

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Boy Scouts on the Great Divide; Or, The Ending of the Trail, by Archibald Lee Fletcher

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Boy Scouts on the Great Divide; Or, The Ending of the Trail

Author: Archibald Lee Fletcher

Release Date: March 3, 2010 [EBook #31487]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Juliet Sutherland, Mary Meehan and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BOY SCOUTS ON THE GREAT DIVIDE; OR, THE ENDING OF THE TRAIL ***

Boy Scouts on the Great Divide;

or, The Ending of the Trail

By Archibald Lee Fletcher

Chicago
M. A. DONOHUE & COMPANY
Copyright 1913
MADE IN U.S.A.

CONTENTS

[CHAPTER I—A BOY SCOUT](#)
[CHAPTER II—THE RUNAWAY](#)
[CHAPTER III—THE CASE IS STATED](#)
[CHAPTER IV—A CHASE IN THE NIGHT](#)
[CHAPTER V—A DETECTIVE AND A ROBBER](#)
[CHAPTER VI—THE CALL OF THE BEAVER](#)
[CHAPTER VII—ARRESTED AS SPIES](#)
[CHAPTER VIII—A MIDNIGHT BEAR HUNT](#)
[CHAPTER IX—LYNCHING IS THREATENED](#)
[CHAPTER X—ONE DANGER TO ANOTHER](#)
[CHAPTER XI—A WYOMING HOLD-UP](#)
[CHAPTER XII—AN INTERRUPTED WIG-WAG](#)
[CHAPTER XIII—TOMMY GOES AFTER BEAR STEAK](#)
[CHAPTER XIV—A PAIR OF PRISONERS](#)
[CHAPTER XV—AN UNDERGROUND CHANNEL](#)
[CHAPTER XVI—CULLEN LOSES HIS STAR](#)
[CHAPTER XVII—A MEETING UNDER GROUND](#)
[CHAPTER XVIII—THE FINDING OF WAGNER](#)
[CHAPTER XIX—SHERIFF PETE'S WINK](#)
[CHAPTER XX—DETECTIVES IN TROUBLE](#)
[CHAPTER XXI—CONCLUSION](#)

Boy Scouts on the Great Divide;

or, The Ending of the Trail

CHAPTER I

A BOY SCOUT CAMP

On a sunny September afternoon two shelter tents stood in a mountain valley, on the south bank of a creek which, miles and miles below, becomes the Sweetwater river.

Above the flap of each tent lifted a yellow pennant, in the center of which a blue beaver stood in an alert and listening attitude, his flat tail outstretched.

A campfire blazed in front of the two tents, and some distance away four bronchos fed noisily on the sweet grass of the valley. Tinned provisions and cooking utensils were scattered here and there in front of the blaze, and four boys wearing the khaki uniform of the Boy Scouts of America were busily engaged in preparing supper.

Those who have read the previous volumes of this series will require no introduction to Will Smith, George Benton, Charley (Sandy) Green, or Tommy Gregory. As will be remembered, they were all members of the Beaver Patrol, Chicago. Will Smith had recently been advanced to the important position of Scoutmaster, and George Benton had been elected to the position left vacant by the advancement of his chum, that of Patrol Leader. Besides carrying the badges of their offices and their patrol, the boys all wore medals showing that they had qualified in the Stalker, Ambulance, Seaman and Pioneer grades.

After rather striking adventures on Lake Superior and in the Florida Everglades the boys had been persuaded by Mr. Horton, a well-known criminal lawyer of Chicago, to undertake a mission in the interest of a client in whom he had become greatly interested. The lads had already arranged a vacation trip to the Great Divide, and it necessitated only a slight change in their program in order to make the investigation desired by the attorney, who had shown himself their friend on more than one occasion. In fact, the Superior trip had been taken at his expense.

Mr. Horton had presented the request which had changed the lads' vacation plans on the night before they left Chicago, and so no details whatever of the case had been given them. They had been asked to proceed to the city of Green River, in the state of Wyoming, and there secure burros, provisions and tents and travel to the valley lying south and west of Altantic peak.

The noted attorney had informed them on the morning of their departure that, in case further instructions did not reach them by wire before they came to Green River, a messenger would follow them into the mountains with full details, and also a history of the case in which they were to be employed. On this sunny afternoon they were awaiting the arrival of the messenger, no information having been received by telegraph.

The tents had been set up on the previous evening, and the boys did not think it possible that the messenger could be more than twenty-four hours behind them. While they waited for the supper to cook they watched the country off to the south anxiously.

"Last call for supper!" cried Sandy, spreading a great white cloth on the fragrant grass of the valley. "We can eat out-doors in this country without any danger of people butting in to see what we've got for supper."

"You say it well!" said Will, "but you can't prove it! For instance," he added, pointing to the south, "there's some one coming right now to see what we've got for supper!"

The figure pointed out was that of a tall and slender man who was climbing the slope to the southeast. He carried a long rifle over his shoulder and a cartridge belt was conspicuously displayed about his waist.

While the boys arranged their food on the table cloth, the man approached warily. When he came into the valley in which the camp was situated he turned away to the right as if about to circle the tents and the fire. Tommy stood up with a great slice of bread in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other and waved both at the stranger.

"Come on in!" he shouted. "The eating's fine!"

At this invitation the stranger came forward to the fire and stood for a moment without speaking, gazing at the boys with eyes strained to their utmost in an effort to make them look piercing.

"Thank you very much for the invitation!" replied the stranger, "I've had a long walk today and I'm both hungry and tired! My name is Katz—Joseph J. Katz, and I'm in business in a small way in Denver."

"I bought a burro at Green River," Katz went on, "but lost him twenty miles to the south. He got his foot in a prairie dog's hole or something of that kind and broke his leg so I had to shoot him."

"And you've been walking ever since?"

"Indeed I have!" was the reply. "And I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to extend your hospitality until morning. I have a friend who will be along sometime tomorrow with a couple of light tents and a couple of burro loads of provisions."

"Then you're going to camp in the mountains, I take it?"

"Yes," was the reply. "We're going farther in and take a rest and look for a good sheep valley while we do so."

"You're welcome to remain here until your friend comes in!" answered Will. "We have plenty of provisions."

"Then you are thinking of remaining in the mountains for some time?" asked the stranger. "In that case we may meet often."

"I hope so," replied Will. "We are boys from Detroit having a little vacation from the hills and it will be all the pleasanter if we have congenial company. But sit down and eat. You must be hungry."

Kata fell to with an appetite and Tommy saw that his plate was replenished as soon as it was emptied. While he was eating Sandy and Will arose from the cloth, excused themselves and passed into one of the tents, where Sandy stood regarding his companion with accusing eyes.

"Say," the boy asked, "are you getting to be such a liar that you just can't tell the truth?"

"What's the matter now?" demanded Will.

"Why did you tell that fellow we were from Detroit?"

"Because he lied to me!" was the rather indignant reply.

Sandy grinned and looked the question he did not ask.

"He told me he was from Denver," Will went on, "and Tommy says he's a Chicago detective. The kid says he saw a detective badge under the fellow's lapel. And I guess Tommy knows a detective badge," the boy continued with a wink. "I should think he would after the fun he's had with Chicago detectives, and the times he's been chased by them."

"You don't suppose he's come on here to pinch one of us, do you?" asked Sandy. "If he has, we'll pitch him into the stream that takes the longest road to Cape Horn."

"Of course not!" answered Will. "For all I know he may be the messenger sent by Mr. Horton."

"Then why should he lie about his home city?" asked Sandy.

"I don't know," answered Will. "He may be the messenger and he may not be. If he is a messenger, he's a fool, because he ought to know without further investigation that we're the boys he set out to find. If he isn't a messenger, he's a charter member of the Ananias club or Tommy's very much mistaken."

"I don't believe he's a messenger," Sandy answered and the two went out to the fire together.

"I have heard a great many stories of robbery and murder in this country," the boys heard Katz saying to Tommy, "but up to this time I have seen no unlawful acts committed."

"Oh, but they have a stage hold-up or some scrape of that kind every week or two!" replied Tommy with a wink at Will. "We remained over at Green River a couple of days and heard a good many stories about highway robbery. There is said to be gold in these mountains," the boy continued, "and there is also said to be a band of brigands who lie in wait for treasure hunters."

Katz appeared deeply interested in what the boy was saying. In fact he seemed rather excited, too, and the boys noticed that he reached out one hand to stroke the gun, which lay near his side, as he listened.

Sandy nudged George in the side and whispered:

"I'll bet Tommy's got him scared half to death!"

"I guess that's what the kid's telling him these stories for!" George ventured. "He's always up to tricks like that."

While the boys worked about the camp preparing beds for the night and clearing away the remains of the supper Tommy remained close to the side of the trench, asking of his experiences on the way in and telling many exciting stories of highwaymen, the most of which had origin in his own brain.

"Tommy'll have that fellow so scared that he can't sleep!" Sandy whispered to George.

"Then the fellow shouldn't get scared so easy!"

"I consider it very fortunate for you boys," they heard Katz saying after a time, "that I came along just as I did. If this country is as thoroughly infested with robbers and murderers as you seem to think it is, I may be of service to you before morning."

"Sure!" agreed Tommy. "We may have a battle with outlaws almost any time now! We're glad you're here to protect us!"

"Of course, one man can't fight a whole regiment," Katz went on rather boastfully, "but I'll do what I can to protect you in case the camp is attacked."

"I know you will!" answered Tommy with a sly wink at Sandy. "I knew you were a brave man as

soon as I saw you!"

During the evening the boys taking the lead made by Tommy told numerous stories of train-robberies and murders in the mountains as they sat around the campfire. Katz listened attentively to them all and more than once the lads saw him involuntarily reach a hand back to his pistol pocket. On such occasions they nudged each other joyfully.

"I wish something would happen tonight," Tommy whispered to Will as they prepared for bed. "I'd just like to see how this Katz would act under fire. I've a good mind to make something happen!"

"You'd better cut that out!" replied Will. "The messenger we are waiting for may be here at any time now and we may have to move camp at any time. So we want to rest while we can."

"All right!" Tommy answered reluctantly. "I'm just as anxious to get a good night's sleep as you are."

"Who's going to stay awake?" asked Sandy stepping up to where the boys were talking.

"I don't think it's necessary for anyone to stay awake," cried Will.

"I don't believe we ought to all sleep at once!" Sandy observed. "Not with this stranger in the camp, anyway," he added.

"Aw, the stranger's all right!" Tommy exclaimed. "He's a bum Chicago detective out after some fugitive from justice and he thinks its foxy to lie about his occupation and his residence. Don't you think I know the earmarks of a Chicago detective?" he added.

"You ought to, considering the number of times you've been mixed up with them," laughed Sandy. "You certainly ought to know all about Chicago detectives."

"What makes you go certain this man is a Chicago detective?" asked Will. "I haven't seen anything that looks like Chicago about him!"

"Why," answered Tommy, "he's mentioned Harrison street and Desplaines street and Chicago avenue half a dozen times when talking about the police department of Denver! And he's been telling about police boats on the lake and on the North and South branches and giving himself away generally. Of course, he doesn't know we're from Chicago and so he doesn't think it necessary to be careful in his speech."

"All right, time will tell!" exclaimed Sandy.

It was arranged that Will, Tommy and George were to sleep together in one of the tents until midnight while Tommy stood watch, and from that time on, the other boys were to watch two hours apiece. Katz was to have the second tent all to himself.

For sometime after the lads and Katz went to their tents, Tommy sat by the fire listening to coyotes and grey wolves howling off in the mountains. Occasionally a coyote came within a few paces of the fire and set up a howl which must have been heard in the dreams of the sleepers.

Along near midnight the boy heard, very indistinctly, shouts to the west of the ridge which lay to the south of the valley. Still more faintly, return shouts were heard. The men, whoever they were, seemed to be advancing toward the camp. While the boy listened a volley of shots came from the west, followed by hoarse shouts and imprecations.

It now became plain that two horsemen were speeding toward the valley and that the shots which were being fired were directed at them. There was no moon as yet although there would be one later on, and little could be seen of the horsemen who were doubtless seeking refuge in the canons farther to the north, but the heavy breathing of the horses and the creaking of the saddles could be distinctly heard.

"I just went to the tent to wake Katz!" Tommy chuckled, "and saw him sneaking away making flat-footed for the hills!"

CHAPTER II

THE RUNAWAY

The horses came on at a swift gallop, to an accompaniment of rifle shots and the jingling of spurs. Directly they were in the circle of light about the fire, their frightened eyes showing red as they ran. The faces of the riders glared viciously down at the boys, but the weapons swinging threateningly from their hands were not discharged as they dashed through the lighted space and were gone.

"Now what do you know about that?" demanded Tommy, as the horses disappeared in the darkness and the gradually receding hoof-beats showed that they were still keeping their course to the north.

"Looks to me like some one was being chased," observed Sandy.

"It would seem that way to the unprejudiced mind!" added George.

Directly the sound of heavy boots scrambling over broken rocks, accompanied by private and personal opinions of that part of Wyoming, of rocky surfaces, and of midnight expeditions, came to the ears of the listening boys. As the sounds drew nearer they grouped closer together.

"Here comes the boys who did the shooting!" exclaimed Tommy.

"I hope they won't mistake us for the men they're after!" George suggested. "They look like rather tough citizens," he added, as the bearded faces and roughly-clad figures of half a dozen men swept into the firelight.

The men were all heavily armed, and it was clear that they were angry from the top of their heads to the soles of their feet. Three presented guns at the breasts of the boys while the other three stepped closer and began asking questions.

"Sure, we saw the ginks go by!" Tommy answered in reply to the first question. "I reckon they won't have anything to ride in about an hour if they keep up that gait."

"Did they stop or say anything to you as they passed?" was asked.

"I should say not!" replied Tommy. "They went by like Mexicans going to a bull-fight! They showed their guns, but they didn't say a word or do any shooting!"

"What does it mean?" asked Will, approaching the man who appeared to be the leader of the party.

"It means," was the reply, "that those two fellows are wanted down in Sweetwater county for holding up a train on the Union Pacific. A party of officers had them safe at Green River a couple of days ago, but they broke loose in some way and came north."

"It's a wonder they headed straight for our campfire!" Will suggested.

"That's what puzzles me!" the other said. "Until I saw you were only boys, probably out on a vacation, I thought the robbers might be associates of yours."

"I hope they won't think so, too," Will answered. "We expect to stay here two or three weeks, and we don't want to get into any mixup."

"They probably won't trouble you any," the officer remarked, "as they're undoubtedly headed for the Bad Lands in Big Horn county. If they get into that country we may as well give up the search."

"Well," Will suggested, "they won't have any horses to ride before morning, and you may be able to overtake them after they slow down."

"Oh, we're going to keep on in pursuit!" cried the officer, "But we have little hope of overtaking them. They're probably five miles in the lead right now. They've been riding while we've been walking."

"Why walking?" asked the boy.

"Because they shot our horses," gritted the officer.

After partaking of a midnight supper, including several cups of hot coffee apiece, the man-hunters continued on their way, looking longingly in the direction of the burros as they passed out of the light of the fire.

"Now that's what I call rotten!" Tommy exclaimed as the voices of the men died away in the darkness. "We've just made camp in a place that looks good to me, and here comes a band of train robbers and a delegation of lynchers ready to make us all kinds of trouble."

"I don't see why they should make us trouble," Sandy objected.

"Well, they will just the same," Will broke in. "They'll hang around the hills to the north, and officers will be chasing in after them, and, between them they'll give us a merry little time! If the messenger doesn't come tomorrow, we'll break camp and get into some other locality."

"I should say so!" exclaimed Tommy. "We went to Lake Superior and got into a nest of diamond smugglers, and we went to the Florida Everglades and got into a bunch of swamp outlaws and wreckers, and I've been counting on a nice quiet vacation this trip."

"We surely do have bad luck on our outing trips!" laughed Sandy. "But I rather enjoy the excitement after all!" he added, with a grin.

"Well, you wait until you get a band of train robbers shooting from one side, and a band of cowboys shooting from the other side, and you won't think it's so funny!" exclaimed George.

While the boys talked they heard a rustling in the long grass to the north and east, and directly a figure, crouching low and apparently walking with great caution, appeared in view.

"That's one now!" whispered Tommy.

"That's right!" returned Sandy. "That's one coward!"

"Oh, I see," Tommy whispered. "That's Katz!"

The stranger now approached the fire, swinging his rifle jauntily in his hand and throwing his shoulders back until his body swung forward with a decided strut. He looked from one boy to the other as he came closer, apparently seeking to learn from their expressions exactly what was in their minds. The boys' faces remained perfectly grave.

"It's no use!" Katz said in a moment, putting the butt of his gun down to the ground and leaning on the barrel. "It's no use whatever!"

The boys eyed the speaker suspiciously, but said nothing.

"I followed on as fast as I could!" Katz continued. "But they were on horseback, and I was on foot, so what could I do? Besides, it was too dark that I couldn't see to shoot," he went on.

"Oh, you went out after the robbers, did you?" asked Will, not caring to call the fellow's attention to the fact that he ran away to the north before the riders made their appearance.

"Why, yes!" was the reply. "What else could I do?"

The boys suspected that Katz had returned to the vicinity of the camp in time to hear the officer explain exactly what was going on. They were satisfied that he had not pursued the horsemen at all after they had passed him, but decided not to enter into any argument with him.

"Well," Will said in a moment. "If you'll all go to bed now, I'll sit up until morning. I don't suppose you boys care to be wakened if we have any more midnight visitors?" he asked tentatively.

"You needn't wake me up for any running race!" Tommy commented.

"If it's all the same to you," Katz suggested, "I prefer to sleep the remainder of the night. Of course," he went on, "if you need me for your defence, you need have no compunctions in waking me."

