?" asked Rob.

"Just before we get ready for it! But if you don't discover when we get there I'll let you know. To my notion, this looks considerable like a muskeg just on ahead of us. Now we'll take a little lesson in muskeg work. What I want to say to you is, that you must never get angry and excited, either over muskeg or mosquitoes. Take it easy all the time."

They paused now at the edge of what seemed a thicket covered with low bushes, which rose above green moss and tufts of grasses. In places the swamp looked as though it would hold up either a man or a horse. None the less, the boys could see where long ago an attempt had been made to corduroy the bog. Some of the poles and logs, broken in the middle, stuck up out of the mud. A black seam, filled with broken bits of poles, trampled moss and bushes, and oozing mud, showed the direction of the trail, as well as proved how deceptive the surface of an unbroken muskeg can be.

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"Now, Jesse," said Uncle Dick, "you and John take your guns and go across on foot on one side of the trail. It will probably hold you if you keep moving and step on the tufts and the bushes. The rest of us will have to do the best we can with the horses."

"Why can't the horses go out there, too?" demanded Jesse. "It looks all right."

"There are times," said Uncle Dick, "when I wish all horses had been born with webbed feet. The hoof of a horse seems made purposely to cut through a muskeg, and the leg of a horse is just long enough to tangle him up in one. None the less, here is the muskeg, and here we are with our horses, and we must get across. We'll not go dry into camp this day, nor clean, either."

The two younger boys were able to get across without any very serious mishaps, and presently they stood, a hundred yards or more away, waiting to see what was going to happen. The horses all stood looking at them as though understanding that they were on the farther side of the troublesome country.

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"Get in, Danny," said Uncle Dick, and slapped his riding-pony on the hip. The plucky little horse walked up to the edge of the soft ground, pawing at it and sniffing and snorting in dislike. Uncle Dick slapped him on the hip once more, and in Danny plunged, wallowing ahead belly-deep in the black slime, slipping and stumbling over the broken bits of poles, and at times obliged to cease, gallant as were his struggles. Of course the saddle was entirely covered with mud. None the less, in some way Danny managed to get across and stood on the farther side, a very much frightened and disgusted horse.

"She's a bad one, Moise," said Uncle Dick, thoughtfully. "I don't know how they'll make it with the loads, but we've got to try. Come on, Rob, let's drive them in."

It took a great deal of shouting and whipping to get the poor brutes to take to this treacherous morass, but one after the other they were driven in, until at length the whole dozen of the pack-train were distributed, half-submerged, over the hundred yards of the mucky trail. Uncle Dick, not stopping to think of his clothes, followed Moise in; and Rob, pluckily as either of the others, also took to the mud. Thigh-deep, plunging along as best they could, in the churned up mass, they worked along the animals, exhorting or encouraging them the best they could. It was piteously hard for all concerned, and for a long time it seemed doubtful if they would get the whole train across. Sometimes a horse, exhausted by its struggles, would lie over on its side, and the three of them would have to tug at him to get him started again.

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The last horse in the train was the unhappy claybank. Within a few yards of the farther side this horse bagged down, helpless, and fell over on its side, its pack down in the mud, and after plunging viciously for a time lay flat, with its head out, so that Rob had to cut some brush to put under it.

"Broken leg, I'm afraid," said Uncle Dick. "It's that rotten corduroy down in the mud there. What shall we do, Moise, cut off the packs and—but I hate to shoot a horse."

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"S'pose you'll wait some minute," said Moise, after a time, coming up plastered with mud from head to foot. "Those horse, she'll want for rest a little while."

"Feel down along his hind leg if you can, Moise," said Uncle Dick; "that's the one that seems helpless."

Moise obediently kneeled in the mud and reached his arm along down the cayuse's legs.

"Those legs, she always there," said he, arising. "Maybe those horse, she'll just fool us." Then he began to exhort the helpless animal. "*Advance donc, sacré cochon diable cheval! En avant la—whoop!*"

Moise continued his shouts, and, to the surprise of all, the disabled horse began to flounder once more; and as they all lifted at his pack and pushed him forward he gave a series of plunges and finally reached firm ground.

"So," said Moise, calmly, "thass all right. She was French horse, thass all—you'll been spoke English on him, and he wasn't understood it."

Uncle Dick, grimed as he was from head to foot, could not help laughing at Moise's explanation. Then they all stood and laughed at one another, for they, as well as the saddles and packs, were black with muck.

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"I told you, young men," said Uncle Dick, "that we wouldn't make a clean camp to-night. You see now why we have covers on the packs, don't you, and why we roll everything in canvas? Well, anyhow, we're across that one, and I hope there's nothing any worse ahead, although you never can tell."

The pack-horses seemed to have very short memories of their troubles, for when the line of march was again resumed they went on peacefully enough, even the claybank bringing up the rear as though nothing had happened to him.

It was a stiff climb which confronted them now, on the eastern slope of the big Athabasca divide; but as they rose the terrors of the trail were in some part compensated by the splendid views of the country which now were disclosed as they passed into this or that opening along the jack-pine ridge. A wide panorama lay off to the east, the country from which they had come; and at last, when finally they had arrived at the top of the divide, they could see the barren slopes of the Rockies, now apparently so close as to be within a

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half-day's travel. It was a savage and desolate scene which lay about them, the more gloomy because of the wide areas of dead and half-burned timber which stretched for miles beyond. Weary and travel-stained as the young travelers were, a feeling of depression came upon them, seeing which Uncle Dick did his best to cheer them up.

"Never mind," said he; "that much is behind us at least. We're nearly a thousand feet above the McLeod River here, and it's over thirteen hundred feet down to the Athabasca yonder. There's bad going between here and there, although the valley itself isn't so bad. So I tell you what I think we'll do—we'll make an early camp, and Moise and I will go off to the south of the main trail and see if we can't work over the heads of some of the creeks. It may be rougher country, but it ought not to be quite so soft."

They were glad enough to follow this counsel, and when at last they came to a little open glade with running water they pulled up and began the unpleasant work of removing the muddy packs. [Pg 62]

"I've got mud in my hair and my eyes and my mouth yet," said Rob, laughing.

"And my stirrups are full, and my rifle scabbard and everything else," added Jesse.

"Well, I don't call this any fun," said John; "I don't like to be dirty."

"Nonsense!" said Rob. "It'll all wash off. And once we are clean and have a cup of tea, we'll be just as good as new."

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## VI

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### THE ATHABASCA AT LAST

"Well, what luck did you have, Uncle Dick?" inquired Jesse, the next morning, when, a little later than usual, they were once more ready to take the trail.

"Do you mean what luck I had in finding a new trail? Well, none too good, but better, I think, than the one on ahead. Anyway, we'll try it. If we can make the mouth of Hardisty Creek, we can't complain. Besides, talking of adventures, you can't think of anything that has more chance in it than finding a new trail down the Athabasca side of this divide—no telling how many muskegs or hills or creeks we may run into."

Uncle Dick, however, proved to be a very practical wilderness guide, for he now led the party considerably to the south of the old trail into country broken and covered with down timber, but with little or none of bad muskeg in it. By noon they were well down toward the water-grade of the Athabasca itself, and at night, after a long, hard day's work, they made their encampment at a point which to the eye seemed almost within touch of the Rocky Mountains themselves. They counted on much better going in the flat valley of the Athabasca than they had had in crossing the country back of them, broken as it had been with many little waterways and by the deep, troughlike valleys of the bolder streams making northward into the Athabasca. [Pg 64]

By this time their camp work seemed less like a picnic and more like routine work, but on the other hand they were settling down to it in steady and businesslike fashion, so that it did not take them long either to make or to break camp. Nor did their weary bodies leave them time to enjoy the splendid mountain view which now lay about them.

On the next day, leaving the big peak of Mount Hardisty behind them, they made a swift climb up the valley of a little creek called Prairie Creek, the beaten trail leaving the main valley and heading off parallel to the big shallows of the Athabasca, known as Brule Lake. Now the great shoulders of the Rockies seemed to come close about them. They were following the general course of the Athabasca valley southward to the point where it breaks out through its gate of the hills. Folding Mountain now rose to the left of them, and when finally they pitched their camp on the next night in a little glade near its foot they felt the pleasing assurance that at last they were getting to the Rockies themselves. Their leader pointed out to them that they were now within the original lines of the great Dominion reserve known as Jasper Park, five thousand square miles in extent, and reaching from the place where they were to the summit of the Rockies themselves, and to the eastern edge of the province of British Columbia. [Pg 65]

"From where we are," said Uncle Dick, that night, "it is seven or eight miles to the Athabasca River at the end of Brule Lake. Once more we are at a place where we have the choice of two evils."



"I know," said Rob, once more pulling out his map; "you mean we'll have to go over the Roche Miette—that big hill on ahead there."

"Yes, if we keep this side the Athabasca we will," said Uncle Dick. "The Roche Miette is a historic landmark on this trail of the fur-traders, and I never heard that any of them ever loved it, either. There's no way of getting between it and the Athabasca, and the trail over it certainly is bad enough. There are places where a pack-horse might slip off, and if so it would go many a hundred feet before it stopped."

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"What would we do if that sort of thing happened?" demanded John.

"Well," said Uncle Dick, "we'd do precisely what other fellows have done when that happened to them. But it hasn't happened yet, and maybe won't at all."

"It's over a thousand feet high," said Rob, standing and looking at the face of the big cliff ahead of them.

"Yes, and that means a thousand feet down on the other side, too. Worse than that, it means fording the Rocky River on beyond, and she's a wild one. Then you've got to ford the Maligne, as well as a lot of little creeks. After that you've got to ford the Athabasca—because we've got to get across the Athabasca in order to go up the Miette River to the Yellowhead Pass."

The boys stood silent, looking at one another, none too happy at these hardships and dangers which confronted them.

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"Don't look so glum," said Uncle Dick. "I've been over this trail three times each way, and the old traders used to cross here dozens of times each way and thought nothing of it. You must learn to be like soldiers, and be contented if you have a good supper and a good place to sleep. Besides, I've got a plan that I'll tell you about in the morning."

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## VII

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### CROSSING THE ATHABASCA

The boys felt a little more cheerful the next morning after they had had their breakfast, and Rob finally asked the noncommittal leader of their party what he had meant the night before when he mentioned his plan for avoiding the Roche Miette.

"Well, some of us may get wet again," said Uncle Dick; "but if we can make it through, we can save a little time and a little risk, I think."

"I know," said Rob; "you mean to ford the Athabasca—or swim it."

Uncle Dick nodded. "The horses will have to swim, but I hope we will not. For that matter, we might have to swim the Rocky River, on ahead. Of course, the higher up the Athabasca we go the less water there is in it, but down in this country she spreads out on gravel-bars and sand-flats. If we can make it across here, it'll be a good thing, the way I figure it."

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"The streams are not as high now as they will be a month from now," said Rob. "It's cold up in the hills yet, and the snow isn't melting. This country's just like Alaska in that way."

"That's the way I figure," said Uncle Dick. "I know the regular trail is on this side the Athabasca, but at the same time they do sometimes ford it down below here. We'll go have a look, anyhow."

Accordingly, they started out from their camp near Folding Mountain, not in the direction of Roche Miette, but departing from the trail nearly at right angles. They pulled up at last on the shores of the rushing, muddy Athabasca. Here they found a single cabin, and near it a solitary and silent Indian. What was better, and what caused Uncle Dick's face to lighten perceptibly, was a rough home-made bateau of boards which lay fastened at the shore.

"How deep?" asked Uncle Dick, pointing to the swirling waters, here several hundred yards in width.

The Indian grinned and made signs, motioning with his hand at his knees, at his waist, and far above his head.

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"Swimming it, eh?" said Uncle Dick. "Well, that means swimming the horses across. Also it means freighting the packs. Off with the loads, then, boys, and let's get busy."

The Indian and Uncle Dick now examined the boat and found that it would ferry something like five hundred pounds besides two men acting as oarsmen. As they had something like three-quarters of a ton in the pack-loads, this meant several trips in the boat.

Meantime Moise, singing and laughing as usual, proceeded to build a fire and to make a little midday camp, for he knew they would tarry here for some time.

"We'll wouldn't took all the grub over right way first thing," said he. "Better eat plenty first."

"All right, Moise," said John; "I'm hungry right now, and I'll eat any time you say. But I think we'd better wait until we see how they come out with the boat."

With the first load of supplies in the skiff, Uncle Dick and the Indian had a good stiff pull of it, for the current of the Athabasca here is at least six or eight miles an hour. But by heading up stream they managed to land nearly opposite the place where they had started. By the time they had returned for the second load all the packs were off and the horses were ready for the crossing. Uncle Dick thought that it would be best to cross the horses at once, as any mountain stream is lower in the early part of the day than it is in mid-afternoon, when the daily flood of melting snow is at its height.

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The boys had often heard of this way of getting a pack-train across a river too deep to ford, and now they were to see it in actual practice. The Indian, wading out, showed that there was a shallow hard bar extending some distance out and offering good footing. He pushed the boat out some distance from shore and sat there, holding it with an oar thrust into the sand. Uncle Dick rode his saddle-pony out a little way, and led the white bell-mare, old Betsy, along behind him, passing Betsy's rope to the Indian as he sat in the boat. Betsy, as may be supposed, was a sensible and courageous horse, well used to all the hardships of mountain work.

It is the way of all pack-horses to be given to sudden frights, but, still, if they see that another horse has gone ahead they nearly always will try to follow. All the other horses now stood looking out at Betsy. As they did so the others of the party made a sort of rope corral behind them and on each side. All at once Moise and Uncle Dick began to shout at the horses and crowd them forward toward the water. Although they plunged and tried to break away, they were afraid of the rope, and, seeing Betsy standing there, one after another they splashed out into the shallow water.

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Uncle Dick sprang on top of his horse, Danny, once more, and headed off those which undertook to come back to the bank. Then, once more riding out to the boat, he sprang off nearly waist-deep into the water and climbed into the boat, leaving Danny to take his chances with the others. Both men now bent to the oars. Old Betsy, seeing her rope fast to the boat for the time, swam toward it so strongly that they were almost afraid she would try to get into it, so at length Uncle Dick cut off the rope as short as he could and cast everything loose. By that time, as good-fortune would have it, all the horses were swimming, following the white lead-mare, which, seeing the shore on ahead, and not seeing the shore behind, and, moreover, seeing human beings in the boat just ahead, struck out sturdily for the other side.

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The swift icy current of the Athabasca carried the animals far down-stream, and this time Uncle Dick did not try to keep the boat up-stream, but allowed it to drift with the horses, angling down. It seemed to those left on the hither shore at least half an hour before a call from the other side announced that the boatmen had reached shallow water. Of course it was not so long; but, whether long or short, it certainly was fortunate that the journey had been made so quickly and so safely. For now, one after another, they could see the horses splashing and struggling as they found solid footing under them, so what had lately been a procession of heads and ears became a line of pack-horses straggling up the bank; and a very cold and much-frightened train of pack-horses they were, too, as Uncle Dick could have told his young companions. But what he did was to give a great shout which announced to them that all was safe.

After that, of course, it was simply a question of freighting over the remainder of the supplies and the others of the party, and of rounding up the scattered horses from the grazing-places in the woods. Moise insisted on having tea before the last trip was made; and by this time the boys realized that at no time in these operations had they been left alone with no one older than themselves to care for them in case of accidents, nor had they been left without supplies close at hand.

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"You're a pretty good manager, Uncle Dick," said John, while they sat on a long log by the fireside before the last trip across the river. "I'm willing to say that you're a pretty good engineer as well as a pretty good contractor."

"Nothing venture, nothing have," said Uncle Dick. "You have to use your head on the trail a little bit, as well as your nerve, however. We'd have had to swim the Athabasca anyhow, and I'd about as soon swim a train over a broad, steady river as to try to cross a rough mountain river with a loaded train, and maybe get a horse swept under a log-jam. Anyway, we can call the river crossed, and jolly glad I am of it, too."

"When do we get any fishing?" asked Jesse. "That water looks too muddy for trout."

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"We won't get any fishing for a couple of days yet, probably," said Uncle Dick. "And as to shooting, you must remember that we are now in Jasper Park, and if we struck a game warden he would seal all our guns for us."

"Well," said Rob, "I see there's a lake over here called Fish Lake."

"Yes. The old traders' trail runs between Fish Lake and Brule Lake, and a great piece of sand it is in there, too—we engineers will have to put blankets on that country to keep it from blowing away when we build the railroad through. But we'll miss all that, and tomorrow we'll stop at Swift's place, on the other side of the river."

"Whose place?" asked John. "I didn't know anybody lived in here."

"It's an odd thing about this country," said Uncle Dick, "but people do live all over it, and have done so for a hundred years or two, although it, none the less, is the wilderness. Sometimes you will find a settler in the wildest part of the mountains. Now, Swift is an old Yankee that came up here from the States about thirty years ago. He used to trade and trap, perhaps, and of late years he has made him quite a farm. Besides that, he has built himself a mill and makes his own flour. He's quite an ingenious old chap, and one of the features of the country. We engineers found his fresh vegetables pretty good last season. For my part, I hope he makes a fortune out of his land if we locate a town near him. His place isn't so very far from Jasper House. That was the first settlement in this country—the Hudson's Bay's post, more than a hundred years ago."

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"Is it still standing?" asked Rob.

"Oh no, and hasn't been for years. We can still see a few logs there, and nothing more. It fell into disuse maybe fifty years ago, and was abandoned altogether twenty-five years back, and since then burned down. It's the only post, so far as I know, called after a man's Christian name. The old posts were called 'houses,' but this one was built by Jasper Hawse. Hardy old chap, old Jasper, I presume; because, he made such good fur returns that the rival company, the old Nor'westers, came in here and built a post, which they called Henry House, on up the river some miles from Jasper House. But the Nor'westers couldn't stand the competition, and before long they abandoned their post, and it has been left so ever since. Lastly came the engineers, following the traders, who followed the Indians, who followed the wild-game trails; and behind us will come the railroads. In two or three years, if you like, you youngsters can come through here on the train a great deal more easily than you are doing it now."

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"But now," concluded Uncle Dick, "we must go across the river and see how old Betsy is getting along with her family."

They made this final trip with the boat without incident, and Uncle Dick gave the Indian ten dollars for his help, which seemed to please that taciturn person very much.

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## VIII

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### IN HIGH ALTITUDES

"Well, I want to shoot something," said John, as they stood in their camp the following morning. "I don't like this park business."

"Nonsense, John," said Rob. "A park is just a place where you raise wild animals; and if there were no parks, pretty soon there wouldn't be any wild animals. Besides, it's such a glorious morning, and this country is so beautiful, that for one I don't much care whether or not we shoot anything for a day or two."

"Well, I like a free country," said John, loudly.

"So do I, but you can say one thing; when a railroad comes into a country and it begins to settle up, you can't have free hunting forever."

"We can have good fishing before long, young gentlemen," said Uncle Dick. "In fact, I'll show you a lake or two up above here where you shall have all the fun you want. This used to be a great fur country. I fancy the Stony Indians killed off a good many of the sheep and bears on the east side of the Rockies below here, and of course along the regular trails all game gets to be scarce, but I will show you goat trails up in these hills which look as though they had been made by a pack-train. I don't doubt, if one would go thirty or forty miles from here, he could get into good grizzly country, but you know we put our grizzly shoots off for the other side of the Rockies, and we all agreed just to plug on through until we got to the summit."

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"How's the country on ahead?" asked John, dubiously.

"Bad enough," said Uncle Dick, "but it might be worse. At least, there is a lot of ground on this side the river which is solid, and in fact I wouldn't say there is anything very bad until we get pretty well up the Miette River where the cross-creeks come down. We may find some soft going up there, with the snow just beginning to melt, as it is. But now let's get into saddle and push on."

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They soon were under way once more, passing up the wide valley and now entering deeper and deeper into the arms of the great Rockies themselves. Not far from their camp they paused for a moment at the ruins of old Jasper House. It was as Uncle Dick had said. Nothing remained excepting one cabin, which showed evident marks of being modern.

"It's too bad," said Rob, "that these old historic houses ever were allowed to pass away. How nice it would be if we could see them now, just the way old Jasper Hawse built them. But log cabins don't stand as well as stone houses, I've noticed."

"I wonder if Mr. Swift is going to build him a stone house when the town comes," said Jesse. "I suppose it's only a log house he's got now."

"Quite right," said Uncle Dick, "and it's only a little way until we reach it to-day. We'll celebrate our crossing the Athabasca by making a short journey to-day."

So presently they did pull up at the quaint frontier home known all along the trail as "Swift's." They were met by the old man himself, who seemed to be alone—a gaunt and grizzled figure of the old frontier breed. He came out and shook hands with each in turn and helped all to get off their saddles and packs, evidently glad to see them, and still more pleased when Uncle Dick told him that these boys had come all the way from Alaska.

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"Alasky?" said he. "You don't tell me! Now here I be, and I thought I'd come a long way when I come from the States thirty year ago. Alasky, eh? I've heard there's gold up there. Maybe I'll stroll over there some day."

"It's a good long way, Mr. Swift," said Rob, smiling.

"Well, maybe 'tis, maybe 'tis," said the old man, "but I betche when they get the railroad across it wouldn't be any farther than it was when I punched a pack-horse up from the state of Washington. Which way you headed?"

"Clear across to the Pacific," said Rob, nonchalantly. "We live at Valdez, in Alaska, and that's a week's sail from Seattle. We crossed the Peace River summit last year—"

"You did? Now you don't tell me that!"

"Yes, sir, and Moise here was with us. And this year we're going across the Yellowhead and down the Fraser to the Tête Jaune Cache, and from there we are going down the Canoe River to the Columbia, and down the Columbia River to the railroad, and then west to the coast. It's easy enough." And Rob spoke rather proudly, perhaps just a little boastfully.

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The old man shook his head from side to side. "Well, I want to know!" said he. "If I didn't know this gentleman of the engineers I'd say you boys was either crazy or lying to me. But he's a good man, all right, and I reckon he'll get you through. So you're going over to the old Tee-John, are you? I know it well."

"And we hope to see the old Boat Encampment on the Columbia where the Saskatchewan trail came in," added Rob, reaching for his map.

"I know it well," said the old man—"know it like a book, the whole country. Well, good luck to you, and I wish I was going through; but I'll see ye up in Alasky in a couple of years, when this here railroad gets through. I got to stay here and tend to my garden and farm and my town lots for a while yit."

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The old man now showed them with a great deal of pride his little fields and his system of irrigation, and the rough mill which he had made with no tools but a saw and an ax. "I used

to pack in flour from Edmonton, three hundred and fifty miles," said he, "and it wasn't any fun, I can tell you. So I said, what's the use—why not make a mill for myself and grind my own flour?"

"And good flour it is, too, boys," said Uncle Dick, "for I've tasted it often and know."

"I s'pose we ought to get on a little bit farther this evening," said John to the leader of the party, after a while.

"No, you don't," said the old man; "you'll stay right here to-night, I tell you. Plenty of trouble on ahead without being in a hurry to get into it, and here you can sleep dry and have plenty to eat. I haven't got any trout in the house to-day, but there's a little lake up by Pyramid Mountain where you can ketch plenty, and there's another one a few miles around the corner of the Miette valley where you can get 'em even better. Oh yes, from now on you'll have all the fish you want to eat, and all the fun, too, I reckon, that you come for. So you're all the way from Alaska, eh? Well, I swan! I've seen folks here from England and New York and Oregon, but I never did see no one from Alaska before. And you're just boys! Come in and unroll your blankets."

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## IX

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### THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAINS

"Well, boys," said Swift, the next day after breakfast, "I wisht ye could stay longer with me, but I reckon ye got to be on your way, so I'll just wish ye well and go about my planting."

"So long, friend," said Uncle Dick, as they parted. "We'll see you from time to time. When the railroad gets through we'll all be neighbors in here."

"Sure," said the old man, none too happily. "It's a fright how close things has got together sence I packed north from the Columby thirty year ago. Well, I hope you'll get some trout where you camp to-night. You'd ought to go up on my mountain and ketch some of them lake-trout. I dun' no' where they come from, for there ain't nothing like 'em in no other lake in these mountains. But I reckon they was always in there, wasn't they?"

"Certainly they were," answered Uncle Dick. "I know about those trout. They tell me they are just like the lake-trout of the Great Lakes. But we can't stop for them to-day. I'll promise the camp some rainbow-trout for supper, though—at least for to-morrow night."

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"I know where ye mean," said the old man, smiling; "it's that little lake off the Miette trail. Plenty o' rainbows in there."

"We'll camp opposite that lake to-night."

"And pass my town site this morning, eh? Wish it well for me. If I've got to be civilized I'm going to be plumb civilized. Well, so long."

They all shook hands, and the little pack-train turned off up the north-bound trail.

They were now following along a rude trail blazed here and there by exploring parties of engineers. Presently Uncle Dick pointed them out the place where the new town was to be built.

"Here," said he, pulling up, "is where we will have a division point, with railway shops, roundhouses, and all that. Its name will be Fitzhugh."

"Huh!" said John, "it doesn't look much like a town yet. It's all rocks and trees."

"But there's a fine view," said Rob, looking out over the landscape with critical eye. "I presume that's the valley of the Maligne River coming in on the other side of the Athabasca, isn't it, Uncle Dick?"

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"Yes, and I am glad we don't have to ford it, but are on this side of the big river."

"It looks like another valley coming down from the right, on ahead," said Rob.

"That's the Miette valley, and we turn up that as though we were going around a corner. Just ahead is where we leave the Athabasca valley. That river runs off to the left. The big white mountain you see square ahead is Mount Geikie. The Athabasca runs south of that, and the Miette this side. In short, this is the place where the old trails fork. Yonder goes the

trail to the Athabasca Pass, and here to the right is ours to the Yellowhead."

"Which did they find first, Uncle Dick?" inquired John.

"As I was telling you, the Athabasca Pass was the first discovered. That is, it was found before the Yellowhead. Far south, at the head of the Saskatchewan, Duncan McGillivray discovered what is called the Howse Pass. That was in 1800. Some suppose that pass was named after old Jasper Hawse, or Howse, who founded Jasper House just below us on the river here.

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"The traders used the Howse Pass quite a while, until, as I told you, the Flathead Indians and Kootenais got guns from the west and whipped the Piegans, down below here. That started old David Thompson out hunting for another pass further north. It is thought that the Athabasca Pass was discovered by J. Henry, a free trapper, about 1810. The Yellowhead Pass, which we are going to cross in due time, was not really discovered or used by the traders until about 1825 or 1826. But our friend Jasper Hawse seems to have used it before that time."

"And he went right up this way where we are going now," said Rob, musingly.

"He certainly did," said Uncle Dick. "There wasn't any other place for him to go if he started up the Miette."

"It seems to me as though the engineers were always following rivers," said Jesse.

"Precisely. When you have learned the rivers of a country you know its geography, and a good part of its history, too. You'll realize more and more that white explorers did very little discovering. They clung to the rivers, which already had paths along them—paths made by the native tribes. Engineers like to stick to stream valleys because the grades are light. All the great passes of the Rockies were found by following rivers back into the hills, just as we are doing now."

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"It's fine," said John, "to feel that we are right here where the old men used to travel, and that we've got to travel the way they did. I'm glad I came."

"I'm glad, too," said Uncle Dick. "It has been rather hard work, and now I propose to give you a little rest, so the horses can pick up as well as ourselves. There's good grass in the valley on ahead, and we'll go into camp rather early."

They pushed on now, swinging away presently from the great valley of the Athabasca, hemmed in by its mountains, and beginning to climb the steeper ascent of the Miette. At the foot of the narrow valley they could see the racing green flood of the river, broken here and there by white rapids, on its way to the valley of the Athabasca, whose rift in the hills they now lost as they continued their ascent.

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Late in that afternoon they found good camping-ground by the side of a brawling little mountain stream. The boys were happy and light-hearted as they went about pitching their camp, for the spot was very lovely, the weather fine, and the going had not been so difficult as to tire them out. They plunged into the camp duties with such enthusiasm as to please Moise very much.

"Those boy, she'll been all right, Monsieur," said that worthy to Uncle Dick. "She'll come through all right, all same trapper man."

"Certainly," said Uncle Dick; "unless we have some bad accident we'll have a very fine journey all the way across."

"And to-morrow she'll caught some feesh?" inquired Moise. "Why not get some sheeps, too? Me, I am tired of those bacon all the time."