The boys laughed at the idea of calling upon the fellow to assist in defending the camp should necessity arise, and the object of their mirth glared at them suspiciously as he turned away to his tent.

In half an hour the camp was quiet again, with Will sitting in front of the fire reading. The coyotes and wolves, which had been frightened away by the shooting and the clatter of hoofs, now came forward again, and Will was thinking seriously of taking a shot at a great gray beast when a soft call came from the darkness.

"Hello!" the voice said. "Hello!"

"Come up and show yourself!" returned Will.

"Will you give me something to eat if I come up?"

"Sure I will," replied the boy with a grin. "Meals at all hours, you know! We usually run a hotel where we stop."

"Well you've got a customer right now!" came the voice from the darkness, and the next moment the figure of a lad of about fourteen made its appearance in the glow of the fire.

Will stood regarding the boy with open-eyed amazement for a moment and then swung his hand forward in the full salute of a Boy Scout.

"That's all right!" the strange boy cried. "I'm glad to see that you're a Boy Scout. I mean to be one some day, but I'm only a tenderfoot now! I haven't had any chance for advancement yet."

"What Patrol?" asked Will.

"Beaver, Chicago!" was the reply.

"That's my patrol!" exclaimed Will in amazement.

"You're the scoutmaster," the boy said, "I've seen you in Chicago."

"Strange I don't remember you!" replied Will.

"Oh, I'm only a tenderfoot," was the answer, "and of course, you don't know all the new boys!"

"What are you doing here?" asked Will.

"I'm running away!" was the reply. "You see," the boy went on, "I got tired of living in Chicago, and sleeping in alleys in summer and warm hallways in winter, so I just made up my mind I'd make a break for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

"But how did you come to walk up into this country?"

"I started out to get a job herding sheep," was the answer, "and I kept travelling, and travelling, without getting any job, and so here I am, hungry, and ready to go back to Chicago on the slightest provocation!"

"What's your name?"

"Chester Winslow."

"Well, Chester," Will laughed, "it won't take me long to get you something to eat, and then you'd better go to bed. You'll have to double up with another stranger who came along earlier in the evening, but I guess you can sleep two in a bed, especially as the bed is made up on the ground and you can't fall out."

The boy ate a very hearty supper, and five minutes later Will heard him snoring. When daylight came and the sleepers arose, Katz stumbled out of his tent with angry exclamations on his lips.

"What's doing here?" he shouted. "Have I come into the home of the Forty Thieves? When I went to bed last night I had a police badge, and a rifle, and a revolver, and quite a lot of money! Now I haven't got a thing except the clothes I've got on! What kind of a game do you call this? If it's a joke, it's a mighty poor one!"

Will went to the tent Katz had occupied and looked inside. There was no one there, and he hastened back to the angry man.

"Where's the strange boy who slept with you last night?" he asked.

"Strange boy?" repeated Katz scornfully. "You can't work that game on me! You boys have taken my property, and you'd better be giving it up! If you don't there'll be trouble!"

"We're not afraid of any trouble from you!" Tommy said, with an angry snort. "If you go to accusing us of stealing your stuff, you'll get your crust caved in!"

Then the boy turned to Will with an interrogation point in both eyes. Will saw the question and answered it.

"Shortly after midnight," he said, "a boy who gave the name of Chester Winslow, his age as fourteen, his rank as Tenderfoot, came here and told a hard luck story about tramping from Chicago. I gave him something to eat and put him to bed with Mr. Katz."

"Then the fellow is a little thief! That's all I've got to say about it!" exclaimed Katz, not quite so aggressive, now that he saw that the boys were inclined to resent insults, and remembering that he had no revolver with which to enforce his demands!

Shortly after breakfast the figures of four burros, heavily laden, and two men appeared at the south, heading directly for the camp.

"There's my associate bringing in the burros and the provisions!" Katz shouted.

"And there's our messenger!" whispered Tommy to Will.

CHAPTER III

THE CASE IS STATED

"It may be that your messenger has come in with my associate," Katz blustered, as the little caravan came nearer to the camp, "but if I'm not very much mistaken, both men are here to assist me!"

"You must need a lot of assistance!" Tommy said, with a wrinkling of his freckled nose. "You look the part, too!"

"Now see here, young man," exclaimed Katz, angrily. "I don't want any lip from you boys. I've been robbed in this camp, and as soon as my men come up I'm going to know whether my property is here or not!"

"If you try any funny business with us," Sandy cut in, "you'll get your block knocked off!"

"We'll see about that when my men come up!" retorted Katz, defiantly. "I'm not going to submit to being held up by four boys who ought to be spanked and put to bed instead of being permitted to roam about the mountains robbing unwary travellers."

Tommy was about to make an angry reply, but Will motioned for him to remain silent. No more was said until the two men came up with their heavily-loaded burros. Katz was first to address the newcomers.

"Well, Cullen," he said, extending a hand to a short, heavily-built man with a dissipated-looking face, "I'm glad you came in on time. I am also glad that you brought a man in with you, and plenty of provisions," he added with a look of challenge at the boys.

"Why," replied Cullen, "I don't know anything about this fellow with me. He came out of Green River with his two burros just ahead of me, and so we decided to travel together. I should judge from what he said that he's looking for the camp we have just blundered into."

Katz stepped back as if annoyed at the statement, and finally drew Cullen away to one side, where they engaged in a whispered conversation.

In the meantime, the messenger advanced toward Will and extended a sealed envelope. He was a well-built young fellow with a clean-shaven face which gave every indication of intelligence and determination.

"I guess you're the boys I'm looking for," he said, with a smile, "I'm John Johnson, of Chicago, special messenger at this time for Mr. Horton."

"We're glad to see you," Will answered, shaking the young man's hand heartily. "We have been waiting for instructions, and, besides," he continued, "this cheap skate that you found here is trying to make us trouble over something which took place in the camp last night."

"You think he's a cheap skate, do you?" Johnson asked, with a significant smile. "Well, I don't think anything about it. I know it. That's Joe Katz, one of the rankest plain-clothes policemen on the Chicago force! The fellow who came in with me is Ed. Cullen, another imitation detective. Now tell me what took place last night."

Will related the story of the arrival of the boy and of the claim made by Katz in the morning. He explained how the detective had threatened them all when the loss of his property was discovered. Also, how he had renewed his threats when he believed that he would have the backing of both newcomers. Johnson smiled at the recital.

"Now, about this boy," he said, without referring to the two detectives or the threats. "I wish you would describe him to me as accurately as possible. Tell me exactly how he looked and how he talked."

Will gave as complete a description of the boy as possible, and also repeated the account the lad had given of himself. Johnson threw back his head and laughed until the echoes came back from the mountains.

"Well, boys," he said, "you seem to have lighted in a hornet's nest the first jump out of the box. And so the kid stole the detective's badge and weapons and money, did he?" he went on, with another roar of laughter. "That's about the best thing I've heard yet!"

"I don't see anything funny about it!" replied Will.

"You will directly," replied Johnson. "Read your instructions, and then I'll tell you all about this boy, and all about these two imitation detectives. Then you'll see how funny this incident is."

Will opened the sealed envelope and held up a sheet of paper which was entirely blank, except for eight words and a signature written in the middle of the page. The words were:

"Introducing Mr. John Johnson. He'll tell the story."

The signature was that of the famous criminal lawyer who had induced the boys to undertake the mission to the Great Divide.

"It won't take very long for me to read the instructions," Will laughed, as the other boys gathered around him. "It seems to be up to you to tell us what we want to know!"

"Yes, that's the idea!" replied Johnson. "Mr. Horton explained to me that he didn't care to put what he had to say to you into writing. But perhaps we'd better get rid of these imitation fly-cops," he added, nodding his head toward the two Chicago detectives. "We don't want them hanging around the camp while we are making our plans."

Katz and Cullen saw that they were being regarded with suspicion and at once came forward to where the boys stood.

"I've been talking the matter of the robbery over with Cullen," Katz said, with a smile intended to be conciliating, "and he says that he's heard of this boy before, and that he's a noted thief. And so," the detective continued, "I'm very glad to be able to apologize to you for anything I might have said at a time when I was excited over my loss. I am satisfied now that you boys are friendly to me, and I sincerely hope that we'll often meet while we are in the hills."

Tommy was about to make some angry reply, as the insincerity of the man was plainly discernible, but Will gave him a nudge in the back which caused him to change his mind.

"And now," Cullen began, "that everything is satisfactorily explained, perhaps we'd better be on our way!"

"That's a fact!" exclaimed Katz. "I'm very much obliged to the boys for their friendly shelter and their well-cooked meals, and I hope they'll all come and partake of our hospitality as soon as we make permanent camp. We'll take steps to let you know where we are," he added, as the two turned toward their burros and led off to the north.

Tommy could not give over the thought of landing an irritating observation as the men walked away by the side of their beasts.

"Remember," he cried, "that the two train robbers and the cowboy vigilance committee went, in that direction last night! You fellows would better watch out, or you'll get mixed up with hold-up men!"

Katz turned an angry face toward the boy, muttered something to his companion, and went on without speaking.

"Those fellows won't dare to sleep a single night after that!" laughed Johnson. "They're scared right now!"

"I don't know anything about Cullen," Tommy answered with a grin, "but I know that the man Katz is a false alarm. You should have seen him take to his heels last night, when the train robbers rushed through the camp. I'd like to know what he's in here for, anyway!"

"That's the very thing I'm here to explain!" replied Johnson. "The story," he continued, "begins with the death of Thomas T. Fremont, a Chicago banker, some weeks ago."

"I remember the case," Will interrupted. "The police declare that the man was murdered, while his relatives insist that he might have committed suicide."

"That's exactly the point," Johnson went on. "The police are working on the theory that Fremont was murdered at his private room at the bank one hot night in July. The relatives declare that there was no reason whatever for him to have committed suicide, yet they insist that he must have done so. Now, understand me," Johnson continued, "the relatives are all interested in the defense of a disinherited son of the banker who is charged with the crime of murder. And so, you see, when the police ask them to point to some one fact substantiating the suicide theory they are unable to do so."

"The result of this peculiar situation is that the police insist that the relatives are advancing the suicide theory solely for the purpose of securing the acquittal of the son. To the average citizen, it would seem that the police are right. The son was always a thorn in the flesh of his father. He has squandered thousands of dollars in riotous living, and brought no end of disgrace on the family whose name he bears. And still the relatives insist that he is innocent, and are willing to spend a million in order to prevent his dying the death of a murderer. Mr. Horton represents the relatives."

"I begin to see daylight!" Will exclaimed. "I guess this case isn't such a little baby affair as we thought it might be!"

"Indeed it is no baby case!" exclaimed Johnson. "The family of the dead banker have a well-defined theory concerning the death of the old man which might help their case with the police if they would only present it to the chief. This, however, they refuse to do, declaring that the police would only take advantage of the confidence and use the information received to the prejudice of the prisoner."

"I don't blame them for doubting the honesty of the police!" declared Tommy. "The detectives are certainly a bum lot!"

"This theory," continued Mr. Johnson, "insists that there was a second person in the private office of the banker that hot July night. It is claimed that this person went to the office to secure financial help from the banker. It is said, too, that he possesses at this time positive proof, in the form of written documents, showing that Fremont committed suicide. The family believes this proof to be perfect."

"Then why don't they find this fellow and bring him forward?" asked Will.

"That is just what they are trying to do," replied Johnson. "That is just what you boys are expected to do!" he added with a smile. "You are expected to bring this witness forward, and so establish the innocence of the son. That's what you're here for."

"That's nice!" exclaimed Tommy. "That's an easy little undertaking for four school boys! When other means fail, hire Boy Scouts!"

"That's right!" replied Johnson.

"And we won't see him if those two imitation detectives get to him first!" the boy went on.

"And that's right too," Johnson answered. "For my part, I can't understand how the Chicago police department got wise to the whereabouts of Wagner at this time. When it was arranged to send you boys out here in quest of him, it was understood that the police had no clue whatever as to his whereabouts. In fact, we all believed that the officers had abandoned the search for the escaped convict."

"Well, they're here all right!" Sandy cut in. "And look here," he went on, "we've got something worse than imitation detectives in our midst! We've got a couple of train robbers, and a band of cowboy vigilantes!"

"Exactly!" Johnson agreed. "And you've got something equally dangerous for the purposes of our cause. You've got that fourteen-year-old Chester Winslow, whose name isn't Winslow at all, but Chester Wagner, son of the escaped convict!"

"Jerusalem!" exclaimed Tommy. "That boy didn't do a thing to Will, did he?" he added with a roar of laughter. "He told him a story about coming in on blind baggage, and sized up the camp, and stole the badge and the weapons and money of the detective sent in here to capture his father. Just think of the kid coming in here and stealing the detective's badge! He'd have taken his necktie if he'd 'a' thought of it!"

"I thought you'd see something humorous in the occurrence as soon as you found out about the boy!" laughed Johnson.

"The little rascal!" shouted Sandy. "The nerve of him! To come in here and steal the badge of the detective sent out to catch his father! Say," he went on, "I hope we'll run across that boy and make friends with him. I rather like his grit!"

"You won't be apt to find him as long as he thinks it necessary to keep his father in hiding!" Johnson suggested.

"He's an awful little liar!" exclaimed Will.

"I guess you'd lie, too," laughed Tommy, "if you had the same motive for lying that he had. He's standing by his father like a brick! And I won't lay it up against him if he tells lies enough to fill a book! He drew one friend in me when he stole that policeman's badge."

"These detectives," Will asked in a moment, "are here to take Wagner back to the penitentiary if they can find him, I suppose?"

"That's the idea! Unless some one of the relatives has leaked, the police do not understand that Wagner is a factor in the Fremont case. They are here to take him back to the penitentiary if they can find him and that's all they know about it."

"Well," Tommy exclaimed, "let them get him and take him back to the penitentiary! As soon as he gets run in for the remainder of his sentence he'll tell about being in the banker's private office that hot July night, and that will secure the release of the boy who is charged with the murder. It seems to me that the police are helping along this case."

"Not so you could notice it!" replied Johnson. "The fact is," he went on, "Wagner is entirely innocent of the crime for which he was convicted. He has had what the officers call a vindictive grouch on ever since the day he was sent to prison. In other words, he is at war with every person in the world except his son, the boy who told you such pretty fairy stories last night. If he is ever retaken and sent back to the penitentiary, he will never open his lips, not even if the accused son dies on the scaffold."

"And that's another beautiful little complication!" exclaimed Sandy.

"The friends of the accused man," continued Johnson, "must find Wagner and contract to establish his innocence. If the police get him first, we lose our case. I say this positively because there is no doubt that he will kill an officer or two before he is taken. Now you boys see exactly what you have undertaken to do."

"It's interesting, anyhow!" Tommy declared.

"Reads like a novel!" cried Sandy.

"Think of that little rat coming here and stealing the detective's badge!" laughed George. "It's a sure thing he'll lead those amateur officers a merry dance while they are in the hills! If I could just get hold of him, I wouldn't mind helping him along now and then!"

"Well, get hold of him then," advised Johnson.

"But how?" asked Will. "Why, from this time on, you might as well try to catch a flea in a load of hay as to get your hands on that boy! He can find you, but you can't find him!"

"But he was hungry last night!" Tommy explained. "And he may become hungry again!"

CHAPTER IV

A CHASE IN THE NIGHT

Shortly after dinner Johnson decided to make a start on his return trip at once. It would take him, he said, two days in addition to the half day to reach Green River, and he was due in San Francisco on the evening of the third day. One of the burros was relieved of his burden of provisions and the young man started away, leaving the boys feeling rather lonely and also rather overloaded with responsibility!

"Do you really think Wagner and the boy are out of provisions?" asked Tommy as twilight settled down over the camp.

"I don't see how they can procure provisions," Will suggested.

"We've just got to find out!" exclaimed Sandy. "You must remember," he continued, "that this Chester Wagner is a Tenderfoot in the Beaver Patrol, Chicago. He's afraid of us, but we've just got to help him out! We wouldn't be good Boy Scouts if we didn't! Suppose we put up a smoke signal for help and see if he'll come."

"Oh, yes, he'll come—not!" exclaimed Tommy.

"We can try it, anyway," insisted Sandy.

The lad carried embers from the campfire a short distance to the west and built another roaring

fire. Then he set about gathering green grass in order to make a greater volume of smoke.

"You'll have to hurry with your telegraph apparatus," laughed George, "if you want the boy to read your signal by daylight. It'll be so dark in half an hour that he couldn't see a column of smoke fifty feet away! Perhaps he isn't near enough to see them, anyway!"

"If I do all I can," Sandy declared, "I won't be to blame if he doesn't see them. I believe we ought to find some way to help that kid!"

The fires were now burning at a great rate, and Sandy heaped huge armfuls of green grass on top of the blazing sticks, with the result that two great columns of white smoke lifted to the evening sky.

When the grass burned out and the smoke became thinner the boy put on more and sat listening patiently for some sound, watching intently for an answering signal from the hills.

"I guess it's no good!" Sandy declared, mournfully, as the third supply of grass burned down. "The chances are that the train robbers and the imitation detectives have frightened Wagner and the kid out of the hills."

"I don't believe he'll come if he does see it," Will declared.

After a time the boys permitted one of the fires to die out and began preparations for supper. Tommy went back to one of the tents for the knives and forks directly, and in a moment came rushing back without any knives or forks but with a folded paper in his hand.

"Look here," he exclaimed excitedly, "while I was entering the tent something hit me a clip on the back. When I turned around to see what foolishness you fellows were up to, I found a piece of rock lying on the ground at my feet and close beside it, this piece of paper."

"Do you think the paper was wrapped around the rock?" asked George.

"Of course it was!" replied Tommy. "You can see the folds now, and there's the place where a corner of the rock cut a hole!"

Will turned a searchlight on the paper, now held outstretched in Tommy's hands, and burst into a laugh as he read the words written there:

"Nix on the help signal."