"We're still inside the Jasper Park Reservation," replied Uncle Dick, "so we can't shoot game, but to-morrow I'll promise you some fish in camp. We're now getting into the Rockies, and we'll have fish every day now, if you like."

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## X

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### RAINBOW LAKE

The boys were up early, excited by the prospect of a day's sport, and before the sun had more than shown above the hills they were out in the dewy grass and ready for

breakfast. From their camp they could hear the rushing of the swift Miette below them. All around them lay a wonderful mountain view—Mount Geikie on one side, and off ahead, apparently closing the valley itself, three tall white peaks which were to rise before them for some time yet. The high, dry air of the mountains was most refreshing, and all were full of life and joy when their leader at length told them that they might start for the hidden lake back in the hills.

“How’d you happen to find that lake?” asked John. “It doesn’t seem to show anywhere in this valley.”

“We found it on the same principle as they found the Yellowhead Pass,” said Uncle Dick. “When we struck this little creek we knew it must come from somewhere, and as a matter of fact we were hungry for trout. So we followed the creek until we discovered the lake that we call Rainbow Lake, where we are going to-day. It’s bad walking along the creek, however, and we’ll find it much easier to go on up the valley a little way, and then cross over the high ridge to the right. It’s a climb of about a thousand feet, but the going is good, and it’s only a mile or so over to the lake in that way.”

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Following their leader, they all started up the valley, each with his fishing-rod in hand. Soon they were making their way up the steep slope of the lofty ridge which lay between the valley and the hidden lake. From time to time they stopped to catch their breath, and at such times sat looking with wonder at the great mountain prospect which rose before them as they climbed.

“It certainly seems as though we were the first to be here,” said Jesse. “You can’t see the track of anybody in here.”

“No,” said Uncle Dick, “no tin cans just yet, and we might as well call ourselves the first, because we’re traveling precisely as the first men did who came through here. But I would like to ask you whether you discovered anything this morning out of the way.”

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John and Jesse could not think of anything, but Rob hesitated. “I’ll tell you what,” said he, “it seems to me there must have been more than one trail up this valley. At least, I’ve seen two this morning.”

“Precisely. The main trail ran lower down, below our camp. The other trail which you noticed cut across a low place in this ridge back of us. Now that trail runs right along the side of our little lake over yonder. It passes back above that lake and heads off into the mountains. It’s as deep and broad as the other trail, but nobody seems to know anything about it. It seems to strike in for the mountains somewhere north of Yellowhead Pass. But where does it go? No one can tell you. Is there another pass in there, north of Yellowhead? No one can answer that. Perhaps the two trails meet somewhere between here and the Yellowhead; but if so, no one has found where. That’s a mystery, isn’t it? Some day, if I ever have time, I’m going to follow out that trail and see where it goes.

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“But come on,” he concluded; “we’ll go on over the ridge and see the trail itself by the side of the lake.”

They rose now and pushed on up to the top of their steep climb, and soon passed into the dense growth of small pines which covered it. Their leader pushed on ahead, calling to them to follow; and, although the going was very difficult on account of burned timber and tangled undergrowth, they passed on rapidly down the farther slope, until presently they broke from the cover and stood at the edge of the beautiful little mountain lake which lay green and mirrorlike, a mile or so in extent, surrounded closely on all sides by the great mountain walls.

“Well,” said John, “it’s a beauty, sure enough.”

“It certainly is,” said Jesse, “and no tin cans of worm fishermen anywhere along here, either. It looks fishy, too.”

“It certainly is fishy,” smiled Uncle Dick; “or it was last year, when I was in here. The trout don’t run so very large, but they strike well and they are mighty good to eat.”

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“What’s this old hump we’re on?” inquired Jesse, looking down curiously at his feet. They were standing on a rude pile of poles and sticks which extended well out into the lake.

“Guess,” said Uncle Dick.

“I know,” said Rob at once—“beaver!”

“Right. It’s one of the biggest beaver-houses I ever saw in my life. You’ll find beaver sign all around this lake, but I suppose they caught the last one—maybe old Swift could tell who got him, or some of his Indian friends. So all we’ll use the old beaver-house for is as a kind of

pier to stand on while we fish—the trees come so close to the lake that it is hard to get a back-cast here.”

“Well,” said Jesse, “over there to the end of the lake is a sort of point that runs out in—where it is rocky, with little trees and grass.”

“A splendid place to fish, too,” said his uncle. “Now if you and John want to go around there, Rob and I will stay here and try it. But you’ll have to be careful in crossing that marsh at the head of the lake. That’s a beaver marsh—and just to show you how old our trail is that I was mentioning, you will probably find the marsh was made later than the trail was. But you can follow it along the edge of the lake for quite a ways. It’s all full of bogs and beaver-dams farther up the valley, beyond the lake.”

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“Come on, Jess,” said John, “and we’ll go over there where we can get out a good long line.”

These boys were all of them fearless, from their outdoor training in their Alaskan home, so without hesitation the two younger members of the party started out alone and presently, after some running and splashing across the wet marsh, they reached the rocky point which they had mentioned.

“My, but this is a pretty lake!” said Jesse, standing for a time admiring the beautiful sheet of water that lay before them.

“It certainly is all alone,” said John. “I saw a trail back in there which I’ll bet was made by caribou. And there’s beaver in here yet, I’m sure.”

“Yes, and trout,” exclaimed Jesse. “Look at that fellow rise! We’ll get some sure. What fly are you going to use, John?”

“Let’s try the Coachman—I’ve noticed that in the mountains trout nearly always run at something white, and the white wings look as good as anything to me.”

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“All right,” said Jesse, and soon they were both casting as far as they could from the shore.

“Out there is a sort of reef or rocks,” said John; “I’ll bet there’s fish there. Now if I could—Aha!” he cried. “Got him! No!” he exclaimed, a minute later. “There’s two!”

As a matter of fact, John was a good caster for one of his age, and he had laid out thirty or forty feet of line when there came a silvery flash from below, followed by a second one, as two fine trout fastened at his two flies.

“I can hardly hold them, Jess,” said he, “but my! don’t they look fine down in that clear water? Rainbows, both of them, and about a pound each, I think.”

It was some time before John could control his two hard-fighting fish; but after a time, with Jesse assisting, he got them out on the hard gravel beach.

“Now you try out there, Jess,” said he. “Cast out there where the bottom looks black—that’s where they lie.”

“All right,” said Jesse; and, to be sure, he had fished but a few moments before a splash and a tug told him that he too had hooked a fine trout.

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“This is great, John, isn’t it?” exclaimed he. “And how they do fight! We never had any trout up in Alaska that fought this hard. Even the salmon we caught on Kadiak Island didn’t pull much harder.”

When finally they had landed Jesse’s trout they stood at the beach and, holding up their prizes, gave a shout, which was answered by Rob from the other side of the lake. He also held up something in his hand which was white and glistening.

“They’re having good luck, too,” said he. “Well, now let’s settle down and get a mess of trout, for I am like Moise, tired of eating bacon all the time.”

They did settle down, and, each finding a good casting-place on the rocky point, they so skilfully plied their rods that in a short time they had a dozen fine trout between them. As their companions seemed to have stopped fishing by this time, they also reeled up their lines and started back across the marsh.

“Pretty good luck, eh?” said Uncle Dick, as they admiringly held up their string of fish.

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“Well, Rob and I have got about as many here.”

“Didn’t they fight hard, though?” asked Rob. “I never saw fish of their size make such trouble.”

“The water is very cold,” said Uncle Dick, “and that makes the fish very firm and active. I



don't know just what they eat, but I suppose there must be some little minnows in the lake. Then there are some insects on warm days; and perhaps they get some kind of ground feed once in a while."

"They're all rainbows, aren't they?" said Rob. "As near as I can tell, they look like the rainbows on the Pacific slope. How did they get over here?"

"How did they get into any of the streams in the United States east of the Rocky summit?" asked Uncle Dick. "Nobody can answer that. Of course, all the rainbows in the Eastern states are planted there. But when you get up on the marsh of the Yellowhead Pass, where the water doesn't know which way to run, you will wonder if sometime in the past the Pacific trout didn't swim into Atlantic waters—just as they are said to have done at the Two-Ocean Pass, south of the Yellowstone Park. Nature has her own way of doing things, and, as she has had plenty of time, we don't always know just how she did some things."

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"I wonder," said Jesse, as he looked around him at the great mountains, "if these old mountains ever have a good time off by themselves in here. They're awfully old, aren't they?"

"I'm awfully hungry," said John. "Let's go on back to camp."

Uncle Dick smiled and led the way into the thick underbrush once more. They had a stiff climb before they reached the summit of their ridge where the timber broke away and gave them once more their splendid view out over the Miette valley and the mountains beyond. They ran rapidly down this fair slope and soon were in camp, where Moise greeted them with much joy.

"By gar!" said he, "those boy, she'll get feesh, eh? What I tole you, Monsieur Deek?"

The day was yet young, but at the earnest request of his young companions Uncle Dick consented to rest one day and allow the horses to graze, as he had promised. Therefore the boys had plenty of time that afternoon to prowl around in the neighborhood of the camp; and that night Moise, having also had abundant time to prepare his supper, offered them boiled trout, fried trout, and griddled trout, until even John at least was obliged to cry "Enough."

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## XI

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### THE PASS

**I**t seemed to our Young Alaskans that Uncle Dick was nothing if not a hard taskmaster on the trail, for before the sun was up he was calling them out of their tents.

"Come now," he warned them; "get out of those blankets at once! You've had a good day's fishing, and now we'll have to make a good day's travel to pay up for it."

Tired from their tramp of the day before, they all groaned protestingly; but Moise also called out from his fireside, "Hello, young mans! Suppose you'll got up and eat some more trout, eh?"

"I certainly am hungry," said John, and in their laughter at John's unfailing appetite Rob and Jesse found themselves awake.

"Well, get out and get the horses, young men," said Uncle Dick, relentlessly, "and then back to breakfast while I make up the packs. You see those three peaks on ahead? Well, we've got to get on the other side of them just as soon as we can. We can't afford to lose a minute at this time of the year, for the fords will be bad enough even as they are."

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When at length their little pack-train began its slow course up the valley of the Miette all the boys turned and looked behind them to say good-by to the great valley of the Athabasca, which had served them as a highway for so long. The excitement of their new adventures, however, kept them keyed up, and certainly the dangers of the trail were not inconsiderable.

The old pass of the traders now swung away from the river, now crossed high ridges, only to drop again into boggy creek-bottoms and side-hill muskeg. Several times they had to ford the Miette, no easy thing, and at other times small streams which came down from the mountains at the right also had to be crossed. The three white peaks ahead still served as landmarks, but it was not until the second day that they reached the flat prairie through

which the Miette River now wandered, broken into many little channels. Even here they found the going very soft and difficult, now impeded by down timber, or again by a rushing torrent where the ford had to be selected with the utmost care. John and Jesse were tired by the end of their second day of this hard travel; and even Rob, muddy to his knees from wading bogs, was glad when at last their leader halted.

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"It's all right, boys," said Uncle Dick. "I don't want to drive you too hard, but I know perfectly well that every day counts with us now. We've got bad country on ahead as well as bad country behind us, and we must make it through before the spring floods are on. I suppose you've noticed that all the creeks are worse late in the afternoon? But I've waited at some of these little streams four and five days without being able to ford at all."

They pushed on up through the open prairie-like country which now lay on about them, continually a panorama of mountains unfolding before them, all strange to them. An angle of the trail seemed to shut off all the valley of the Miette from them, so that they seemed in a different world.

"When will we get to the summit, Uncle Dick?" inquired Rob, after a time, as they halted at the edge of a wide green valley in whose deep grass for a time no running stream could be seen.

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Uncle Dick smiled. "We're at the summit now, you might say," said he. "I knew you couldn't tell when we got there."

"This isn't like the Peace River Pass at all," said Rob; "it doesn't look like a pass at all, but more like a flat prairie country."

"Precisely—they call that the Dominion Prairie over yonder. But a mountain pass is rarely what it is supposed to be. Take the Tennessee Pass, for instance, down in Colorado; you'll see a wide meadow with a dull creek running through it, something like this. The deep gorges and cañons are lower down in the mountains, not on top of them. What you see before you is the old Yellowhead Pass, and we are now almost at the highest point. The grade rises very little from here to the actual summit."

"Well," said John, "I never thought I'd be in a place like this in all my life. It seems a long way off from everywhere."

"It comes near being the wilderness," said his uncle. "Far north of us is the Peace River Pass, which you made last year. Just the other way is the Athabasca Pass. Yonder, south of us, is Mount Geikie, between us and the Athabasca. Over west is Mount Fitzwilliam, and across the lake from him is Yellowhead Mountain; that's the one the early traders through here used to call Mount Bingley. And on every side of us there is all kinds of country where, so far as any one knows, no white man's foot has ever trod. Northwest of the pass and north of here we don't pretend to map the country, and not one mountain in ten has got its name yet. In short, we are in the wilderness here about as much as you're apt to be in many a long day's journey, no matter where you go."

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"And yet right out in there it looks like a farm meadow," said Jesse, pointing to the green flats broken with willows and poplar mottes here and there.

"Beaver out there one time, no doubt," said Uncle Dick, "and maybe even now; but sometime there will be farms in here. At least, this is the top of the mountains and the lowest pass in all the Rockies. I'll show you the actual summit when we come to it."

They sat for some time looking about them and allowing their horses to graze. All at once Rob broke the silence. "I'm going to be an engineer sometime," said he. "I believe I'd like to do locating work in wild countries like this."

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"As for me," said John, "I believe I'd rather stay in the office and make maps and things."

"And I'm going to be a merchant," said Jesse, "and I'll ship things over your road when you get it built."

"That reminds me," said Uncle Dick, "you young men have not brought up your own map of the country we have crossed over. You are only using the maps that you could make or buy ready-made. Now, John, suppose you be official map-maker for the party and take your notes from day to day."

"Pshaw! What do I know about making a map?" said John.

"Well, you can do as well as an Indian; and let me tell you an Indian can make a pretty good map with nothing but a stick and a smooth place in the sand."

"How could I tell how far it was from one place to another?" inquired the newly elected

map-maker.

"We can't tell so very well, as we are now traveling. Of course, when engineers go out in a party they measure every mile by a chain, and know just how far they have come. The old trappers used to allow three or four miles an hour for their pack-horses in a country like this. Sometimes an engineer carries what is called a pedometer in his pocket, which tells him how far he has walked. Maybe you did not know that instrument was invented by Thomas Jefferson over a hundred years ago? Suppose you allow twenty or twenty-five miles a day, at most, for our travel. Now you have your compass, and, though you don't try to put in every little bend in the trail or in the valley, you take the courses of all the long valleys and the general directions from one peak to another. Thus between your compass and your pack-train you will have to do the best you can with your map, because we have no scientific instruments to help us."

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"All right," said John. "I'll make my notes the best I can, and every night we'll try to bring up the map. It'll be fine to have when we get back home to show our folks, won't it?"

"Well, I'll help you all I can," said Uncle Dick. "You remember the two big streams that run into the Miette back of us, where we made the fourth ford of the Miette? Well, that is just about eight miles from the Athabasca River. If we had not lost so much time with the horses bogging down we ought to have been in here yesterday instead of to-day, for now we are at Deer Creek, and that is only fourteen miles in a straight line from the Athabasca. This prairie between the forks of Deer Creek is called Dominion Prairie. The valley is soft and marshy for a couple of miles beyond the Dominion Prairie, as you can see from the way the trail runs over the edges of the ridges. The grade is a little bit steeper for three miles west of Dominion Prairie. The width of the marsh or meadow in here is about half a mile to a mile. At the last crossing of the Miette, three miles west of Dominion Prairie, the Miette is just a little stream with many branches. Now note very well the last one of these branches. That points out the true summit of Yellowhead Pass. Perhaps this very summer, if there is high water, some of the drainage water will run west from this marsh into the Fraser River, while some of it will run east into the Miette and the Athabasca."

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"Then how far have we come up the Miette all together, Uncle Dick?" inquired John, his pencil in his mouth.

"Only about seventeen miles, but they have been rather hard ones. We have climbed about four hundred feet all together in total elevation, but a great deal more than that if we count all the little ridges we have crossed over. Now do you think you can get your directions from your compass and make your map from these figures?"

"I'll try my best," said John.

"Well, come ahead," said Uncle Dick. "It isn't far from here to the place we call the top of the hill."

Surely enough, after a little more scrambling progress they pulled up beside a little square stump, or post, to which Uncle Dick pointed silently.

"I helped set that," said he, "and, believe me, it meant some work. Well, do you see the figures on it? Three, seven, two, o—that's how high we are above the level of the sea, and this is the lowest of all the mountain passes. It is a little over three thousand five hundred miles between the Atlantic and the Pacific on this railway line, and this is the highest point on the whole line. Believe me, my young friends, you are at rather an interesting place right here—so interesting that if you don't mind we'll forget the short day's travel for the last few days and make our day's camp right here."

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Nothing loath, the entire party assisted in hunting out a suitable camping-spot not far from the actual summit where grass and water were to be found and a fairly good place for the tents.

John was much excited with his first attempt at map-making; and all the boys, impressed by the interesting nature of the place in which they were encamped, plied the leader of the party with many questions.

"I was thinking," said Rob, "that the Yellowhead Pass was one of the earliest ones found, but 1826 is not so very early, is it?"

"Not so very," said Uncle Dick. "I told you how this pass came to be discovered. Well, as a matter of fact, none of these routes across the mountains were so useful after the big fur companies had established posts on the Pacific coast. This pass was used more than the Peace River Pass. The traders used to bring a good deal of buckskin through here, and sometimes this was called the Leather Pass."

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"Now you boys are going down the Columbia River on the latter part of your journey. You heard Swift say he came up the Columbia. Well, that was part of the old highway between the two oceans. In 1814 a canoe brigade started up the Columbia from the Pacific coast. Gabriel Franchere was along, and he made a journal about the trip. So we know that as early as May 16 in 1814 they had got to the Athabasca River. He mentions the Roche Miette, which we dodged by fording the river, and he himself forded in order to escape climbing it. He speaks of the Rocky Mountain House, but that was the same as Jasper House. You must remember, however, he did not cross here, but went down the Athabasca south of that big mountain you see over yonder, Mt. Geikie.

"Sir George Simpson and a party of traders came up the Columbia in 1826, but they also crossed the Athabasca Pass. They named a little lake in there the Committee's Punch Bowl, and it has that name to this day. They stopped at Henry House, and at Jasper House, lower down at Brule Lake. The first record of which I know of a crossing made here where we are was by George McDougall in 1827. He mentions the Tête Jaune Cache as being 'freshly discovered.' I presume it was found a year before.

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"A great many men crossed the Athabasca Pass, but not so many took the Yellowhead route. Even as late as 1839 the traders preferred the Athabasca Pass to this one. Father de Smet took that route in 1846. I shouldn't wonder if the mountain called Pyramid Mountain was the one originally called De Smet Mountain.

"There was an artist by the name of Paul Kane that crossed west by the Athabasca Pass in 1846. In those days the Yellowhead Pass was little used. It came into most prominence after the Cariboo Diggings discoveries of gold. Parties came out going east as early as 1860 from the gold-mines. About that time Sir James Hector was examining all this country, and he named a lot of it, too. More than a hundred and fifty miners went west through this pass in '62 bound for the Cariboo Diggings. They didn't stop to name anything, you may be sure, for they were in a hurry to get to the gold; but in 1863 Viscount Milton and Dr. Cheadle went across here and wrote a book about it which is very useful even yet. They named a lot of mountains. I don't know who named that wonderful peak Mount Robson, but it was named after Premier Robson of British Columbia in 1865.

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"Nobody knows much about this country, for the early travelers did not make many maps or journals. But about 1872 they began to explore this country with a view to railway explorations, and from that time on it has been better known and more visited, although really very few persons have ever been right where we are sitting now."

"Well," said Rob, thoughtfully, after a time, "after all, the best way to learn about a country is to go and see it yourself. You can read all about it in books, but still it looks different when you come to see it yourself."

"Wait till I get my map done," said John, "and many a time after this we'll talk it all over, and we can tell on the map right where we were all the time."

"Well, you're at the summit now at this camp," said Uncle Dick. "Yonder to the east is Miette water. Over yonder is the Fraser. It's downhill from here west, and sometimes downhill rather faster than you'll like. We've come a couple of hundred miles on our journey to the summit here, and in a little more than fifty more we'll be at the Tête Jaune Cache. That's on the Fraser—and a wicked old river she is, too."

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"How's the trail between here and there, Uncle Dick?" asked Jesse, somewhat anxiously.

"Bad enough, you may depend."

"And don't we get any more fishing?"

Uncle Dick smiled. "Well, I'll tell you," said he; "we'll probably not have a great many chances for trout as good as we'll have to-morrow. It's only two or three miles from here to Yellowhead Lake, and I think we'll find that almost as good a fishing-place as Rainbow Lake was the other day."

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## XII

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### THE WILDERNESS

"It's cold up here, just the same," said Jesse, when he rolled out of his blanket early on the following morning, "and the woods and mountains make it dark, too, on ahead there. Somehow the trees don't look just the same to me, Uncle Dick."

"They're not the same," said Uncle Dick, "and I am glad you are so observing. From here on the trees'll get bigger and bigger. They always are, on the Pacific side of the Rocky Mountains. The east side is far more dry and barren. When you get down into the Columbia valley or the Fraser country you'll see Douglas firs bigger than you ever thought a tree could grow."

"Yes, and devil's-club, too," said Rob. "I stepped on one just a little while ago, and it flew up and hit me on the knee."

Uncle Dick laughed. "You'll see devil's-club aplenty before you get done with this trip," said he. "In fact, I will say for all this upper country, it doesn't seem to have been laid out for comfort in traveling. The lower Rockies, in our country, say in Wyoming and Colorado, are the best outdoor countries in the world. It's a little wet and soft up here sometimes, although, fortunately, we've had rather good weather." [Pg 117]

"From now on," he continued, "you'll see a change in the vegetation. You can still see the fireweed—it seems a universal plant all the way from the Saskatchewan to the Peace River and west even to this prairie here. That and the Indian paint—that red flower which you all remember—is common over all the north country. Then there is a sort of black birch which grows far up to the north, and we have had our friends the willows and the poplars quite a while. Now we'll go downhill into the land of big trees and devil's-club."

"So that's the last of the Yellowhead Pass for this trip," said Rob, turning back, as within the hour after they had arisen they were in saddle once more for the west-bound trail.

"Yes," said Uncle Dick, "one of the most mysterious of all the passes. I often wonder myself just what time it was that old Jasper Hawse first came through here." [Pg 118]

"Was it really named after him, and who was he?" inquired John.

"Some say he was an Iroquois Indian who had red hair—in which case he must have been part white, I should say. Others say he was a Swede. Yet others say that 'Tête Jaune,' or 'Yellowhead,' was an old Indian chief who had gray hair. Now, I've seen a few white-haired Indians—for instance, old White Calf, down in the Blackfoot reservation—and their hair seems rather yellow more than pure white when they are very old. At any rate, whoever the original Tête Jaune was, we are bound now for his old bivouac on the Fraser, fifty miles below, the Tête Jaune Cache.

"Every man who wants to do mountain exploring has heard of the Tête Jaune Cache on the Fraser River. It has been one of the most inaccessible places in the Rockies. But now it will be easy to get there in a year or so, and I am sure on this beautiful Yellowhead Lake just ahead of us somebody will put up a hotel one day or other, and they will make trails around in these mountains and kill all these goats and bear."

"How far is it down to the lake?" inquired Jesse, pushing up his riding-pony alongside the others. [Pg 119]

"About half an hour," replied his uncle. "Not too good a trail, and about a hundred feet drop from the summit down."

Surely enough, they had gone but a little distance over the winding and difficult blazed route when they came out into an open spot whence they could see Yellowhead Lake lying before them. It was a lovely sheet of water about four miles long, with bold mountains rising on either side.

"Now, young men," said their leader, as they paused, "we'll not take the liberties with these mountains that some of the earlier travelers did. We'll call that big mountain on the south side of the lake Mount Fitzwilliam. On the north side is old Bingley, but I presume we'd just as well call it Yellowhead Mountain now. Some called it Mount Pelee, but we'll call it Yellowhead, because it seems too bad the pass and mountain should not have the same name from the same man—whoever he was. That's the guardian of the pass from this side, at any rate. It looks as though it shut up the pass, because, you see, it bends around the foot of the mountain. I've climbed that mountain in my time—none too easy a job. In that way you can see the headwaters of the Fraser River, and glaciers twenty miles south of here. From the top of Yellowhead you can see Mount Geikie, although we are past it now." [Pg 120]

"When are we going to do our fishing?" inquired John, in his practical fashion.

"Well, I'll tell you," said his uncle; "if you'll be good and travel steadily, we'll make camp at the side of this lake and fish this afternoon."

"Agreed," said John; "go ahead."

They found it not so easy to go ahead as might have been supposed, for the trail passed

through some very rough and troublesome country, made the worse by burned timber which had blown down. At last, however, they made their way along the northwest shore and neared the narrows at the lower end of the lake. Here they found a low peninsula jutting out into the lake, where there was a little grass and good clean footing as well as the fine shade of some tall pines.

"Here we are," said the leader of the party; and soon they had off-saddled and the horses were grazing, while the others prepared for the bivouac.

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"Now, if we had a boat," said Rob, "I believe we would get some trout in this lake, and good ones, too."

"They're here, all right," said Uncle Dick, "as I can testify, but boats don't grow in the Rocky Mountains this high up. You'll have to try it from the shore."

"But could we not make a raft? I see some pretty good cedar timber lying along here. And I've got some hay-wire in my war-bag—I never travel without it." Rob was eager.

"And a very good thing it is to have in camp, too. Well, try your raft if you like, but be careful."

All three of the young Alaskans, more experienced than most boys of their age in outdoor work, now fell at the task of making themselves a raft or float. Soon they had half a dozen cedar logs lying side by side in the shallow water, their limbs trimmed off closely with the axes. Under Rob's instructions they now lashed two crosspieces on top of the logs, using the wire to bind them fast to each. So in the course of half an hour they had quite a substantial raft ready for use. Securing a couple of long poles to use as push-poles, they set boldly out into the shallow bay that lay before them. They took only one rod along, assigning to John the task of doing the angling while the others endeavored to keep the raft steady.

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"This is as far as we can go," said Rob after a while. "Fifteen feet of water, and my pole won't touch any longer."

"Well, it looks fishy," said John. "Hold on, fellows, and I'll begin to cast."

He did so, standing as best he could on the uncertain footing under which the green water, clear as glass, showed the sandy bottom plainly below them. Ordinarily it would have been impossible to catch trout in water so clear, but the trout of the Yellowhead Lake at that time were hungry and unskilled. Therefore John had hardly cast a dozen times before he saw a great splash and felt a heavy tug at his line. As a matter of fact, a four-pound rainbow had taken the fly.

"My, he's a whopper!" said John, as he struck, and endeavored to stop the first rush of the big fish.

But he scarcely finished his last words, for as he stepped back in his excitement, his foot slipped on the wet bark of one of the logs, and over he went backward into the deep green water underneath!

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It happened so quickly that neither Rob nor Jesse for the moment could understand it. They could see their companion clearly in the water, struggling and twisting as he went down, and surrounded on all sides by a mass of white bubbles, which almost obscured him from view.

"Look out, there!" cried Uncle Dick, from shore, who had seen it all perfectly. At the same time he cast off his coat and was tugging at his shoes, making ready to swim out.

But just at that time the head and face of John appeared above the surface, his face distorted with fright and discomfort. He struck out boldly for the raft just at the instant when Rob held out to him the end of the push-pole.

"Catch hold of this, John," said he, quietly.

An instant later the puffing swimmer was at the raft.

"Look out now," said Rob; "don't swamp us. Just lie there till I get you in."

"It's cold!" exclaimed John; and, indeed, his teeth were chattering with the cold of the icy mountain water.

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"All right, we'll be in in a minute," said Rob; and he began poling the raft toward shore as rapidly as he could. They were not out fifty yards, but it seemed an age before the raft reached shore—or, rather, reached the outstretched hands of Uncle Dick, who stood shoulder-deep in the water waiting for them.

"I was afraid of that raft," said he, "but it's lucky it was no worse. Come here, John."

"It wasn't the fault of the raft, sir," chattered John. "I just got foolish and slipped off. I'm all right. Where's my fish?"