"The little rascal!" exclaimed Tommy, reading the sentence.

"He's wise, that boy!" declared Sandy.

"He thinks we're setting a trap for him," Will explained, "and I can't say that I blame him much for sending just that kind of a message."

"Anyway," Tommy went on, "it shows that he isn't far away. If he'll only hover around within reaching distance, we'll soon convince him that we don't mean him or his father any harm."

"I wonder if he took any provisions with him when he ran away this time!" laughed George. "I really hope he did. That is, if they haven't got any in their own camp."

The boys looked at the provisions which had been taken out for supper, and discovered that two loaves of bread and several tins of preserved meats had been taken.

"Good for him!" shouted Tommy.

After supper it was arranged that two of the boys should watch the camp until one o'clock, and then awake the others, who were to stand guard until morning. Tommy and Sandy were to take the first watch.

"I don't think there's much use of anyone standing guard!" exclaimed Will. "Our lovely burros over there will probably lift up their voices if any stranger comes nosing around in the dark."

"Anyhow," Tommy suggested, "we may be able to get sight of young Wagner if we keep watch all night."

Will and George were in bed by nine o'clock, and then Sandy and Tommy began planning the excursion into the hills which each one, independent of the other, had determined to make.

"Now it's just this way," Tommy began, "wherever those fellows are, they have a fire. It's September, but the nights are cold here, just the same. Now, you remain here and watch the camp and I'll make my way to one of the summits to the north and take a peep over the country. If I see a campfire, and it isn't too far away, I'll sneak down and see whether it belongs to Wagner, to the cheap detectives, to the train robbers, or to the cowboy vigilantes."

"That's quite a collection of interests to be assembled in one spot on the Great Divide!" laughed Sandy.

"Oh, we always get into some kind of a mess like this," grumbled Tommy. "We could have a nice peaceful time catching Wagner if the detectives, and the train robbers, and the cowboys had remained away. I hope the cowboys will catch the robbers and lug them out, anyway!"

"I have an idea that the detectives will soon get tired of wandering around in the hills and

meeting grizzly bears, and rattlesnakes, and wolverines every half hour."

"Grizzly bears!" exclaimed Tommy. "What are you talking about grizzly bears for?"

"There are more grizzly bears in Wyoming," declared Sandy, "than in all the other western states put together. The Bad Lands are full of them, and up in the Yellowstone National Park, they have them trained to eat with a knife and fork!"

"All right!" exclaimed Tommy. "I'll take your word for it, but I don't believe it! I know there are rattlesnakes, all right, but I don't believe there's a grizzly bear within a hundred miles of this spot!"

The words were hardly out of the boy's mouth before a rumbling growl came to the ears of the watchers.

"There!" cried Tommy. "You've called the roll and that's the first response. But I'll bet he's the only one around here!" the boy added.

Sandy laid a hand on his friend's shoulder to invoke silence.

"Listen," he said, "that's no bear!"

"Perhaps it's a rattlesnake, then!" scorned Tommy.

"It's a boy!" declared Sandy. "That's what it is!"

Both lads darted into the darkness, waving electric searchlights as they advanced, and calling out in such words as a Boy Scout would be apt to understand. They ran for some distance, until they fell over a bit of rocky ground, and then stood looking toward a point in the darkness from which a sound of footsteps came.

"You go on back to camp," whispered Tommy to Sandy, "and make all the noise you can going, and talk to yourself, so he'll think we're talking together. I'll put out my light and follow that chump by the noise he makes. I guess I can do it all right!"

"Aw, let's both go," pleaded Sandy.

"One's got to go back to camp to put him off his guard!" insisted Tommy, "Run along, like a good little boy, now," he added with a grin.

Sandy departed, talking to himself, and trying his best to make noise enough for two boys, while Tommy turned off his light and crept forward in the darkness in the direction of the sounds he had heard.

For a time he seemed to gain on the person who was making his way some hundred yards or more ahead of him, but at last, try as he might, the sound of footsteps gradually died away, and there were only the sounds of the night in the boy's ears.

He paused, after a time, and threw himself down on the rocky slope. The campfire seemed to be a long distance away, now, and the boy had just decided to give over his search at that time and return to the camp.

When he started to rise, however, he found a heavy hand pressed down on either shoulder. His amazement was so great that for a moment he sat perfectly still.

But there were cowboy vigilantes, train robbers, and detectives somewhere in the hills, so the boy was not quite so sure of the personality of the other as he had been at the first instant of contact.

"Well?" he said in a moment.

"Who are you?" came the question, not in the voice of a boy, but in the gruff tones of a man who was taking no pains to make a good impression.

"A boy from the camp down yonder," Tommy answered.

The boy was thinking fast. This might be one of the detectives, or it might be one of the train robbers, or it might be one of the cowboys, or it might be the escaped convict himself.

"What are you boys camping there for?" was asked.

"Vacation!" was the reply.

"Which way did the cowboys go?" was the next question.

Tommy needed no further introduction to the man who was clinging to his shoulders with a grip that was positively painful. No one but the train robbers would be apt to be interested in the direction taken by the cowboys. Tommy declares to this day that he felt the hair rising straight up on his head when he realized that he was talking with one of the hold-up men. He also says that his teeth chattered with fright.

"The last we heard of the cowboys," he answered, "they were going straight north. I thought you went that way, too," he added.

"We couldn't get too far away from our base of supplies," replied the other with a cynical laugh.

"We were just thinking of going back to your camp for a square meal when we heard you blundering up the slope. You'll have to feed us for a few days, young fellow!"

CHAPTER V

A DETECTIVE AND A ROBBER

Half way back to the camp, Sandy crouched down at the sound of approaching footsteps.

"I'll bet that's Tommy trying to give me a scare," was the boy's thought.

He listened intently for a moment, without hearing a repetition of the noise, and started on again.

"If I thought that really was Tommy," he mused, "I'd arrange a neat little surprise for him. He's always up to his tricks."

The sound of heavy breathing came to his ears directly, and, not having the least doubt that the approaching figure was that of his chum, he waited for an instant until the labored breathing seemed to be passing the spot where he stood and leaped forward.

Much to his amazement he struck a pair of broad, muscular shoulders instead of the slender shoulders of his chum and felt himself in the grasp of a pair of powerful hands.

"What are you prowling around in the night for?" was asked.

Sandy pulled away at the hand which was smothering him and taking the hint, his captor released him for a moment.

"I can't talk with my mouth and nose all stopped up!" returned the boy. "What did you want to go and do that for?"

"What are you prowling about in the night for?" repeated the other.

Sandy thought he recognized the voice as that of Katz, the plain-clothes policeman who had lied on the previous evening regarding his residence and his calling.

"I might ask the same of you," replied Sandy, mopping his face with his handkerchief. "What are you prowling around for?"

"Keeping an eye on your camp," replied the other gruffly.

"What for?" demanded Sandy.

"Because you're suspicious characters."

"You're Katz, aren't you?" asked Sandy.

"Who told you that?" snarled the other.

"John Johnson," was the reply.

"I recognized him as one of Horton's men," declared Katz.

"That's what he is!" Sandy answered.

"What has Horton got to do with you?"

"That's some more of our business!" replied the boy.

"Now, look here," the detective said in a moment, "we're here, as you probably know by this time, in search of an escaped convict. We have positive information that he is hiding somewhere in this district. We have brought in plenty of supplies, and intend to remain here until we find him. He's a slippery fellow, but we'll get him yet."

"That doesn't interest me any," suggested Sandy.

"But I'm going to interest you in just about one minute!" declared Katz. "The boy who stole my property and left your camp in the night is likely to return there at any time. We want that boy. Will you help us get him? If you don't, you're likely to get into trouble yourselves."

"I guess there isn't much chance of his coming back to us!" Sandy answered. "I guess you know that yourself."

"You know who he is?" ask the detective.

"We've been told," was the reply, "that he is the son of the man you're hunting for, but we don't believe it."

"Well, we've made up our minds that he is," Katz went on, "and we've also made up our minds to watch your camp until the boy shows up again. I'll teach him to steal my badge of authority!"

"When you catch him," Sandy requested, "just let us know. We want to see him ourselves. Will

you do that?"

"I guess you'll see him before we do," replied Katz, gruffly. "And now, if you don't mind," the detective went on, "I'll just go over to the camp with you and see what the other boys say about him. And while I'm there, you might make me a couple of cups of coffee. I'm a long distance from my camp and quite hungry."

Notwithstanding the impudence of the request, the boy consented to the arrangement and the two were starting away together when the sound of approaching footsteps was heard.

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Sandy. "This deserted country seems to me about like the corner of State and Madison streets tonight. There's always some one walking around in the dark."

"Suppose we wait and see who it is," suggested the detective.

Now, Sandy had an idea that one of the persons approaching was Tommy and that the other might possibly be Chester Wagner. He had no notion of assisting the detective to get his hands on the boy, and so hung back when Katz would have stepped forward to intercept those who were advancing toward him. Thinking this an attempt to break away, Katz caught the lad by the arm and held fast to him while the others went by.

Sandy was certain that he heard Tommy's voice as the two passed, but was not certain that he recognized the voice of his companion in the low reply which was made. The boy realized that he must have occupied considerable time in his return to camp, after leaving his chum.

"And so, one of your chums was prowling around in the darkness, too," snarled the detective. "Who is that person with him?"

"I don't know," answered Sandy.

"Yes you do know, too!" gritted Katz, "You just came from that direction yourself, and you probably left the two together when you came away."

"You're off there," Sandy answered.

"I'll tell you what I think," the detective went on, "and that is that you boys have been out after that Wagner kid. I believe he's going into the camp with your chum right this minute. Anyway, I'll take you in and find out about it."

As the two advanced toward the campfire they watched in vain for the two figures which had gone on ahead.

"You walk in there and see whether that boy thief is there or not," commanded the detective. "And remember," he went on, threateningly, "that I'm waiting here in the darkness with an automatic revolver in my hand, so you'd better not attempt any funny business!"

When he reached Tommy's side he saw that the boy was frying bacon and eggs and making coffee. The large skillet used by the boys contained at least half a dozen eggs and about half a pound of breakfast bacon.

"Where's your friend?" Sandy asked in a whisper.

Tommy laid a finger on his lips as a request for low-voiced conversation. All the time he kept busy with the skillet.

"He's back there watching us with a loaded automatic in his hand," whispered the boy. "I wish one of the boys would get up and put a bullet through his head. That's what he deserves!"

"Who is it?" whispered Sandy.

"One of the train robbers!" was the startling reply.

"Where'd you get him?"

"He geezled me out here on the slope!"

"And came in with you and ordered his dinner?"

"That's it!" was the reply.

Sandy sat down on the grass beside the fire and chuckled until he was red in the face. Tommy almost permitted the bacon to burn while he watched his chum with wide-open eyes.

"If that train robber should send a bullet out this way, you wouldn't think it so funny!" Tommy declared. "He's a mighty suspicious fellow. He wouldn't permit me to wake any of the boys to help get supper."

"Look here," whispered Sandy, "I've got that imitation detective out there waiting for me to tell him whether Chester Wagner is here or not. He says he's hungry, too, and insists that I give him a night lunch. Now I'll tell you what we'll do," the boy continued. "I'll go and steer the detective up against the train robber, and we'll see what he'll do."

Before Tommy could reply, Sandy was away in the darkness, whistling softly to the detective.

"Say," he said, when Katz came lumbering into the edge of the illumination, "the boy isn't there,

but I've got good news for you, just the same. The man who went in with my chum is one of the train robbers the cowboys are in search of. There's ten thousand dollars reward offered for him, and all you've got to do is to walk in there, hold a gun to his head, and march him off to Green River. You ought to give me half the reward, though," the boy added, "for you wouldn't have caught him only for me."

"All right," whispered the detective in a shaking voice. "I'll creep back into the shadows and come up from behind. When you go back, point with your hand to where he is. I'll be right there with a gun on him in half a minute!"

"All right," replied Sandy, and the detective disappeared from view.

Then the boy walked back to Tommy's side and explained what sort of circus there would be there in about a minute.

CHAPTER VI

THE CALL OF THE BEAVER

"Oh, I don't believe there'll be any circus!" whispered Tommy.

"And why not?"

"Because Katz will get the fellow handcuffed so quick by that there won't be any fun in it! There's a big reward out for that fellow!"

"Huh!" grinned Sandy. "You didn't see how scared the detective was when I told him the train robber was here by our fire. It's a hundred to one that the train robber will give the detective a swift kick in the pants and go back to his own camp."

The boys listened and waited for a considerable length of time, but heard no evidence of the approach of the detective.

"Say," Tommy whispered, "this is a pretty nice supper I've been getting for that robber. It looks good enough for me to eat myself!"

"We can eat it after Katz takes the robber away," suggested Sandy.

"I don't see anything of Katz, do you?" asked Tommy with a wink.

"Je-rusalem!" exclaimed Sandy. "You don't think he's run away, do you? He wouldn't do that, I'm sure!"

"He wouldn't," laughed Tommy. "I'll bet that fellow's running away now with a face so pale it leaves a white streak in the night."

"Well, it takes him a long time to get here, anyway," admitted Sandy.

"You just wait a minute," Tommy chuckled, "and I'll fix this business all right. You just tend this skillet until I come back."

Tommy moved away toward where the robber sat on the ground, watching every move that was made, and keeping a particularly keen eye on Sandy, whose temporary absence from the camp had attracted his suspicions.

"Look here," Tommy whispered, "we're not anxious to see you boys get into trouble, and so we're going to give you a tip. Sandy went out a moment ago to steer away one of the detectives who came in from Chicago last night."

The hold-up man got softly to his feet and began moving out of the light of the fire. Tommy urged him by look and a motion to remain where he was for the present.

"I didn't know that there were any detectives from Chicago in here," he said. "They must have made a quick jump to get here!"

"I guess they did," replied Tommy. "One of them was here before you were yesterday. He chased you up the valley, but came back, saying that he couldn't get a shot."

"Pretty nervy kind of a fellow, eh?" asked the train robber.

"He looks to me," declared Tommy, "as if he'd fight a rattlesnake and give him the first bite. He may have a swarm of his men in the vicinity of the camp, and if I were you, I'd turn away to the east and get out of sight as soon as possible."

"I can't fight a whole army," declared the train robber, as, crouching low, he moved away.

"Wait a minute," whispered Tommy chuckling so that he was afraid the other would discover the merriment in his voice. "Why don't you wait and have some of the supper I've been cooking for you?"

The train robber did not even pause to hear the conclusion of the boy's remarks, and Tommy went back to the fire and lay down and rolled back and forth until Sandy threw a cup of water into his face.

"What do you think of that!" he exclaimed. "There's a bum Chicago detective chasing off to the north at a forty mile gait, because he thinks there's a train robber after him, and there's a train robber chasing off to the east at a forty-mile gait because he thinks there's a Chicago detective after him! Some day," the boy added, "I'm going to make a motion picture scenario of that."

While the boys were enjoying the joke, Will and George came out of the tent where they had been sleeping. Both looked grave when the incidents of the night were related to them.

"It means," Will declared, "that we are suspected by the train robbers of harboring a detective, and suspected by the detective of harboring the convict and his son."

"Aw, they won't come back here again, any of them!" asserted Tommy.

"Don't you think they won't," replied Will. "Here," he added, as Tommy dipped into the skillet of bacon and eggs. "What are you boys doing with the third or fourth supper?"

"I cooked this for the train robber!" grinned Tommy, "How'd you like to have a few bites of it?"

"I don't mind!" declared Will.

"Of the four parties representing four diverse interests," Will said, at the conclusion of the meal, "two have been represented here tonight. Before morning we may receive a call from the cowboys and the escaped convict. The visits might not be very agreeable ones but, still, they would complete the roll-call."

"You remember that trip to the Florida Everglades, don't you?" asked Tommy, with a most satisfying yawn. "Well, if you haven't forgotten all about it, you'll remember that we didn't have any sleep there for a couple of nights, and that I actually began to grow thin because of being kept awake so much."

"It was your own fault," insisted Sandy.

"That may be," replied Tommy, "but, all the same, I'm not going to let anything like that happen on this trip. I'm going to bed right now, and there's nothing on the face of the earth that can get me out of bed again until morning."

"That's me, too!" declared Sandy.

The boys entered the tent recently vacated, drew down the flap and were soon in bed, and asleep. Will and George, sitting by the fire, discussing the unusual combination of circumstances, heard a succession of sounds which any member of the Beaver patrol, Boy Scouts of America, would have recognized instantly.

It was the beaver call which consists in slapping the open palms together violently in imitation of the play of the flat tail of the beaver upon the surface of the water.

"Slap, slap, slap!" came the challenge from the darkness.

"That's a Beaver!" exclaimed George.

"Slap, slap, slap!" went the reply from Will's open palms.

"Why doesn't he come in?" asked George in a moment.

"I guess I'll have to go and find out!" declared Will. "This, you see," he added with a smile, "is the third interest to be represented here tonight. There is no doubt but that we'll hear from the cowboys before morning. It never rains but it pours."

"Slap, slap, slap!" came the call from the darkness again.

Will gave a low whistle in recognition of the signal and stepped forward. An answering whistle directed his steps, and presently he saw the light of the fire shining on the pale face of the lad who had stolen the badge of office from the detective.

"Why didn't you come on in?" asked Will.

"Why," was the reply, "I wasn't afraid of you boys, but I didn't know who might be watching the camp. I've been loitering around here most of the time since dark and just got the courage to call you out. Some one chased me away once."

"Are you hungry?" asked Will. "If you are, now's the time to say so. Last call for dinner in the dining car!"

"Yes, I'm hungry," was the reply, "but I haven't got time to wait for supper. If you'll snatch a loaf of bread and can of something and come along with me, you'll do the greatest favor one Boy Scout ever did for another. You'll come, won't you?"

"Sure I will," was the reply, "and I'll bring something more than a loaf of bread and a can of something," he went on.

"You can't carry much," replied Chester, "for we've got a rocky road to climb, and we'll have to go

fast, too!"

"You haven't told me what the trouble is, yet!"

"It's father!" the boy answered hesitatingly. "I suppose you know now that I didn't tell you the truth when I was at your camp. I saw John Johnson there after I stole that bum detective's badge and ran away, and I suppose he told you all about me."

"Yes, he did," replied Will, rejoicing inwardly that the very thing they had been wishing for had taken place.

All he had to do now was to win the confidence of the boy, find his way to the father, and so clear up the mystery of the Fremont case.

"Yes," Will went on, "he told me all about you and all about your father, and I've been wondering ever since how you, a Boy Scout, could find the nerve to make up such a mess of lies as you told to me."

"I wanted to find out what you were here for, and who you were, and get something to eat," replied the boy, "and so I told you the first thing that came into my head. And now," he continued, "I'm going to tell you something that I wish might be classed as a fairy tale later on."

"Go ahead," answered Will. "Two days ago I had no idea that I'd ever become mixed up in the Fremont case, but I'll tell you right now that I'm becoming interested in it."

"A few days ago," the boy began, "father fell from a ledge of rock near our hiding place and injured his head. I have taken as good care of him as I could, but it was impossible for me to remain with him all the time, because I had to fish and hunt and provide food for both of us."

"You're welcome to any provisions we have," said Will, feeling genuine sympathy for the boy.

"That isn't the point now," Chester went on.

"While I was in your camp last night waiting, for the chance to steal provisions to take back to father, he left the hiding place. I know he's out of his head, and so I believe him to be wandering about the hills in a demented condition. There's no knowing what will happen to him if he is not found and placed in hiding again. I want you to go and help me find him. The detectives who came in last night, or some time yesterday, are here to take him back to prison, and they're likely to get him at any minute if he continues to wander about while insane from the recent injury to his head. There's no one to help me but you. Will you go?"

Here was the very chance the Boy Scouts had been waiting for.

CHAPTER VII

ARRESTED AS SPIES

"Of course, we'll go with you!" replied Will, in answer to the boy's anxious question. "Do you think anything can be done tonight?"

"I think we ought to begin the search tonight," replied Chester. "One of father's hobbies is the campfire. It is my idea that if he has matches he will build himself a rousing fire, if he comes to dry wood. If he doesn't do this, he's likely to make his way to the first campfire he sees. I was in hopes that he'd come here."

Will called his chums into the tent for a general discussion of the matter, Chester remaining just outside the fire line. The boy seemed to have a mortal fear of being watched and followed.

Before entering fully into the conference, Will carried a liberal supper out to the hungry boy. Chester said that he had eaten very little since disposing of the provisions taken from the camp. Owing to the sudden disappearance of his father, he had not had time to hunt and fish. Will thought he had never seen a boy eat so industriously.

"Why don't he come into the tent," queried Tommy, as Will returned.

"He's afraid some one's watching the camp," was the reply.

"What if there is some one watching the camp," Tommy insisted, "they'll see something's going on and follow us when we go away with Chester. So he might just as well come on in!"

"Watch us when we go away?" repeated George. "Who do you think is going away with the boy in search of his father?"

"I'm going, for one!" declared Tommy.

"Not so you could notice it!" Will cut in. "You and Sandy have been doing all the scouting tonight, and now George and I will take a turn at it!"

Tommy winked slyly at Sandy but said nothing.

Will, however, caught the look which passed between the two boys, and declared that he meant to tie them both up before he left the camp.

"You boys are always running away, and always getting into trouble!" he declared. "You remember what a scrape you got us into down in the Everglades. If it hadn't been for the Seminole, you'd 'a' had us all under ground before we'd been there two days!"

"Aw, who said anything about leaving camp?" demanded Sandy.

"No one said anything about it," returned the other, "but I understand what you boys have in your minds, and I'll tell you right now that I don't think it's right for you to leave the camp until we return."

"Of course we won't!" declared Tommy.

"Well, I've said all I'm going to say about it!" Will went on. "Of course, you'll go if the notion comes into your heads, anyway, so what's the use? I hope you'll get into something that'll keep you home for a week if you do go out tonight."

"All right," laughed Tommy. "We know all about you! If we got into trouble anywhere, you'd be the first one to help get us out."

"And now about plans for the search," Will went on, without seeming to notice the last remark of the boy, "it is nearly midnight now, and we may not be back by morning, so perhaps we'd better take something to eat with us. We may be miles from camp at sunrise."

"And when we find Wagner, we may find a hungry man," George added.

"That's a fact!" cried Tommy darting away to the provision box.

In a very short time the boy brought a great package of egg and ham sandwiches to the two lads who were about to start away.

"Now, don't eat all this truck before sunrise," Tommy advised. "As George says, when you find Wagner, you'll find a hungry man."

After stowing the sandwiches away in their pockets, and seeing that their automatics and searchlights were in good condition, the boys went out to the place where they had left Chester and found him sound asleep in the long grass.

"The poor fellow is about all in!" exclaimed George.

"I wish we could get him to remain in camp while we make the search!" Will suggested. "He's in no shape to take a long trip into the mountains."

"And still," George began, "we haven't any idea where to look for his father. And the boy may have a very clear notion as to where to look first. I guess, after all, we'll have to take him with us!"

"I suppose so," Will agreed, "but I tell you what we can do. We can get him to tell us what he knows about his father's habits and inclinations, and then ask him to rest up while we investigate some of the points suggested. Perhaps he'll do that."

"I guess he'll have to!" smiled George. "He's so sound asleep now that we could carry him bodily into the tent and he'd never know it!"

It was quite a difficult task to wake the boy, but at last when he sat up rubbing his eyes he pretended, as all boys will, that he had just dozed off for a minute.

"I was pretty tired," he declared, "and I guess the supper I ate made me a little bit sleepy."

"Well," Will said, "we may as well be on our way. I suppose you'll take us first to the place where you and your father have been hiding."

"That was my intention."

The sky was clearing now, and the light of the stars made it possible for the boys to walk at a swift pace over the level valley and up the easy slope which led to the top of a low and rocky range of hills lying at the western foot of Atlantic peak.

When the boys finally reached the summit of the ridge, Chester led the way down an incline facing the east to a gulch which ran in between the great mountain and the lower range.

"Here's where we've been stopping," he said, pointing to what is known in that part of the country as a limestone cave. "It's quite comfortable in there if you have a fire near the entrance, and no one can see the blaze from the valley, so it's reasonably safe."

The boys stepped into the cavern and looked around. A rude couch had been made of the boughs of spruce and white pine, and saplings had been roughly hewn into a table and two chairs.

"You must have been here some time?" asked Will, pointing to the skins on the floor.

"Several long, dreary weeks," was the reply.

"Did you come here with your father?"

"Yes, we came together."

"Were you with him in Chicago just before he left for Wyoming?"

The boy opened his eyes wider.

"How did you know we were ever in Chicago?" he asked.

"We know more about your father and yourself than you think we do."

"Perhaps," said the boy suspiciously, "I have done wrong in asking you for assistance."

"Oh, you've come to the right shop for help," George cut in. "You'll find that we'll help you while you're in the hills, and continue to help you after you get out of the hills. You're a Beaver, you know."

It was on Will's lips to tell the boy exactly why they were there, and how glad they were that he had come to them in his trouble, but he refrained from doing so.

After half an hour's walk they came to the place where the gulch opened into a small valley.

"I think," Chester said, as they stepped into one of these openings, "that father may be hiding somewhere in this vicinity."

"Do you think so," asked Will, "because of that light in there?"

"I didn't see any light when I spoke," replied the boy, "but I see the reflection of a fire now. It must be some distance from this opening."

The boys moved forward softly until they came near a campfire which was in a passage connecting the cave they were in with one to the north. When they came close enough they saw three figures sitting before the fire. Chester clutched Will fiercely by the arm and declared that one of the men was his father. He was for rushing forward immediately, but the boys held him back.

"If the other fellows are the detectives," George suggested to Will, "it's all up with us, unless we can get him away."

"But they are not the detectives," replied Will.

"Those fellows are the men who are wanted for the Union Pacific train robbery!"

While the boys were advancing the three men at the fire disappeared as if by magic! The next moment the circle of light showed the figures of half a dozen cowboys darting hither and thither in search of the men who had taken themselves off so suddenly.

Believing that the cowboys might be induced to assist in the search for the missing man, the boys advanced toward the fire. As they did so the cowboys swarmed down upon them. Before they could utter a word of protest they were securely bound with ropes and dragged to the opening.

"We didn't get the robbers," the man who seemed to be leader of the party said, "but we can amuse ourselves lynching these spies!"

CHAPTER VIII

A MIDNIGHT BEAR HUNT

"I have heard," Tommy said with a wink, soon after the departure of the boys, "that the best time to get a grizzly bear rug for a Boy Scout club room in Chicago is at moonrise."

"I think I've heard something like that, too," Sandy answered, with a grin. "That is," he went on, "if you want to get a grizzly bear rug for a Boy Scout club room in Chicago in the month of September."

"Yes," Tommy admitted, "I think the month of September was mentioned in the information I received on the subject."

"And the best place to get a grizzly bear rug for a Boy Scout club room in Chicago," Sandy laughed, "is in a range of foot hills built mostly of limestone. You see," the lad continued, "water washes out limestone and leaves caves and holes which the bears occupy. Sometimes these caves and holes furnish accommodation for a whole family of baby bears, I have heard, so we may be able to take a pet cub back to Chicago with us. That would be pretty poor, I guess!"

"Well," Tommy said, rummaging the provision box, "if we start out to get a couple of grizzly bear rugs for a Boy Scout club room in Chicago, we probably won't get back before sunrise, so we may as well take a little something to eat with us."

"Trust you for always taking something to eat with you!" laughed Sandy. "It's a sure thing you'll never starve to death."

The boys provided themselves with plenty of sandwiches and a couple of cans of pork and beans and, after seeing that the fire was safe and not likely to spread to the tents and provisions, and after changing the feeding ground of the burros so that they had plenty of grass, started away toward the foothills.

"Of course," Tommy said as they walked along, "we may find Wagner while we are looking for bear, and Will and George may find bear while they're looking for Wagner. I've heard of such things before now."

The boys crossed the valley to the foothills and clambered up the slope not far north of the spot where their chums and Chester had gained the summit. They descended into the gulch, too, and turned to the left.

"Now," Tommy said, seating himself on the slope, "the moon ought to be up in half an hour. I've heard that at the time the moon comes up bears leave their beds in search of food. We'll just sit here on the slope and watch the line of foothills."

"And I suppose," Sandy scoffed, "that you've got a notion in your nut that a couple of grizzly bears will come walking out into the gulch, take off their hides, and make you a present of them in a nice little speech."

"Now don't get smart, Freshy!" exclaimed Tommy. "According to all accounts, the walls of many of these foothills are punctured with limestone caves. There's where the bears live. From where we sit we can see a long ways to the north, as soon as the moon rises and we may be able to catch sight of a grizzly coming out for an early lunch."

The lads were seated not very far from the entrance to the cavern which had been occupied by Wagner and his son, but they had no knowledge of the fact. It was not their purpose to investigate one cavern at a time, but to watch the valley for anything that might come out of any one of them.

They could see only a short distance when they halted but presently the moon lifted into the sky and diffused a faint light over the hills. It would be some minutes before the direct rays would, strike into the gulch, and so the boys waited, hiding in the shadows, for that time to come.

"I guess we've got one already," Tommy observed, whispering the words excitedly in his chum's ear.

"I don't see anything that looks like a grizzly."

"Can't you see that there's a movement in the shadows about a hundred feet, to the north?" asked Tommy.

"I see something moving but I can't tell what it is."

"It's a bear!" shouted Tommy, taking no pain now to control his voice.

"Yes," exclaimed Sandy, "and it's two bears, if anybody should ask you, and they're coming this way!"

"Then we'd better get back a little ways," advised Tommy.

"I should say so!" cried Sandy. "At least we want to get into a position where they can't get in behind us."

The boys turned back a few paces and sought a position where their backs would be supported by the almost perpendicular wall of the bluff to the west. Then Sandy grinned as he pointed to the south.

"I guess this is a bear convention," he said. "There's another grizzly old scout coming from the other way."

"Three bear rugs," chuckled Tommy.

"Say, look here!" Sandy exclaimed. "Do we stand here and let these brutes come up and smell of our clothes before we do any shooting?"

"We don't do any shooting from here," Tommy answered moving back to the south. "If we should wound those big brutes without shutting off their motive power, they'd chew us into rags, in about three minutes. We've got to get some place where we can run!"

"Then what'd you back up against this rock for?" demanded Sandy.

"I didn't know how many bears there were in the world," grinned Tommy.

The boys moved a few paces and stopped at the mouth of a cavern. Tommy threw his searchlight into the interior and saw only bare walls. On his right as he looked in, appeared to be some sort of connection with the cave beyond.

"Gee—whiz!" he exclaimed. "There seem to be passages and corridors in this big bear tenement building. I wonder if there isn't an elevator, too."

"I wouldn't mind going up a few hundred feet!" suggested Sandy.

The bears came lumbering along toward the cavern where the boys stood, apparently not much interested in the visitors. When the moon rose they snuffed about the crevices along the slope, and finally fixed their attention on the spot where the boys were standing.

Both boys, realizing that a mistake had been made, dashed into the cavern and kept firing as the animals came into view, rather sharply outlined now against the growing moonlight.

"Now you have done it!" cried Sandy.

"Aw, what have I done?" demanded Tommy. "We came out to get grizzly rugs for our clubroom in Chicago, didn't we?"

"Yes, and you went and fired without killing them, and now we've been chased into a hole! If they've got the sense to stand there and wait for us to come out, they'll have a feast of boy flesh in a few hours."

"Huh!" exclaimed Tommy, "I didn't see you bringing down any of the bears, and you shot as often as I did."

"It sure was bum shooting," admitted Sandy.

The bears were now out of view, but the boys knew that they were still watching the entrance to the cavern. Tommy's searchlight showed the entrance to the connection between the two caverns, and the boys lost no more in changing their position. Tommy looked out of the entrance to the hiding place and saw that the brutes had shifted their quarters and were watching from a new position.

"I guess we've got into the kind of a mess Will predicted," Tommy declared. "This looks like we'd have to stand a siege."

Tommy moved to the side of his chum and fired a couple of shots at the sentinel outside.

"Look here," Sandy advised. "You'd better save your bullets!"

"All right!" Tommy answered. "I suppose that's what we're here for—to save bullets!"

"Well, you needn't be throwing them away where there's no chance of hitting anything," grumbled Sandy.

Tommy retreated into the cavern and began investigating the wall with his searchlight.

"If we could only find another corridor in this steam-heated old collection of bear traps," he said, "we might get out of sight of the brutes. I wish we could find a hole leading up to the roof!"

The boys finally found a small opening which led into the wall on the south. After investigating and finding that it connected only with the cavern they had just left, the boys turned back.

Tommy, who was in the lead, sprang back when he came to the main cave with a suddenness which almost threw his chum to the floor.

"Now we've gone and done a fine thing!" he cried. "The bears are out there in the cave we're shut in good and tight!"

CHAPTER IX

LYNCHING IS THREATENED

"Spies!" repeated Will, indignantly, as the cowboys gathered around.

"Yes, spies!" exclaimed the leader of the party excitedly. "You thought you pulled the wool over our eyes down at your camp the other night, but you didn't! We have good reason to believe that the robbers have visited your camp every day and that you fed them!"

"That isn't true!" declared George angrily.

"If you're not in with these bandits, what are you doing here?" demanded another member of the party.

"Why, we came in search of—"

Will closed his teeth with a snap as he realized that on no account must he reveal the real motive for this night visit to the cavern.

"Go on!" shouted the leader.

Will glanced significantly at George and remained silent.

Chester seemed about to speak, but George gave him a nudge with his elbow and the boy remained silent.

"You said you came here in search of some one!" the leader demanded.

"I didn't say anything of the kind," Will contradicted.

"Well, out with it! What did you say?"

"I was about to say that we were prowling around just for the fun of the thing."

"Prowling around in the ante-room of a robbers' den in the middle of the night just for the fun of the thing!" laughed the leader.

"That story is so bald that it's funny!" laughed another member of the party. "You ought to make up something better than that!"

"It's the truth!" answered George.

"Look here!" the leader exclaimed. "If you boys'll tell us where those three men went to, we'll take you into Green River and see that you have a fair trial. If you don't, we'll string you up right here in the mountains!"

"We don't know where they went!" answered Will.

A member of the party who had been called Seth by his companions now stepped forward and began an examination of the Boy Scout badges which adorned the coats of the two lads.

"Where did you get them?" he asked.

"Chicago," was the reply.

"The Beaver Patrol, I see," the man went on.

"Yes, sir!" replied Will.

"You look like a young man," George cut in. "Were you ever a Boy Scout?"

"Hardly," was the reply, "but I have a son who is very much interested in the organization. He belongs to the Eagle Patrol, at Lander, and I hear nothing but Boy Scout rules, and tactics, and that sort of thing, from morning till night."

"Well, he must be a good lad if he's a faithful Boy Scout," Will suggested. "He certainly must be all right!"

"Indeed he is!" Seth answered. "He's a good boy, and I hope some day that he'll have the right to wear a badge like that," pointing to the Scoutmaster emblem on Will's hat.

"How many of these medals has he?" asked George, pointing to the Ambulance, Stalker, Seaman and Pioneer medals on his sleeve.

"Oh, I don't know," Seth laughed. "He comes home every day or two and says he's going to have a new one! Look here, lad," the man added glancing apprehensively back at his companions, "why don't you tell the truth and get out of this scrape in the easiest possible way?"