Surely enough, they turned to the other end of the raft; where they saw John's rod fast between two logs, where the reel held it firmly. All the line was run out, but when Jesse reached out and brought in the rod he felt a surge at the other end which told that the fish was still on.

"Let me have him," said John. "I'm just going to get even with him if I can, and take him out of the wet, too."

Much relieved at seeing him so plucky and at finding him now safe, the others roared with laughter as he stood, wet and shivering, at the edge of the beach, fighting his big trout for several minutes before he could get him in. But at last victory rested with the skilful young angler, and Uncle Dick with a piece of coffee-sacking scooped out the big rainbow as he came inshore.

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"Well, there," said he, "is fish enough for supper. Now, John, go and strip and wring your clothes and dry out by the fire. I think maybe that'll be fish enough for a while. We're lucky to get the fish, and lucky to get you, too, for it's no joke to go overboard in water as cold as that."

"You can just bet it isn't!" said John, his face now almost blue with cold, although he was beginning to revive in the warm rays of the sun. "Just for that, I am going to eat that fish—or as much of him as I can."

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## XIII

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### AFTER THE WHITE GOATS

Moise, although good-natured, none the less was fond enough of good living, and, moreover, disposed to rest very well content when the camping conditions were as good as those in which they now found themselves. He thought that it might be just as well not to be in too big a hurry.

"Suppose we did get caught on those high water, M'sieu Deek," he said; "if we only wait some time, she'll run down bime-by. But suppose we'll don't got nothing to eat but bacon and flour, and go starve to death. What then?"

"Well, Moise," said Rob, as they sat at the breakfast-table, where the good voyageur made this remark, "we've got a whole lake full of trout there waiting for us to go out and catch them—if we didn't fall off the raft again."

"Never mind about that raft any more, young man," said Uncle Dick. "A raft is all right if you have nothing else, and if you have to use it, but it is not compulsory here. We'll just leave the raft business and try for some trout down here in the creek."

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"There'll ain't no trout on those creek," objected Moise. "I'll try him myself, and not get no bite. Besides, M'sieu Deek, feesh is all right for woman and dog, but meat she is more better for strong man."

"That's the way I feel about it," said John, his mouth half full of bacon. "I wouldn't mind a little fresh meat once in a while. But where are we going to get it?"

"No moose up in here," volunteered Jesse, "and I don't suppose any caribou either. As for sheep, I suppose there are none this side of the high peaks east of here, are there, Uncle Dick?"

"Probably not. But we'll find caribou farther west. Besides, there are any number of white goats in these mountains all around us here. I suppose you know what they are, although I'm not sure you ever saw them in Alaska."

"I know them," said Rob. "They're the greatest climbers in the world—'On top' is their motto always."

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"That's why the head of a white goat is always considered a good trophy among sportsmen; it means that the hunter has had to climb high for it. They're a sporting proposition, all right, those goats; but when it comes to eating, that's something different. I boiled goat

meat two days straight once, and it was still like shoe leather.” Uncle Dick shook his head.

“Oh, you’ll got old goat—old Guillaume goat,” said Moise. “He’s too tough for eat. But s’pose you’ll got some small leetle goat; she’s good for eat like anything.”

“So I’ve heard,” said Uncle Dick, “but I’m willing to take my chances with flour and bacon.”

“Well, now,” said Rob, “if there are goats in here I’d like awfully well to try to photograph one, at least. They tell me they’re so dull and stupid you can go right up on them.”

“I’m not so sure about their being stupid,” replied Uncle Dick. “I think it’s more likely that they just are not afraid of anything. A big billy will kill any dog in the world, and some hunters declare that they will even fight a grizzly bear. Their little black horns are sharp as needles, and they can hit a hard blow with that neck of theirs, backed by a couple of hundred pounds of bone and muscle.

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“Whatever a goat may be as to wisdom, he won’t run away, and you can never hurry him. A bighorn will run for miles if he smells or sees you, but if a goat sees you he’ll take his own time, stop and look at you, and then go off as slowly as he likes. If you get too close to him, he may stop and stamp his feet, and work his lips at you, and show he’s angry. But he’ll never show he is scared. That’s why they are so easy to kill, once you climb up where they are. That ought to make them easy to photograph, too, Rob. I should say there were ten chances to get a goat photograph to one of the bighorn.”

“Do you suppose there are any around here?” inquired Jesse.

“Plenty of them on old Yellowhead Mountain, right here above us.”

“Well, why not have a hunt, then?”

Uncle Dick threw up his hands. “Now, there you go again, always wanting to stop to fish or hunt! I’ve told you that we ought to hurry on through.”

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“Well, just one day!” argued John.

Uncle Dick sighed. “Well,” said he, “we ought to be glad you’re not drowned, John. And I suppose you think we ought to make some sacrifice on that account? Well, all right. If you promise to be contented with one day’s hunt, and to start out to-morrow morning and keep on the trail until we strike the Tête Jaune Cache, I’ll agree to go with you to-day. The fact is, I wouldn’t mind stretching my own legs a little bit, for I’m cramped with saddle work. But I warn you it’s a stiff pull up that mountain there.”

“Shall we just go to photograph?” asked Rob, “or shall we take the rifle?”

“As you like, for this is British Columbia here, and I’ve a license for each of you to shoot game as needed. But we only want one goat, so we don’t need to take more than one rifle. And it really is hard climbing.”

“Let me take my camera,” said Rob, “and you carry the rifle, Uncle Dick. The others won’t need to take anything at all.”

“Then we wouldn’t have anything to do but just climb,” protested John.

His uncle smiled at him. “Come now,” said he; “I’ll let you do the shooting if you see a good, fat young goat. For my part, I’d as soon shoot a poor, sick calf in a barnyard. You and Jesse decide which is to shoot, and I’ll carry the gun until the time comes.”

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“That’s all right,” said Moise, who overheard their conversation. “Those boys was both fine shot, both of him. You let him shoot one small, leetle goat for Moise, and I’ll show you he’s good for eat.”

“Agreed,” said Uncle Dick, “but, mind you, you’ve only got to-night to cook him—I fear we might get caught in the high waters if we stopped here until you boiled it tender!”

They made ready now for their climb, each with a light pair of nailed boots and heavy stockings. Under their leader’s advice they stripped down to their flannel shirts, but each carried along a canvas jacket, ready to put on when they reached the upper heights where the wind was sure to be very cold. Uncle Dick carried John’s rifle, and Rob took his favorite camera, provided with a curtain shutter, and an eye-piece on top where he could look in and see the game on the ground glass and thus focus it properly. The weather was very fine, and they started out in the best of spirits.

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They walked steadily up through the heavy pine forest which covered the foot of the mountain; and then, striking the steeper grade along a bare ridge, they climbed steadily until, turning about and looking down, they could see the glorious prospect which lay below



them. The surface of the lake, deep green in color, barely wrinkled now by a light morning breeze, was visible from end to end, three miles or more. On the other side of it showed the bold peaks of Fitzwilliam mountain, back of that yet other peaks were disclosed as they climbed. In that direction there lay an undiscovered country, and they might well reflect that few even had looked out across it as they themselves now were doing from their lofty perch. They knew well enough that the old traders who passed through here rarely left the trail except for necessary hunting, but passed on through as rapidly as they might, this being merely their highway, and not their hunting-grounds.

"What is this, Uncle Dick?" called Rob, after a time, as, turning from their study of the noble landscape, they resumed their work of ascending the steep mountainside. Rob pointed to the broken surface of the ground at his feet.

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"What do you mean, Rob?" asked the older hunter.

"It looks as if horses had been here," said Rob, "yesterday, late."

"Yes," said Uncle Dick, smiling, "but not horses, I should say."

"Maybe not," said Rob, doubtfully. "But I thought maybe prospectors had been in here."

"Only the original prospectors—the ones with white coats and long whiskers and sharp horns," said Uncle Dick.

"But it looks like a regular trail!"

"It is a regular trail, but if you will look closer you'll see the hoof marks. Horses do not have split toes, my boy. In fact, I have no doubt this is the regular stairway of the goat family that lives on this mountain. Like enough they've been down in here to get some different sort of grass or water. They've evidently been using this path quite a while."

"How high do you suppose they are now?" inquired John.

"Who can tell? A mile or two, or three, or five, for all I know. It will take us two or three hours to get up to the rim-rock, at least, and I've usually noticed that goats don't stop much short of the rim-rock when they start to go up a hill. The sign is fresh, however, made late last night or very early this morning; I think with you, Rob, that it was yesterday."

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"How many are there?" inquired Jesse, bending over the broad trail.

"Hard to tell, for they've used this trail more than once. A dozen or more, I should say. Well, all we can do is to follow after them and thank them for showing us a good path."

They climbed on up all the more eagerly now, and when they reached more open country where the sun shone fairly on them they soon were dripping with perspiration. But, young as were these hunters from Alaska, they were not inexperienced in mountain-climbing. They knew that the way to get up a mountain is to keep on slowly and steadily, not hurrying, and never resting very long at a time. Thus they advanced for three-quarters of an hour, until they could see still farther out over the country below them. Now they could see that the game had sometimes wandered about feeding, and the trail itself divided and grew fainter.

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Uncle Dick pointed out all these things quietly and suggested that they would better be on the lookout. They advanced now more carefully, and whenever they came to the edge of an open reach or topped some shoulder of the slope they paused and examined the country ahead very carefully. At last, when they had reached an altitude where the trees were much smaller and more scattering, Uncle Dick stopped and took his field-glasses from the case. He lay for some time, resting the glasses on a big rock, sweeping all the country ahead of him with the glasses. At last they saw him stop and gaze steadily at one spot for quite a while.

"See anything?" asked Jesse, eagerly.

Uncle Dick did not reply at once, but after a time handed Jesse the glasses. "Look over there," said he, "about half a mile, right at the foot of that rock wall. You'll see something that looks like a flock of snowballs, rather large ones."

Jesse tried the glasses for a time, and at last caught the spot pointed out to him. "I see," said he, in a whisper. "Goats! Lots of them." They showed so plainly in the glasses, in fact, that he spoke carefully, as though he feared to frighten them.

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"Oh, look at them!" said he, after a while. "The young ones are playing like little sheep, jumping and butting around and having a regular frolic."

"Any big ones?" asked Rob, quickly.

"I should say so; five or six, all sizes. And they look white as big pillows. There's one that looks as though he had on white pants, and his long white beard makes him look like an old man. He's looking right down the mountain. You can see them plain against that black rock."

"Just like a goat," said Uncle Dick. "They never try to hide themselves. And even when there's snow on the mountains they'll leave it and go lie on a black rock where everybody can see them. Well, come on, and we'll see what sort of a stalk we can make on them."

They went on much more cautiously now, under Dick's guidance, keeping under cover in the low trees and working to one side and upward in the general direction of their game. It was hard work, and all the boys were panting when at last their leader called a halt. [Pg 137]

"We'll wait here," said he, in a low tone of voice. He now unslung the rifle from his back and handed it to John. "You and Rob go on now," said he. "Don't shoot until Rob is done with his picture-making. And when you do shoot, don't kill an old billy, for we couldn't keep the head. Kill one of the young goats—I think there are two or three yearlings there. I wouldn't shoot either of those two pairs of kids. They're too little even for Moise, I think."

"Where are you going, Uncle Dick?" asked Rob.

"Jesse and I are going to stop right here under cover, and Jesse shall have the sport of watching your hunt through the field-glasses—almost as good fun as going along himself. Go on now, and don't lose any time."

The two older boys now advanced carefully up the slope, using the cover of the trees as far as they could. They appeared in the open for a little time, only to disappear beyond a series of rocks which projected from the slope above them.

"I don't see where they've gone," said Jesse, who was steadily watching through the glasses. [Pg 138]

"Give them time," said Uncle Dick. "You must remember that Rob has to get pretty close in order to make the photograph. I'm sure they're within rifle-range now."

"Oh, there they are!" whispered Jesse, a little later. "I see them now. They're up above the goats, and crawling right down toward them. Now there's old Rob, he's trying to get to the edge of the rocks; I can see he's got his camera all ready. He'll be on top of them, almost, if he gets there."

"Good boy, Rob!" said Uncle Dick, approvingly. "He has made a good stalk of it."

Jesse, still gazing through the glasses, now saw his two friends slowly advancing, clinging like flies to the steep rock's face, but all the time getting closer to their game. The goats seemed not to suspect an enemy, but lay or stood about in perfect unconcern. They did not have any sentinel posted, as the mountain sheep often will, but seemed to feel perfectly secure from all intrusion.



**ROB'S GOAT**

At last Jesse saw Rob stand up straight and walk forward rapidly with his camera in front of him. The goats now heard or scented him, for at once they all stood up and turned toward him, facing him silent and motionless. [Pg 139]

"They don't know what he is!" exclaimed Jesse. "They're just looking at him. No, there goes a big one right up toward him."

"In that case," said Uncle Dick, "Rob will get his picture, sure." An easy prophecy, for, as a matter of fact, Rob secured several very good pictures of the old goat and the others, as he stood rapidly working his camera, almost in the face of the fearless old billy which advanced toward him so pugnaciously.

But now Jesse saw the band of goats apparently take alarm at something. They turned and began to disperse, some of them climbing slowly up the apparently perpendicular rock face.

"They'll run right into John!" exclaimed Jesse. "There he is—there, he's shot! Got him, too!"

They heard the faint sound of the report of the rifle come down from above, and could see the fall of the goat as he slipped and rolled among the rocks.

"Well done," said Uncle Dick. "They've both done their work well, Jesse, and I am pretty sure we'll have both goat pictures and goat steaks, all we want. I'm glad John did not get crazy and shoot a lot of those poor creatures." [Pg 140]

"Come on," said Jesse, "let's run up to where they are."

In due time they climbed up to where Rob and Jesse were sitting by the side of the dead goat. The boys waved their hats to one another as Jesse approached, smiling and panting.

"I saw it all," said Jesse, "right in the field-glasses, close up. That's fine, isn't it?"

Rob and John both began to talk at once, while Uncle Dick stood smilingly looking down at the dead goat.

"I could have killed two or three big ones," said John. "What heads they had, too!"

"What could we have done with them?" asked his uncle. "No, you did quite right in killing this yearling—it's all we want. And I think Rob had the hardest task of any of us; it's easier to shoot a goat with a rifle than with a camera."

"Well," said Rob, "it was just the way you said—they didn't seem afraid at all. I've got one picture, square front end, of that old fellow, and I don't think he was twenty feet away from me. He seemed to think the camera was something that was going to hurt him, and he showed fight." [Pg 141]

"Now," said Uncle Dick, "the next thing is to get our meat down the mountain."

Rolling up his sleeves, he now prepared to skin out such meat as he wanted from the dead goat. He cut off the head and neck, and cut off the legs at the knee-joints. Then he skinned back only the fore quarters, leaving the hide still attached to the hind quarters and the saddle. Using his belt, he folded the skin over the saddle, and then, tying the sleeves of his coat so that it covered his shoulders, he hoisted the saddle astride of his neck.

"I don't fancy this smell very much," said he, "but I guess it will be the easiest way to get our meat down the mountain. Come on now, boys, every fellow for himself, and be careful not to get a fall."

It was hard and sometimes rather slow work scrambling down the steep face of the mountain, especially high up where the rocks were bare. But after a time they came to the small green trees, and then to the tall pines under whose shade the ground was softer and gave them a better footing. It did not take them so long to come down as it had to ascend, but they were all tired when late that afternoon they arrived at their camp on the little promontory.

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Moise was overjoyed at their success, and was all for cooking some of the meat at once; but Uncle Dick checked him.

"No," said he, "it's too fresh yet. Skin it out, Moise, and hang it up overnight, at least. You may set a little of it to stew all night at the fire, if you like. Soak some more of it overnight in salt and water—and then I think you'd better throw away all the kettles that you've used with this goat meat. It may be all right, but I'm afraid it's going to be a long time before I learn to like goat. If this were a mountain sheep, now, I could eat all that saddle myself."

Moise asked who killed the goat, and when told that it was John he complimented him very much. For Rob's work with the camera he had less praise.

"I s'pose she's all right to make picture of goat," said he, "but s'pose a man he's hongree, he couldn't eat picture, could he?"

Rob only laughed at him. "You wait, Moise," said he. "When I get my pictures made maybe you'd rather have one of them than another piece of goat meat."

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In spite of Uncle Dick's disgust, Moise that evening broiled himself a piece of the fresh goat meat at the fire, and ate it with such relish that the boys asked for a morsel or so of it themselves. To their surprise, they found the tenderloin not so bad to eat. Thus, with one excuse or another, they sat around the fire, happy and contented, until the leader of the party at last drove them all off to bed.

"I like this place," said John, "even if I did come pretty nearly getting drowned out there in the lake."

And indeed the spot had proved so pleasant in every way that it was only with a feeling of regret that they broke camp on Yellowhead Lake and proceeded on their westward journey.

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## XIV

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### DOWN THE FRASER

Up to this time on their journey the weather had continued most favorable, there having been little rain to disturb them either on the trail or in camp. Now, however, they were on the western slope of the Rockies and in the moister climate of the Pacific region. When they left camp on Yellowhead Lake it was in a steady downpour which left them drenched thoroughly before they had gone a mile.

The trail, moreover, now proved not only uncomfortable, but dangerous, the rain making the footing so soft that in many cases on steep slopes they were obliged to dismount and lead their horses up or down. Indeed, the trail scarcely could be called a trail at all, all trace of the original traders' paths now being lost. Many persons, mostly engineers or prospecting adventurers, had passed here, each taking his own way, and the sum of their selections served only to make bad very much worse. In the level places the trail was a quagmire, on some of the steeper slopes simply a zigzag of scrambling hoof tracks.

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They kept on, in spite of their discomforts, throughout the forenoon without pause. It was their purpose to get on the farther side of as many of these mountain streams as possible.

They were now in a bold mountain country, where numerous small tributaries came down to the great Fraser which roared and plunged along beside their trail. "The Bad River," old Sir Alexander Mackenzie called one of the headwaters of the Fraser, and bad enough it is from its source on down.

They were now near the forks of the two main tributaries of the Fraser, one roaring torrent coming down from the south. The trail held to the north bank of the Fraser, following down from the lake along the rapid but harmless little river which made its outlet. To ford the Fraser was, of course, impossible. Time and again the young adventurers paused to look down at the raging torrent, broken into high, foaming waves by the numerous reefs of rock which ran across it. Continually the roar of the angry waters came up to them through the trees. More than ever they realized that they now were on the shores of one of the wickedest rivers in all the Rockies, as their Uncle Dick had told them of the Fraser.

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They now observed that the trees of the forest through which they traveled were much larger than they had been. But, splendid as this forest growth had been, they found that in a large area fire had gone through it in some previous year, and this burned country—or *brûlé*, as Moise called it—made one of the worst obstacles any traveler could encounter. This hardship was to remain with them almost all the way down the Fraser to the Tête Jaune Cache, and it added immeasurably to the trials of pack-train travel.

At last they pulled up alongside of a broad and brawling stream, turbulent but shallow, a little threatening to one not skilled in mountain travel, but not dangerous to a party led as was this one, by a man acquainted with the region.



**APPROACHING THE GRAND CAÑON ON THE FRASER RIVER**

"Here we are at Grant Creek," said Uncle Dick, as they paused on the hither side of the stream. "This is one of the many swift tributaries on the north side of the Fraser, but I am glad we've got to ford it, and not the Fraser itself. You see, we have to keep on the north bank all the way down now."

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Uncle Dick carefully located his landmarks and examined some stones and stumps to get some idea of the stage of the water.

"It's all right," said he. "Come on across. Follow me closely now."

Soon they were belly-deep in the tawny flood of the stream, which came down noisily all about them. The sturdy horses, however, seemed not to be in the least alarmed, but followed old Danny, Uncle Dick's pony, as he slowly plodded on across, angling down the stream and never once losing his footing in the rolling stones of the bottom. The stream was not over a hundred and twenty feet wide at this point, and the ford was made with no difficulty at all.

"This is easy," said Uncle Dick, as they emerged on the western side. "But three miles ahead we come to the Moose River, and that's apt to be a different proposition. You can't tell anything about any of these rivers until you try them. One thing is sure, we can't get any wetter than we are."

"I've noticed all these streams are highest in the afternoon," said Rob—"a lot higher, too. We've often mentioned that."

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"Yes; that's because the snow melts in the morning and starts the water down the high slopes. It takes some time for it to get down to the lower levels. Morning is the best time to

ford any of these mountain rivers, as I have told you.”

The trail was none too good on to the Moose River, and they were none too cheerful as they paused to look over the situation at the bank of this stream.

“When I crossed here the last time I marked a stump with an ax,” said Uncle Dick. “That was barely below swimming-line. Ah, there it is, I see—we’ve got six inches to the good, and that means we can get across, I think. It’s lucky it isn’t worse. There are some falls up this river a little way, and perhaps we could get across the narrows there, but in any case we would have to get the horses across down here, and we had better all make it together. Anyhow, I’ll go ahead on Danny and see how it works. Moise, you’ll bring up the rear; Rob, you go next ahead of Moise, and you, John and Jesse, follow just behind me a little way back. If Danny loses his footing, all of you stop at once and wait for further orders. Well, here goes.”

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He spurred his plucky little horse into the roily, turbulent flood, closely followed by the others as he had instructed. Fortunately, the pack-train, by this time well broken into the work of the trail, made no disturbance, but followed along stolidly in the rear of the leader. Thus, little by little, they edged on across and at last crossed the dangerous middle part of the river. Here Uncle Dick angled a little down, following the shallow water indicated by the light ripples. As the boys saw Danny begin to show more and more above the surface of the water, until he was walking no deeper than his knees, they swung their hats and shouted exultantly, for now they were safely to cross one of the most dangerous rivers on the whole trail.

“Well,” said Uncle Dick, as at last they pulled up on the farther side, “that’s done, at any rate. From here it’s only a couple of miles or so to the head of Moose Lake. The trail is fierce along there, but once beyond that lake we can safely call the worst of our whole journey past and done with. We can make it in a few hours’ steady work if we have luck.”

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They pushed on, and after a time paused at a point near the head of Moose Lake, from which they could see it lying before them, seven miles or so of slaty gray water, now wrinkled under the downpouring rain. It was a prospect not in the least cheerful, to be sure.

“The Fraser River runs straight through this lake,” said Uncle Dick, “and, as you see, it is getting more water every mile out of these hills. This is the only quiet place on the whole Fraser River that I know of. But we can’t get across it, couldn’t even if we had boats, for here are the horses.

“But if we could cross the lake here, and if we could cross the Selwyn Mountains over there on the other side of it, we would find a little creek up there which heads up just opposite Price Creek. You see, Price Creek runs down into the Canoe River, which is the stream we’re going to follow below Tête Jaune Cache. They say the Indians used to take horses up this little creek and down Price Creek on the other side. If so, they must have had horses born on the other side of the Fraser, for I’ll warrant they couldn’t get them across from the north side where we are.”

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“Did any white man ever go over that way?” asked Rob, curiously.

“Not that I know of. I don’t know when the Indians went there, but there’s a story that some of them took horses across the Selwyns over yonder. As for us, we’ve got to keep on down this valley. We are twenty miles west from the Yellowhead Pass, and have thirty miles more to go yet to the Tête Jaune Cache.”

“What are these big mountains over on the right?” inquired Rob.

“That’s the Rainbow range. We make our way right along their feet. On beyond the lake for some distance the river is a little more quiet, then she drops; that’s all. There’s a strip of water in here twenty miles or so that no boat could live in at all. There were two rattle-headed engineers who did try to take a boat down a part of the Fraser in here, and in some miraculous way they ran maybe ten or twelve miles of it, part in and part out of the water. Then their boat smashed on a rock, and they both were drowned. One body was found, the other was never heard of.”

“Well,” said John, “we’re complaining a good deal about going along on horses, but I believe I like that better than taking a boat on that river.”

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“When we’ll make camp to-day, M’sieu Deek?” asked Moise, pushing up alongside the leader’s horse. They all sat in the rain, dripping like so many drowned rats.

“Well,” said Uncle Dick, “this is pretty bad, isn’t it? It seems to me that we had better use all the daylight we can to-day, for we’re wet as we can get anyway. There are no bad

streams now, but the trail is awful of itself—side-hills and *brûlè*, and in and out of the water all along the lake side. But we've got to pass it some time. Suppose we make the best of a bad bargain, and see if we can get to the lower end of the lake to-day?"

The boys all agreed to this, and so the party pushed on, but they found later that the prediction of their leader was quite true, for none of them had ever seen so fearful a trail as that along the north shore of Moose Lake. But even as it grew darker in the deep valley at last they broke through the farther edge of the heaviest timber, picked their way through a wide strip of *brûlè*, crossed the last dangerous face of rock side, and emerged into an open area where some sort of camp at last was possible. Here they dismounted, all ready to agree that this was the worst day any of them had ever seen on the trail.

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"Well," said Uncle Dick, chuckling, "I pushed pretty hard to-day, but I had to make up for that lost day we spent hunting goats. To tell the truth, I didn't think we could get this far on to-day, and so I just count we're even on the goat-hunt. Besides, we are now past the worst part of our troubles. To-morrow I promise you something worth all the hard work we've undergone."

"What's that?" demanded Jesse. "Some more hunting?"

"Certainly not. You've another guess, Jesse. Something better than that."

"You don't mean sheep or grizzly?"

"Something bigger than grizzly, even."

"That," said Rob, "must be a mountain."

"Quite right. I'm going to show you the greatest mountain in all the Canadian Rockies, and one of the greatest mountains on this continent. It isn't known very much to-day, but soon Mount Robson will be one of the show-places of this whole country. The Indians have always called it the biggest of all these mountains, time out of mind."

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"What time shall we see it?" inquired Rob.

"That depends a great deal. It'll be about fourteen miles down the trail to the Grand Fork Valley. Looking right up that, we'll be staring into the face of old Robson. I only hope the rain will be done by that time, so that the sun will shine and give us a fair view. It's very rarely that one ever sees Mount Robson clear to the top. But sufficient for to-day are the evils, I presume. Let's see if we can make ourselves comfortable in camp to-night."

"One thing," said John, that night, "this horse business isn't going to last forever. I hope the Canoe River isn't as bad as the Fraser, for I'm getting ready to get into a boat once more. I've changed my mind a little."

"I wonder where the Canoe River got its name, Uncle Dick?" queried Rob.

"That I cannot tell you. There are some canoes on the Fraser which came up from the Pacific way, and there are some canoe birches in these woods, this side of the summit. Now, whether some of the old traders one day made a birch-bark canoe and ran that stream I can't tell. But that is the name given to it by the traders, and I suppose they got it from the earlier traders who crossed this country."

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"John," he added, "this is a hard place for you to bring up your map. I'll excuse you from your map-making until we have a drier camp than this."

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## XV

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### THE GREAT MOUNTAIN

Happily on the next day the weather relented and the sun greeted them when they were ready for their breakfast, although all the trees were dripping wet. Uncle Dick was very much rejoiced.

"We'll see Robson to-day if this sun holds," said he. "Let's hurry on."

"There you go!" grumbled John. "Uncle Dick, you always are finding one reason or other for being in a hurry."

"Well, everything in here is in a hurry," was his uncle's answer. "All the water's in a hurry, and all the engineers are in a hurry. But, speaking of that, you may notice that below the

lake here the slopes are not quite so steep. The river is getting wider. By and by it will be so tame that you really can run a boat on it. The Tête Jaune Cache was what you might call the head of water transportation on the west side—as far as the canoes dared attempt the Fraser going east. From the Tête Jaune Cache it is possible to make a canoe journey up and down the river between that point and Fort George, although every time one makes the journey he takes his own chances.”

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“Is the Canoe River a very bad river, then?” demanded John.

“Well, as to that, she’s jammed and drifted and overhung and fast, but not so bad as the Peace River was in many places,” replied Uncle Dick. “I don’t think we need have much anxiety as to that part of our journey. At least, we’ll not worry about it yet, for worrying doesn’t get anybody anything. I only hope that Mount Robson will not put on his cap until we get down to the lower end of the Grand Fork Valley.”

They found their trail now as it had been described, less dangerous. Indeed, there was but one risky crossing, that of a rock slide which ran down sheer to the river-bank, where a misstep might have been fatal. They kept steadily on until at length they opened up the wide valley of the Grand Fork, a tributary which comes down from the great peaks which surround the noble mountain known as Robson.