"We have told the truth," was the reply, "except that we didn't come out just for the fun of the thing. We came out for a purpose which we can't disclose at this time. We blundered on the train robbers, and have no more idea of where they went than you have."

"Look here Seth," the leader of the party exclaimed. "If you can't make those boys tell the truth, just cut out this conversation. We've got work to do tonight!"

"I think they are telling the truth!" Seth answered.

"Oh, I guess you know better than that!" laughed the leader. "You're interested in them because they claim to be Boy Scouts, and I suppose you're taking in everything they say."

"I think the boys are all right!" insisted Seth.

"It doesn't make any difference what you think!" replied the other angrily, "If they don't tell the truth, they're going to swing in less than half an hour!"

"I can't stand for that, Pete," Seth answered.

"Who's sheriff of this county?" demanded the man who had been called Pete. "I suppose you think you're boss of this expedition."

"I don't think anything of the kind," was the reply, "but I'm not going to see these Boy Scouts murdered without a hearing, and if you attempt anything of the kind, you'll never be sheriff of this county again! I can tell you that much."

The four other members of the party were now whispering together some distance away. As they whispered, they glanced furtively from the boys to the man who was trying to protect them.

"Look here, Pete," one of them said, as they all stepped forward, "we don't see any necessity for this halt in the proceedings just because Seth has a lad that belongs to the Boy Scouts."

"That's right," another member of the party declared. "Just you say the word and we'll string these boys up in a holy minute!"

"Not with my consent!" exclaimed Seth. "I'm not murdering babies! And if you fellows attempt

anything of the kind, there'll be trouble!"

"Look here," the sheriff said, addressing Will. "You boys go off in a corner somewhere and talk this thing over. Here's a pretty decent kind of a fellow, a neighbor of mine, getting into trouble on your account. Now you go and talk the thing over, and see if you can't decide to tell the truth and help him out as well as yourself."

"Why can't you tell him the whole story?" asked Chester as the boys grouped themselves in a shadowy corner of the cave. "Why don't you tell him just why you came out tonight, and how we happened to come into the cavern. I don't believe they'll do us any harm if you tell the truth."

"Now, look here, kid," Will answered, "if we tell the cowboys that we came into the hills hunting for a demented man, they'll want to know who the demented man is, and why he came into the hills without any supplies. Can't you understand that?"

"If he does," replied Chester, "I'll tell him all about it."

"If you do," Will continued, "the cowboys will join in the search for your father, and when they catch him, they'll turn him over to the two detectives who are now in the hills searching for him."

Chester turned pale as death and shrank back against the wall of the cave. His voice was piteous as he asked:

"So you know all about that, too, do you?"

"Yes," answered Will, "and we don't want the officers to get hold of your father. If they do, it will spoil all our plans, because they'll take him back to the penitentiary, and that would make new trouble for our friend. We want to find him ourselves."

"But I don't understand—"

"I know that you don't understand," Will declared, "and this is no time nor place to give you the information you lack."

"But I'll see father taken back to prison before I'll see you two boys lynched!" insisted Chester.

"You'd better think the matter over carefully," Will advised. "The chances are that they won't believe anything we say to them now."

"Well!" the sheriff called out impatiently. "Have you boys reached a conclusion?"

"We have already told you everything which can possibly interest you!" Will answered. "We have nothing more to say!"

"Then bring out your rope, boys!" the sheriff shouted.

Seth threw a hand back to his pistol pocket and faced the sheriff angrily. The sheriff's eyes flashed vengefully.

"I protest against this murder!" Seth exclaimed.

"If you don't want to take a hand in the proceedings, get out!" ordered the sheriff. "We can do the work without you!"

"I don't propose to see these Boy Scouts murdered!" Seth declared.

Every member of the party now held a gun in his hand, and it seemed to the boys that a desperate battle must take place. They drew their own revolvers and stood side by side with their defender.

"Take those guns away from the kids," shouted the sheriff, addressing two of his men. "We ought to have attended to that before this!"

"Don't you try it!" Seth said calmly. "I'll shoot the first man that lays a hand on one of them!"

While the two parties stood facing each other, each ready to begin shooting at the slightest provocation, a volley of shots came from up the gorge. The angry men turned their eyes toward the entrance to the cavern and the sheriff threw up his hand in a command for an armistice.

"The train robbers may be out in the gulch shooting up some one now!" he exclaimed. "We ought to see about this!"

"Yes," Seth exclaimed, "there's no use of our coming to blows over this matter. If the robbers' hiding place can be found, we can make them tell whether these boys are mixed up in their affairs or not."

"That's right!" exclaimed another member of the party. "If the boys will give up their guns and promise to make no attempt to escape, we'll investigate this shooting and give them the benefit of every doubt there is in the case. Will you do that, boys?"

The lads handed their weapons to Seth and moved out toward the gulch. When the party passed out of the cavern they found no one in sight. While they stood listening and watching more shots came from the south and they all moved up in that direction. The moon was now shining brilliantly and the whole gulch was in view.

"Strange where that shooting is!" Seth exclaimed.

"It's in the caverns up to the north, and that means that the train robbers have been brought to bay!" exclaimed the sheriff.

As the party started up the gulch, Will drew Seth aside and whispered a few words into his ear.

CHAPTER X

ONE DANGER TO ANOTHER

"How do you know the bears are out there in the cave?" Sandy asked, as Tommy drew back into the smaller cavity.

"Just take a peek out, if you don't believe me."

Sandy did take a peek out, and sprang back with a face which looked as white as a sheet of paper under the rays of Tommy's electric searchlight.

"One of 'em took a swipe at me!" he said.

The boys turned their searchlights on the entrance and waited patiently for some moments for the bears to present themselves in the illuminated circle, but the animals seemed to understand that there was danger under the light, and remained around the angle of the wall.

"What are you going to do?" asked Tommy, presently.

"Blessed if I know!" answered Sandy.

"We might rush out and fill 'em full of lead," suggested Tommy.

"Not for me!" the other answered. "They'd get in one good crack at us before we could pull the trigger, and then it would be 'Good-night!'"

"How long do you think they'll stay here?" asked Tommy.

"The bear has the reputation of being a stayer," replied the other.

"Well, in time," Tommy said, "we'll have to make a break. We've got about enough provisions for breakfast, and after that, we'll be on the verge of starvation as long as we remain here. So far as I can see, we may as well make a break right now."

"I'm game for it," replied Sandy. "We'll dazzle their eyes with our searchlights, and fire a whole clip of bullets without stopping. Perhaps that'll bring them down or cause them to run away."

"All right!" Tommy agreed. "We'll round the corner together with our searchlights held in front and begin shooting."

"And don't make any mistake about shooting straight!" advised Sandy. "I don't want Will and George to know that we ever got into a mess like this. You know what they said about our coming away tonight, anyhow!"

"Sure, I know!" admitted Tommy. "And I'd rather have one of the bears bite off an arm than to have them know we got into a scrape we couldn't get out of without their help."

"Well, here goes, then!" cried Sandy.

Without waiting for his chum he sprang around the corner or the wall, his electric advanced, his automatic ready for instant use. As he turned the corner one foot caught on a loose rock and he half fell to the ground. As he did so, Tommy saw a hairy paw shoot out with vicious force and brush and scrape across the boy's shoulder.

Tommy heard the boy's coat ripping and tearing under the clutch of the great claws, and heard his chum utter a piercing scream as the wicked claws touched the flesh.

It seemed to Tommy that the figure of his chum, now lying prostrate on the floor of the cavern with the head extending outward, was being drawn away from him by the claw which still clung to the shoulder.

He raised his automatic to fire and pushed his searchlight forward. The bear's eyes closed for an instant under the strong finger of light, and the bullet caught him, exactly in the center of the forehead.

He dropped with a savage growl, scrambled, to his feet again and dashed toward Tommy, who fired shot after shot at the advancing animal, but apparently without avail. In a moment all three bears, doubtless excited by the smell of blood, sprang before the entrance to the little cave where Tommy stood. For the moment the animals paid no attention to Sandy, still, lying prostrate on the floor, blood oozing from the wounded shoulder. Tommy fired shot after shot as the bears came on.

For the first time in his life Tommy realized that the next moment might be his last. He saw Sandy lying bleeding on the floor. He saw three savage, pain-maddened animals rushing upon him and worked the trigger of his automatic until the clip was spent. Then he hurled the useless weapon at the nearest animal and seizing Sandy by the feet, dragged him farther into the cavern.

"I guess it's all off now," he mused as the bears stood hesitating and apparently ready for a spring. "I wish we'd left a note for Will."

He heard the clatter of sharp claws on the rocky floor, saw the pig-like eyes of the animals shining red under the light, heard their spasmodic breathing, and was about to make a desperate rush forward when the outer cavern was flooded with a racing light which grew and grew as Tommy looked. Then he heard the sound of feet.

Next came a volley of shots, followed by the shouts of men and the call of a voice that he knew.

"Tommy!" the voice cried.

The boy did not answer instantly, for his eyes were fixed upon the squirming figures of the bears. They had fallen under the shots and were weaving about the floor, snarling and snapping at each other and at themselves in their blind rage.

Several more shots came, and then the animals lay still.

"Tommy!" came the voice again.

"That's Will!" said Sandy faintly.

"Cripes! Are you alive?" demanded Tommy.

"I wouldn't be talking if I was dead, would I?" asked Sandy, speaking in a very faint tone of voice.

"Sandy!" came the voice again.

"Hello!" called Tommy.

"Come on out!" cried Will.

"We're coming!" Sandy answered.

The next moment the flashlights carried by Will and George swept into the cavern, revealing the true condition of affairs.

The two boys sprang to Sandy's side and raised him into a sitting position. Sandy smiled weakly but said nothing.

"Where is he hurt?" asked Will, facing Tommy.

Tommy pointed to the boy's bleeding shoulder.

"One of the bears swatted him," he said.

The cowboys now gathered in front of the little cavern and gazed at the group with excited interest.

"What's coming off here?" the sheriff asked.

"This kid's coat's coming off, for one thing," answered Will, with a slight smile as he drew away at one sleeve. "He's been cut by the bear, and we want to see how badly he's wounded."

Seth stepped forward to assist in the removal of the coat, but the sheriff laid a hand on his arm and drew him back.

"If those two boys have guns," he said, "get them away from them!"

"What's that?" demanded Tommy, gazing at the sheriff indignantly.

"You're all under arrest," thundered the officer, "and I demand that you give up your weapons."

"You'll find my gun out there in the cavern somewhere," Tommy answered. "I threw it at the bears after the last bullet had been fired."

Will put his hand into Sandy's pocket as if feeling for a gun but found none there. "I dropped it in the cavern," the boy said. "There are no bullets in it, anyway. I shot 'em all at the bear."

Sandy's wound proved to consist only of several scratches in the flesh of the shoulder, but Will explained to the sheriff that it would be necessary to take him out to where water could be obtained in order that the injury might be properly dressed.

"Come along, then," the sheriff consented. "We've had enough of this underground hole, anyway."

Tommy looked longingly at the three dead bears as he passed out.

"I'm coming back here to get those rugs," he whispered to Will.

"And I'm coming back here and get some bear steak," George contributed.

"What are you boys talking about?" demanded the sheriff.

"Aw, what's eating you?" demanded Tommy, who did not at all understand the situation. "You want to keep your clam closed."

The sheriff turned back and eyed the boy with anger and amazement depicted on his rather heavy features.

"You're one of these Boy Scouts, I presume?" he snarled.

"Yes, sir," answered Tommy. "Proud of it!"

"Then perhaps you can tell me where those train robbers are hiding."

"I would if I could!" replied the boy.

"What are you kids out at this time of night for, anyway?" was the next question. "You ought to be in bed."

"We came out to gather a couple of bear rugs for a Boy Scout clubroom in Chicago," answered Tommy, with a slight grin in Will's direction.

"And what did those boys come out for?" the sheriff asked, pointing at Will and George and the boy in whose interest they had left camp.

Tommy had no means of knowing what stories the boys might have told regarding their presence in the mountains, and so he decided to dodge the question. This seemed the only safe way.

"Ask them!" he said after a short silence.

By this time the whole party was out in the gulch, standing full in the moonlight. The men conferred together for some moments, and then the sheriff turned to the other members of the party.

"Get your ropes, boys," he said. "We haven't got time to fool with these boys any longer."

"I protest against this action," shouted Seth. "You, Pete, are sheriff of this county, and it is your duty to enforce the laws. If you permit this lynching to take place in your presence, you'll be guilty of the crime of murder, and I warn you that you'll be prosecuted."

Tommy and Sandy looked at their chums questioningly. They did not at all understand what was going on. Will and George were binding up the wound with bandages which they had long carried for use on just such an occasion as this.

"I think I know my duty," answered the sheriff. "Wyoming officers are being made the laughing-stock of the whole world because of the frequency of these train robberies. In nearly every instance, lately, the outlaws have escaped, principally because of assistance given them by such people as we have here under arrest."

The men removed ropes from under their coat and began to unwind them. Seth drew his revolver and waited.

CHAPTER XI

A WYOMING HOLD-UP

The four men stepped forward toward the boys with the ropes in their hands. The boys stood facing the crowd with unflinching eyes.

"I warn you!" shouted Seth.

"Wait!" Chester cried, stepping forward. "If you're doing this because my friends won't tell why they are in the mountains of Wyoming, and why they are out in the hills tonight, you may as well hold your hands. I'll give you all the information on the subject you desire."

Will stepped forward and caught the boy by the arm.

"You know what it means to—to some one if you speak," he warned.

"But I'm not going to see you boys murdered before my eyes!"

"No more fairy tales go!" shouted a member of the sheriff's gang. "We have an unpleasant duty to perform here and we're not going to shirk it. As the sheriff says, outlaws are flocking to Wyoming because they are hidden and protected by such people as you."

"But I can satisfy you as to the honesty of these boys," pleaded Chester, "if you'll listen to me for five minutes."

"Nothing doing!" shouted the sheriff.

Again the men advanced with the ropes and again Seth lifted his revolver in warning. The situation was a critical one.

During the second of silence which followed, a clatter of stones came into the gulch from the rocky summit above, and all eyes were instantly turned in that direction. As they looked the sheriff and his men dropped their weapons to the ground and threw their hands into the air.

"That's right!" came a hoarse voice from above. "Throw down your weapons and drop your belts at your feet. Now line up there in a row, you baby snatchers! Never mind that funny business, there, you man with the red whiskers. You'll drop in your tracks if you make another move! You are the cowboy sheriff of the county, I understand, but you ought to be training puppies for a dogshow. That's about your size."

In a moment every member of the sheriff's posse, including Seth, was unarmed. As they stood meekly in a row the boys were ordered to take their own weapons from the heap on the ground and walk away over the ridge.

"Can you see who they are?" asked Will, as the boys moved slowly along.

"I can see only the outlines of their heads and the gleaming barrels of their rifles," George answered. "Say," the boy went on, "didn't the cowboys drop their weapons quick when they saw those shining muzzles?"

"They knew the other fellows had the drop on them, and I don't blame them," Tommy cut in.

"Do you really think they are the train robbers?" asked Sandy, who was being assisted up the slope by Will and George.

"They're the train robbers, all right!" insisted Tommy. "I can't see their faces any more than you can, but I remember that voice! You remember the night he was at our camp, and we were getting something to eat? Well, I heard quite a lot of his conversation that night. Some of it I liked and some of it I didn't, but I'm sure the man whose conversation I heard that night is the same man who ordered the cowboy officers to throw down their weapons."

"But why should they do a thing like that?" demanded Will.

"I don't know," replied George, "unless it is because train robbers have a continual and perpetual grouch against officers of any kind."

"That must be the reason," Will admitted.

"Well, I'm glad they got us away!" said Tommy, as the five boys reached the summit and looked down into the little valley, "but they sure put us in bad with the cowboys from this time on. The cowboys, apparently with good cause, were accusing us of standing in with the train robbers, and now the train robbers have proven the point by butting in for our protection."

"It's too bad," Will answered, "but I don't see how it can be helped. It is particularly unfortunate at this time, because with the cowboys opposing us we won't dare search the mountains for Chester's father."

"We'll find a way!" insisted Tommy. "We'll be sure to find a way."

When the boys turned down the slope which led to their camp, not very far away, daylight was growing in the sky. They could see the figures of the men who had rescued them creeping away to the south.

Shouts and exclamations of rage were coming over the ridge, and the boys understood very well that in a short time the cowboys would be at their camp, with stronger motive than ever for their destruction.

"We've got our guns," Will said as they walked along, "and we've got to fight. That's all there is to it."

When the boys came to the side of the dying campfire they found two men who seemed to be entire strangers sitting calmly in one of the tents, dividing the contents of a great tin of roast beef, and also sharing a huge loaf of bread. The light was still dim in the tent, and so Will turned his electric on the rather domestic scene.

"What are you men doing in there?" he demanded.

"Eating!" was the calm reply.

"I didn't know but you were getting a hair-cut," grinned Tommy.

"Where'd you come from?" asked George, as the boys all gathered in front of the flap.

"Look here, kids," one of the men said easily, "we've been traveling two days and two nights, and we're hungry and sleepy. Just let us fill up on this chuck and we'll tell you all about it."

"We really ought to go to sleep!" the other intruder suggested. "But, as you seem anxious to know why we're consuming your provisions, I'll relieve your minds of anxiety by saying that we met John Johnson half way to Green River and he sent us in to tell you that he would arrange for reinforcements for you as soon as he reached Green River. He said he mentioned the fact to you when he was here, but you didn't seem to like it, and so he said nothing more about it to you."

"He sent you in here just to tell us that?" demanded Will.

"Aw, tell him the truth," laughed the other.

"Well, then, I'll tell him the truth," replied the intruder, his mouth full of bread and meat.