When at last the full view up this valley unfolded before them they pulled up and paused, not saying a word. It was a wonderful sight that lay before them, one of the most wonderful in all the great Rockies. On every hand ran frowning slopes crowned with dark forest growth, flanked here and there by the yet darker shadows of the passing clouds. But towering above all, and dwarfing all rivalry, there stood before them one great, noble, white-topped peak, unshaded by any clouds. As the boys gazed at it instinctively they took off their caps.

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“That’s Robson!” said Uncle Dick, smiling. “Any way you look at it it’s big. Here you see a sheer wall of bare rock, thousands of feet. The approach is steep as the roof of a house, as you can see. All over it in every little valley there are glaciers. Any way you approach it it’s hard going when you try to climb old Robson—‘*Yuh-hai-has-kun*,’ the Indians called it, ‘the mountain with the stairs.’ But when they tried to climb it they never could quite find the stairs. So far no one has made the ascent.”<sup>[1]</sup>



**TOWERING ABOVE ALL, AND DWARFING ALL RIVALRY,  
THERE STOOD BEFORE THEM ONE GREAT NOBLE  
WHITE-TOPPED PEAK—MT. ROBSON**

“Many a man has heard of this mountain,” continued Uncle Dick, “and a good many have tried to climb it. One party spent all the season trying to get behind it and find a way up. But Robson doesn’t seem to have any blind side.”

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“Why can’t we try it?” said Rob, enthusiastically.

“Some day, perhaps,” smiled Uncle Dick, “but hardly now, as short of grub as we are, and as short of time as well. Mountain climbing is a business of itself, and you need a complete equipment. It would take a year, two years, or three to climb Robson, very likely. So with two or three days at our disposal I’ll have to ask to be excused from the attempt; let us take on something easier for an order.

“Now,” he added, “about all we can do is to take off our hats to the old peak and say good



morning as we pass.”

“And thank you very much, Sir Mountain,” said Jesse, gravely, his young face serious as he looked toward the peak, “because you let us see clear all up to the top.”

“It mightn’t happen once in months,” said Uncle Dick. “I’ve passed here several times, and I’ve never had as fine a view as we have right now. She’s thirteen thousand seven hundred feet, our triangulations made it. That’s something of a mountain, to be hid back in here all by itself, isn’t it?” [Pg 160]

“Up at the foot of the mountain,” he continued, “there’s a fine lake, as lovely as Lake Louise down in the lower Rockies. I do wish we had time to go up in there, for the lake is worth seeing. Some day it will be famous, and visited by thousands. At least we can see the edge of it from where we are, and lucky you are to have so early a look, I can assure you.

“Well, we’ll be going on,” said he, presently, as he gathered up his reins. “We can’t take the time now for fifteen miles of the sort of travel that lies between here and the foot of the mountain. At least we’ve seen Robson, full front and clear all the way to the summit—a most unusual sight. You may always remember now that you saw this mountain before it became common.”

They forded the Grand Fork itself without much difficulty, for it was a flat and shallow stream at this point. Passing on to the westward, they finally encamped in a flat from which they still could see up the valley, it being the wish of all to keep in view as long as possible the great white summit of *Yuh-hai-has-kun*. [Pg 161]

“To-morrow we’ll say good-by to Robson,” said Uncle Dick, “and we’ll camp at the Tête Jaune Cache.”

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## XVI

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### AT THE TÊTE JAUNE CACHE

“The last day on the trail!” Such was the first word with which the leader of our little party greeted his young friends when they rolled out of their tents in the morning. And soon all hands were busy adjusting the packs ready for the plucky animals which had brought them through so far. Their breakfast was hurried as rapidly as possible.

“Well,” said Rob, “I don’t know whether or not to be glad. We certainly have had a grand trip with the pack-train, hard as it has been sometimes. At least it’s brought us here to the foot of Mount Robson.”

“Our horses will be glad enough to be done with it,” said Uncle Dick. “Down at the Cache they’ll have all the grass they want and nothing to do for all the rest of this summer—unless some of Leo’s children take to riding them too hard.”

“Leo?” inquired John. “He’s the Indian who’s going to take us down the Canoe River, isn’t he?” [Pg 163]

“Yes, and a good man, too, Leo. He and Moise will show us how to get along without the horses, eh, Moise?”

That good-natured man grinned and showed his white teeth. “Sometam she’ll ron pretty fast, this river on Columbia valley?” said he.

“Well, at any rate, we turn in our horses with Leo here at the Cache and get them the next time we come through—next year or some other year, perhaps. A horse takes his chance of getting a permanent residence in this part of the world. But our train has come through in fine shape—not a sore back in the lot. That speaks well for your care in packing, young men, and for Moise’s skill in making saddles.”

By this time they all had shaken down into the routine of packing the horses in the morning, and not long after they had finished their breakfast all was in readiness for their last march.

“*En avant!*” said Uncle Dick. “Mush! Moise, we’ll lunch at the Cache to-day.”

They swung on steadily down the broadened valley whose course now changed more to the southwest for five miles or so. The trail was much better, and as they reached the wide eastern end of the valley, which broadens out near the historic Tête Jaune Cache, they made rapid progress, animated by the continually changing scene before them. [Pg 164]

For the last five miles they were in a broad, grassy valley where many hoofs had worn a plainly marked trail. On ahead they could see the Fraser swinging in from its southwest bend to meet them. The courses of many other small streams, outlined by green bushes, also could be seen coming in from almost every direction. Farther to the west and south lofty mountains rose, broken by caps which seemed to be of no great altitude. The Selwyns, on the other side of the Fraser, stood behind them, and off on the right gradually rose the high, sweeping hills which climbed to the shoulders of Mount Robson itself. The whole made an extraordinary landscape.

"We're in the Tête Jaune Valley," said Uncle Dick, halting at the edge of the grassy expanse which seemed quite flat for five miles or so ahead of them. "We're coming now to one of the most interesting points in all the Rocky Mountains, and one of the least known. Some day, where we are here, there will be a town, perhaps a good one. Yonder is the original pathway of the Fraser—five hundred feet across here already, and a great river before it gets much farther toward the Pacific. We leave it here, so let's not give it a worse name than we have to, for, take it all in all, it hasn't harmed us thus far."

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"On across the Fraser, to the south, is the North Thompson," he continued. "Not very much known by any except a few of our explorers. It's rather rough-looking in there, isn't it? The Albreda Pass makes up from the Thompson, over yonder where you see the big mountains rising."

"Is that where we go to get to the Canoe River?" said John. "It's over in there somewhere."

"No, the pass to the Canoe River is a wonderful thing in its way for this high country. Look over there to the south twenty miles or so, and you'll see Cranberry Lake. The McLennan River runs out of that to join the Fraser right here, and that lake is just twenty-one feet above the level of this ground where we stand! You could pole a boat up there if you liked. Just over Cranberry Lake it's only a mile to where the Canoe River bends in from the west. That country is just made for a pass from the Fraser to the Columbia, and to my mind it's quite as interesting as any of these great mountain passes. I don't know of any divide as low as this between two waterways as great as those of the Fraser and the Columbia. It's only two thousand five hundred and sixty-three feet above sea-level at the summit, and, as I said, is only twenty-one feet above the Fraser."

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"We must have come down quite a way," said Rob, "since we left the pass."

"More than a thousand feet. And in that thousand feet the Fraser has grown from a trickle to a great river—in fifty miles downhill."

"Well, I can see," said Rob, looking about the pleasant valley which lay before them, "that this is a good place for a town."

"Certainly," said the leader of their party. "There'll be more than one railroad come through here across the Yellowhead Pass, very likely, and already they are making surveys down the Fraser and Thompson and the Canoe River. Sometime there will be a railroad down the Big Bend of the Columbia below us, and it will have a branch up here, as sure as we're standing here now. That will open up all this country from the points along the Canadian Pacific. Then all these names—the Thompson, the Fraser, and the Canoe—will be as familiar to the traveling public as the Missouri and the Mississippi. Yet as we stand here and look at that country it is a country as yet unknown and unnamed! I couldn't map it, John, myself, for, although that country south of us is one of the most interesting of the continent, it is one of the least known. In short, that's the game country we've been heading for, and I'll promise you a grizzly when we get south of that flat divide."

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"Well," said John, "that'll satisfy me, all right. We've had mighty little shooting this far."

"All in good time, all in good time, John, my boy. Maybe we'll show you as good sport as you're looking for, at least, what with rapids and grizzly bears."

"But now we must go on and find Leo, if we can. I sent word to him last fall for him to meet me here at the Cache this month. We'll see what luck there is in the wilderness despatch."

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They passed on rapidly along and across the sunlit valley, exulting in a sense of freedom in getting out of the dark and gloomy mountains into an open country where they could see all about them. Soon they saw smoke rising above the tops of the low trees, and discovered it to come from a number of tepees, tall and conical, built with long poles, precisely like the tepees of the tribes east of the Rockies.

"That's the Shuswap village," said Uncle Dick. "Leo lives there with his people. Some good canoemen and hunters in there, too. First, let's go on down to the end of the trail. I want you to see the actual location of the old Tête Jaune Cache."

When they pulled up at the bank of the Fraser it was on an open flat shut in by low pines and poplars. They could see no building at all; only a few poles and tent-stakes littered the ground.

"This is the Cache," said Uncle Dick.

"It isn't so much of a place as I expected," said John. "Weren't there any houses here?" [Pg 169]

"Over there, no doubt, were some log buildings once upon a time," said Uncle Dick. "No doubt the old trappers built their cache well and strong, for plenty of good furs came through here—marten and ermine and beaver and otter—for the ladies of Great Britain to wear nearly a hundred years ago. But, you see, in this climate logs rot rather early, and the fires have run all through here, as well. So when the traders left these old trails Nature soon claimed her own and wiped out all traces of them. The cache has gone the way of Jasper House and Henry House."

"What became of all of those old fellows?" inquired Rob. "We only hear of the ones that wrote books."

"They are gone and forgotten," said Uncle Dick. "No one knows even where old Tête Jaune himself—whether he was Iroquois or Swede or plain Injun—lies buried to-day. There is no record of where he laid his bones to rest. He was a brave man, whoever he was, and he lived in a great age of adventure. Think of what he must have seen, spending all his life in a country like this!

"But each to his own day, I suppose. Here we are at the end of our trail. We'll have to cross the Fraser. I must see Leo, and learn what he has done about the boats—I've told him to build a couple of good big boats—bateaux—to take us down the Canoe River over yonder. [Pg 170]

"Here, you see, we leave the trail," he continued. "Yonder is the Fraser trail down to Fort George. Once at Fort George, you know, you can take an automobile down the old Ashcroft trail to the Canadian Pacific."

"Automobile! What do you know about that!" exclaimed Jesse. "I didn't know we were within a thousand miles of one."

"Yes, within two hundred miles. It doesn't look much like it, does it? You see, we're living in rather a wonderful age. This country which looks so wild will not be wild very much longer. That's the only reason I've allowed you to take so dangerous a journey as this, this spring, with me. Before long all these things will be common. People will come out here on the cars by thousands, and complain about the sleepers and the dining-car, when they are crossing the Rocky Mountains, very likely. One day they'll have horseback trails through here, as they do around Banff, and I suppose even old Mount Robson will get more or less common one time or another. But at least we've seen this country before those things happened. [Pg 171]

"This is all there is to the old Cache. It's mostly a memory, but history has written it down as one of the important places in the Rockies. John, you must bring your map up to date here, at the Tête Jaune Cache. And here your trail bends to the south, for now we're going to follow the Columbia, and not the Fraser, after this, although my railroad goes on down the Fraser.

"We'll ride over now to the village and see if we can find Leo," he concluded, as he turned his horse back and started off in the direction of the tepees.

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## XVII

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### LEO THE GRIZZLY-HUNTER

As our party of adventurers approached the Shuswap village, a little bit removed from the bank of the Fraser, they were greeted with a chorus of barking dogs. A number of children who had been playing in the grass fled in fright into the tepees, from the doors of which, none the less, presently appeared many heads alike of young and old.

As the horsemen pulled up in front of the central tepee there came out to meet them a slight but hardy figure, not very tall, but erect and strong, dressed in ordinary western garb, and a wide hat such as is common in that part of the country. His face was dark, and his hair, worn long, was braided, and fell to his shoulders on his neck. Grave and unsmiling like most of his people, none the less his eyes wrinkled a little bit about the corners as now he recognized the leader of the band of horsemen. Advancing, he extended his hand to [Pg 173]

Uncle Dick and greeted him very pleasantly.

"How-do," said he.

The party now dismounted, and their leader turned to his young companions. "This," said he, "is Leo Tennes, the man I told you would be our guide down the Canoe River. When I tell you that he has run the Big Bend of the Columbia more than once I have said all there is to say about his fitness."

He now introduced each of his young comrades in turn to Leo, who shook hands with them gravely and with dignity, but looking at them keenly meantime. He was evidently surprised at their youth, and perhaps none too well pleased, although obliged to admit to himself that these boys already had undergone many hardships to get this far on their journey.

Moise himself, usually light-hearted and talkative, now became silent and dignified also as he and Leo stood looking at each other. They shook hands, and each spoke to the other in his own tongue. Then both laughed.

"Me Shuswap!" said Leo.

"Cree!" rejoined Moise—"North Cree, me."

Then, to the surprise and interest of the others, these two, unable to converse in any common tongue except English, which neither seemed to fancy at the time, began to employ the singular sign language of the savage tribes, more or less universally known throughout the American continent. Moise put his two forefingers together parallel to show that he and Leo were friends. He pointed back across the mountains, and, placing his head on his hands and raising his fingers several times, signified that he had come, so many sleeps, to this place. He said they had come horseback—straddling his left forefinger with two fingers on his right hand. Then smilingly he pointed to the boys and to his own heart, and made a motion as though trying to break a stout stick, thus saying to Leo that their hearts were strong.

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Leo stood looking at him unsmiling, and when he had finished threw out his right hand in front of him, palm down, by which he said: "That is all right. It is good. I am satisfied."

"Oh, pshaw! Moise," said Uncle Dick, laughing, "you and Leo can both talk English a great deal better than you let on. I'll say, Leo, that our man Moise is as good in a boat as you are yourself, so you need not be uneasy. As for the rest of us, we'll undertake to keep up our end. When will you be ready to start?"

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"Maybe-so to-night, maybe-so to-morrow," said Leo.

"And can you take care of our horses for us as I wrote you last fall?"

"Yes. Horse all right here. You get 'um next year all right."

"Very well," said Uncle Dick. "We'll just unpack and turn them over right here."

The boys were very regretful at saying good-by to their faithful animals, especially the saddle-ponies which had carried them safely so far. They stood looking at them rather ruefully.

"Never mind," said Uncle Dick. "Leo has got some hay for them, and they will winter well here. I'll warrant you they'll be very glad to trade the trail for this pleasant valley here, where they can live in idleness and get fat for a year.

"Now, about the boat, Leo," he resumed.

"All right. Got two boats," said Leo. "I make 'um." And he led the way to an open spot in the bushes where there stood two newly completed boats, flat-bottomed and double-ended, with high sides, the material all made of whip-sawed lumber gotten out by Leo and his people.

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Uncle Dick walked up to the boats and looked them over carefully. "Pretty heavy, Leo," said he, "but they'll do to run downhill all the way."

"She's good boat," said Leo. "Need 'um strong."

"Yes, about twenty-two feet long each one—that will carry us and our supplies nicely. You and your man will take one boat, and Moise and I the other. I think I'll put the boys in our boat. What man are you going to get to go with you, Leo?"

"My cousin George; he's good man. We make hunt last spring down the Canoe River."

"What were you after?"

"After grizzlum bear."

"Did you get one?"

"No, not get one."

"Not one? And I thought that was a good bear country!"

"Not get *one*," said Leo. "Get sixteen."

"Sixteen! That's something different. That looks as though we might expect some bears ourselves this spring." [Pg 177]

"All right, plenty grizzlum. Maybe-so forty, fifty mile."

"What does he think about the running on the Canoe River, Uncle Dick?" inquired Rob. "Is it going to be bad water?"

"Not too bad water," said Leo, turning to Rob. "Snow not too much melt yet on big hills. We take wagon first."

"A wagon!" exclaimed John. "I didn't know there was a wagon within a thousand miles."

"My cousin other side river," said Leo, proudly, "got wagon. Bring 'um wagon two hunder miles from Fort George on canoe. His horses heap kick wagon sometam, but bime-by all right. We get work on railroad bime-by."

Rob and John stood looking at each other somewhat puzzled. "Well," said John, "I thought we were coming to a wild country, but it looks as though everybody here was getting ready to be civilized as fast as possible. But even if we have a wagon, where are we going with it?"

"There's a perfectly good trail up to Cranberry Lake, the summit of this divide, as I told you," said Uncle Dick. "I think Leo would rather take one of the boats by wagon. The rest of us can push the other boat up the McLennan, part way at least." [Pg 178]

"Good trail," said Leo. "Suppose you'll like, we got horse trail down Canoe River forty mile now. Many people come now. I been to Revelstruck [Revelstoke] three tam, me and my cousin George—part way horse, part way boat. Bime-by go on railroad. That's why my cousin buy his wagon—work on railroad and get money for ticket to Revelstruck."

"Well, what do you know about that, Rob?" said John. "This country certainly is full of enterprise. What I don't understand is, how they got a wagon up the Fraser River in a canoe."

After a time Leo led them down to the bank of the Fraser and showed them several of the long, dug-out canoes of the Shuswap, with which these people have navigated that wild river for many years. He explained how, by lashing two canoes together, they could carry quite a load without danger of capsizing; and he explained the laborious process of poling such a craft up this rapid river. The boys listened to all these things in wonder and admiration, feeling that certainly they were in a new and singular country after all. Once all the trade of the Pacific coast had passed this very spot. [Pg 179]

"Well now, Leo," said Uncle Dick, "you go get your cousin George, and let us begin to make plans to start out. We've got to hurry."

"Oh, of course we've got to hurry!" said John, laughing. "I never saw you when you were not in a hurry, Uncle Dick."

"S'pose we put boat on Canoe River or Columby River," said Leo, smiling, "she'll go plenty hurry, fast enough."

By and by he brought another Indian of his own age, even darker in color and more taciturn.

"This George," said he, "my cousin. I am mos' bes' grizzlum-hunter at Tête Jaune. George is mos' bes' man on boat."

"And Moise is the most best cook," said Uncle Dick, laughing. "Well, it looks as though we'd get along all right. But, since you accuse me of always being in too big a hurry, I'll agree to camp here for the night. Boys, you may unroll the packs. Leo, you may get us that mosquito-tent I left with you last year."

## SOUTHWARD BOUND

The boys all had a pleasant time visiting around the Indian village, and enjoyed, moreover, the rest after their long ride on the trail. On the morning of their start from Tête Jaune Cache they went to look once more at the boats which were now to make their means of transportation.

"I think they'll be all right," said Rob. "They're heavier than the ones we had on the Peace River, and the sides are higher. You could put a ton in one of these boats and she'd ride pretty safe in rather rough water, I should say."

"I'll bet we'll think they weigh a ton when we try to carry them down to the river," said Jesse. "But I suppose there'll be plenty of men to help do that."

"Now, we'll be leaving this place pretty soon," continued John. "I hate to go away and leave my pony, Jim. This morning he came up and rubbed his nose on my arm as if he was trying to say something."

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"He'd just as well say good-by," smiled Rob, "for, big as our boats are, we couldn't carry a pack-train along in them, and I think the swimming will be pretty rough over yonder."

"These are pretty heavy paddles," said Jesse, picking up one of the rough contrivances Leo had made. "They look more like sweeps. But they're not oars, for I don't see any thole-pins."

"It'll be all paddling and all down-stream," said Rob. "You couldn't use oars, and the paddles have to be very strong to handle boats as heavy as these. You just claw and pole and pull with these paddles, and use them more to guide than to get up motion for the boat."

"How far do we go on the Canoe River?" inquired Jesse of Rob. "You'll have to be making your map now, John, you know."

"Leo called it a hundred and fifty miles from the summit to the Columbia River," replied Rob, "but Uncle Dick thought it was not over eighty or a hundred miles in a straight line."

"Besides, we've got to go down the Columbia River a hundred miles or so," added John, drawing out his map-paper. "I'm going to lay out the courses each day."

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"It won't take long to run that far in a boat," said Rob. "And I only hope Uncle Dick won't get in too big a hurry, although I suppose he knows best about this high water which he seems to dread so much all the time. Leo told me that about the worst thing on the Canoe River was log-jams—driftwood, I mean."

The boys now bent over John's map on which he was beginning to trace some preliminary lines.

"Yonder to the left and south, somewhere, Rob, is the Athabasca Pass, which the traders all used who used the Columbia River instead of the Fraser. Somewhere on our way south we'll cut their trail. It came down some of these streams on the left. I don't know whether they came up the Canoe River or not, but not regularly, I'm sure. On Thompson's map you'll see another stream running south almost parallel to the Canoe—that's the Wood River. They didn't use that very much, from all I can learn, and that place on the Columbia called the Boat Encampment was a sort of a round-up place for all those who crossed the Athabasca Pass. Just to think, we're going the same trail on the big river traveled a hundred years ago by David Thompson and Sir George Simpson, and Doctor Laughlin, of old Fort Vancouver, and all those old chaps!"

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"I wonder what kind of boats they had in those times," remarked Jesse.

"They seem to have left no record about these most interesting details in their business. I suppose, however, they must have had log canoes a good deal like these Indians use on the Fraser. I don't think they used birch-bark; and if they had boats made out of sawed boards, I can't find any mention of it."

While they were standing talking thus, and working on John's map, they were approached by the leader of the party with the men who were to accompany them, and one or two other Indians of the village.

"All ready now," said Uncle Dick. "Here, you men, carry this boat down to the river-bank. The rest of you get busy with the packs."

"There she goes, the old Fraser," said John, as they gathered at the river-bank. "It's a good rifle-shot across her here, and she's only fifty miles long. It looks as though we'd have our own troubles getting across, too." [Pg 184]

But Leo and George, well used to navigation on these swift waters, took the first boat across, loaded, without any difficulty, standing up and paddling vigorously, and making a fairly straight passage across the rapid stream, although they landed far below their starting-point. With no serious difficulty the entire party was thus transported, and soon the heavier of the two boats, with most of the camp supplies, was loaded on the new red wagon of Leo's other cousin, who now stood waiting for them, having his own troubles with a pair of fractious young cayuses that he had managed to hitch to the wagon.

With this last addition to their party perched on top, and Leo and George walking alongside, the procession started off up the trail across the valley, headed for the low divide which lay beyond. The remaining boat, manned by Moise and Uncle Dick at bow and stern, was launched on the little river which came down from Cranberry Lake. The boys, rifles in hand, and light packs on their shoulders, trudged along on foot, cutting off bends and meeting the boat every once in a while. They had an early start after all, and, the wagon doubling back after depositing its load late in the afternoon to bring on the second boat, they all made camp on the summit not far from the lake that evening. [Pg 185]

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## XIX

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### ON THE CANOE RIVER

"John," said Uncle Dick, before they broke camp the following morning, "you'll have some work to do now with your map. This pass is not as high as the Yellowhead Pass, but in a way it's almost as interesting because it is the divide between the Fraser and the Columbia valleys; so you must get it on the map.

"Yonder is the river which old Simon Fraser thought was the Columbia, and the river which first took Sir Alexander Mackenzie to the Pacific. South of us runs the great Columbia, bending up as far as it can to reach this very spot. South to the Columbia run these two rivers, the Canoe and the Wood. Over yonder is the Albreda Pass, by which you reach the Thompson—glaciers enough there to suit any one. And over in that way, too, rises the Canoe River, which runs conveniently right toward us here, within a mile of our lake, inviting us to take its pathway to the Columbia. [Pg 187]

"Over that way on the left, as you know, lie the Rockies, and outside of two or three passes between the Kicking Horse Pass and the Yellowhead Pass no one really knows much about them. You see, we've quite a little world of our own in here. The white men are just beginning to come into this valley."

"Where are we going to hunt the grizzlies, Leo?" inquired Rob, after a time, as they busied themselves making ready for the portage with the canoe.

Leo rose and pointed his hand first south, and then to the west and south.

"Little creek come in from high mountain," said he. "All valleys deep, plenty slides."

"Slides? What does he mean, Uncle Dick?" inquired John.

"Well, I'll tell you. Leo hunts bear here in about the only practical way, which is to say, on the slides which the avalanches have torn down the sides of the mountains. You see, all these mountainsides are covered with enormous forest growth, so dense that you could not find anything in them, for game will hear or see you before you come up with it. These forests high up on the mountains make the real home of the grizzly. In the spring, however, the first thing a grizzly does is to hunt out some open country where he can find grass, or roots, or maybe mice or gophers—almost anything to eat. Besides, he likes to look around over the country, just like a white goat, apparently. So he will pick out a sort of feeding-ground or loafing-ground right in one of these slides—a place where the snow-slips have carried away the trees and rocks perhaps many years earlier and repeated it from year to year. [Pg 188]

"On these slides you will find grass and little bushes. As this is the place where the bears are most apt to be, and as you could not see them anyhow if they were anywhere else, that is where the hunters look for them. Late in the afternoon is the best time to find a grizzly on a slide. You see, his fur is very hot for him, and he doesn't like the open sun, and stays in

until the cooler hours of the day. Evidently Leo has found some creeks down below in the Canoe Valley where the hunters have not yet got in, and that is why he made such a big hunt last spring. Indeed, there are a number of creeks which come into the Columbia from the west where almost no hunting has ever been done, and where, very likely, one could make a good bear-hunt any time this month."

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The boys all agreed that the prospects of getting a grizzly apiece seemed very good indeed, and so set to work with much enthusiasm in the task of re-embarking, on the rapid waters of the Canoe River, here a small and raging stream, but with water sufficient to carry down the two bateaux. Their man with the wagon, without saying good-by, turned and went back to his village on the banks of the Fraser. Thus in the course of a day, the young travelers found themselves in an entirely different country, bound upon a different route, and with a wholly different means of transport. The keen delight of this exciting form of travel took hold upon them, and Uncle Dick and Moise, who handled the rear boat, in which all the boys were passengers, had all they could do to keep them still and to restrain their wish to help do some of the paddling.

Leo and his cousin George, as has been stated, took the lead in the boat which the party christened the *Lizzie W.*, in honor of Jesse's mother. The rear boat they called the *Bronco*, because of her antics in some of the fast rapids which from time to time they encountered.

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For a time they made none too rapid progress on their stream, which, though deep enough, was more or less clogged with sweepers and driftwood in some of the bends. Uncle Dick gave Leo orders not to go more than one bend ahead, so that in case of accident the boats would be in touch with each other. Thus very often the rear boat ran up on the forward one, lying inshore, and held ready to line down some bad chute of the stream.

In this work all bore a hand. The lines to be used were made of rawhide, which would have been slippery except for the large knots tied every foot or so to give a good handhold. Of course, in all this, as much in as out of the water, pretty much every one in the party got soaked to the skin, but this was accepted as part of the day's work, and they all went steadily on down the stream, putting mile after mile behind them, and opening up at every bend additional vistas of splendid mountain prospects.

At noon they paused to boil the tea-kettle, but made only a short stop. So steady had been their journey that when they pitched camp for the night on a little beach they estimated that their progress had been more than that of a pack-train in a good day's travel. That night they had for supper some fresh grouse, or "fool-hens," which fell to Jesse's rifle out of a covey which perched in the bushes not far from their camp-site. They passed a very jovial night in this camp, well content alike with their advance and with the prospects which now they felt lay before them.

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## XX

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### CARIBOU IN CAMP

"This weather," said Uncle Dick, walking toward an open place in the trees and looking up at the bright sky above, "is entirely too fine to suit me. This morning looks as though we would have a warm day, and that means high water. The rock walls in the cañons below here don't stretch, and a foot of water on a flat like this may mean twenty feet rise in a cañon. And that is where this little band of travelers will all get out and walk."

Leo, who had been examining his boat, which he had drawn up on the beach to dry overnight, now asked a little time to calk a leak which he had discovered. Meantime the boys concluded it might be a good plan to walk out a little way into an open place and try the sights of their rifles, which they knew would need to be exactly right if they were to engage in such dangerous sport as that of hunting the grizzly bear.

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"S'pose you see some small little bear," said Moise, as they started out, "you shoot 'um. Shoot 'um caribou too, s'pose you see one—law says traveler can kil meat."

"Well, we're not apt to see one," said John, "for we'd scare them when we began to shoot our rifles."

They had advanced only a few hundred yards from the camp when they found an open place in front of the trees which offered a good opportunity for a rifle-range of two hundred yards.



"I'm not going to fool with my sights," said Jesse, "because my gun shot all right last night on the grouse. You fellows go ahead."

Rob and John proceeded with the work of targeting their rifles, firing perhaps a dozen shots apiece in all before they turned to walk back to the camp. As they did so Rob, happening to look back of them, suddenly halted them with a low word. "What's that?" said he.

An animal large as a two-year-old heifer and wearing short stubs of horns was trotting toward them steadily, as though bound to come directly up to them. So far from being alarmed by the firing, it seemed to have been attracted by it, and really it was only curiosity which brought it up thus to its most dangerous enemy. It had never heard a rifle or seen a human being before in all its life.

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"Caribou!" said Rob in a low tone of voice. Even as he spoke John's rifle rang out, and the other two followed promptly. The stupid beast, now within sixty yards of them, fell dead in less time than it would take to tell of the incident. A moment later the boys stood at its side, excitedly talking together.

"Go back to camp, Jesse," said Rob, at length, "and tell Moise to come out. John and I will stay and begin to skin out the meat."

Moise, when he came out from camp, was very much pleased with the results of this impromptu hunt. "Plenty fat meat now," said he. "That's nice young caribou, heem." He fell rapidly to work in his experienced fashion, and in a short time he and George had packed the meat down to the camp and loaded it in the two boats, both of which were now ready for the departure.

"That's the most obliging caribou I ever heard of," said Rob, "to walk right into our camp that way. I've read about buffalo-hunters in the old times running a buffalo almost into camp before they killed it, to save trouble in packing the meat. But they'd have to do pretty well if they beat this caribou business of ours."

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Leo stood looking at the young hunters with considerable surprise, for he had been very skeptical of their ability to kill any game, and extremely distrustful of their having anything to do with grizzly hunting.

"Plenty caribou this valley," said he; "big black-face caribou. Heem plenty fool, too. Caribou he don't bite. But s'pose you'll see grizzlum bear, you better look out—then maybe you get some scares. S'pose you get some scares, you better leave grizzlum alone."

"Never mind, Leo," said Uncle Dick, laughing at him, "let's not worry about that yet a while. First find your grizzly."

"Find plenty grizzlum to-morrow, one day, two day," said Leo. "Not far now."

They determined to make a good long run that day, and indeed the stage of water aided them in that purpose; but Uncle Dick, as leader of the party, found that Leo and George had very definite ideas of their own as to what constituted a day's work. When noon came—although neither of them had a watch—they went ashore at a beach and signified their intention of resting one hour, quite as though they were members of a labor-union in some city; so nothing would do but the kettle must be boiled and a good rest taken.

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"How'll you and George get back up this stream, Leo?" inquired Rob, seating himself by the Indians as they lolled on the sand.

"That easy," said Leo. "We go Revelstruck two, three tam, my cousin and me. Come up Columby those wind behind us all right. Sometam pull boat on rope, mos' tam pole. Sometam pull 'um up on bush, little bit at time. But when we come on Columby, up Canoe, we get horse fifty miles this side Cranberry Lake and go out on trail. It most easy to go down and not come up."

"Well, I should say so," said Rob, "and on the whole I'm glad we don't have to come back at all."

"We not come back this way," said Leo, calmly lighting his pipe.

"But I thought you just said that you did."

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"Not this tam. My cousin and me we go on railroad from Revelstruck west to Ashcroft. Plenty choo-choo wagon Ashcroft near Fort George. At Fort George two, three choo-choo boat nowadays. We get on choo-choo boat and go up to Tête Jaune. That's more easy. Bime-by railroad, then heap more easy."

"Well, will you listen to that!" said John, as Leo concluded. "Automobiles and powerboats

up in this country, and a railroad coming in a couple of years! It looks to me as though we'd have to go to the north pole next time, if we get anywhere worth while."

"Bime-by grizzlum," said Leo, rising after a while and tightening his belt, as he walked down to the boats. "I know two, three good place. We camp this night, make hunt there."

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## XXI

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### THE FIRST BEAR CAMP

As they advanced to the southward the boys all felt that they were, in spite of all these threats of an advancing civilization, at last in the wilderness itself. Where the stream swept in close to the mountain range they could see dense, heavy forest, presenting an unbroken cover almost to the tops of the peaks themselves. At times when obliged to leave the bed of the stream for a little while, when the men lined down the boat on a bad passage, the boys would find themselves confronted, even when going a hundred yards or so, with a forest growth whose like they had never seen. Giant firs whose trunks were six feet or more in diameter were everywhere. Sometimes they would find one of these giants fallen in the woods, crashing down through the other trees, even great trunks spanning little ravines or gullies as bridges.

They were willing enough to make their path along any of these trunks which lay in their way, for below them lay the icy floor of the forest, covered with wet moss, or with slush and snow, since the sun hardly ever shone fair upon the ground in these heavy forests. Dense alders and thickets of devil's-club also opposed them, so that they were at a loss to see how any one could make his way through such a country as this, and were glad enough to reach even the inhospitable pathway of their mountain river and to take to the boats again.

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Unquestionably they made a long run that afternoon, for Leo evidently was in a hurry to reach some certain point. Late as the sun sank in that northern latitude, it was almost dark when at length they pulled inshore on an open beach at the mouth of the brawling stream which came down from the west out of a deep gorge lined with the ancient and impenetrable forest growth.

"I wish we had some fish to eat," said John. "Couldn't we catch any in this creek, or in the river?"

"No catch 'um trout," said Leo. "Too much ice and snow in water. Some trout in Columby. In summer salmon come."

"And in spring mosquito come," said Jesse, slapping at his face. "I think we'd better put up our new mosquito-tents from this time on."

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"All right," said John. "That's a good idea. We haven't needed them very much yet, but it looks as though the warm weather was going to hatch out a lot of fly."

They now proceeded to put up on the beach one of the tents which had earlier been brought along to the Cache by their uncle from Seattle, where much of the Alaskan outfitting is done. This tent was a rather curious affair, but effective in its way. It had about a three-foot wall, and the roof extended for two inches beyond the sides, as well as the two inches above the top, or ridge, where a number of grommets allowed the passage of a rope for a ridge-pole. The boys pitched the tent by means of a ridge-pole above the tent, supported by crotched poles at each end, and lashed the top firmly to the ridge-pole.

The interior of the tent was like a box, for the floor was sewed to the bottom of the walls all around and the front end of the tent did not open at all. Instead it had a round hole large enough to admit a man's body, and to the edges of this hole was sewed a long sleeve, or funnel, of light drilling, with an opening just large enough to let a man crawl through it to the interior of the tent. Once inside, he could, as John explained it, pull the hole in after him and then tie a knot in the hole. The end of the sleeve, or funnel, was tied tight after the occupant of the tent had gotten inside.

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In order to secure ventilation, ample windows, covered with bobbinet, or cheese-cloth, were provided in each end and in the sides, each with a little curtain of canvas which could be tied down in case of rain. Their engineer uncle, who had aided in the perfection of this device, declared it to be the only thing which made engineering possible in this far northern country, which was impassable in the winter-time, and intolerable in the summer-time for the man who has no defense against the insect pests which make life so wretched for the

inexperienced traveler in the north.

Leo looked with considerable interest at this arrangement after the boys had crawled in and made their beds inside ready for the night's rest. The boys offered him the use of their old tent, if he liked, but he seemed a trifle contemptuous about it.

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"Fly no hurt Injun," said he. And indeed he, George, and Moise all slept in the open by preference, with only their blankets drawn over their heads to protect them against the onslaughts of the mosquitoes.

They were now at their first hunting-ground, and our young friends were keen enough to be about the business soon after the sun had begun to warm up their little valley the next day. Leo swept a hand to the steep gorge down which the little creek came tumbling. "Plenty slide up there," said he. "Maybe-so three mile, maybe-so five."

"Well, now, how about that, Leo?" inquired Uncle Dick. "That's quite a climb, perhaps. Shall we come back here to-night, or stay up in the hills? We might pack up a camp outfit, and let Moise and George come back here to spend the night."

"All right," said Leo. "That's most best way. High up this creek she come flatten down—little valley there, plenty slide, plenty grizzlum."

"No mosquito-tent now, fellows," said Rob, laughing. "That'll be too heavy to pack up—we'll take the light silk shelter-tent, and get on the best we can to-night, eh?"

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"Precisely," said Uncle Dick, "and only one blanket for two. That, with our rifles and axes and some bacon and flour, will make all the load we need in a country such as this."

Equipped for the chase, early in the day they plunged into the dense forest which seemed to fill up completely the valley of the little stream which came tumbling down out of the high country. Leo went ahead at a good pace, followed by Moise and George with their packs. Uncle Dick and the young hunters carried no packs, but, even so, they were obliged to keep up a very fast gait to hold the leaders in sight. The going was the worst imaginable, the forest being full of devil's-club and alder, and the course—for path or trail there was none—often leading directly across the trunk of some great tree over which none of the boys could climb unassisted.

At times they reached places along the valley where the only cover was a dense growth of alders, all of which leaned downhill close to the ground, and then curved up strongly at their extremities. Perhaps no going is worse than side-hill country covered with bent alders, and sometimes the boys almost lost their patience. They could not stoop down under the alders, and could hardly crawl over or through them.

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"This is the worst ever, Uncle Dick," complained Jesse. "What makes them grow this way?"

"It's the snow," replied his uncle. "All this country has a very heavy snowfall in the winter. It packs down these bushes and slides down over them until it combs them all downhill. Then when the snow melts or slides off the ends of the bushes begin to grow up again toward the light and the sun. That's why they curve at the ends and why they lie so flat to the ground. Mixed in with devil's-club, I must say these alders are enough to try a saint."

In the course of an hour or so they had passed the heaviest forest growth and gotten above the worst of the alder thicket. On ahead they could now begin to see steep mountainsides, and their progress was up the shoulder of a mountain, at as sharp an angle as they could well accomplish. After a time they came to a steep slope still covered with a long, slanting drift of snow which ran down sharply to the tumbling creek below them. Across this the three men with the packs already made their way, but the boys hesitated, for the snow seemed to lie at an angle of at least forty-five degrees, and a slip would have meant a long roll to the bottom of the slope.

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"It's perfectly safe," said Uncle Dick, "especially since the others have stamped in footholds. You just follow me and step in my tracks. Not that way, Jesse—don't lean in toward the slope, for that is not the way to cross ice or snow on a side-hill. If you lean in, don't you see, you make yourself most liable to slip? Walk just as straight up as though you were on level ground—that's the safest position you can take."

"Well," said Jesse, "I can understand how that theory works, but it's awfully hard not to lean over when you feel as though your feet were going to slip from under you."

They gained confidence as they advanced on the icy side-hill, and got across without mishap. Soon they came up with the three packers, who were resting and waiting for them.

"Make camp soon now," said Leo. "Good place. Plenty slide not far."

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Indeed, within half a mile the men threw off their packs at a grunted word or so from Leo, and at once began to make their simple preparations for a camp. It was now almost noon, and all the party were well tired, so that a kettle of tea seemed welcome.

"Which way do we hunt from here, Leo?" inquired Uncle Dick, as they sat on a rock at the comfortable little bivouac they had constructed.

"Walk one mile," answered Leo, "go around edge this mountain here. Come little creek there, three, four good slides. We kill 'um bear last spring. Camp here, so not get too close."

After a time they were all ready for the hunt, but Leo seemed unhappy about something.

"You s'pose them boy go along?" he inquired of the leader.

"They surely do," was the answer. "That's what we came here for."

"Even those small leetle boy?"

"Even those small leetle boy, yes, Leo. You don't need to be uneasy—you and I can take care of these boys if they show they can't take care of themselves. How about that, Moise?" [Pg 207]

"I'll tol' Leo those boy she'll been all right," said Moise. "I'll been out with those boy when she'll ain't one year so old as he is now, and she's good honter then, heem. Those boy she'll not get scare'. Better for those bear he'll get scare' and ron off!"

Accordingly, there were five rifles in the party which at length started up the mountain after Moise and George had gone back down the trail to the main camp on the river. They climbed upward in country now grown very steep, and at last turned into a high, deep gorge out of which came a brawling stream of milky-colored ice-water, some twenty or thirty yards across. Without hesitation Leo plunged in and waded across, proving the stream to be not much more than knee-deep. And truth to say, Uncle Dick was proud of his young comrades when, without a word or a whimper, they unhesitatingly plunged in also and waded through after their leader. Nothing was said about the incident, but it was noticeable that Leo seemed more gracious thereafter toward the young hunters, for pluck is something an Indian always admires. [Pg 208]

"Now, Leo," said Uncle Dick, when after a steady march of some time they had reached the foot of a slide perhaps half a mile or so in extent, which lay like a big gash of green on the face of the black mountain slope, "I suppose this is where we make our first hunt."

Leo nodded, and began to feel in his pockets for some cartridges.

"Now never mind about loading up your magazine any more than it is, Leo," went on the other, "and just pump out the shells from your rifle. If there's any bear-killing done by this party this afternoon these boys are going to do it, and you and I will only serve as backing guns in case of trouble. My gun's loaded, but I know you well enough, Leo, old man, not to let you load your gun just yet awhile—you'd be off up the hill if we saw a bear, and you'd have it killed before any of the others got a chance for a shot. You just hold your horses for a while, neighbor, and give my boys a chance."

"Me no like," said Leo, rather glumly. "Me heap kill 'um grizzlum."

"Not this evening! These boys hunt 'um grizzlum this evening, Leo. They've come a long way, and they have to begin sometime. You live in here, and can kill plenty of bear any time you like. Besides, if any one of these boys kills a bear this afternoon I'm going to give you twenty dollars—that'll be about as good as though you killed one yourself and got nothing but your wages, won't it, Leo?" [Pg 209]

Leo broke out into a broad smile. "All right," said he. "But please, when you come on bear, let me load gun."

"Certainly," said Uncle Dick. "I'm not going to ask any man to stand in front of a grizzly with an empty rifle. But I'm not going to let you shoot until the time comes, believe me."

The boys found it right cold sitting about in this high mountain air with their clothing still wet from their fording of the stream. They could see on ahead of them the flattened valley of the creek which they had ascended, and Leo promised that perhaps on the next day they would move their camp farther in that direction and so avoid fording the icy torrent twice a day.

"First hunt this slide," said he. "Heap good. I ketch 'um bear here every time."

For an hour or more it seemed as if Leo was not going to "ketch 'um bear" this afternoon, and all the members of the party except himself grew cold and uneasy, although he sat [Pg 210]

impassive, every so often glancing up the steep slope above them. All at once they heard him give a low grunt.

Following his gaze, they saw, high up on the slide, and nearly half a mile away, a great, gray figure which, even without the glasses, they knew to be a large grizzly bear. The boys felt the blood leap in their veins as they stood looking up at this great creature, which carelessly, as though it knew nothing of any intrusion, now strolled about in full view above them. Sometimes it pawed idly as though hunting grass roots or the like, and then again it would stand and look vacantly down the mountainside.

"He'll see us, sure," whispered Rob.

"S'pose keep still, no see 'um," said Leo, still sitting looking at the bear. "S'pose hear 'um noise in bush, heem not scare. S'pose him smell us small little bit, heem run, sure. Wind this way. We go up this side."

They now threw off all encumbering clothing, and each of the boys, with loaded rifle, began the ascent of the mountain, parallel to the slide, and under the thick cover of the forest. More than once Uncle Dick had to tap Leo on the shoulder and make him wait for the others, for an Indian has no mercy on a weak or inexperienced person on a hunting-trail. Indeed, so little did he show the fabled Indian calm, he was more excited than any of the others when they began to approach a point from which they might expect to see their game. Uncle Dick reached out his hand for Leo's rifle and motioned for him to go ahead for a look. Leo advanced quietly to the edge of the slide and stood for a time peering out from behind the screening bush. Presently he came back.

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"Beeg bear," said he, "grizzlum. Heem eat grass. Up there, two, three hundred yard."

Uncle Dick turned to look at his young friends to see how they were standing the excitement of this experience. Jesse was a little pale, but his eyes were shining. Rob, as usual, was a little grave and silent, and John, although somewhat out of breath, showed no disposition to halt. Smiling to himself, Uncle Dick motioned Leo to the rear; and once more they began their progress, this time closer to the edge of the slide and working steadily upward all the time.

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At length he held up his hand. They could hear a low, whining, discontented sound, as though the bear were grumbling at the food which he was finding. Uncle Dick laid his finger on his lips and beckoned to Rob to go on ahead. Without hesitation Rob cocked his rifle and strode forward toward the edge of the slide, the others cautiously following, and Uncle Dick now handing Leo a handful of his cartridges, but raising a restraining hand to keep him back in his place.

They saw Rob, stooping down, advance rapidly to the edge of the cover and peer out intently, his rifle poised. Then quick as thought he raised his rifle and fired one shot, stood a half instant, and dashed forward.

There was no sound of any thrashing about in the bushes, nor had Rob fired more than the one shot, but when they joined him it was at the side of the dead body of a five-hundred-pound grizzly, in prime, dark coat, a silver tip such as any old bear-hunter would have been proud to claim as a trophy.

Rob was trying his best to control his excitement, and both the other boys were trembling quite as much as he. Leo quite forgot his calm and gave a tremendous yell of joy, and, advancing, shook Rob warmly by the hand. "Heap shoot!" said he. "I see!" And, taking the bear by the ear, he turned its head over to show the small red hole in the side of the skull.

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"He was right here," said Rob, "not thirty-five yards away. When I first saw him his head was down, but then he raised it and stood sideways to me. I knew if I could hit him in the butt of the ear I'd kill him dead at once, so I took that shot."

"Son," said Uncle Dick, "this is fine business. I couldn't have done better myself."

"I s'pose you'll give me twenty dollar now," said Leo; at which they all laughed heartily.

"I certainly will, Leo," said Uncle Dick, "and will do it right now, and on the spot! You certainly made good in taking us up to the bear, and it certainly was worth twenty dollars to see Rob kill him as quick and clean as he did."

"Is he good to eat?" asked John.

"No, John. And if he were, you couldn't eat all of him; he's too big. Some men have eaten grizzly liver, but I beg to be excused. But here's a robe that down in the States would be worth a hundred and fifty dollars these days. Come on, Leo, let's get our work over with and get back to camp."

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Under the experienced hands of Leo and Uncle Dick the great robe was rapidly removed. Leo rolled it into a pack, and Uncle Dick showed him how to make it firm by using two square-pointed sticks to hold it in shape after it was folded—a trick Moise had taught them long before. Leo, though not a large man, proved powerful, for he scorned all assistance after the heavy pack was once on his shoulders, and so staggered down the mountainside. So pleased were the boys over the success of their hunt that they hardly noticed the icy ford when again they plunged through the creek on their way to camp.

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## XXII

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### THE YOUNG GRIZZLY-HUNTERS

So excited were our young hunters over their first bear-hunt that they scarcely slept at all that night. It was a very merry party which sat late about the little camp-fire high up in the mountains. Their camp was rather a bivouac than a regular encampment, but they now scorned any discomfort, and, indeed, exulted in their primitive condition.

"Now, Leo," said Uncle Dick, "what do you think about these boys as hunters?"

"One boy heap shoot," grunted Leo. "Kill 'um one bear when mans along. Don't know about other boys."

"But let me tell you they have killed bear before now, and big ones, too. Why, two years ago, up in Alaska, all by themselves, they killed a Kadiak bear a good deal bigger than this one whose hide we have here for our mattress to-night."

"Yes, and last year up on the Peace River we helped kill a big grizzly," added Jesse, "only Alex MacKenzie was along, and he shot, too." [Pg 216]

"But this time, Leo," continued Uncle Dick, "you must admit that only one shot was fired, even if we were in the woods near by."

"That's all right," admitted Leo, who still felt aggrieved at the humiliation of not being allowed to use his own rifle in the bear-hunt. "S'pose only one bear, and only one boy, what then?"

"Well, in that case the best thing the bear could do would be to run away. As I told you, a rifle will shoot just as hard for a boy as for a man if the boy knows how to hold it."

"Did you ever have a bear come at you, Leo?" inquired Rob.

"Sometam bear come, not many," said he, indifferently. "Sometam bear get scared, not know which way he's ron—then people say he's got mad."

"And didn't you ever get scared yourself, Leo?" inquired Jesse.

"Too much kill 'um bear long time for me to get scare'," said Leo, proudly. "Kill 'um more bear pretty soon," added he, pointing over to the steep country on the other side of the valley. [Pg 217]

"Well, I was just thinking," said Uncle Dick, "we could very likely get more bear. But why? Some one will have to go down to camp and carry this hide, or else take word to the other men to come up and get it. Besides, this isn't the only bear valley in the country. What do you say, boys? Shall we stay up here, or go back and run on down the river farther?"

The boys were silent for a time. "Now, Uncle Dick," said John, at last, "no matter where you are, you're always in a hurry to get somewhere else. It's pretty hard to climb up into the real bear country even when you get near to it. Now here we are, already up, and we know that this is good bear country. We would only lose time if we hunted up any other country lower down."

"That's very well reasoned, John. What do you say, Jesse?"

"Well, I don't see any good in working the men too hard packing the stuff up from a main camp anywhere else. The devil's-clubs stick a fellow a good deal. Besides, here we are." [Pg 218]

"And you, Rob?"

Rob looked for a time up at the clouded sky, bright with innumerable stars. "Well," said he, "it certainly does look as though we were going to have clearer weather. And if so, we will have higher water. I stuck a stick in a bank for a water-mark yesterday, and I'm just

wondering how much the river has risen since then."

"Precisely, and that's well reasoned, too. You see, I don't want to take any more chances running these rivers than I have to."

"How far is it to the Columbia from here, Leo?" inquired Rob.

"Half-day run—whole day, don't know. S'pose water all right."

"Exactly," rejoined the leader of the party. "We don't know how long the water will stay all right. Every day we run puts that much behind us. And I want to tell you all that the danger of hunting these grizzlies is nothing at all compared to the risk of running the upper Columbia when the rise is on. I've tried both, and I know."

John protested at this. "Well, Rob has got his bear, but, you see, Jess and I haven't had a shot yet—though I don't suppose that is why Rob is willing to go." [Pg 219]

"No, that isn't the reason," commented Rob, quietly.

Uncle Dick thought for a time. "Well, I'll tell you what we'll do," said he, at length. "We'll stay at least one more day and hunt here to-morrow. Then if we don't have any luck to-morrow we'll run on down and have a look at the Columbia, and if she isn't too bad we'll stop at some good country below—say on Nagel Creek, down the bend."

"That seems fair," assented John; and Jesse also said he would vote the same way.

"How about you, Leo?" inquired Uncle Dick.

"Me not 'fraid of any water," replied the courageous Indian. "I like stay here. Most best grizzlum country of anywhere. Down below too much timber. Plenty black bear, not so much grizzlum. Not many place where you'll get grizzlum now. This plenty good place."

"Agreed," said Uncle Dick. "I think you all reason pretty well, and am convinced that we could spend another day here to good advantage. And now, Rob, since you got your bear, I think I'm going to send you down to camp in the morning for Moise and George. They can carry down the hide and some of the other stuff which will have to go down." [Pg 220]

"All right," said Rob. "I'm not afraid. The only risky place is on the snow-slide at the side-hill. Then you go right down in the creek-valley and follow that to the camp."

"Very well. That will leave the other two boys to make a hunt to-morrow, and if they have as good luck as you have had we certainly will have more hides in camp."

With this arrangement already made, they at length turned to the little tent, where their blankets and the big hide of the bear made some sort of a bed for them.

At an early hour of the morning they had finished their breakfast, and Rob was ready to take the trail back to the camp.

"Well, so-long, Rob," said John. "We're going to try to kill as big a bear as you got. You're not afraid to go back through the woods, are you?"

"Certainly not," said Rob; "I have my ax, and my compass, and my match box, and a little something to eat, besides my rifle. I might be able to get clear through to the railroad or back to Tête Jaune if I had to. But I'll not have to. So-long." [Pg 221]

"That's good boy," said Leo, approvingly, after Rob left and as they saw his sturdy figure trudging steadily onward toward the shoulder of the mountain.

"They're all good boys," replied Uncle Dick. "I'm going to make hunters out of all of'em. And now, just as a part of their education, they'll all help us to flesh out this bear-hide."

Jesse, hunting around on the side of the mountain, found a bit of coarse stone which John and he used as a whetstone to sharpen up their knives. They knew well enough that work on the coarse surface of a bear-hide dulls a knife very quickly. It was an hour or two before their leader was satisfied with the preparation of the big hide.

"I wish we had more salt," said he; "but as it happens Moise has put in a little tin of pepper, and pepper is very good to use around the ears and nose of a fresh bear-hide. The main thing is to flesh the hide carefully, and to skin out all the thick parts around the ears and nose very carefully indeed. Then you dry the hide—not in the bright sunlight, but in the shade—and never let it get near a fire. Some hides get grease-burned from bad fleshing and bad drying. I think this one'll do all right, though, for we made a pretty good job at scraping it down." [Pg 222]

"Plenty all right now," said Leo. "Go hunt."

"Which way next, Leo?" inquired John.

Leo pointed up the valley. "Plenty slide farther up. S'pose we stay here three, four days, get plenty grizzlum. Best tam late in day. Maybe-so get 'um now, maybe-so not. Don't know."

"Yes," said John; "it's too bad we have to start back to camp in just the best part of the day. But we've agreed to do that, so all we can do is to do our best. I suppose bears do sometimes come out before evening?"

"Once in a while," said Uncle Dick, "a bear will come out on the slide just to look around, as I've told you. There are no absolute rules about it. They don't like the sun any too well, but sometimes there is a heap of snow on a slide, usually near the foot of it, and I've seen two or three bears at once come out and lie down on the snow to get cool. Then sometimes they like to go out where they can get a bare rock to scratch themselves against. Besides that, I don't suppose all the bears get hungry at just the same time, and come out on the slide when they hear a dinner-bell ring. Take it all in all, grizzly-hunting is about as hard to classify as anything you'll find. It's one thing that would make a man believe in luck, good or bad. Anyhow, we'll go and try our luck."

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On their way up the valley they had to wade their little stream once more, but at this hour of the day it was not very wide or deep, although it certainly was very cold.

"Me know one slide," said Leo, after a time, "very old slide, not steep. Plenty gopher on that slide. Dig in dirt. Grizzlum he like eat gopher. Sometam he come there and dig gopher most all day. Maybe-so ketch 'um grizzlum there."

"That's mighty well reasoned, Leo," said Uncle Dick, approvingly. "You see, boys, why Leo is such a successful grizzly-hunter—he is a good observer, and he knows the habits of animals, and why animals have such or such habits. To be a good hunter you've got to be a good student."

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When at last they had reached the upper end of the flat valley in which the many branches of their little creek wandered tricklingly, Leo pulled up alongside a dead log and signified that they would stop there for a time while observing the slides on each side of the valley. From this point they had an excellent view of a great mountain series opening out beyond. And as they were commenting on the beauty of this prospect there came to them one of the experiences of mountains which not very many men have known.

They heard a heavy, rumbling sound, yet faint, like thunder in the distance. Then slowly they saw a spot on one side of the valley, some four or five miles distant, grow misty and white, as though a heavy cloud were forming.

"Look yonder!" exclaimed Uncle Dick. "That's a snow-slide, boys, and lucky enough we are that we're not under it. It's a big one, too."

They sat silent, listening to the dull voice of the avalanche. The great mass of snow which lay on the steep mountainside had begun to loosen at the rim-rock as the snow melted and began to trickle under the edges. Gradually the surface of the ground, moistened under the snow this way, began to offer less and less hold to the snow which was piled above it. Little by little the upper region of the snow-field began to drop and settle down, growing heavier and heavier on the supporting snow beneath, until finally, under the increasing weight above, it had given way along the whole surface of the mountain, a half-mile or more in extent.

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It chanced that at the foot of the slide—that is to say, at the edge of the valley—there was a tall cliff, or rock wall, and over this precipice all the mass of snow now was pouring, driven with such mighty force against this wall of rock at its foot that it broke into fine particles more like mist than snow. In a vast cascade it poured down and out over the valley, making one of the most wonderful spectacles a man could see anywhere in the mountains.