"We met Johnson while he was on his way out, and he told us to look in on you boys as we passed and see if you were all right. He seemed to have a notion in his head that you'd be apt to get into trouble of some kind."

"Glad you came in," Will said, extending his hand, "I don't know how Mr. Johnson came to think of it, but your coming here just now is something in the nature of a miracle."

"Glad to be of any service!"

Then without explaining the purpose of their night mission into the mountains, the boys explained the situation to the two strangers, dwelling particularly on the fact that the sheriff's cowboys now had good cause for believing that the lads really were associating with the train robbers.

"I think the train robbers held the officers up more because they've got a grouch against all policemen than for any other reason," Will said. "I don't see why they should cut in order to save our lives. The sheriff will get good and even with them for that!"

"Just a grouch against all the officers in the world!" laughed one of the strangers. "All brigands feel that way."

"But you can see where it leaves us!" exclaimed George. "We can't have any fun in the mountains with those fellows chasing us all the time, and one of our friends is wandering around in the mountains nutty, with a broken head, and we can't even go out and find him if this hostile attitude of the cowboys continues."

"You think they'll follow you down to camp, do you?" asked one of the men. "Of course the outlaws wouldn't hold them very long."

"Yes, I think they'll follow us down to camp and they won't lose any time getting here, either," Will answered.

"Did you ever seen anything like it?" asked Tommy as, accompanied by George, he started toward the provision box.

"Like what?" demanded the other.

"Why, this lone mountain valley becoming the center of population of the United States!" exclaimed Tommy. "When we came in here, there wasn't a soul in sight in the valley. And then the robbers came, and the detectives came, and the cowboys came, and Johnson came, then we got next to Chester, and now these two strangers come butting in. If this isn't the center of population, I'd like to know where it is."

"It's a good thing we've got those old burros picketed out on the grass," George observed. "In about two days more, we'll have to set sail for Green River and load up with provisions. We've been running a public eating house ever since we struck Wyoming. I wonder how long these fellows are going to stay. If they remain more than one day, I'm going to charge 'em for board or send them out fishing."

"When you want any fish," Tommy exclaimed, "you needn't send any strange guys out to get 'em. I'll bring in all the fish you want!"

George chuckled, and Tommy threw an empty can at his head.

"When you go out fishing," George said in a moment, "just let us know, and we'll send a guard out with you."

"Oh, just because I had a little trouble up on Lake Superior and down in Florida, you think I can't catch fish!" complained Tommy. "You just wait until we get this rumpus with the cowboy officers settled and I'll show you whether I can catch fish or not."

"I wish we had some of that bear steak!" George suggested. "We're eating the ham and eggs all up, and we're right in the middle of a game country at that."

"Look here," Tommy suggested, "you go right on cooking ham and warming up those shoestring potatoes, and I'll sneak over the ridge and bring back about fifty pounds of bear." Besides, he went on, "I want to get those hides before the wolverines get them, or any one sneaks them off."

Just as Tommy disappeared up the slope the cowboy officers were seen rushing toward the camp, their weapons ready for use.

"I guess they think the train robbers are here," commented Will.

CHAPTER XII

AN INTERRUPTED WIG-WAG

The boys gathered in a little group not far from the fire and awaited, with what excitement and anxiety may well be imagined, the arrival of the officers. Their automatics were in their hands. A short distance from the camp the cowboys paused as if for a consultation, although the show of weapons made by the boys may have had something to do with their quick stop.

As the boys stood ready to defend themselves if attacked, they noticed that the two strangers who had recently arrived at the camp were creeping farther into the tent, at the flap of which they had been sitting. The lads saw weapons in their hands, but saw no evidence that the fellows intended using them. Sandy gave Will a nudge on the shoulder.

"Do you think those fellows are all right?" he asked. "Looks funny to see them crawling out of sight as soon as danger shows!"

"It does look strange," Will admitted, "but look here," he added, pointing to the boy's bandaged shoulder, "you ought to be in one of the tents yourself. You're not fit to be out here if any fighting takes place."

"Huh, I guess this bum shoulder won't prevent me from shooting straight!" declared Sandy. "Say," he continued, "I've a great mind to go in where those fellows are and ask what they're hiding away for."

"I just believe," George cut in, "that those fellows lied when they said Johnson asked them to come here. You remember how they told two stories, don't you? One that they had been told to tell us that reinforcements would be sent in, and the other that they had been asked to stop and see us on their way into the mountains."

"We're certainly in a nice box if we've got enemies in our own camp," Will grumbled. "In that case, as soon as the shooting begins we'll be between two fires. By the way," he went on, "where's Tommy?"

"Gone after bear meat for breakfast," answered George.

"He's always dodging away without any one knowing what's in his mind!?" declared Will, rather crossly. "I guess he's got some idea above bear steak for breakfast, right now. Anyhow," the boy added, "if Tommy is well armed these cowboy fly-cops will also be between two fires when the battle opens. That will help some."

"Perhaps there won't be any battle," suggested George. "Those fellows don't seem to be in any hurry about starting in, anyway."

"Oh, they'll never swallow the bluff they got from the train robbers," Will insisted. "As soon as the story is told outside they'll be roasted by the whole state. Just think of it!" the boy went on. "They come in here to capture two train robbers and get held up the first thing. If there's a live editor in the state he'll print a faked-up picture of the six men with their hands up in the air and their guns lying at their feet."

"Perhaps they saw the two strangers come in," suggested Sandy. "In that case they may be doing a little guessing as to whether the newcomers won't help us in case of trouble."

"But these two men were here before we returned," suggested George.

"Well, they may have seen them sitting in the flap of the tent eating our good pork and beans and roast beef," Will went on.

"If they knew that the two strangers were hiding in the back corner of one of the tents," George commented, "I don't think they'd hesitate much longer. These two visitors may be all right, but they don't look it!"

"Why don't you go and ask them if they wouldn't like to have us dig a hole to put them in?" demanded Sandy.

While the boys were puzzling over the situation, Seth, the deputy who had defended the Boy Scouts when they stood in grave danger of being lynched, separated himself from the group of officers and advanced toward the camp. There was a smile on the deputy's face as he approached but the other members of the party were scowling heavily.

The boys dropped the muzzles of their automatics as Seth came up to the fire. The deputy stood for a moment glancing keenly around at the tents, the burros, and the cooking utensils before speaking.

"Glad to see you so comfortably situated boys," he said, "and I'm glad, also," he went on pointing to the pennants which showed at the tops of the tents, "to see that you're not ashamed to show your colors."

"We're proud of being Boy Scouts!" Will declared.

"And we're proud of the Beaver Patrol!" George cut in.

"That's right, boys!" Seth said "Stick to Boy Scout laws and teachings and you can't go very far wrong."

"What are those fellows going to do now?" asked Will, nodding toward the cowboy officers, who had now thrown themselves down upon the long grass of the valley. "They didn't follow us here just for exercise."

"If those train robbers really are friends of yours," Seth replied, "they have done you, perhaps unintentionally, a great deal of harm. It is an old saying, you know," the deputy went on, "that one fool friend can work a man more mischief than a dozen open enemies."

"I suppose you people think now," Will said, "that we really do train with that bunch of robbers."

"I don't!" declared Seth. "I know you to be honest Boy Scouts, and no counterfeits, and I don't believe such lads mix up with train robbers."

"We don't at all events," Will answered.

"Look here," George interrupted, "the train robbers saw a chance to rub it into the officers and they did it. That's all there is to that! They would have protected the detectives who were searching the mountains, or even a band of burglars, just the same as they did us. You know very well that such fellows have a perpetual grouch against officers of the law. The only wonder is they didn't shoot when they had the cowboys unarmed."

"Even train robbers are averse to committing murder," replied Seth.

"Well, what are they going to do about it?" Will insisted.

"They want you to come out to Lander with me and stand trial."

"And if we refuse?"

"But you won't do that!"

"You are mistaken there," replied Will. "If they want us, they've got to come and get us."

"That isn't good judgment," declared Seth.

While the two discussed the situation, the others listening intently, the two visitors came slowly out of the tent and approached the spot where Seth and Will were standing. Seth regarded the two men quizzically for a moment and then extended both hands in greeting.

"Glad to see you, Gilmore!" he said. "How long have you been here?"

"Only a short time," was the reply. "At the request of a personal friend, an officer from Chicago, we dropped in for breakfast and also to see if the boys needed any assistance."

"Boys," Seth said, turning to the astonished group of youngsters, "this is Sheriff Gilmore of Sweetwater county, and this," pointing to the other, "is Doyle, one of his deputies. They are both good fellows."

"Did you say you knew John Johnson well?" asked Will, after greetings had been exchanged. "Was it the truth you said about his asking you to call and help us out if we needed assistance?"

"True as Gospel!" answered Gilmore. "I knew John Johnson when he was on a ranch over here in the Sweetwater country. I'm taking a little excursion into Pete's country in search of the train robbers. I met Johnson going out, and he asked me to call on his friends, the boys."

"So you can vouch for these lads, can you?" asked Seth, a smile of satisfaction coming to his face.

"I certainly can!" was the reply. "Johnson told me all about them, so I know what they're here for, and all about their movements."

Before speaking, Seth took off his hat and began waving it in the direction of the cowboy officers. Sheriff Pete and his deputies rose to their feet and walked toward the camp. Before reaching the fire, they recognized Sheriff Gilmore and came forward with extended hands. The situation was soon explained.

"Now see here, kiddo," Sheriff Pete said, as he drew Will to one side, "we don't know what you're in here for, but we know now that you're all right. We'll stand by you to the bottom of the deck if you'll just forget all about that little hold-up over in the other valley."

"That was funny, wasn't it?" Will said with a grin.

"I can't see anything funny in it!" said the Sheriff.

"Those train robbers looked pretty good to us just then," Will commented. "They came just in time!"

"You wouldn't have been harmed," said the sheriff, with a smile. "I was only putting in a little third degree work."

"All right," Will said, "you help us if it comes handy for you to do so, and we won't say a word about the hold-up."

The two sheriffs and their deputies discussed the situation thoroughly, and finally decided that the two train robbers were making for the Bad Lands in Big Horn county.

"If Tommy'd only come back now with that bear steak," Will suggested, "I could get all you boys a dinner that would put an inch of fat on your ribs! Seems to me it's pretty near time for him to be back."

"Suppose I go and hurry him up?" asked George.

"Go to it!" Will replied, "and I'll get out a lot of spuds and make a gallon of coffee, and we'll have a Sunday School picnic right here in the long grass! You've got to feed before you go away!"

"Everything looks mighty friendly here just now," Sandy answered, "but look up on top of the ridge, and see if you can tell what George is trying to say to us. That's Boy Scout wig-wag, all right!"

"Yes," replied Will, springing to his feet excitedly. "That's the Myer code, sure as you live, and he's got a big white pine bough he's using as a flag. Can you see what he is saying?"

"Sure!" replied Sandy, "He says he wants—now what do you think of that? He's stopped!"

As they looked the boy dropped to the ground

CHAPTER XIII

TOMMY GOES AFTER BEAR STEAK

Tommy started up the slope whistling gaily. At the summit he turned to look back at the camp. The cowboys were at that time standing some distance away and Seth was advancing toward the fire.

"That Seth is a good Indian!" declared the boy, "He'll fix things up all right, so there's no need of my going back. Gee!" he went on as he looked up and down the pleasant valley, warm and sweet under the morning sun. "It's a pretty good thing to be a Boy Scout! Here we find a man in the mountains of Wyoming ready to fight for us just because we are Boy Scouts. I should think every boy in the world would want to join!"

The lad stood for a moment watching the figures at the distant camp, and then hastened into the valley below. When he struck the rock-strewn gulch which lay to the south of the wide opening in the hills he paused and looked cautiously about.

"There may be plenty more bears here!" he mused.

But no bears or hostile animals of any kind were in sight, so the boy passed along to the cavern which George and Will had visited on the previous night—the cavern where the escaped convict and his son had made their home. Tommy glanced curiously into the opening in the rocky wall as he halted in front of it.

On the previous night he had passed this cavern in company with Sandy without observing it. At this time he was not certain that it was not the cave where he had met the bears, so he stepped inside after a moment's thought and advanced toward the rear wall.

A semi-twilight lay over the interior, and the boy brought out his searchlight. By its rays he saw a break in the rock of the north wall and stepped closer. The place was merely an alcove eight or ten feet in size, doubtless carved out by the action of water.

In the alcove the boy saw the embers of a fire. Then he turned about and inspected the outer cave more carefully. He saw the rude furniture which his chums had observed the night before, and the pitifully small supply of cooking utensils. Lying on the table was a generous supply of fresh meat, evidently taken from the carcass of one of the bears.

Tommy had heard little said concerning the cave which had been occupied by Wagner and his son, but quite enough to understand that he had stumbled upon the place.

What puzzled him now was the presence of the bear meat. He knew very well that neither Wagner nor his son had occupied the place since the disappearance of the father. He understood, too, that if there had been provisions in the cave at the time of the visit of his chums, they would have referred to the fact. Besides all this, the bear which had probably supplied the meat had been killed only a few hours before.

"I guess some one's moved in!" the boy mused.

He went into the alcove and examined the embers of the fire. It had been built of dry pine and spruce boughs and had evidently burned brightly an hour before.

"Now I wonder," the boy puzzled, "whether Wagner isn't hiding some where in the cave. It doesn't seem to me that any one else would take possession of the blooming old flat."

Resolved to return to the cavern later, the lad hastened outside and moved toward the south. He was not exactly certain of the location of the cavern where the fight with the bears had taken place, but he had no doubt that he could find it by peering into every opening he came to.

He had proceeded but a short distance when the face of Katz peered out at him from one of the minor caves. Cullen, the fellow's associate stood not far away with his cruel mouth stretched into a sardonic grin.

"Where are you going, boy?" Katz asked.

Tommy hesitated a moment and a twinkle of humor came into his eyes as he answered the gruff question of the detective.

"I'm looking after the train robbers you chased up last night."

The two men scowled angrily and drew nearer to the lad.

"I don't believe you told the truth about that train robber!" Katz said. "I was right on the ground and I saw no one."

"You beat him to it!" laughed Tommy. "You went one way and he went the other! You're both good runners, I guess, for you never came within a mile of each other," he added.

"None of your impudence, now!" snarled Katz.

"I think we ought to take this boy in out of the wet," suggested Cullen. "He's too fresh, anyway."

"You'd better confine your attentions to the train robbers, or the man you came in here to find," suggested Tommy.

"I don't believe there are any train robbers here!" declared Katz.

"Perhaps not," answered Tommy, "but about half the officers of Fremont and Sweetwater counties are loafing around these hills! Besides," he added, "I got a look at the train robbers last night."

The two detectives glanced at each other apprehensively.

"Was there a train robber at your camp last night?" asked Katz.

"Sure there was!"

"Is your camp headquarters for outlaws?"

"Not that I know of," replied Tommy, angrily.

"Don't you know that the boy who stole my property at your camp is connected with an escaped convict?"

"I don't know anything about the boy," declared Tommy, not telling the truth exactly. "He looks all right to me!"

"Do you know what I think?" Cullen demanded. "I think you boys came in here to set up a base of supplies for outlaws!"

"Aw, you don't know what you're talking about!" exclaimed Tommy.

"If you're not mixed up with this escaped convict," Katz demanded, "what are you doing here?"

"Early this morning," Cullen went on, "we found the cave where Wagner and his son had been living. That's it back there. The one you entered and looked over so carefully. Did you expect to find Wagner there?"

"Did you build a fire in there?" asked Tommy.

The detectives shook their heads.

"Did you take a big piece of bear meat in there?"

"We certainly did not!"

Here was another puzzler for Tommy. Who had built the fire in the cavern? Who had taken the bear meat there? The cowboys were not in that vicinity at the time the fire must have been built. The detectives declared that they had not built the fire, or carried in the meat.

"Did you find a fire burning in the cavern?" asked Katz.

Tommy nodded.

"And fresh meat there, too?"

Another nod from the boy.

"What do you make of it, Cullen?" asked Katz, turning to his companion.

Cullen shook his head, and a thought which brought a smile to his freckled face crept into Tommy's mischievous cranium.

"I'll tell you what I think," he said. "We were in this gulch last night, and saw the train robbers. They were on the summit, not far from the Wagner flat, as we ought to call it. If anybody has been living in that cave this morning, it's the train robbers. Say," he went on, with the idea of

giving the detectives a good scare, "those train robbers are the fiercest fellows I ever saw. We saw 'em hold up six armed cowboys last night!"

The two detectives looked at each other apprehensively.

"If they should see you standing here," Tommy went on, "and were wise to the fact that you are Chicago detectives, they'd pump in the lead until your heads looked like a pound of Swiss cheese."

"You seem to know quite a lot about those train robbers, lad!"

"He knows too much," Cullen declared. "We'll just take him along with us and hold him for a few hours!"

"If you do, you'll get in trouble!" declared Tommy.

"No threats, now!" cried Katz.

"I'm not making any threats," declared Tommy who really was rather anxious to have the detectives take him away to their camp. "I think you're a couple of cheap skates, anyway, and I don't believe you're Chicago detectives. I live in Chicago myself, and I never saw bums like you on the force of plain clothes men."

The taunting words did exactly what Tommy had expected them to do. Katz seized him viciously by the arm and started away down the valley. The boy was perfectly willing to accompany the detective, for he believed that by doing so he might find out what steps they were taking for the capture of the escaped convict, but he pretended to feel great indignation as he was hurried along over the rough ground.

As the three moved away George swung up the slope on the other side and came into view on the summit. The boy had cut a white pine climbing staff from which the small boughs had not been trimmed away, and Tommy saw that he was using this as a wig-wag flag. It was plain to the boy that George thoroughly understood the situation below.