"There are rocks and trees going down in that cloud of snow, very likely," said Uncle Dick, "but you can't see them. That's how Leo gets his bear-hunting country made for him—eh, Leo?"

Leo grinned, but sat watching the snow-slide more indifferently than the others, the work of the great forces of nature being accepted as a matter of course in his philosophy. The others, however, could not repress their wonder. The slide ran for several minutes, sometimes subsiding and then breaking out in full force again, as the vast mass of snow, dammed up by the edge of the rock wall, would from time to time assume such proportions that the snow behind it finally drove it forward over the brink. Thus in successive cascades it ran on, until at last it died away in a faint dribble of thin white. Silence once more reigned in the valley. With their glasses they could now plainly see a vast mass of white

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choking the upper valley almost entirely across.

"Now, boys," said their leader, "there is something in this mountain work besides just hunting bear. The people who live in the lowlands don't always stop to think very much where their rivers come from and what keeps them up. Here you have seen the birth of a river, or a part of a river. That mass of packed snow will lie there nearly all summer, just melting a little bit at times, and feeding this stream which runs right past us here. Still farther back in the mountains you'll see the glaciers—great ice-fields which never thaw out completely. These are the upper sponges of the mountains, squeezed each year by the summer sun. That is why the rivers run and keep on running."

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"It's wonderful to me," said Jesse. "I'm glad we saw that—and glad, too, that we weren't camped right where it came down."

"Yes," assented his uncle. "In that case there would have been no possible help for us. But good hunters in the high country always take care not to pitch their camp where a slide can possibly come down on them. We wouldn't have been more than so many straws under that mass of snow and rocks."

They sat for some time in the bright morning sun, their wet clothing gradually becoming dryer upon them as they moved about a little now and then, or resumed their wait with Leo on the log. The young Indian sat motionless, apparently indifferent to all discomforts, and with no interest in anything except the controlling impulse of the hunt. His keen eye roved from time to time over all the faces of the slides near them in the valley, especially the one directly in front of them at the right. Presently they noted that he was gazing intently for some time at one spot, although he said nothing.

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"Do you see anything, Leo?" asked John, idly.

"Yes, see 'um four bears, grizzlum," said Leo, quietly.

At once all the others started into interest. "Where are they, Leo?" demanded Jesse. "I can't see them."

"Four grizzlum," reaffirmed Leo, quietly. "Up high. Up high, two; more low, two."

Indeed, at last they saw that the hunter was not mistaken. There were four bears all at once on the surface of the slides, but they were almost concealed by the tall vegetation which in places had grown upon it.

"He'll go dig pretty soon now," said Leo. "Ketch 'um gopher."

"You're mistaken, Leo," said Uncle Dick, "about two of those bears. I can see them all plainly with the glasses now, and those lowest down in the brush are black bears. The upper ones are grizzlies, and mighty good ones, too."

"Oh, ho!" said Leo. "No see 'um good at first. Yes, two black bear—he won't go close to grizzlum. Him scare' of grizzlum. Me no like 'um black bear there. S'pose we go after grizzlum, them little black bear, he'll ron off and scare grizzlum."

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They sat watching the bears from their place in the middle of the valley. The largest one began to advance deliberately toward the middle of the slide, where they could see little heaps of yellow earth thrown up by the burrowing gophers. The bear would look at these idly and paw at them curiously now and then, but it was some time before he began to dig in earnest.

The second grizzly, lower down on the slide, went earnestly to work, and apparently was interested in something which he thought was underneath a certain large rock. They later found that this rock must have weighed three or four hundred pounds at least, although they saw where the bear, putting his mighty forearm under it, had rolled it out of its bed as easily as though it had been a pebble. There is no animal in the world more powerful for its size than the mountain grizzly.

Leo continued to express his dislike of the little black bears.

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"S'pose grizzlum ketch plenty gopher, he stay sometam. We heap shoot 'um. But me no like 'um black bears. No get around 'um; they ron off sure."

"Well, we'll wait awhile," said Uncle Dick, "and see what'll happen."

"Just look at them!" exclaimed Jesse, who was using the glasses now. "They're playing like children, those little black bears."

They could see that these two smaller bears were apparently out more for a lark than anything else. They would lie down sometimes flat on the ground like dogs, or sit up in all

kinds of awkward attitudes and scratch themselves, first with one foot and then another. Sometimes they would start off and gallop aimlessly for quite a distance, then, turning, would run full tilt into each other and, standing up on their hind legs, would box like men. At this sport one bear seemed to be the better, and sometimes would land so hard a cuff on his comrade as to knock the latter rolling down the hill, in which case the aggrieved one, recovering himself, with ears laid back would run up once more at his antagonist and resume the half-playful combat.

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The two big grizzlies, stately and dignified, paid no attention to these antics, but went on with their own employment of digging for breakfast. Sometimes they would stand motionless, looking out over the country, then leisurely go back to their digging. If they saw the black bears they did not pay any attention to them.

At last the two little bears became either bolder or more careless, and began to work higher up the slide. Then the nearest grizzly, his mane erect on his shoulders, and head down, made a sort of short run at them, half carelessly and indifferently, as though he held them in contempt. At this both the black bears turned tail and galloped off lumberingly into the forest, and were seen no more.

Leo, with a short grunt, arose and reached for his rifle. He made a quick motion with his arm for the others to follow, and set out in the direction which would put him downwind from the game. In order to reach the proper side of the slide they had to walk in full view in the open valley, directly below the two bears, but Leo seemed to be not in the least uneasy about this.

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"Grizzlum not see 'um very good," said he. "He can't look half-mile. Smell 'um very good."

When they reached the edge of the timber and made ready for the climb up the side of the slide, the Indian turned inquiringly to Uncle Dick and patted his rifle on the stock. "S'pose two bear, grizzlum?" he said.

"All right, Leo," said Uncle Dick; "you're in on this hunt with the rest of us. We'll all load our rifles here. Now, John, you go on with Leo, and take the grizzly highest up. He's maybe the biggest; I don't know. Jesse and I will stop opposite the bear which is lowest down and wait till you get in reach of yours. When you do, open up, and we'll shoot as soon as we see ours. The slide is narrow up there, and they'll be under cover in forty yards. There are two robes too good to lose, and we'll all just take a hand in stopping them."

"I'd like to kill one all by myself the way Rob did," said Jesse, although it must be admitted he was just a trifle pale.

"Maybe you will," said his uncle. "But any hunter has to take a bear just as he finds his chance. It's always best for two men to go up together on a grizzly, no matter how good a hunter either may be. It isn't often that you get as good a chance as Rob had on his bear. You leave that to Leo and me. And, Leo, mind now, give your boy the first shot at the bear if it's a possible thing to do it. I'll do the same way with Jesse."

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They began now their steady climb under cover, sometimes in the edge of the forest, and sometimes on the face of the slide itself. They were surprised to see that what had appeared to be a flat green slope was really a very steep one, and covered in some places with bushes much higher than their heads, with tall, rank shrubs and early vegetation of many sorts. Leo, as good a grizzly-hunter as could have been found in all the west, was allowed to lead the way, and he took good care never to get within sight of the game or to allow the wind to blow from him toward the bears. He climbed so fast that the others had much difficulty in keeping up with him. But at length, making a swift detour in the forest, he paused and raised a hand.

They could hear now the whining, grumbling voice of the grizzly, as though he were complaining about his poor luck with the gophers, now and then a grunt of anger or disgust as he tugged at some rock. They knew this to be the larger bear, the one higher up the hillside. Leo pointed that way and caught John by the arm, motioning to Uncle Dick and Jesse to advance straight toward the slide in their position.

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Without hesitation John dropped in behind his guide; and Jesse, whether or not he felt any trace of fear, in turn followed his own leader. Thus for the moment the two parties were separated.

In a few moments Leo and John were at the edge of their cover. The Indian caught the boy roughly by the arm, at the same time cocking his own gun. They were in the edge of a little poplar thicket which jutted out from the pine forest upon the slide. Leo would have preferred to get above his bear, as all good hunters do, but saw that the cover above would not be so good. Now, as John stepped to the edge of the thicket he saw the great grizzly

directly above him, not thirty yards away up the slope.

At the same instant also the bear saw the hunters. He stood looking down at them, champing his jaws like a big hog and making no motion either offensive or defensive. John reached one hand back to quiet Leo, who had given him a strong dig in the back. Then quickly he raised his rifle and fired. It was impossible to restrain the Indian much longer, and his shot was so close to John's that they sounded almost like one, although John really was first to hit the bear.

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The mark was easy enough for any one of any sort of steadiness, for the bear stood with his broad breast full toward them. John's bullet, as they found, struck fair enough and ranged deep into the great body, while Leo's landed on one shoulder. It is possible neither shot would have knocked the bear down, but any bear, when hit, will drop. This one, with an angry roar which could have been heard half a mile, let go and came down directly toward them, rolling and clawing, biting at itself, and struggling to catch its footing. John fired again, and to his shame be it said that this time his bullet went wild. At his side, however, Leo, brave as a soldier, stood firm, rapidly working the lever of his own rifle. John recovered presently and joined in. In a few seconds, although it seemed long to the younger hunter, their double fire had accounted for the grizzly, which rolled over and expired very close to them, its body caught in its descent by two or three trees.

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Meantime—although John declared he never had heard it—there came from below the roar of the rifles of Jesse and Uncle Dick. The second bear, perhaps more wary than its mate or perhaps warmer from its digging, had left the open space and taken shelter in a little clump of green bushes close to the point where the two hunters approached the slide. When the sound of firing began above, this bear, much excited, began to plunge wildly this way and that inside the clump of bushes. At last it broke cover almost upon Jesse, who was standing in front.

"Shoot!" called Uncle Dick, in quick command; and Jesse fired, almost without aim, into what seemed a great gray mass which ran as though directly over him. Almost at the same instant Uncle Dick fired also and then, like their companions above, they both fired rapidly as they could until their bear also at last lay quiet, but dangerously close at hand.

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Uncle Dick pushed back his hat and wiped his forehead, looking at Jesse half quizzically. "Son," said he, "it's lucky we both were here. That bear was either badly scared or good and angry. It meant business, I believe, and it's a lucky thing we stopped it when we did."

Jesse put his rifle to the ground and stood trembling all over. "Well, Uncle Dick," said he, "I don't know whether or not the bear was scared, but I know *I* am right now."

"It's just as well to be honest," said his uncle, putting a hand kindly on his shoulder. "Any man has a right to be anxious in as close a corner as this."

They heard the loud hallo of John now, a little way above them; and presently Leo came slipping down toward them, smiling broadly.

"Kill 'um two bear!" said he. "Plenty good hunt, eh?" He looked at the little heap of empty shells lying so close to the dead bear.

"Two grizzlum, both fight," said he. "Bad bear. Heap shoot 'um."

"And I'm mighty glad we're no worse off," said Uncle Dick, when in turn they had passed from one of the great grizzlies to the other. "And, speaking of luck, you boys certainly have had it in every way. Leo, it looks to me as though you put us up almost too close on these bears."

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"No see 'um from trees," said Leo. "I like shoot 'um bear close up. Heap shoot 'um. This boy he heap shoot 'um too."

"All is well that ends well," said their leader. "Now here we are again, with two big bear-hides to get down out of these mountains. Are you satisfied, boys—good and plenty satisfied?"

"I should say so," said Jesse, smiling; and they all laughed at him.

"I don't know that I ever knew of a better hunt," said Uncle Dick, at last, looking approvingly at the two bears. They had rolled and pulled the upper bear down to the lower, so that they now lay side by side. "Three bears like this in two days is certainly considerable hunting. These are big as Rob's bear. The robes are prime, too, and not rubbed to amount to anything—one dark silver tip and one gray fellow. You can't ever tell what color a grizzly is going to have or what he is going to do."

They fell to work now, each party skinning out its own bear, a task which kept them

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employed for some time.

"We'd better kill the next bears closer to the foot of the slide," said Jesse, laughing. "Then we won't have to carry the skins so far."

"A good idea," assented his uncle. "I'm telling you, a full-sized grizzly-hide, green, is all a strong man can pack."

"We'll not try to carry them down to the main camp, will we?" inquired Jesse.

"Indeed, no. We'll be lucky if we make it back to last night's camp down the valley. There's a bare chance that we may meet Moise and George there. They won't know where we are, unless they heard us shooting."

Leo came up to them at about this time, and stood looking at Jesse's bear for some time. "S'pose me get 'um two twenty dollar, now?" said he, looking at Uncle Dick. The latter looked at him quizzically for a time, rubbing his chin with a finger.

"Well, Leo," said he, "you're a pretty good business man as well as a good grizzly-hunter. So you want to cash in on our bear, do you? All right; I feel so good about it that I'll just go you—you shall have twenty dollars a head for these bears—and sixty dollars in two days, besides your wages, ought to leave you and your cousin George pretty well satisfied, eh?"

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"Yes, feel heap good," said Leo, grinning. "Buy plenty flour now. Plenty grub on Fort George."

"You're no better satisfied than we are, my friend," rejoined the white hunter. Leo extended his hand, and they shook hands all around.

"I'm willing to go on down the river now," said John; and Jesse smiled his assent.

With some labor they squared the two hides into a portable pack, one for each of the men, binding them into place with bits of thongs which each carried at his belt. Then, using their belts as tump-straps, Leo and Uncle Dick shouldered their heavy loads and started down the mountain.

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## XXIII

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### ONWARD BOUND

They had gone down the valley only about half a mile, now and then splashing through the shallow fords of the meandering little stream which spread all over the flat, gravelly floor of the valley, when they heard a shout and saw Moise advancing rapidly toward them. That worthy came up smiling, as usual, and beginning to talk before he came within good ear-range.

"Hollo!" he cried. "Some more bear? Plenty bear now, this tam?"

Uncle Dick halted and dropped his pack to the ground. "Welcome! Moise," said he. "I don't know that I ever was gladder to see you in my life—this load is heavy."

"I'll take heem," said Moise. "My faith, she's big bear, heem, too, eh? Two beeg bear"—and he lifted also the other pack which Leo had dropped down. "I hear you shoot when I come on the camp here, and I say to myself, 'Moise, those boy he kill more bear, sure.' Bime-by I come up, help you get load down the hill. George, he's make cup tea on the camp; Rob, he's down below on the big camp, on the boat."

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"Didn't I told you, Leo," continued Moise, exultantly, "those boy, she's the most best grizzly-hunter ever come on the Tête Jaune Cache, heem?" And Leo this time grinned his assent and approval.

They now made their way back to the bivouac camp where they had passed the night, and where they were much refreshed by a lunch and a cup of tea all around, after which they made ready to get back down to the valley of the Canoe as rapidly as possible. All the men had particularly heavy loads to carry, and even the boys took on light packs of blankets or camp equipment.

They made the journey around the point of the mountain and down into the Creek Valley which ran into the Canoe without much incident, except that on the side-hill snowdrifts George, carrying one of the bear-hides, slipped by reason of a broken foothold in the

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thawing snow, and had a considerable roll downhill with his load before he brought up against a little tree. To the others this seemed a dangerous experience; but Leo, like any other Indian, found it only laughable, and he derided George for some time in their own language. George seemed very much chagrined, for no Indian likes to make a mistake or be humiliated in the presence of others.

As may be supposed, Rob greeted them, on their arrival at the main camp, with the greatest delight in the world.

"Well, what luck!" exclaimed he. "Two more hides—that's one apiece! Did each of you get one, fellows?"

The three boys now shook hands all around, and for a long time they chatted gaily together, telling one another the many exciting incidents of their hunt. They all agreed that certainly they were the luckiest young hunters that ever had gone after grizzlies.

"I don't know how you all feel about it now," said Rob, finally, "but for my part I would be content to run straight on down and not stop for any more hunting. I've been watching my water-mark here, and this river has risen almost a foot in the last twenty-four hours. That means that the snows are beginning to go on the upper snow-fields. We've had a big hunt, so let's take out the rest of it in a big run on the old Columbia—they say that's worse than grizzlies."

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The others assented to this readily enough, for, wet, tired, and successful as they were, they welcomed the thought of a night's rest and a journey in the boats, which, taking one thing with another, they knew would be easier than climbing after grizzlies in the mountains.

They all slept soundly that night in their mosquito-proof tent, and in the morning were much refreshed. All bore a hand in breaking the camp and loading the boats, and early in the day they were once more off in their swift journey down the mountain river. The river itself seemed to have changed almost overnight. From being mild and inoffensive it now brawled over its reefs and surged madly through its cañons. Many times they were obliged to go ashore and line down some of the bad water, and all the time, when running, the paddlers were silent and eager, looking ahead for danger, and obliged constantly to use care with the paddles to dodge this rock or to avoid that stretch of roaring water. There was no accident, however, to mar their progress, and they kept on until in the afternoon they reached a place where the valley seemed to flatten and spread, a wide and beautiful mountain prospect opening out before them. After a time, at the head of a long stretch of water, as both boats were running along side by side, they saw suddenly unfold before them the spectacle of a wide, green flood, beyond which rose a wedgelike range of lofty mountains, the inner peaks of which were topped with snow.

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"*La Grande Rivière!*" exclaimed Moise; and Leo turned his head to shout: "Ketch 'um Columby!"

"Yes, there's the Columbia, boys," said Uncle Dick. And the three young hunters in the boat waved their hats with a shout at seeing at last this great river of which they had heard so much, and which had had so large a place in their youthful dreams.

Steadily the boat swept on down the stained and tawny current of their smaller river, until they felt beneath them the lift of the green flood of the great Columbia, here broken into waves by the force of an up-stream wind. Uncle Dick called out an order to the lead-boat. Soon they all were ashore on a little beach near the mouth of the Canoe River, each feeling that now at last a great stage of their journey had been completed, and that another yet as great still lay before them.

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## XXIV

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### THE BOAT ENCAMPMENT

Our party of adventurers were now in one of the wildest and most remote regions to be found in all the northern mountains, and one perhaps as little known as any to the average wilderness goer—the head of the Big Bend of the Columbia River; that wild gorge, bent in a half circle, two hundred miles in extent, which separates the Selkirks from the Rockies. There are few spots on this continent farther from settlements of civilized human beings.

To the left, up the great river, lay a series of mighty rapids, impossible of ascent by any boat. Nearly a hundred miles that way would have been the nearest railroad point, that on the Beaver Mouth River. Down-stream to the southward more than a hundred miles of water almost equally dangerous lay before them. Back of them lay the steep pitch of the Canoe River, down which they had come. Before them reared the mighty wedge of the Selkirks, thrusting northward. Any way they looked lay the wilderness, frowning and savage, and offering conditions of travel perhaps the most difficult to be found in any part of this continent.

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"I congratulate you, young men," said Uncle Dick, at last, as they sat silently gazing out over this tremendous landscape. "This is a man's trip, and few enough men have made it. So far as I know, there has never been a boy here before in the history of all this valley which we see here before us."

Rob and John began to bend over their maps, both those which they had brought with them and that which John was still tracing out upon his piece of paper.

"We can't be far from the Boat Encampment here," said Rob, at last.



**THE BIG BEND OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER**

"It's just around the corner of the Big Bend here," rejoined their leader. "Over yonder a few hundred yards away is the mouth of the Wood River, and the Encampment lies beyond that. That's the end of the water trail of the Columbia going east, and the end of the land trail for those crossing the Athabasca Pass and going west. Many a bold man in the past has gone by this very spot where we now stand. There isn't much left to mark their passing, even at the old Boat Encampment, but, if you like, we'll go up there and have a look at the old place."

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Accordingly, they now embarked once more, and, taking such advantage of the slack water as they could, and of the up-stream wind which aided them for a time, they slowly advanced along the banks of the Columbia, whose mighty green flood came pouring down in a way which caused them almost a feeling of awe. Thus they passed the mouth of the more quiet Wood River, coming in from the north, and after a long, hard pull of it landed at last at the edge of a sharp bend, where a little beach gave them good landing-room.

Uncle Dick led them a short distance back toward a flat grassy space among the low bushes. Here there was a scattered litter of old tent-pegs and a few broken poles, now and then a tin can. Nothing else remained to mark the historic spot, which had passed from the physical surface of the earth almost as completely as the old Tête Jaune Cache. Uncle Dick turned away in disgust.

"Some trappers have camped here lately," said he, "or perhaps some of the engineers sent out by another railroad. But, at any rate, this is the old Boat Encampment. Yonder runs the trail, and you can follow that back clear to Timbasket Lake, if you like, or to the Athabasca Pass."

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"Is this where they came in from the Saskatchewan?" demanded Rob.

"No, the old trail that way really came down the Blaeberry, very far above. I presume after they got on the west side, in the Columbia valley, they took to the trail and came down to this point just the same, for I doubt if any of them ran the Columbia much above here. Many a time old David Thompson stopped here—the first of the great map-makers, my young friends, and somewhat ahead of you, John. And Sir George Simpson, the lord of the fur-traders, came here with his Indian wife, who became a peeress of Great Britain, but who had to walk like any voyageur from here out across the Rockies. I don't doubt old Doctor

Laughlin, of Fort Vancouver, was here, as I have told you. In short, most of the great fur-traders came to this point up to about 1825, or 1826, at which time, as we have learned, they developed the upper trail, along the Fraser to the Tête Jaune Cache."

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"But didn't any one of them ever go up the Wood River yonder?" demanded Rob. "That looks like an easy stream."

"The engineer Moberly went up there, and crossed the Rockies to the head of the Whirlpool River on the east side," replied Uncle Dick, "but that was in modern times—about the same time that Major Rogers discovered the Rogers Pass through the Selkirks below here, where the Canadian Pacific road crosses the Rockies. It's a great tumble and jumble of mountains in here, my young friends, and a man's job for any chap who picked out any pass in these big mountains here."

"Yonder"—he rose and pointed as he spoke—"east of us, is the head of the Saskatchewan—the Howse Pass is far to the south of where we stand here. Northeast of us, and much closer, is the Athabasca Pass, and we know that by following down the Athabasca we would come to Henry House and Jasper House, not far from the mouth of the Miette River."

"Now, somewhere north of here, down the west side of the mountains, came the trail from the Athabasca Pass, and it ended right here where we stand. I've never made that trip across the Athabasca Pass myself. That old pass, famous as it is, is in the discard now. With a railroad on each side of it, it will be visited from this time on very rarely by any man, whether he be tourist or bear-hunter. The Rockies will take back their own once more."

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"But here, right where we stand, is one of those points comparable to old Fort Benton, or Laramie, on the plains below us, in our own country. This was the rendezvous, the half-way house, of scores of bold and brave men who now are dead and gone. I want you to look at this place, boys, and to make it plain on your map, and to remember it always. Few of your age have ever had the privilege of visiting a spot like this."

Rob and Jesse busied themselves helping John with his map, and meantime Moise and the other two men were making a little fire to boil a kettle of tea.

"Why did they stop here?" asked John, after a time, busy with his pencil. "Couldn't they get any farther up?"



**THE COLUMBIA RIVER, ABOVE THE BOAT ENCAMPMENT**

Uncle Dick pointed to the jutting end of the shore which hid the bend of the river from view above them. "You know that river, Leo?" said he.

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Leo spread out his hands wide, with a gesture of respect.

"Me know 'um," said he. "Plenty bad river. Me run 'um, and my Cousin George. And Walt Steffens—he live at Golden, and Jack Bogardus, his partner, and Joe McLimanee, and old man Allison—no one else know this river—no one else ron 'um. No man go up Columby beyond here—come down, yes, maybe-so."

"Last year," said Uncle Dick, "when I came in from the Beaver Mouth I saw a broken boat not far below Timbasket Lake. Whose was it?"

"My boat," grinned Leo. And George also laughed. "We bust up boat on rock, lose flour, tea, everything. We swim out, and walk trail down to here, swim Wood River, and go up Canoe River, fifty mile. Two day we'll not got anything to eat."

"Well, I don't see how they got up these streams at all," said John.

"Joe McLimane he come this far from Revelstruck," said Leo. "Take him twenty-nine day, not on high water." [Pg 254]

"Then there must be bad rapids below here," said John.

"Yes," said his uncle, "and, as I went up the Canoe myself from here, I've never seen that part of this river, but they say that at the time of the big gold excitements a generation ago, when the miners tried to get out of this country, they took to rafts. The story is that a hundred and sixty-five men of that stampede were drowned in one year on the Death Rapids."

Leo picked up a stick and began to make a map on the sand, showing the Big Bend of the Columbia and some of its side-streams.

"You start Beaver Mouth," said he, "all right, till you come on Surprise Rapids—all at once, right round bend. Surprise Rapids, him very bad. Much portage there. Very bad to get boat through even on line. Portage three mile there, maybe-so."

"Here was old man Brinkman, his rapid—not so bad, but bad enough for to scare old man Brinkman, so they name it on him, 'Brinkman's Terror.'

"Here is what Walt Steffen calls 'Double Eddy'—bad place sometam in high water. Bime-by we come on Lake Timbasket, up there, maybe thirty mile, maybe-so." [Pg 255]

Leo made a tracing of the outline of the lake, then followed his scratch in the sand on around.

"Now begin Twenty-six Mile Rapid, all bad—Gordon Rapids here, Big Eddy here, Rock Cañon here. Now we come on Boat Encampment. This way Revelstruck. Death Rapids here; Priest Rapids down here; and then Revelstruck Cañon; him bad, very bad, plenty man drown there, too. That five miles from Revelstruck; we get out and walk there."

"Now here"—and he pointed on his sand map—"is Boat Encampment. Right around corner there is one of most bad places on whole river."

"But you've been through, Uncle Dick. Tell us about it."

"Yes, I came through once last year, and that's enough for me," said Uncle Dick. "That's the Rock Cañon and the Grand Eddy. Leo has shown it all pretty plainly here. I don't want to make that trip again, myself. But when we got to Lake Timbasket we didn't any of us know how bad it was going to be—the old trapper who acted as our guide had never been through when the water was high. But when we got at the head of the Twenty-six Mile Rapids, below Lake Timbasket, it was like the bottom had dropped out of things, and we had to go through, for we couldn't get back." [Pg 256]

"Of course, we could line sometimes, and many of the chutes we did not attempt. The first day below Timbasket we made about ten miles, to a camp somewhere below the Cummins Creek chute. We could hear the water grinding—it sounded like breaking glass—all night long, right near the place where we slept, and it kept me awake all night. I suppose it is the gravel down at the bottom of the deep water. Then there were growlings and rumblings—the Indians say there are spirits in the river, and it sounded like it."

"There was one Swede that the trapper told us of, who started through the Cummins Rapids on a raft and was wrecked. He got ashore and walked back to the settlements. He had only money enough left to buy one sack of flour, then he started down the river again. From that day to this he has never been heard of, and no one knows when or where he was drowned." [Pg 257]

"We passed one big boulder where the trapper said the name of another Swede was cut on the rock by his friends who were wrecked with him near by. I believe they were some miners trying to get out of this country in boats. That man's body was never found, for the Columbia never gives up her dead. We saw Leo's broken boat, as I told you; and on the shores of Lake Timbasket we found the wrecks of two other boats, washed down. You see, this wild country has no telegraph or newspaper in it. When a man starts down the Big Bend of the Columbia he leaves all sort of communication behind him. Many an unknown man had started down this stream and never been seen again and never missed—this river can hold its own mysteries."

"Well, tell us about this rapid just above here, Uncle Dick," went on Jesse. "Wasn't it pretty bad?"

"The worst I ever saw, at least. When we stopped above the head of that cañon the trapper



told me where the trail was down here to the Encampment, but of course I concluded to run on through if the others did. Before we got that far I was pretty well impressed with the Columbia, myself. When we landed at the head of Upper Death Cañon I don't believe any of us were very sure that our boat would go through. No one was talking very much, I'll promise you that.

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"The worst part of that long stretch of bad water of the Rock Cañon can't be more than four or five miles in all, and there isn't a foot of good water in the whole distance, as I remember it. Of course, the worst is the Giant Eddy—it lies just over there, beyond the edge of the hill from us. In there the water runs three different ways all at once. There is no boat on earth can go up this river through the Giant Eddy, and lucky enough is the one which comes down through it.

"You see, once you get in there, you can't get either up again or out on either side—the rock walls come square down to the river, which boils down through a narrow, crooked gorge. It is like a big letter Z, with all the flood of the Columbia pouring through the bent legs; no one knows how deep, but not half the width which we see here.

"That's the worst water I ever saw myself—it runs so strong that there is a big ridge thrown up in the middle of the river, many feet higher than the water on either side. There is a crest of white water all down the sides of the top of that high ridge. The water looks as though it were hard, so that you couldn't drive a nail through it, it's flung through there at such tremendous pressure.

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"You don't have much time to look as you go through, and there is no place where you can see the Giant Eddy except from the Giant Eddy itself. All I can remember is that we were clawing to keep on top of that high rib of the water mid-stream. I can see it now, that place—with green water running up-stream on each side, and the ridge of white water in the middle, and the long bent slope, like a show-case glass, running on each side from us to the edges of the up-stream currents. It was a very wonderful and terrible sight, and seeing it once was quite enough for me.

"About half-way down that long, bad chute I saw a hole open up in the crown of that ridge and could look down into it, it seemed to me, fifteen feet—some freak in the current made it—no one can tell what. It seemed to chase us on down, and all our men paddled like mad. If our stern had got into that whirlpool a foot, no power on earth could have saved us. As luck would have it, we kept just outside the rim of the suckhole, and finally escaped it.

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"Then we came to the place which lies first around the bend above us—a great deep saucer in the river, below a rock ledge of white water—it is like a shallow bicycle track, higher at the edges, a basin dished out in the river itself. I don't know how we got into it, and have only a passing memory of the water running three ways, and the high ridge in the middle, and the suckhole that followed us, and then we slipped down into that basin at the last leg of the Z, and through it and across it, and so right around that bend yonder, and here to the Boat Encampment. You may believe me, we were glad enough.

"So now, adding my story to the one you'll be able to tell from here on down, you may say that you know almost as much about the Big Bend of the Columbia as Gabriel Franchere himself, or even Sir George Simpson, peer of the realm of Great Britain.

"Some day they'll build a railroad around the Big Bend. Then I believe I'll take that journey myself; it's much easier than making it as we are making it now. Not that I wish to frighten you at all, young men, about the rest of our journey, for our men are good, and Leo and George have the advantage of knowing every inch of the river thoroughly—an Indian never forgets a place he once has seen."

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"Have you 'got some scares,' Leo?" inquired John, smiling. Leo also smiled.

"No, no get scare—not 'fraid of Columby."

"You Shuswaps are white-water dogs, all right," said Uncle Dick. "I'm not going to let you run all the rapids that you want, perhaps, between here and Revelstoke.

"Now," he continued, "if John has finished his map work I think we can make a few more miles on our way down this evening, and every mile we make is that much done."

"Bime-by below Canoe," said Leo, "come on old man Allison's cabin—him trap there two winters ago, not live there now."

The boys looked inquiringly at Uncle Dick.

"All right," said he. "We'll stop there for the night." So presently they took boat once more, and, passing the tawny flood waters of the Wood and the Canoe rivers, which only stained

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the edges of the green Columbia, not yet wholly discolored in its course through its snow-crowned pathway, they pulled up at length on a beach at the edge of which stood a little log cabin, roofed with bark and poles.

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## XXV

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### HISTORY ON THE GROUND

The boys preferred to spread their mosquito-tent again for the night, but the others concluded to bunk in the old trapper's cabin, where they all gathered during the evening, as was their custom, for a little conversation before they retired for sleep. John found here an old table made of slabs, on which for a time he pursued his work as map-maker, by the aid of a candle which he fabricated from a saucer full of grease and a rag for a wick. The others sat about in the half darkness on the floor or on the single bunk.

"There was one book you once mentioned, Uncle Dick," remarked Rob, after a time, "which I always wanted to read, although I could never get a copy. I think they call it *The Northwest Passage by Land*. Did you ever read it?"

"Certainly, and a very interesting and useful book it is, too. It was done by two Englishmen, Viscount Milton and Doctor Cheadle. They were among the very early ones to take a pack-train across by way of the Yellowhead Pass."

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"And did they come down this way where we are now?"

"Oh, no. They went west just as we did, over the Yellowhead Pass as far as the Tête Jaune Cache. They crossed the Fraser there, just as we did, and turned south, indeed passing up to Cranberry Lake at the summit, just as we did. Their story tells how they crossed the Canoe River on a raft and were nearly swept away and lost, the river being then in flood. From that point, however, they turned west beyond Albreda Lake, for it was their intention not to go down the Fraser or the Canoe or the Columbia, but down the North Thompson. You see, they were trying to get through and to discover a new route to the Cariboo Gold Diggings."

"What year was that?" inquired Jesse.

"That was in 1863. The Tête Jaune Cache was then sometimes called the Leather Pass. At that time very little was known of this great region between the Rockies and the Pacific. Milton and Cheadle named many of its mountains that we passed. The old traders, as I have said, knew nothing of this country except along the trails, and these men even did not know the trails. Just to show you how little idea they actually had of this region hereabout, their book says that they supposed the Canoe River to rise in the Cariboo district!"

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"Now, in order for the Canoe River to rise in the Cariboo district, it would have to cross a vast range of mountains and two great rivers, the north fork of the Thompson and the Fraser River. Their map would not have been as accurate as John's here, although when their book was printed they had the use of yet other maps made by others working in from the westward.

"None the less, theirs was a great journey. There were only two of them, both Englishmen, in charge of the party, and they had one half-breed and his wife and boy and an inefficient Irishman who was of no service but much detriment, according to their story. To my mind theirs is the most interesting account given of early times in this region, and the book will prove well worth reading.

"These men were observers, and they were the first to realize that the days of wild game were going, and that if the Hudson's Bay Company was to keep up its trade it must feed its people on the products of the soil, and not of the chase. They speak of sixty million acres of land fit for farming in the Saskatchewan Valley, and speak of the country as the future support of this Pacific coast. That is precisely the policy of the Canadian country to-day. They said that the Hudson's Bay Company could not long govern so vast a region—and all the history of the Dominion government and the changes in the western Canadian provinces have taken place almost as if they had prophesied them literally. They speak of the Yellowhead Pass as being the best one for railroad purposes—and now here is our railroad building directly over that pass, and yet others heading for it. They said also that without doubt there was a good route down the North Thompson—and to-day there is a railroad line following their trail with its survey, with Kamloops as its objective point. It was at Kamloops that they eventually came out, far below the Cariboo district, for which they

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were heading.

"These men were lost in a wilderness at that time wholly unknown, and how they ever got through is one of the wonderful things in exploration. They took their horses all the way across, except three, one of which was drowned in the Fraser and two of which they killed to eat—for in the closing part of their trip they nearly starved to death. [Pg 267]

"They were following as best they could the path of another party of emigrants who had gone out the year before. But these men grew discouraged, and built rafts and tried to go down the Thompson, where many of them were drowned on the rapids. Perhaps to the wisdom of their half-breed guide is to be attributed the fact that Milton and Cheadle took their horses on through. Had they wearied of the great delay in getting through these tremendous forests with a pack-train, they must either have perished of starvation or have perished on the rapids. But in some way they got through.

"It was in that way, little by little, that all this country was explored and mapped—just as John is mapping out this region now."

"It's a funny thing to me," said John, looking at one of the large folding maps which they had brought along, "how many of these rivers up here run north for quite a way and then bend south again." [Pg 268]

"Yes, that's a peculiarity of this upper Pacific slope," said Uncle Dick. "That's the way the Columbia does. Not all Americans know the Columbia River rises near our boundary line and then runs for hundreds of miles north into Canada before it turns and swings southwest over our country to the Pacific—after reaching this very point where we are sitting now.

"Take the Fraser River, too. From the Tête Jaune Cache it swings far northwest, up to the Giscombe Portage. Then it bends just like the Columbia. You may remember the upper bend of the Fraser, for that is about where the Salmon River comes in, down which Sir Alexander Mackenzie came—and where you went in last year on your trip over the Peace River Pass."

"Oh, don't we remember that, though!" said John. "And now that you mention it, I recall that at that time we were speaking of this big bend in the Fraser."

"Yes, and the Canoe River rises in these hills, and it runs north quite a way before it bends down and comes into the Columbia, although it runs to the southeast ultimately, and not to the southwest. [Pg 269]

"You see, these mountains are all laid out along great parallels, and the rivers have to do just as we did, hunt a way through if they want to get west. This is the pass of the Columbia where we are now, the way it has found downhill between the Selkirks and the Rockies. Always in getting through from east to west, as I have told you, men have followed the rivers up on one side and down on the other. So you can see, right on this ground, the way in which much of our history has been made."

"One thing about this sort of geography is that when you see it this way you don't forget it. And I rather like those old books which tell about the trips across the country," said John.

"Yes," said his uncle, "they are interesting, and useful as well, and it is interesting to follow their story, as we have done. If you would read *The Northwest Passage*—Rob's book which he has just mentioned—you will see that they had even worse troubles than we, I should say, for, although they had one good guide, most of them were rank tenderfeet. They were five days getting from Jasper House up to the Yellowhead Pass, and they were a month and a half in getting from Edmonton to the Tête Jaune Cache—very much longer than we were, as you will remember. [Pg 270]

"And worst of all—and here's what I want you to remember—they delayed so much from time to time that when they got out of this country they met all the rivers at their swollen stages. They reached the Cache in the middle of July, and that was why they found the Canoe River so swollen and dangerous near its sources. We are about a month ahead of them. And now you will see why I have been crowding so hard all along this trip—I don't want to repeat the mistakes of the earliest explorers who crossed this country, not knowing what they were to find in it. But I give them all honor, these two Englishmen, Milton and Cheadle, for making one of the best trips ever made over the Rockies, all things considered, and contributing as they did to the growth and civilization of this country. For they were among the first to have the vision of all these great developments which have come since then."

"They must have had a hard old time," said Rob, "plugging along and not knowing where they were coming out. But, then, you told us that everybody who crossed the mountains in those times had native guides." [Pg 271]

"And so did they. At Edmonton they met a man who had been west with the emigrants the year before, who had started for the gold-fields. This guide had taken the party right up by Cranberry Lake, where we were a few days ago, over the Albreda Pass, and down the Thompson, until he showed them what he called the Cariboo country—which none of them ever reached.

"And when they reached Jasper House they found some of Leo's people—the Rocky Mountain Shuswaps—living over there. In that way they got more directions on how to reach the Cache. There an old woman told them about the country to the west, and a man took them up to the pass into the Thompson and showed them their way down—if way it could be called. Then, when they got down toward Kamloops, they met yet other natives, and if they had not they must have starved to death, near as they were to the settlements. Left alone, these men perhaps never would have gotten even to the Yellowhead Pass. I'll warrant it was some Indian who first ran the rapids on the Columbia. Eh, Leo?"

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"Maybe-so," smiled Leo, who had been listening intently to every word of this. "Injun not always 'fraid of water, some tribes."

"Well," said Uncle Dick, "I don't know whether it was courage or laziness, Leo, but certainly a great many of your people were the ones to tell the whites about the rapids on some of these bad rivers."

They all laughed heartily over this at Leo, who joined in.

"But it's true," Uncle Dick went on, "there never has been an original passage of the Rocky Mountains made by a white man, from the time of Lewis and Clark and Mackenzie up to the modern engineers, which was not conducted, in reality, by some native who pointed out the way.

"Now here we are, with Leo and George. I trust them perfectly. Leo's map, there on the sand at the Boat Encampment, showed me that he was perfectly accurate, and that he knew the places of all the streams and rapids. So I feel no fear about our getting down the Big Bend from here with him as our guide. I'll warrant that Leo can draw a map of the river from here to Revelstoke as accurately as any professional map-maker, and name every stream and tell every rapid all the way down. In short, we furnish the grub and Leo furnishes the experience."

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"We'll not furnish grub much longer," said Moise. "The flour she's getting mighty low, and not much pork now, and the tea she's 'bout gone."

"Well, what could you expect?" said Uncle Dick. "With three Injuns and an engineer to eat, we ought to have an extra boat to carry the grub—not to mention John, here, who is hungry all the time. We may have to eat our moccasins yet, young men."

"Leo says we can't get any fish yet," said John, "and we're not to stop for any more bear meat, even if we could eat it. We're not apt to get any grub right along the river either. I don't see how any one can hunt in this awful forest. It's always cold and dark, and there doesn't seem to be anything to eat there. Rob and I measured some trees by stretching out our arms, and we figured that they were thirty feet or more around, some of them. And one log we walked which paced over three hundred feet—it was so thick we couldn't crawl over it at all. That's no sort of place to hunt."

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"No, not for anything unless it was a porcupine," said Uncle Dick. "We may have to come to that. But even with a little grub we can last for a hundred miles or so, can't we? Can't we make forty or fifty miles a day, Leo?"

Leo laughed and shook his head. "Some day not make more than ten or twelve mile," said he.

"Well, I know that there's a good deal of slack water for quite a way below here. At least, I have heard that that is the case. So for a time, if we don't meet bad head-winds, we can put a good deal of this country back of us."

"Could any one walk along these banks and get out to the settlements at all if he were left alone in here?" inquired Rob.

"One can do a great deal if he has to," said Uncle Dick. "But I hope none of us will ever have to try to make the railroad on foot from here. There isn't any trail, and very often the banks are sheer rock faces running into the river. Get behind such a hill, and you're on another slope, and the first thing you know you're clear away from the river and all tangled up. But, still, men have come up here one way or another. On the other side, there used to be a sort of pack-horse trail from Revelstoke up to the Selkirk gold-mines. There are two or three creeks which are still worked along the Big Bend of the Columbia. When we

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engineers have all done our work it will be easier to get in here than it is to-day."

"Well, I'm going to be an engineer some day," said Rob, firmly, once more. "I like this work."

"Well, you're all going to bed now at once," said Uncle Dick. "We must hurry on down to-morrow, for, unless I am mistaken, this roily water of the Canoe means that the spring rise has begun earlier than it should."

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## XXVI

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### DOWN THE COLUMBIA

They did hurry to embark on the next morning, and, as Uncle Dick had predicted, for many miles the river was much more mild, although the current was steady and strong. They had run perhaps four hours when they came to the mouth of a creek which Leo and George said was called either Nagel Creek or End Creek, they did not know which. They went ashore for a time at a little unfinished log cabin which had been started perhaps two years before by some unknown person or persons.

"That way," said Leo, "up creek ten mile, fine bear country; plenty caribou too. S'pose we hunt?"

"Certainly not," said Uncle Dick. "It would take us a day to hunt and another day to get back. What do you say about that, boys?"

"Well," said Rob, "of course we'd like to hunt a little more, but I don't myself much like the thought of walking out of this country with a pack on my back and nothing to eat but a little flour. Besides, I've a feeling that this river is rising all the time now."

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"She'll rise five inch last night," said Moise. "I'll mark heem on the stick."

"Yes," said Uncle Dick, "the June rise is going to chase us out, that's sure. All those great snow-fields which you see up there on the Selkirks and the Rockies have got to melt and come right down here where our boat is now. So, Leo, you and George go on ahead—we'll run late to-night and make forty miles to-day, at least, if we can. How far are we from Revelstoke?"

"S'pose 'bout hunderd mile," said Leo. "Long way."

"Not long if it was all clear water like this. But it isn't. A pack-train on an unknown trail is one thing, but a boat on an unknown river is something mighty different. As I've told you, every foot of rise changes the river absolutely in the narrows. Therefore all I can allow you for lunch to-day is a piece of bannock—and we'll eat that as we run."

They found milder water now for twenty-five miles, and made steady progress. The wind had shifted a little bit, and Rob managed to get assistance out of it by rigging a sail from a corner of the tent. This brought the lead-boat ahead so steadily that Leo and George protested and made Rob take down his sail. But soon the long reach of slack water was passed. More and more they could hear, coming up-stream from perhaps a mile ahead, the low, sullen roar of rapids.

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The water began to set faster and faster, and seemed each mile to assume more and more malicious habits. Great boils, coming up from some mysterious depth, would strike the boat as though with a mighty hammer so hard as to make the boys look around in consternation. At times they could see the river sink before them in a great slide, or basin, a depression perhaps two hundred feet across, with white water at its edges. Deep boils and eddies came up every now and then without warning, and sometimes the boat would feel a wrench, as though with some mighty hand thrust up from the water. Their course was hardly steady for more than a moment or so at a time, and the boats required continual steering. In fact, it seemed to them that never was there a stream so variable and so unaccountable as this they were now descending.

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"She's worse than the Peace River, a whole lot," said Rob; and all the boys agreed with him. In fact, by this time all of them were pretty well sobered down now, for they could see that it was serious work which lay ahead of them. Now and again Uncle Dick would see the boys looking at the black forests which covered these slopes on each side of the river, foaming down between the Selkirks and the Rockies.

Late in the afternoon they passed a little settlement of a few cabins, where a discolored stream came down into the river through a long sluice-box whose end was visible.

"This Howard's camp," shouted Leo. "Them mans wash gold here. Some mans live there now."

Two or three men indeed did come to the bank and wave an excited greeting as the boats swept by. But there was no going ashore, for directly at this place a stretch of rapids demanded the attention of every one in the boats.

And still Uncle Dick urged the Indians of the first boat to go on as far as they could that night. They ran until almost dark, and made camp on the top of a high bank on the left side of the river where once an old lumber camp had been. Here they found the breeze good and the mosquito nuisance much diminished. [Pg 280]

"How far now to Revelstoke, Leo?" inquired Uncle Dick, as they sat at their frugal supper that night.

"Maybe-so forty mile, maybe-so sixty," said Leo.

"Can we make it in one day?"

Leo shook his head soberly.

"Two days?"

Leo shook his head.

"Three days?"

"Maybe-so," said he, at last. "Plenty bad water below here," said he.

"Well, I haven't seen any of these awful cañons yet that you've been telling about," said John.

Leo smiled. "To-morrow see 'um plenty," said he. "Pretty soon come Death Eddy, then Death Cañon, then Death Rapids, then Priest Rapids. All them bad places. Maybe-so can't run, water too high."

"We'll not get out of here any too soon, that's sure," said Uncle Dick. "The best time to run any of these mountain rivers is in the fall, for then the water is lowest. But a day or two more will tell the tale for us. So, Moise, please don't starve us any more than you have to—I could eat a whole porcupine now myself if I had one." [Pg 281]

That night at the fireside Uncle Dick saw the boys bending over close together, and looked at them curiously, for they seemed to be writing.

"What's up, young men?" said he.

"Well, we're making our wills," said Rob. "We haven't got much to give to anybody, of course, but you know, in case of any accident, we thought the folks ought to know about it. Not that we're afraid. I was just thinking that so many people were lost here that never were heard of again."

Uncle Dick did not smile at Rob's frank confession, but liked the boys all the more for it.

"Well," said he, "that's all right, too. I'm willing to admit that when I ran the Rock Cañon above the Boat Encampment last year I did a little writing myself and put it in my pocket, and I tied one leg to the boat with a rope, too. But please don't be too much alarmed over anything we've said, for if the cañons should prove too bad we will line down with the boat; and if we can't line down, then we will all take to the woods." [Pg 282]

None the less, the boys were all very quiet that night and slept but little.

"I don't like that water at all," whispered Jesse to John. "You can hear it growling and groaning all night long, as though it were gnashing its teeth—I don't like it at all."

And, indeed, even on top of their high bank they could hear the strange noises that come up always from the Columbia River when the high water is on. The stream where they were encamped was several hundred yards in width, but now the run-off waters of the mighty snow-sheds were making the river each day more and more a torrent, full of danger even for experienced men.

## ON THE RAPIDS

It was cool that night, almost cool enough for frost, and the morning was chill when they rolled out of their blankets. A heavy mist rose from over the river, and while this obtained Leo refused to attempt to go on. So they lost a little time after breakfast before the sun had broken up the mist enough to make it safe to venture on the river. They were off at about nine o'clock perhaps, plunging at once into three or four miles of very fast water.

The boats now kept close together, and at times they landed, so that their leaders could go ahead and spy out the water around the bend. In making these landings with heavy boats, as the boys observed, the men would always let the stern swing around and then paddle up-stream, so that the landing was made with the bow up-stream. The force of the river would very likely have capsized the boat if a landing were attempted with the bow down-stream. "Just like a steamboat-landing," said Jesse. [Pg 284]

Leo himself was now very alert. He did not say a word to anybody, but kept his eyes on ahead as though he felt himself to be the responsible man of the party. Certainly he took every precaution and proved himself a wonderful riverman. But he seemed puzzled at last as, when they landed upon a beach, he turned toward Uncle Dick.

"Me no understand!" said he. "Death Eddy up there, but no see 'um!"

"What do you mean, Leo?"

"Well, Death Eddy up there, and we come through, but no see 'um! I s'pose maybe high water has change'. I go look ahead."

He went down the stream for a little way until he could see into the next bend, but came back shaking his head.

"No can make that cañon," said he. "Water she's too high—bad, very bad in there now. Must line down."

"What place did you call this, Leo?" inquired Uncle Dick.

"Call 'um Methodist Cañon. Low water she's all right, now she's bad."

"Out you go, boys," said Uncle Dick. "We've got to line through. How far, Leo?" [Pg 285]

"Maybe-so one mile," rejoined the Indian. "S'pose low water, we paddle through here all right!"

Uncle Dick sighed. "Well, I hate to take the time, but I suppose that's what we'll have to do. You boys go on along the shore the best you can, while we let the boats down."

The boys struggled up now on the side of the shelving beach, which was nothing but a mass of heavy rock that had rolled down from the mountainsides. It was a wild scene enough, and the roar of the waters as they crashed through this narrow pass added to the oppressive quality of it.

After a time the water became so bad even close to shore that it was impossible to let the boat down on the line without danger of swamping it. So each boat was lifted out bodily and carried out along the beach for two or three hundred yards until it was safe to launch it again. Part of the time the men were in and part of the time out of the water, guiding the boats among the boulders which lay along the edge.

To make a mile at this work took as much time as twenty miles had the day before, and they were glad enough when Moise proposed to boil the kettle. They did this just above the head of Death Rapids, in a very wild and beautiful spot. Just across the river from them they could see a beautiful cascade some two or three hundred feet in height, and they christened this the Lottie Falls, after a sister of Uncle Dick, which name it has to-day. Now and again the boys would look down the raging stream ahead of them, wondering that any man should ever have tried to run such a rapid. [Pg 286]

"Hunderd sixty men drown right here, so they say," commented Leo. He pointed out to them the most dangerous part of the Death Rapids, where the strong current, running down in a long V, ended at the foot of the rapids in a deep, back-curving roller or "cellar-door" wave, sure to swamp any boat or to sweep over any raft.

"S'pose raft go through there, round bend," said Leo, "it must go down there in that big wave. Then her nose go under wave, and raft she sink, and all mans come off in the water."

No can swim. No can hang on raft. Many men drowned there. Plenty Chinaman he'll get drowned there, time my father was young man. Chinaman no can swim, no can paddle, no can ron on land—no good. All he do is drown."

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"Well, one thing is sure," said Uncle Dick. "I'll not try that rapid, even with our boats, today. We'll just line on down past here."

"Plenty glad we didn't stop hunt grizzlum no more," said Leo. "She's come up all day long."

Soon they resumed their slow progress, letting the boats down, foot by foot, along the shore, usually three or four men holding to the one line, and then returning for the other boat after a time. Moise did not like this heavy work at all.

"This boat she's too big," said he. "She pull like three, four oxens. I like small little canoe more better, heem."

"Well," said Rob, "you can't get a boat that looks too big for me in here. Look over there at that water—where would any canoe be out there?"

Thus, with very little actual running, and with the boys on foot all the way, they went on until at length they heard coming up from below them the roar of a rapid which sounded especially threatening.

"Priest Rapids!" said Leo. "And he's bad this time too."

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"Why do they call this the Priest Rapids, Leo?" inquired Rob.

"I don' know," said Leo.

"That's a fact," added uncle Dick. "No one seems to know why these were called the Priest Rapids. Perhaps because a priest read the burial service over some of the voyageurs here. Perhaps because a priest was saved here, or drowned here—no one seems to know."

They had called a halt here while Leo and Moise walked up on the bank to reach a higher point of view. The boys could see them now, gesticulating and pointing out across the river. Presently they joined the others.

"She's too bad for ron this side," said Moise, "but over on other side, two-third way across, is place where mans can get through. No can line on this side—rock, she come straight down on the river."

"Well," said Uncle Dick, "here is a pretty kettle of fish! I don't like the looks of this in the least. I'm not going to try to take these boys through that rapid over there. Are you sure you can't line down on this side?"

"No can walk," said Leo, "no can ron this side. Other side only place for to go through. She's pretty bad, but maybe-so make 'um."

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"Well, I'm not going to let the boys try it," said Uncle Dick. "Now see here, young men, I'll tell you what you have got to do. You see that point below there about two miles, where the forest comes out? Very well; you'll have to get around there somehow. Go back of that shelving rock face the best you can, and come out on that point, and wait for us."

The boys looked at him rather soberly. "Why can't we go with you," asked John, presently, who did not in the least fancy the look of these dark woods and the heavy, frowning mountains that lay back of them. Indeed, they all reflected that here they were many a day's march from Revelstoke, over a country practically impassable.

"You couldn't go in the boats, boys, even if it were safe," said Uncle Dick. "We want them light as we can have them. Go on now, and do as you are told. This is a place where we all of us will have to take a chance, and now your time has come to take your chances, for it's the best that we can do. Each of you take a little pack—one rifle will do for you, but each of you must have his ax and matches and compass and a little something to eat—here, take all the bannocks we have cooked, and this little bit of flour. When you get to the point make a smoke to let us know you're there. If we don't get through you'll have to get on the best way you can."

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"Why can't one of you go with us?" inquired John, still anxiously.

"It wouldn't be right for the men left in the boat—it takes two men to run a boat through water like that, my boy. Go on, now. I am sorry to send you off, but this is the best that we can do, so you must undertake it like men."

"It's all right, fellows," said Rob; "come on. We can get around there, I'm sure, and I'm pretty sure too that these men, good boatmen that they are, will run that chute. You're not



afraid, are you, Leo?"

But if Leo heard him he said nothing in answer, although he made ready by stripping off his coat and tightening his belt, in which Moise and all the others followed him.

The boys turned for some time, looking back before they were lost to view in the forest. The men were still sitting on the beach, calmly smoking and giving them time to make their detour before they themselves attempted the dangerous run of the rapids. [Pg 291]

It was perhaps an hour before the three young adventurers were able to climb the rugged slope which lay before them, and finally to descend a bad rock wall which allowed them access to the long point which Uncle Dick had pointed out to them, far below and at one side of the dreaded Priest Rapids. Here they built their little fire of driftwood, as they had been instructed; and, climbing up on another pile of driftwood which was massed on the beach, they began eagerly to look up-stream.

"The worst waves are over on the other side," said Rob, after a time. "Look, I can see them now—they look mighty little—that's the boats angling across from where we left them! It'll soon be over now, one way or the other."

They all stood looking anxiously. "They're out of sight!" exclaimed Rob. And so, indeed, they were.

"That's only the dip they've taken," said Rob, after a time. "I see them coming now. Look! *Look* at them come! I believe they're through."

They stood looking for a little time, and then all took off their hats and waved them with a yell. They could see the boats now plunging on down, rising and falling, but growing larger and blacker every instant. At last they could see them outlined against the distant white, rolling waves, and knew that they were through the end of the chute and practically safe. [Pg 292]

In a few moments more the two boats came on, racing by their point, all the men so busy that they had not time to catch the excited greetings which the boys shouted to them. But once around the point the boats swung in sharply, and soon, bow up-stream, made a landing but a few hundred yards below where they stood. Soon they were all united once more, shaking hands warmly with one another.

"That's great!" said Uncle Dick. "I'll warrant there was one swell there over fifteen feet high—maybe twenty, for all we could tell. I know it reared up clear above us, so that you had to lean your head to see the top of it. If we'd hit it would have been all over with us."

"She's bad tam, young men," said Moise. "From where we see him she don't look so bad, but once you get in there—poom! Well, anyway, here we are. That's more better'n getting drowned, and more better'n walk, too." And Moise, the light-hearted, used to taking chances, dismissed the danger once it was past. [Pg 293]

"Well, that's what I call good planning and good work," said Rob, quietly, after a while. "To find the best thing to do and then to do it—that seems to be the way for an engineer to work, isn't it, Uncle Dick?"

"Yes, it is, and all's well that ends well," commented the other. "And mighty glad I am to think that we are safe together again, and that you don't have to try to make your way alone and on foot from this part of the country. I wasn't happy at all when I thought of that."

"And we weren't happy at all until we saw you safely through that chute, either," said Rob.

"Now," resumed the leader, "how far is it to a good camping-place, Leo? We'll want to rest a while to-night."