The detectives growled out several vicious oaths as they saw the boy swinging his staff from the summit. They whispered together for a moment, and then Katz, leaving Tommy threatened by Cullen's revolver, moved toward the summit and the signaling boy.

When, in a moment, George looked down the slope to the east, he saw the detective creeping stealthily toward him. The officer was some, distance away, yet the boy knew that he was in danger from the gun in his hand. He gave one last swing and dropped his staff.

"Come down here!" shouted the detective. "I want to see you!"

"Come up here, then!" answered George. "What are you doing to my chum? You're always butting in on us boys!"

"If you don't come down instantly," shouted the angry detective, "I'll fill your hide full of lead! I've got you covered!"

Seeing by the malicious look on the face of the detective that he was really in earnest, George dropped quickly to the ground.

CHAPTER XIV

A PAIR OF PRISONERS

Tommy saw his chum drop and, supposing that he had been injured in some way, started racing up the slope. Directly he found himself hampered by Cullen, who was clinging to the tail of his khaki coat.

As the boy drew up George rose from the ground and moved down the slope facing the east. Tommy saw that he was acting under instructions from Katz, who held a revolver in his hand.

In five minutes the boys, unarmed now, were walking along by the side of the detectives. A wink from George convinced Tommy that his chum had at least succeeded in attracting the attention of the people at the camp below. It might be that help would come before the detectives could lead them to a hiding place in the hills.

What the boys appeared to need just at that time was delay, so they asked all sorts of questions as they walked along, hoping that their captors would pause to answer them. However, the fellows plugged steadily along toward the opposite side of the ridge, and finally drew up on a shelf of rock from which the caverns to the west could be plainly seen. Here the officials sat down to watch and wait.

Directly a group of men came dashing over the summit and hastened down into the valley. The boys were certain that they recognized Will in the company. It was certain that Sheriff Pete was there, and the boys were positive that the two men who had been found in the camp on their

return from the midnight expedition were also there.

The men separated at the foot of the slope and scattered up and down the gulch. It was clear that George's wig-wag signals had been seen, and that the men were in search of the two boys.

"Those signals of yours must be effective," snarled Katz as the members of the party across the gorge began exploring the caverns.

"You're right, they are!" answered George. "That's the Boy Scout wig-wag! You have to learn those things when you join the Boy Scouts!"

"What did you say?"

"I explained that we had been captured by the train robbers!" replied George, telling the untruth with a great deal of satisfaction as he saw the effect produced on the detectives.

"What'd you do that for?" demanded Cullen. "Because we want the cowboy officers to get hold of you fellows, and beat you up!" answered George. "They'll do it, too, if they lay hands on you! Those fellows are our friends!"

"Where's that boy who stole my property?" demanded Katz.

"He was down in the camp when I left," replied George.

"Do you think he's with that crowd on the other side of the gulch now? Or would he stay at the camp?"

"He probably would come out in answer to George's signal," Tommy cut in.

The detectives whispered together for some moments. Although the boys could not hear a word they were saying, they understood very well what all the whispering was about. They were discussing the possibility of capturing Chester and forcing him to lead them to his father's hiding place. They did not, of course, know that the father was wandering over the mountains in a demented condition.

After a time the party passed on down the valley much to the disgust of the two captive lads, and disappeared from sight. Then the detectives left the angle of the ledge which had concealed them and motioned the boys down the slope. The lads obeyed wonderingly.

Arrived at the bottom of the gulch once more, the detectives halted for another long consultation. Katz seemed to be in favor of following the party which had gone down the valley in the hope of getting hold of Chester, while Cullen was of the opinion that they might be able to capture the escaped convict himself by lingering around the cavern where the fire had been so mysteriously kindled.

While the two discussed, not without some show of anger, the situation, the two boys kept their eyes fixed on the opposite cavern. George knew positively that it was the one which had been occupied by the escaped convict and his son, and he believed that in time the father would return to it. It seemed to him that Cullen was clinging to an opinion which might cause himself and friends serious trouble.

"Gee!" he whispered to Tommy, "I wish we could get these flatties to follow the cowboys! I'm afraid they'll catch Wagner if they hang around that cave over there!"

"I'm afraid they will!" replied Tommy. "There's some one been there this morning, and it wasn't the cowboys or the detectives, either. It was either Wagner or the train robbers."

"Just as sure as you're a foot high," exclaimed George, "there's some one moving about in the entrance to that cavern now! I can see something moving, but I can't see any features."

"Well, don't look that way too steadily," Tommy cried. "If Wagner is over there we don't want to put these detectives wise to the fact. He's the man they're in here after, you remember!"

"Well, there's some one there, all right!" exclaimed George. "While you were talking, I saw a chalk-white face appear for a second at the entrance. I'll bet he's been hiding there ever since last night."

"He was with the train robbers last night," suggested Tommy. "At least we think he was, for there are only two robbers and we saw three men."

"He may be with the train robbers, now for all we know," George put in.

"Yes, they may be hiding over there," Tommy admitted. "If I thought they were, I'd steer these bum detectives up against them!"

"We'd better not take any chances!" advised George. "If Wagner is over there, he may be alone. In that case, these cheap flatties would geeze him and make for the Union Pacific railroad without stopping to say good-by to the hills. And once they get to the railroad, it's all off with the young man in Chicago who is soon to be tried for murder."

While the boys discussed the situation, Katz caught sight of the moving figure in the entrance to the cavern. The boys saw him pointing in that direction and about abandoned hope.

"There's some one over there," the boys heard Katz saying, "and we may as well go and see who

it is. Have you got a pair of handcuffs with you?" he added, turning to his companion.

"Of course I have!" was the reply.

"Then use them on these two boys!" ordered Katz. "Tie them together so they won't be apt to go chasing off if we get into action."

Cullen did as requested, and the boys, unable to make resistance at that time, resolved that both officers should pay well for the indignity in the future. When the detectives started forward, they walked as slowly as possible, one of them frequently falling down, in order to give the person in the cavern, whoever he might be, plenty of time to observe the approach of the detectives.

"Gee!" exclaimed Tommy. "These fellows blunder along like a load of hay. If the man over there has any sense, he'll be a mile off before they get to the entrance! I hope the train robbers are there!"

"Well, I hope Wagner isn't there," George said.

There were no signs of light as the two detectives scrambled up the little slope which lay between the bottom of the gulch and the entrance to the cavern. The faint smell of burning wood reached their nostrils, but no one was in sight. They stepped inside boldly.

Following along behind, more as a matter of curiosity than because they felt obliged to do so, the boys saw the detectives standing in the twilight of the place looking about. Then they saw them drop their arms to their sides, heard the clatter of revolvers upon the rocky floor and realized that something unexpected was taking place inside.

Directly the detectives came out to the entrance and sat down on the hard floor, their backs against the south wall. The boys looked them over with pleased eyes, and Tommy went so far as to wrinkle his freckled nose at Katz, who frowned savagely but said nothing.

"Look here, you fellows," Katz finally blurted out. "I want you to understand that you're getting yourselves into trouble."

"Is that so?" came a hoarse and scornful voice from the darkness.

"I'm Detective Katz, of the Chicago force," continued the officer, "and I command you, in the name of the law, to return our weapons and let us depart in peace!"

"And I guess you don't know who we are!" came the voice from inside. "We're Red Mike of the Gulch and Daring Dan of the Devil's Dip, and we're out for blood! When we're at home in the Bad Lands, we feed on rattlesnakes!"

"Say," Tommy whispered to George, "that ain't so bad, is it? Those fellows know they've got the detectives buffaloed, and they're piling it on. I'll bet if we sat a little nearer, we could hear the detectives' teeth rattle!"

"The robbers certainly have a sense of humor," grinned George.

In a moment two muscular, bearded figures came out of the cavern and stood facing the two detectives. The boys at once recognized the men as the ones who had ridden so fiercely by their campfire on the night of their arrival. Tommy was certain that one of the men was the person who had been waiting for supper at the camp when informed of the presence of the detectives.

"Do you belong with this bunch?" one of them asked.

The boys held up their handcuffed wrists.

"Who's got the key?" demanded the outlaw.

Cullen held out a ring of keys and the robber promptly used one of them on the handcuff. When the manacles dropped from the boys' wrists, he threw the ring of keys into the gulch and tossed the handcuffs in the same direction.

"I've claimed all along that you boys belonged with these train robbers," Katz gritted as the handcuffs rattled down the slope.

"And now we know it!" Cullen cut in.

The two boys leaned against the north wall of the cavern and shook their sides with laughter. The fright of the two detectives was so absolute that it was pitiful.

"You certainly are a bum pair of detectives!" Tommy said.

CHAPTER XV

AN UNDERGROUND CHANNEL

Following along behind the two sheriffs and their deputies, Will and Chester finally came to the cavern which by mutual consent the boys now called the Cave of the Three Bears.

"Tommy was headed for this place!" exclaimed Will. "It's a mystery to me where George disappeared to so suddenly. Of course, we didn't see enough of his wig-wag to know what he intended to say, but we understand there's something amiss."

"There are plenty of caverns here in which one may hide," Chester answered. "There is one just north of this which has several good-sized rooms. Father and I thought of moving to that one."

They passed into the Cave of the Three Bears and found that one hide had been partly removed, and that a huge piece of meat had been taken away.

"I guess Tommy's been here all right!" Will suggested.

Chester stooped down and examined the carcass carefully.

"No," he said. "Tommy wanted the three skins for rugs. He never cut the hide like that to get at the meat."

"No, he wouldn't do that," Will admitted.

"Father may have been here," suggested Chester.

"We should have stopped at the cave where you two formerly lived," said Will. "For all we know, your father may be hiding there now."

"I know it," replied Chester, "but we came on so fast and in such a state of excitement that we didn't think of doing so."

"Well, we mustn't let the others get too far ahead of us," Will suggested. "They must be quite a ways off now!"

"Don't you think we can do a better job with them out of the way?" asked Chester. "They go roaring along like a herd of elephants."

"I presume we can," replied Will. "Anyway we can make an investigation of our own and then go back to camp. Sandy is alone there with his wounded shoulder, and almost anything is likely to happen."

"We'll go into the cave I spoke about a moment ago," Chester said, "and examine it thoroughly with the searchlights."

"What's the idea of that?" asked Will.

"Well, Tommy and George are in some one of these caves. They may be hiding from us or they may have been captured by the train robbers. If they are hidden away, they're quite likely to be in the large cavern I spoke of. It won't do any harm to look through it."

"Why, that must be the cave where we saw the three men last night!" Will exclaimed. "I have an idea that the three men we saw were the two train robbers and your father."

"That was my idea at the time," the boy replied, "but now I can't quite make up my mind that father would tie up with such a bunch."

"Bless your innocent soul," grinned Will. "Your father couldn't help associating with them if they insisted upon it! I can see no reason why they should want to molest him, but one can never account for the mental processes of train robbers."

"I believe this is the same place!" Chester cried as they stepped inside. "You know father often talked about moving to this cave, and I've got an idea that he knows more about the locality than I do."

"In what way?" asked Will.

"Well, I think he found some secret passage here. I believe he knows how to enter and leave this cavern without being seen. This whole ridge, you know, is honeycombed with caverns and tunnels. I have been told," the boy continued, "that the gorge and the valley to the east formed the basin for a great lake, hundreds of years ago, and that the water seeped through the limestone rock until there wasn't much left of it in some places. There are certainly plenty of caves here!"

"I should say so!" replied Will turning on his searchlight.

"Look here," Chester went on, "that would be a reason for the train robbers hanging to father, if they found him, wouldn't it?"

"I don't understand," replied Will.

"Why, if father knows a lot of passages and hiding places and empty river channels, in this section, he's just the man the train robbers would want to tie to."

"I understand now," Will replied. "And you remember, too," he continued, "how mysteriously the three men disappeared last night? Why, they got out of sight as quickly as if they had been painted on a slate and rubbed out."

"That's a fact!" replied Chester.

"There's one thing about it," Will argued, "the train robbers won't dare to go on into the bad lands, for they have no supplies, and their horses must be about used up. By remaining here, they may be able to steal supplies and, possibly get out to Lander and buy some."

"I guess we've got it doped out all right," Chester answered. "All we've got to do now is to go on and see whether we have or not."

The boys pressed on to the back of the first cavern and turned to the right into one which ran parallel with it. Their lights showed that a fire had been built in the tunnel connecting the two. There were also empty tin cans and cardboard food packages scattered about.

"This looks like population," grinned Will.

"Isn't this the spot from which the men disappeared?" asked Chester.

"Unless I am much mistaken," Will returned, "the three men were in front of a fire in this tunnel. Say, but they did get out of sight quick, didn't they? It was like the scene from the Black Crook."

"Then the passage they crawled into can't be far away," Chester volunteered, "at any rate, right here's where we want to make our search!"

"There's no knowing where this wrinkle leads to," Will said as the lights pierced the narrow channel. "If we get down there, we may never be able to get back."

"Father must have known of this place," Chester said, "and that's why he talked about moving our camp here."

"Well, if he used the passage, we certainly can!" replied Will.

"Are we going down now?" asked Chester.

"I'm game for it."

"Well, then, wait a minute!"

Chester ran to the entrance of the cavern and looked up and down the gorge and valley. When he returned there was a worried look on his face. He pointed to the dry channel and said:

"We may as well be getting down there. There's some one coming."

"Who is it?" asked Will.

"I couldn't distinguish faces," was the reply.

"Wasn't George and Tommy, was it?"

"No, two men. They're coming along fast, so we may as well get under cover. We don't know where we're going, but we're on our way," he smiled as he dropped down on his hands and knees and scrambled backward into what had once been the channel of a mountain stream.

Will followed in a moment and, after trying his best to draw the boulder into place, scrambled on after his chum.

"Did you get the rock fixed?" asked Chester as they came together on a little level place probably thirty feet down.

"Couldn't budge it!" was the reply.

"Well, then, we'll keep on going."

"Je-rusalem!" exclaimed Will. "I believe this thing runs clear through the ridge. And that would make it something like a mile long!"

"Of course it does," Chester answered. "This ditch was cut by water, and the water had to find an outlet somewhere."

"If your father knows all about this underground network of caverns and channels," Will said in a moment, "we'll have a happy old time finding him! He can dodge us here for a month."

"And those officers will have a fine old job getting the train robbers, too," Chester chuckled, "if they're acquainted with this underground system of highways. It strikes me," he went on, "that these train robbers have been here before."

"That may be!" answered Will. "In fact, it, occurs to me that your father searched out all these subterranean roads and rooms and showed them to the train robbers."

The boys proceeded downward for some distance and then stopped in a tolerably large chamber to rest and investigate.

"There's no use of our going on until we know whether the fellows you saw are coming in here," Will reasoned.

"I'm going up to the top again," said Chester, "and see what's going on there! The fellows I saw may be coming in."

Will waited for a long half hour for the boy's return, and when at last Chester slid down to him

his face showed that he was frightened.

"They've got the combination to this channel all right!" he said.

CHAPTER XVI

CULLEN LOSES HIS STAR

"So these are the detectives, are they?" asked one of the train robbers, as the two men crouched against the wall of the cavern.

"That's what they say!" answered Tommy.

"What were they doing to you?"

"They had us pinched."

"What for?"

"They said we belonged to your gang."

The bandit laughed hoarsely.

"To our gang?" he said. "The perfectly correct gentleman of the road never has a 'gang'. He believes thoroughly in the old theory that 'he travels fastest who travels alone'."

"So they pinched you for being associates of ours, did they?" asked the other outlaw.

"That's what they said," replied Tommy.

"And that was the truth, too!" roared Katz.

"You seem to know all about these boys, and they know all about you. You've been seen at their camp, and one of the boys at the camp stole my property, too!" he went on with another roar of indignation.

"Chester stole his official star!" chuckled Tommy.

"That's a pious notion, too?" laughed the outlaw. "Have you got a star, too?" he asked, stepping up to Cullen. "If you have, hand it over. I don't think you're fit to wear a police badge!"

Cullen handed his star over with a scowl, and the outlaw passed it to Tommy. The boy put it in his pocket with a grin at the detective.

"Did you fellows have the nerve to come in here after us?" asked the robber.

"We came in after an escaped convict," was the reply.

"Did you get him?"

"Not yet, but we will get him."

"Well, I'd advise you both to go back home before the escaped convict comes up and steals your necktie. You're not large enough to be out alone after dark."

"We're going to take that escaped convict back with us," Katz boasted. "We'll get him if we stay here a year."

"We'll give you two days to get him," grinned one of the outlaws. "We'll turn you loose for two days. If you catch him in that time and get out, very well. If you don't catch him in that time, you'll get out anyhow. You stiffs are attracting altogether too much attention to this part of the country. It's getting so an honest train robber can't get a good night's sleep."

The outlaw pointed to the gulch below and motioned for the fellows to move along. They started but looked back pleadingly.

"Can't we have our guns?" Katz asked.

"And our badges?" pleaded Cullen.

"No," replied the outlaw. "You might injure yourself with the guns, and the badges are no good anywhere outside of Chicago. If you don't get out right now, we'll handcuff you to a tree and let the bears feed on you. You don't look good to us anyway."

"Look-a-here," Tommy said to the two outlaws as the detectives disappeared down the gulch. "Do you know that every person in the state of Wyoming will be believing that we really belong to your crowd if this thing keeps up? We're much obliged to you for bluffing the cowboys last night, and getting us out of the handcuffs just now, but you're getting us into trouble just the same."

"Any time we get a chance to bluff an officer out of a captive, we're going to do it!" laughed one of the outlaws. "We're not asking you whether you like it or not. We're pleasing ourselves in what we're doing."

"And here's another thing," the other outlaw said, with something like a scowl. "We've got the idea that you wouldn't be doing as much for us as we've been doing for you. The men who came in here to hunt us down make their headquarters at your camp. If you go back to your friends now, you'll tell them where you saw us, and describe everything that's taken place. Therefore, we're not going to let you go back to your camp right away. You're going to be our guests for a time."