"Good camp three mile down," said Leo, "on high bank."

"And how far have we come to-day, or will we have come by that time?"

"Not far," said Leo; "'bout ten mile all."

Uncle Dick sighed. "Well, we're all tired, so let's go into camp early to-night, and hold ourselves lucky that we can camp together, too. Maybe we'd better bail out first—it's lucky, for we only took in three or four pails of water apiece." [Pg 294]

"No man I ever know come through Priest Rapids on the high water like this," said Leo. "That's good fun." And he and George grinned happily at each other.

They pulled on in more leisurely fashion now, and soon reached the foot of a high grassy bluff on the left-hand side of the river. They climbed the steep slope here, and so weary

were they that that night they did not put up the tents at all, but lay down, each wrapped in his blanket, as soon as they had completed their scanty supper.

"Better get home pretty soon now," said Moise. "No sugar no more. No baking-powder no more. Pretty soon no pork, and flour, she's 'most gone, too."

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## XXVIII

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### IN SIGHT OF SAFETY

Once more, as had now been their custom for several days, in their anxiety to get as far forward as possible each day, our party arose before dawn. If truth were told, perhaps few of them had slept soundly the night through, and as they went about their morning duties they spoke but little. They realized that, though many of their dangers now might be called past, perhaps the worst of them, indeed, they still were not quite out of the woods.

Moise, who had each night left a water-mark, reported that the river during the night had risen nearly a foot. Even feeling as they did that the worst of the rapids were passed, the leaders of the party were a trifle anxious over this report, Leo not less than the others, for he well remembered how the rising waters had wiped out such places as the Death Eddy, which once he had known familiarly. They all knew that the rise of a foot here in the broader parts of the river would mean serious trouble in any cañon.

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"How far now, Leo?" asked John once more of the Indian guide, on whom they placed their main reliance.

"Maybe-so forty mile, maybe fifty," said Leo. "Maybe not run far now. Down there ten mile, come Tom Boyd farm. Steamboat come there maybe. Then can go home on steamboat, suppose our boat is bust."

"Well, the *Bronco* isn't quite busted," said Uncle Dick, "but she has sprung something of a leak, and we'll have to do a little calking before we can start out with her this morning. Come on, Moise, let's see what we can do."

So saying, they two went down to repair an injury which one of the boats had sustained on a rock. Of course, in this lining down, with the boats close inshore in the shallower water, they often came in contact with the rocks, so that, although both the boats were practically new, the bottom boards were now ragged and furry. A long crack in the side of the *Bronco* showed the force with which a boat sometimes could be driven by the swift current, even when the men were taking the best of care to keep it off the rocks.

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"Leo doesn't tell much about his plans, does he?" remarked Rob. "I was thinking all the time we'd have to run the whole fifty miles to Revelstoke."

Uncle Dick laughed. "Leo believes in saving labor even in talking," said he, "but I am not complaining, for he has brought us this far in safety. I'm willing to say he's as good a boatman as I ever saw, and more careful than I feared he would be. Most of these Indians are too lazy to line down, and will take all sorts of chances to save a little work. But I must say Leo has been careful. It has been very rarely we've even shipped a little bit of water."

"One thing," said John, "we haven't got much left to get wet, so far as grub's concerned. I'm pretty near ready to go out hunting porcupines or gophers, for flour and tea and a little bacon rind leave a fellow rather hungry. But I'm mighty glad, Uncle Dick, that you came through that rapid all right with the boats and found us all right afterward. Suppose we had got separated up there in some way and you had gone by us, thinking that we were lower down—what would you have done in that case—suppose we had all the grub?"

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"Oh, I don't know," replied his uncle, "but I fancy we'd have got through somehow. Men have done that in harder circumstances. Think of those chaps Milton and Cheadle we were talking of the other night; they were in worse shape than we were, for they had no idea where they were or how far it was to safety, or how they were to get there, and they had no guide who had ever been across the country. Now, although we have been in a dangerous country for some days, we know perfectly where we are and how far it is to a settlement. The trail out is plain, or at least the direction is plain."

"Well, I'm glad we didn't have to try to get out alone, just the same."

"And so am I, but I believe that even if you had been left alone you'd have made it out some way. You had a rifle, and, although game is not plentiful in the heavy forest, you very likely

would have found a porcupine now and then—that is to say, a porcupine would very likely have found you, for they are very apt to prowl about the camp almost anywhere in this country. You wouldn't even have been obliged to make a noise like a porcupine if you had used anything greasy around your cooking or left any scraps where they could get at them. Or you might even have tried eating a little pine bark, the way the porcupines do. Again, in almost any clearing this far down to the south you might have run across some of these gophers which you have seen on the grassy banks lately. Not that I would care to eat gopher myself, for they look like prairie-dog, and I never did like prairie-dog to eat. Besides, they tell bad stories about these mountain gophers; I've heard that the spotted fever of the mountains, a very deadly disease, is only found in a gopher country; so I'm very glad you did not have to resort to that sort of diet."

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"We might get some goats back there in the mountains if we had to," said Rob, "but goat-hunting is hard work, and I don't suppose a fellow would last long at it on light diet."

"Well, I wish we had one or two of those kids that we left up on the mountain at Yellowhead Lake," said John. "Moise says a goat kid is just as good to eat as any kind of meat. And any kind of meat would be better than bacon rind to chew on."

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"Never mind, John," said Rob; "we could go two days without anything to eat if we had to, and in two days, at least, we'll be where you can get as square a meal as you like. Maybe even to-day we'll land where we can get supplies, although Leo doesn't seem to tell us very much about things on ahead."

Leo and his silent but hard-working cousin George now came down to the waterside and signified that it was time to start off, as by this time the sun had cleared the mists from the river. As the light strengthened, they could see that the river had lost something of its deep blue or green color and taken on a tawny hue, which spoke all too plainly of the flood-waters coming down from the snow-fields through the many creeks they had passed on both sides of the river.



**ON THE COLUMBIA RIVER**

It took but a few moments now for them to embark, and soon they were plying their paddles once more and passing swiftly down the great river. Although they knew Leo was not very loquacious, and so not apt to say much of dangers on ahead, the general feeling of all the others was that the worst of their route had been traversed and that now they were in close touch with civilization.

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They were moving along steadily in the bright, warm sunlight, and John and Rob were assisting with paddles on each side of the boat, when all at once they saw the lead-boat leave the center of the channel and shoot to the left toward a high bluff, which, they could see, was surmounted by several buildings.

"What's the matter?" said Jesse. "Rapids on ahead?"

"No," said Uncle Dick, "not rapids, but houses and barns! This must be the Boyd farm, and, if so, we're very likely done with our boating. Heave ho, then, my hearties, and let's see how fast we can paddle!"

They pulled up presently at the foot of the bluff, where Leo and George lay waiting for them.

"Hallo, Leo! What place is this?" called Jesse.

"This Sam Boyd farm. Steamboat come here—not go more higher," answered Leo. He steadied the bow of the *Bronco* as they swung in, and soon all were standing on the shore.

"Plenty house here, plenty farm—trail up there, all way to Revelstruck," said Leo.

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The boys looked at their boat and at the river, and then gazed up the bank, at the summit of which, as they now learned, lay what might be called the skirmish-line of civilization, the point which practically ended their adventures. A feeling of regret and disappointment came over them all, which was reflected in their countenances as they turned toward their leader.

"I know how you feel, boys," said their uncle, "for I never want to leave the woods myself. But we'll go up and have a look over things, and find out maybe more than Leo has told us about our plans."

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## XXIX

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### STORIES OF THE COLUMBIA

When they had climbed to the top of the highest bank they saw before them a clearing of over two hundred acres, a part of which had been made into a hay-field. Immediately in front of them was a yard full of beautiful flowers, kept as well as any flower-garden in the cities. To the left lay a series of barns and sheds, and near by was a vegetable-garden in which small green things already were beginning to show.

"Well, what do you know about this?" demanded John. "It looks as though we certainly had got to where people live at last. This is the finest place we've seen in many a day, and I'll bet we can get something to eat here, too."

Leo raised a shout, which presently brought out of the house a man who proved to be the caretaker of the place, a well-seasoned outdoor character by name of O'Brien. He advanced now and made them welcome.

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"Come in, come in," said he, "and tell me who ye may be and where ye come from? Is it you, Leo? I thought you were at the Cache, far above."

"We all were there a few days ago," replied the leader of the party. "We engaged Leo to bring us down the Canoe and the Columbia, and out to Revelstoke—we've crossed the mountains at the Yellowhead Pass, coming west from Edmonton by pack-train."

"Ye're jokin', man!" rejoined O'Brien. "Shure, ye'll not be tellin' me those boys came all that way?"

"Him did," said Leo, with almost his first word of praise. "Boys all right. Kill 'um grizzlum. Not scare' of rapid."

They went on now to explain to O'Brien more details of their journey and its more exciting incidents, including the hunt for the grizzlies and the still more dangerous experiences on the rapids. O'Brien listened with considerable amazement.

"But I know Leo," he added, "and he'll go annywheres in a boat. 'Tis not the first time he's run this river, bad cess to her! But come in the house now, and I'll be gettin' ye something to eat, for belike ye're hungry."

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"We are frankly and thoroughly hungry," said Uncle Dick, "especially John here, who is hungry most of the time. We've reached your place just as our grub was about gone. Can we stock up with you a little bit, O'Brien?"

"Shure, if ye need to. But why not take passage on the steamer—she's due this afternoon at three o'clock, and she's goin' down to-morrow. Ye see, we run a wood-yard here, for the steamboat company owns this farm now, and I'm takin' care of it for them."

"What do you say, boys?" asked their leader. "Shall we make it on down? Or shall we take to the steamer and leave our boats here?"

"Better take to the steamboat," said O'Brien. "True, ye could get down mayhap to the head of Revelstoke Cañon all right, but then ye'd have to walk in about five miles anyway. The steamer can't run the cañon herself, for that matter, and no boat should try it at this stage, nor anny other stage, fer all that. She's a murderer, this old river, that's what she is."

Leo and Moise now helped O'Brien with his preparation of the meal, so that in a little time they were all sitting on real chairs and at a real table, with a real oil-cloth cover—the first of such things they had seen for many a day. Their own tin dishes they left in their boats, and ate from china, coarse but clean. Their meal was well cooked and abundant, and O'Brien gave them with a certain pride some fresh rhubarb, raised in a hotbed of his own, and also fried eggs.

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"Wait a little," said he, "and I'll give ye new potatoes and all sorts o' things. 'Tis a good farm we have here."

"But how came you to have a farm like this, up here in the Selkirks?" inquired Rob.

"Well, you see," answered O'Brien, "there's quite a bit of gold-mining up here, and has been more. Those camps at the gold-creeks above here all needed supplies, and they used to pack them in—the pack-trail's right back of our barn yonder. But Sam Boyd knew that every pound of hay and other stuff he raised fifty miles north of Revelstoke was that much closer to the market. This was his farm, you know—till the river got him, as she will every one who lives along her, in time.

"Ye see, Sam was the mail-carrier here, between Revelstoke and the camps above, and, as the trail is a horror, he mostly went by boat. His partner was Tom Horn, a good riverman too, and the two of them in their canoe went up and down together many a trip. 'Twas a careful man he was, too, Sam, and no coward. But one time, to save them a little walk, I suppose, they concluded to run the Revelstoke Cañon. Well, they never got through, and what became of them no one knows, except that their boat came through in bits. Ye're lucky this fellow Leo didn't want to run ye all through there, with the fine big boats ye've got below. But at least Sam and Tom never made it through.

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"Well, the old river got them, as she has so many. Sam's widow lived on here fer a time, then went to town and died there, and the company took the farm. They have a Chink to keep Mrs. Boyd's flower-garden going the way she did before, for the boys all liked it in the mines. And back in the woods is a whole bunch of Chinks, wood-cutters that supplies the boats. When my Chink is done his gardenin' I make him hoe my vegetables fer me.

"So ye're grizzly-hunters, are ye, all of ye?" continued O'Brien. "And not afraid to take yer own life in your hands? 'Tis well, and anny man must learn that who goes into the wilds. But many a tale I could tell ye of bould and brave men who've not been able to beat this old river here. Take yon cañon above Revelstoke, fer instance. She'd be but a graveyard, if the tale was told. One time six men started through in a big bateau, and all were lost but one, and he never knew how he got through at all. Once they say a raft full of Chinamen started down, and all were swept off and drowned but one. He hung to a rope, and was swept through somehow, but when they found him he was so bad scared he could not say a word. He hit the ties afoot, goin' west and shakin' his head, and maybe bound for China. No man could ever get him to spake again!

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"Now do ye mind the big rapids up there they call the Death Rapids, above the Priest—I'm thinkin' ye lined through there, or ye wouldn't be here at the table now, much as I know how Leo hates to line a boat."

"We certainly did line," said Uncle Dick, "and were glad to get through at that. We lost almost a day there getting down."

"Lucky ye lost no more, fer many a man has lost his all at that very spot. Once a party of fourteen started down, in good boats, too, and only one man got out alive. Some say sixty men have been drowned in that one rapid; some say a hundred and sixty-five, counting in the Chinamen and Frenchmen who were drowned in the big stampede the time so many started down to the diggings on rafts. Ye see, they'd shoot right around the head of the bend without sendin' a man ahead to prospect the water, and then when they saw the rapids, 'twas too late to get to either side. 'Tis a death trap she is there, and well named.

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"Wan time a Swede was spilled out on the Death Rapids, and somehow he came through alive. He swam for two miles below there before they could catch him with a boat, and he'd been swimming yet if they hadn't caught him, he was that scared, and if they hadn't hit him on the head with a oar. 'Twas entirely crazy he was.

"Mayhap ye remember the cabin on the west side, where they're sluicing—that's Joe Howard's cabin. Well, Howard, like everywan else on the river, finds it easiest to get in and out by boat. Wan time he and his mate were lining down a boat not far from shore when she broke away. Howard jumped on a rock, but 'twas so far out he dared not try to swim ashore, fer the current set strong. The other man grabbed the boat and got through the edge of the rapids somehow, but 'twas half a mile below before he got ashore. Then he cuddn't get the boat up again to where Howard was, and 'twas two or three hours of

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figgerin' he did before Howard dared take the plunge and try to catch the pole which his mate reached out to him. 'Twas well-nigh crazy he was—a man nearly always goes crazy when he's left out on a rock in the fast water that way.

"The Priest Rapids is another murderer, and I'll not say how many have perished there. You tell me that your boats ran it at this stage of water? 'Twas wonderful, then, that's all. Men have come through, 'tis true, and tenderfeet at that, and duffers, at that. Two were once cast in the Priest, and only one got through, and he could not swim a stroke! They say that sixty miners were lost in that rapid in one year.

"To be sure, maybe these are large tales, for such matters grow, most like, as the years go by, but ye've seen the river yerselves, and ye know what the risk is. Take a band of miners, foolhardy men, and disgust them with tryin' to get out of this country afoot—and 'tis awful going on foot through here—and a raft is the first thing they think of—'tis always a tenderfoot's first idea. There's nothing so hard to handle as a raft. Now here they come, singin' and shoutin', and swing around the bend before they see the Death Rapids, or the Priest, we'll say. They run till the first cellar-door wave rolls back on them and the raft plunges her nose in. Then the raft goes down, and the men are swept off, and there's no swimming in the Columbia for most men. There's not annything left then fer anny man to do except the priest—and belike that's why they call it the Priest Rapids."

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"I've often wondered," said Rob, "when we were coming down that stream, whether some of those Alaska Indians with their big sea-canoes could not run this river—they're splendid boats for rough water, and they go out in almost any weather."

"And where'll ye be meanin', my boy?" asked O'Brien.

"Along the upper Alaska coast. You see, we live at Valdez."

"Alaska? Do ye hear that now! And that's the place I've been wanting to see all me life! They tell me 'tis foine up there, and plenty of gold, too. But tell me, why do ye come down to this country from so good a place as Alaska?"

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"Well, we were just traveling about, you know," said Rob, "and we wanted to see some of this country along the Rockies before it got too common and settled up. You see, this isn't our first trip across the Rockies; we ran the Peace River from the summit down last summer, and had a bully time. The fact is, every trip we take seems to us better than any of the others. You must come up some time and see us in Alaska."

"It's that same I'll be doin', ye may depend," said O'Brien, "the first chance I get. 'Tis weary I get here, all by myself, with no one to talk to, and no sport but swearin' at a lot of pig-tailed Chinks, and not time to go grizzly-huntin' even—though they do tell me there's fine grizzly-huntin' twelve miles back, in the Standard Basin. So 'tis here I sit, and watch that mountain yonder that they've named for pore Sam Boyd—Boyd's Peak, they call it, and 'tis much like old Assiniboine she looks, isn't it? Just that I be doin' day by day, and all the time be wantin' to see Alaska. And now here comes me friend Leo from the Cache, and brings a lot of Alaskans ye'd be expectin' annywhere else but here or there! 'Tis fine byes ye are, to come so far, and I'll be hopin' to meet ye in Alaska one of these fine days, for I'm a bit of a miner myself, as most of us are up here."

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"She's good boy," said Moise, who took much pride in his young friends. "She ain't scare' go anywhere on the *rivière* with Moise and his oncle, or even with Leo and George. I s'pose next year she'll come see Moise again, maybe-so."

The boys laughed and looked at Uncle Dick. "I don't know about that," said Rob, "but we'll be wanting to go somewhere next summer."

"That's a long time off," said their uncle.

O'Brien, after they had spent some time in this manner of conversation, began to look at his watch. "Carlson's pretty prompt," said he—"that's the skipper of the *Columbia*. We'll be hearin' her whistle before long."

"Then this about ends our trip, doesn't it, Uncle Dick?" said John once more; and his uncle nodded.

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"I'm going to give O'Brien one of the boats," said he, "and I'll let the title to the other and the cook outfit rest in Leo and George—they may be coming through here again one way or the other some day. As for us, we've been lucky, and I think we would better wait here a day rather than go on with our boats."

They passed out into the bright sunlight to look about at the fine mountain prospect which stretched before them from the top of the bluff. They had not long to wait before they heard

the boom of the steamboat's whistle, and soon the *Columbia*, thrust forward by her powerful engines, could be seen bucking the flood of the Columbia and slowly churning her way up-stream. She landed opposite the wood-chute of the wood-yard, where a crowd of jabbering Chinamen gathered. Soon our party walked in that direction also, and so became acquainted with Carlson, the skipper of the boat, who agreed to take them down to Revelstoke the following day.

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## XXX

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### THE END OF THE TRAIL

Although O'Brien offered them beds in his house, and Carlson bunks on board the *Columbia*, Rob, John, and Jesse all preferred to sleep out-of-doors as long as they could, and so made their beds on the grass-plot at the top of the bluff, not putting up any tent, as the mosquitoes here were not bad. They were rather tired; and, feeling that their trip was practically over, with little excitement remaining, they slept soundly and did not awake until the sun was shining in their faces.

"Come on, fellows," said Jesse, kicking off his blankets. "I suppose now we'll have to get used to washing in a real wash-basin and using a real towel. Somehow I feel more sorry than happy, even if it was rather rough work coming down the river."

This seemed to be the feeling of both the others, and they were not talkative at the breakfast-table, where O'Brien had supplied them with a fine meal, including abundance of fresh-laid eggs from his own farm-yard.

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After breakfast they employed themselves chiefly in making themselves as tidy as they could and in packing their few personal possessions in shape for railway transportation. Most of their outfit, however, they gave away to the men who were to remain behind them. Toward noon the whistle of the steamboat announced that she was ready to take up her down-stream trip; so the young Alaskans were obliged to say good-by to O'Brien, in whose heart they had found a warm place.

"Good luck to ye, byes," said he, "and don't be diggin' all the gold up in Alaska, for 'tis myself'll be seein' ye wan of these days—'tis a foine country entirely, and I'm wishin' fer a change."

Leo and George, without any instructions, had turned in to help the boat crew in their work of pushing off. Moise, once aboard the boat, seemed unusually silent and thoughtful for him, until Rob rallied him as to his sorrowful countenance.

"Well," said Moise, "you boy will all go back on Alaska now, and Moise she's got to go home on the Peace River. I'll not been scare' of the horse or the canoe, but this steamboat and those railroad train she'll scare Moise plenty. All the time I'm think she'll ron off the track and bust Moise."

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"You mustn't feel that way," said Rob, "for that's Uncle Dick's business—finding places for railroads to run. That's going to be my business too, sometime, as I told you. I think it's fine—going out here where all those old chaps went a hundred years ago, and to see the country about as they saw it, and to live and travel just about as they did. Men can live in the towns if they like, but in the towns anybody can get on who has money so he can buy things. But in the country where we've been, money wouldn't put you through; you've got to know how to do things, and not be afraid."

"S'pose you boys keep on," said Moise, "bime-by you make *voyageur*. Then you come with Moise—she'll show you something!"

"Well, Moise," continued Rob, "if we don't see you many a time again it won't be our fault, you may be sure."

"I'm just wondering," said Jesse, "how Leo and George are going to get back up to the Tête Jaune Cache. They told us they meant to go up the Ashcroft trail and home by way of Fort George and the Fraser River and the 'choo-choo boat.' But that seems a long way around. I suppose you'll come to the hotel with us, down to Revelstoke, won't you Leo?" he added.

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"No like 'um," said Leo. "My cousin and me, we live in woods till time to take choo-choo that way to Ashcrof'."

"Well, in that case," said John, "I think we'd better give you our mosquito-tent; you may

need it more than we will, and we can get another up from Seattle at any time.”

“Tent plenty all right,” said Leo. “Thank.” And when John fished it out of the pack-bag and gave it to him he turned it over to George with a few words in his own language.

George carried it away without comment. They were all very much surprised a little later, however, to discover him working away on the tent with his knife, and, to their great disgust, they observed that he was busily engaged in cutting out all the bobbinet windows and in ripping the front of the tent open so that it was precisely like any other tent! John was very indignant at this, but his reproof had little effect on Leo.

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“Tent plenty all right now,” said he. “Let plenty air inside! Mosquito no bite ‘um Injun.”

When they came to think of it this seemed so funny to them that they rolled on the deck with laughter, but they all agreed to let Leo arrange his own outfit after that.

They passed steadily on down between the lofty banks of the Columbia, here a river several hundred yards in width, and more like a lake than a stream in many of its wider bends. They could see white-topped mountains in many different directions, and, indeed, close to them lay one of the most wonderful mountain regions of the continent, with localities rarely visited at that time save by hunters or travelers as bold as themselves.

Carlson, the good-natured skipper of the *Columbia*, asked the boys all up to the wheelhouse with him, and even allowed Rob to steer the boat a half-mile in one of the open and easy bends. He told them about his many adventurous trips on the great river and explained to them the allowances it was necessary to make for the current on a bend, the best way of getting off a bar, and the proper method of making a landing.

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“You shall make good pilot-man pratty soon,” he said to Rob, approvingly. “Not many man come down the Colomby. That take pilot-man, too.”

“Well,” said Rob, modestly, “we didn’t really do very much of it ourselves, but I believe we’d have run the rapids wherever the men did if they had allowed us to.”

“Batter not run the rapid so long you can walk, young man,” said Carlson. “The safest kind sailorman ban the man that always stay on shore.” And he laughed heartily at his own wit.

The boat tied up at the head of the Revelstoke Cañon, and here the boys put their scanty luggage in a wagon which had come out to meet her, and started off, carrying their rifles, along the wagon-trail which leads from above the cañon to the town, part of the time on a high trestle.

When they came abreast of the cañon they were well in advance of the men, who also were walking in, and they concluded to go to the brink of the cañon and look down at the water.



REVELSTOKE CAÑON



It was a wild sight enough which they saw from their lofty perch. The great Columbia River, lately so broad and lakelike, was compressed into a narrow strip of raging white water, driven down with such force that they could see very plainly the upflung rib of the river, forced above the level of the edges by the friction on the perpendicular rock walls. From where they peered over the brink they could see vast white surges, and could even distinguish the strange, irregular swells, or boils, which without warning or regularity come up at times from the depths of this erratic river. They quite agreed that it would have been impossible for a boat to go through Revelstoke Cañon alive at the stage of the water as they saw it. Rob tried to make a photograph, which he said he was going to take home to show to his mother.

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"You'd better not," said John. "You'll get the folks to thinking that this sort of thing isn't safe!"

The boys stood back from the rim of the cañon after a while and waited for the others to come up with them.

"We think this one looks about as bad as anything we've seen, Uncle Dick," said Rob. "A man might get through once in a while, and they say Sam Boyd and Tom Horn did make it more than once before it got them. It doesn't look possible to me to run it."

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"The river is a lot worse than the Peace," said John. "Of course, there's the Rocky Mountain Cañon, which nobody can get through either way, and there isn't any portage as bad as that on the whole Columbia Big Bend. But for number of bad rapids this river is a lot worse than the Peace."

"Yes," assented the others, "in some ways this is a wilder and more risky trip than the one we had last year. But we've had a pretty good time of it just the same, haven't we?"

"We certainly have," said Rob; and John and Jesse answered in the same way. "I only wish it wasn't all over so soon," added Jesse, disconsolately.

The boys, hardy and lighter of foot even than their companions, raced on ahead over the few remaining miles into Revelstoke town, leaving the bank of the river, which here swung off broad and mild enough once it had emerged from its cañon walls. Before them lay the town of Revelstoke, with its many buildings, its railway trains, and its signs of life and activity.

In town they all found a great budget of mail awaiting them, and concluded to spend the night at Revelstoke in order to do certain necessary writing and telegraphing. They had several letters from their people in Alaska, but none announcing any word from themselves after they had arrived at Edmonton, so that some of the letters bore rather an anxious note.

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"What would it cost to send a telegram from here to Seattle, and a cablegram up the coast, and then by wireless up to the fort near Valdez?" inquired Rob. "That ought to get through to-morrow, and just two or three words to let them know we were out safe might make them all feel pretty comfortable. It's a good thing they don't know just what we've been through the last few days."

"Well, you go down to the station and see if it can be done," said Uncle Dick, "and I'll foot the bill. Get your berths for the next Transcontinental west to Vancouver, and reserve accommodations for Moise and me going east. Leo and George, I'm thinking, will want to wait here for a while; with so much money as he has as grizzly premiums and wages, Leo is not going to leave until he has seen something of the attractions of this city. In fact, I shouldn't wonder if he got broke here and walked back up to O'Brien's and took his boat there up the Columbia. They always get back home some way, the beggars, and I'll warrant you that when we all go to the Tête Jaune Cache by rail, a couple of years from now, we'll see Leo and George waiting for us at the train as happy as larks!"

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"I wonder if my pony'll be there too?" said John.

"He will, unless something very unusual should happen to him. You'll find the word of an Indian good; and, although Leo does not talk much, I would depend on him absolutely in any promise that he made. We will have to agree that he has been a good man in everything he agreed to do, a good hunter and a good boatman."

"We may go in there and have a hunt with him some time after the road comes through," said Rob. "In fact, all this northern country will seem closer together when the road gets through to Prince Rupert. Why, that's a lot closer to Valdez than Vancouver is, and we could just step right off the cars there and get off at Leo's, or even go up to Yellowhead Lake and get another goat."

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"Or find the place where John fell off the raft," added Jesse, laughing.

“Or go on across to where Uncle Dick may be working, one side or other of the summit. I wish he didn’t have to go back to Edmonton, and could come on home with us now. But we can tell them all about it when we get home.”

“Where’d you like to go the next time, if you had a chance, Rob?” asked John.

“There are a lot of places I’d like to see,” said Rob. “For one thing, I’ve always wanted to go down the Mackenzie and then over the Rat portage to the Yukon, then out to Skagway—that’d be something of a trip. Then I’ve always had a hankering to go up the Saskatchewan and come up over the Howse Pass. And some day we may see the Athabasca Pass and the trail above the Boat Encampment. The railroads have spoiled a lot of the passes south of there, but when you come to read books on exploration you’ll find a lot of things happened, even in the United States, in places where the railroads haven’t gone yet. We’ll have to see some of those countries sometime.”

“How is your map coming on, John?” inquired Uncle Dick, a little later, when once more they had met in their room at the hotel. [Pg 326]

“I’ve got this one almost done,” said John.

## THE END

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### FOOTNOTE NOTE:

[1] At the time of this journey the Kinney ascension of Mount Robson had not yet been made.—THE AUTHOR.

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### TRANSCRIBER’S NOTE:

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