"What's the good of that?" demanded Tommy.

"That's our business," replied the outlaw.

"We'll never mention you to our crowd," George added.

"Anyway," the outlaw insisted, "it's safer for us to keep track of you two kids. I'd rather have a dozen Chicago sleuths after me than three or four husky little Boy Scouts."

"Say," Tommy asked with a grin, "do you remember those plays where a shrinking maiden would be in the center of the stage one minute and be grabbed by the villain the next, and be grabbed back by the hero in the next, and be grabbed back by the villain in the next, and be grabbed back by the hero for the final curtain?"

"I remember something like that," said the outlaw with a laugh.

"That's us!" grinned Tommy. "That's George and me! We're here to be captured by cowboys, and bum detectives, and bearded train robbers, and I don't know what form our imprisonment will take next."

"When we get back to Chicago," George went on, whimsically, "we're going to write up a story of our capture by two bold, bad men who gave their names as Red Mike of the Gulch and Daring Dan of the Devil's Dip or something like that."

"Say," Tommy cut in, "when you called those names out of the darkness you certainly did have those detectives buffaloed!"

"You're a pair of nervy kids, anyway," laughed the outlaw.

"Oh, this is all right," laughed Tommy. "This will be one more experience. We've been chased by smugglers over the Pictured Rocks of Lake Superior, and we've been chased by alligators in the Everglades of Florida, and now we've been geezled by the bold, bad men who held up the Union Pacific pay car."

"How do you know we did?" demanded one of the outlaws.

"That's the dope that's been coming to us right along."

"Well, come on," the other outlaw said rather impatiently. "We've got to get out of sight! We can't expect to remain in the open in broad daylight without being seen by some one."

"Move along, boys," ordered the other.

"Where?" asked Tommy.

"Straight ahead."

"But where are you going to take us?"

"Oh, you'll know all about that soon enough," was the reply. "We've got a place over here where we can keep our friends in seclusion."

"It seems the place keeps you in seclusion," grinned George. "You've been in here about as long as we have, and we've been captured numerous times and you've never been taken at all. But you'll get it up your neck one of these days," he added.

"When we're captured," one of the men said grimly, "it won't be by a lot of tin-horn detectives from Chicago."

They all walked along for some distance, and then Tommy turned back and faced the two outlaws.

"If we've got far to go," he said, "I wish you'd stop in at some lunch counter and order something to eat. I haven't had anything this morning only wind sandwiches. I came out to get a piece of that bear meat for breakfast, and I'm here yet."

"And I came out to hurry you up," George cut in, "and I'm here yet!"

"All right," laughed one of the outlaws, accepting the humor of the request. "If we run across a free lunch sign anywhere, well take the two of you in. We're hungry ourselves."

"Have you got anything to eat in this secluded retreat of yours?" asked Tommy. "If you have, we'll hurry up."

"Not a thing!" was the reply.

"Then we'll walk slow!" declared George.

"Look here!" Tommy advised. "Why don't you go back and get some of that bear steak. It's only a little way back to the Cave of the Three Bears, and there's enough meat there to last the four of us a week if we can only keep it from spoiling."

"That's a bright idea," said one of the outlaws, stopping suddenly. "Suppose we do go back and load up with fresh steak."

"I'm for it!" answered Tommy, rubbing his stomach.

They all walked back to the Cave of the Three Bears, and when they left each carried quite a load of fresh meat.

"Have you got a place to cook it?" asked Tommy.

"Have you got any coffee?" asked George.

"I think we'll have to let you boys go pretty soon," one of the outlaws grinned. "If we don't you'll be apt to eat us out of house and home."

"We're some on the eat!" Tommy announced.

After a time the four came, without further incident, to the chain of caverns which Will and Chester had entered some time before.

They paused for a moment in the connecting tunnel, where the fire had been built on the previous night, and inspected the boulder, which lay a short distance from the opening to the dry channel.

"He's been here and gone on in," one of the outlaws said.

"Perhaps some one else has been here," the other suggested.

"The man who showed us where to enter this labyrinth is the only man in the mountains who knows anything about it!" declared the other. "I'm not certain that we didn't leave the stone out of place when we left this morning. But, if we didn't, our friend is certainly down stairs at this minute! I'll drop down and see, anyway!"

"Push the boys in first," advised the other.

"What do you think of this for an elevator?" demanded Tommy as he backed into the opening. "These fellows seem to be foolish—like a fox!"

George followed Tommy into the tunnel as the latter dropped down, and then the figure of one of the outlaws blocked the opening.

For only a minute, however, for the boys heard a succession of pistol shots, and then the sound of voices rang into the cavern they had just left.

The next instant the outlaws crowded into the tunnel, but instead of dropping down, waited near the entrance, weapons in hand.

CHAPTER XVII

A MEETING UNDER GROUND

"Some one's got the combination to this channel, all right!" Chester repeated as he joined Will in the larger cavern.

"Did you see them?" asked Will.

"Can't see anything," was the reply, "it's too dark!"

"Then how do you know there's some one coming?"

"We saw them coming toward the cave, didn't we?" asked Chester.

"Look here," Will exclaimed. "Did you see any one entering the mouth of this tunnel?"

"When the mouth of the tunnel is clear," Chester replied, "there's a faint mist of light visible. While I lay up there watching I heard whispering voices and the entrance was blocked."

"Perhaps they've rolled the boulder in front of it," suggested Will.

"You don't like the idea of being caught like a rat in a trap any more than I do," Chester said, "but I really believe that if we ever get out of here alive, we'll have to head toward the west and make our exit on that side of the range."

"I'd like to know how many people know about this hiding place!" Will grumbled. "If people walk out of the valley and drop down here, there may, for all we know, be others in hiding further down."

"That's a fact," Chester admitted.

"I wish we knew who the people are who are entering the tunnel," Will said. "It may be the robbers, or the detectives, or the sheriffs. It may even be your father, for all we know."

"Well, shall we move on down to see if we can find an outlet?" asked Chester. "That seems to me to be the best thing to do."

"It strikes me that that is the only thing we can do."

The boys were moving on down the almost level floor of the chamber in absolute darkness, for they did not consider it safe to show their electric lights when they heard a chuckle in the darkness.

They drew up instantly and listened.

"That's Tommy!" declared Will.

"It can't be," replied Chester.

"Don't you suppose I know that chuckle?"

"Well, the boys weren't with the men I saw near the mouth of the cavern," declared Chester.

The boys listened again for some moments, and then caught sight of a finger of light far up the slope of the tunnel.

"That's a searchlight!" declared Chester.

"It surely is," agreed Will.

While the boys stood in the darkness, waiting and listening, they heard a voice which they had no difficulty in recognizing as that of Tommy.

"This is some basement stairway," the boy said.

The next moment George's voice was heard.

"We must be about nine stories under ground by this time," he said.

There was silence for a moment and then Tommy was heard to ask:

"What's become of our chaperons?"

"There's something doing out in the lobby," the boys heard George say, "and I guess they went back to defend their home and fireside."

"I hope they'll get a couple of bullets in their domes!" declared Chester. "They've helped us out several times, but they've never done it because they wanted to do us a favor!"

"Keep still a minute," Will suggested. "Let's hear what those boys are saying. I'd like to know who they're talking about."

"I haven't got much use for the detectives," they heard George saying, "but I hope they'll get these train robbers and get them good and plenty!"

"So it's the train robbers!" exclaimed Will.

"I don't believe the detectives will ever get within a mile of the robbers," the boys heard Tommy say. "If anybody catches the outlaws, it'll be the sheriff of Fremont county."

"The man at the head of the cowboys?" they heard George ask.

"That's the fellow!" Tommy replied.

"He hasn't got 'em yet," George declared.

"Oh, he's had hard luck, all right enough," Will and Chester heard Tommy say, "but he's a nervy sort of a chap, and he'll take them out with him when he goes."

"That's the fellow that wanted to lynch us!" George grumbled.

"That was a bluff!" Tommy said. "That's the kind of third degree business they go into out in the mountains. I guess that was all a by-play, anyhow. You don't catch no western sheriff lynching his own prisoners. And this sheriff of Fremont county will just get even with those train robbers for that hold-up!" the boy added.

The boys listened intently for a short time, not daring to show their light yet. From the conversation they had heard they understood that their chums had been placed in the tunnel for safe keeping, and they feared that their captors might appear at any moment.

After a time two shots came from the cavern end of the dry channel, and the close air of the place became almost stifling with the smell of powder smoke. Then the two watchers heard George and Tommy scrambling down to the place where they stood.

Will flashed his light but instantly closed it.

"Did you see that?" they heard Tommy ask.

"Sure I did!"

"What do you think it is?"

"I give it up!" replied George.

No one spoke for an instant and then the call of the Beaver came out of the darkness.

"Slap, slap, slap!"

"Do you mind that, now?" asked Will.

"I don't see how I could fail to recognize that!" Chester said.

"Of course not," Will agreed. "That's the call of the Beaver."

Will answered the challenge, and presently Tommy and George came tumbling down the tunnel into the larger opening and landed almost at the feet of their chums. In their joy at the meeting, the boys almost hugged each other, which they would not have done in daylight!

"So they got you, too, did they?" asked Tommy.

"I should say not," answered Will.

"But you're here, ain't you?"

"Yes, but we came here of our own free will," Chester cut in.

"How'd you ever find it?" asked George.

"Just blundered into it," was the answer. "We were looking for father, and thought we might find him in the cavern where the three men were seen around the campfire."

"So that passage out there is really the place where the mysterious disappearance took place? Where the three men went up in the air?"

"Where the three men came down into this dry channel!" corrected George.

"Who were the three men?" asked Will.

"If they leave it to me," George replied, "two of them were train robbers and the third was Chester's father."

"That's about the way we had it sized up," Will agreed.

"By the way, Tommy," asked Chester with a slight chuckle, "where's the bear meat you left the camp to get for breakfast?"

"I've got it out here in the cavern!" replied Tommy.

"Is that right, George?" asked Chester.

"We sure have a lot of it out in the vestibule!" agreed George.

"Let's see," Will said, nudging George in the ribs, "you went after Tommy to bring him back, didn't you?"

"Sure I did," answered George. "And I brought him back, didn't I?"

"You didn't bring him back to camp," Will answered.

"And you're the fellow who wig-wagged to us to come and escort the two of you home," continued Will, addressing George with a laugh.

"Sure I wig-wagged," replied the boy.

"Then why didn't you stay there until we came up and tell us what you wanted. You're a fine boy to wig-wag!"

"Circumstances over which I had no control intervened," replied George. "I got pinched."

Then the story of the adventures of Tommy and George were told and Will told of the doings of those who had left the camp in answer to the call for help.

"Then the sheriffs and their men are not far away?" asked Will.

"Why, they must be in the cavern," answered Tommy. "When the train robbers chucked us down into this dry sewer the sheriffs were entering the audience chamber on the outside."

"And where did the detectives go?" asked Will.

"I don't think they've got done going yet!" replied Tommy. "The train robbers took away their badges, and gave 'em two days in which to get out of town. Gee!" the boy continued. "That sounds like Harrison street station, don't it? Give 'em two days to get out of town. They make me sick!"

"So they're all centering around this little old ex-aqueduct," George said. "In about five minutes the two sheriffs'll be crawling into this old drain and taking the train robbers by the scruff of the

neck."

"I'd rather the sheriffs would lug the detectives out of the country," Chester observed. "They're the people who are looking for father."

"You want to keep mighty quiet about any one looking for your father," Will advised. "We are sure to bunt into these two sheriffs before long and if they know that your father is now regarded as a fugitive from justice, they'll get him and ship him back to Chicago, all right!"

"The sheriffs got held up by the train robbers," Tommy went on, "but they can't be blamed for that, and they tried to put us through the third degree when they thought we were in cahoots with the robbers, but they're game all the same. If you ever see those fellows in action you'll know there's something going on."

"And we're going to see them in action right now!" cried George.

A succession of shots came from the entrance to the old channel, and the boys heard the defenders scrambling down toward the chamber where they stood.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FINDING OF WAGNER

"Good night!" cried Tommy.

The heavy footsteps came on faster than before. The ping of bullets was in the air, and the old channel was filling with powder smoke. Now and then the flash of a gun lit the passage.

"Me for the tall timber," Tommy went on, springing up the tunnel.

"Here! Where are you going?" shouted Will.

"There's a hiding place up here!" answered Tommy. "We saw it when we came down! Me for the hiding place."

"That's a fact!" Will exclaimed turning to Chester. "You remember the old channel running in from the southeast?"

"We'll have to get somewhere right soon!" Chester answered. "Perhaps that is as good a place as any."

Bullets singing down the narrow passage indicated that the sheriffs and their men had already entered the subterranean channel from above.

The train robbers were defending the passage heroically, but the officers were coming bravely on.

Directly the boys came to the lead which cut the south wall of the main channel into the shape of a "W." They passed on up this dry channel just as the train robbers, retreating step by step, came to the entrance.

"Shoot to kill!" the boys heard one of the outlaws saying.

"Do you know the way to the other end?" asked the second outlaw.

"I've been told how to find it," was the answer, "but I never made my way through it. Those sheriffs are game to come crowding into a hole like this in front of two armed and desperate men."

"You get up against the real thing when you strike a Wyoming sheriff," the other outlaw declared.

"Throw up your hands!" a heavy voice came from above.

"Come and take us!" was the only answer.

Another storm of bullets was followed by a groan of pain.

"They got me!" the boys heard one of the men say.

"They got me, too!" said the other. "It's a wonder we haven't been cut into ribbons before this!"

"All we can do now is to lay down and shoot as long as we've got ammunition," the first speaker advised.

"You may as well surrender, boys!" They heard Sheriff Pete's heavy voice saying. "I'm coming down there after you!"

The only answer from the outlaws was a volley of bullets, punctuated with oaths. Tommy turned to Will with a low chuckle.

"This seems to be a nice quiet Boy Scout excursion, doesn't it?" he asked. "We come up on the

mountains to have a pleasant vacation, and we butt into a scene that wouldn't be admitted to the stage of any theatre because the critics would say that it wasn't true to life!"

"We certainly do strike life in the raw!" replied Will.

"Are you going to surrender?" shouted the sheriff from above.

"I'll bet they don't," whispered George.

"You're on!" Tommy shouted. "I'll bet they do."

The boys listened anxiously for the reply.

"I'm coming down there now!" they heard Sheriff Pete say.

"There isn't one man in a million who would dare walk into a trap like this," Will mused. "I wonder if this sheriff we've been finding fault with will have the nerve to do it."

"You see if he hasn't got the nerve to do it," Tommy answered.

The outlaws fired once more, and then the boys heard their weapons clattering down the tunnel.

"That's the stuff, boys!" the sheriff said.

They heard him sliding and scrambling down the channel, and turned on their flashlights. The sheriff paused with an exclamation of surprise, but came steadily on in a moment, his deputies not far in the rear.

"Throw up your hands there, you with the light!" cried the officer.

"I ain't going to throw up my hands," Tommy called out with a chuckle, "but if it'll give you any satisfaction, I'll throw up my job as a man-hunter. I have no further use for it!"

"That must be the Boy Scouts," the voice of the Sweetwater sheriff said. "I wonder how they got here."

As the officers came on under the rays of the searchlights, the boys having now stepped into the main tunnel, the outlaws stumbled to their feet and stood leaning against the wall. They were wounded in several places and blood was flowing quite freely, but their jaws were set in lines of determination.

The sheriffs glanced keenly about and smiled as their eyes took in the boys grouped together in the tunnel.

"What about it?" asked Sheriff Pete.

"That's a long story," Will answered.

One of the outlaws now stepped forward, although he still held himself upright by one hand on the wall.

"You're a nervy chap, Sheriff," he said.

"Turn and turn about is fair play!" replied the officer. "It isn't so very long ago that you held me up."

"Any man can hold up another when he has a loaded gun in his face," said the outlaw.

"It strikes me," the sheriff said, "that you'd better be removed from this hole as quickly as possible. Your wounds probably need attention."

"We're not sobbing about the wounds," was the reply. "The only kick we've got coming is that our ammunition gave out."

"You would have been taken in time!" was the reply.

"I guess that's right, with a man like you on our track, I've been in a good many tight spots but I never saw a man walk into a storm of bullets and appear to like it as you have done today."

"Never mind that now," the Sheriff cut in. "We're going to get you out so you can do a little work for the state before you die."

"Say," Tommy exclaimed as the officers and prisoners started to climb the steep tunnel, "when you get to the top have one of the men start a big fire. I'm so hungry that I could eat my way out of this rock like it was cheese."

"What you going to cook?" asked Will.

"Bear steak," replied Tommy.

"That's a joke!" declared Chester.

"Joke is it?" exclaimed Tommy. "You wait till we get out there and see whether it is or not. I went out after bear steak for breakfast, didn't I? Well, I got it, didn't I?"

"Breakfast!" repeated George, rubbing his Stomach. "It must be afternoon, and I'm hungry enough to bite a corner off the Masonic Temple."

"One o'clock!" said Will, looking at his watch.

"Are you boys really going to cook breakfast in the cavern?" asked the sheriff. "Why not go to the camp?"

"Because we can't walk to camp without first acquiring sustenance!" chuckled Tommy. "I'm empty from the top of my head to the end of my big toe!"

"If you'll ask your men to gather a lot of dry wood," George suggested, "we'll have a lot of bear steak ready to eat in about ten minutes."

"But we haven't got any salt!" objected the sheriff.

"Don't you think we haven't got any salt," Tommy replied. "You never saw a Boy Scout go out into the woods without plenty of salt and matches. And don't you think we don't know how to build a fire with one match and broil a steak over coals in ten minutes."

"All right!" laughed the sheriff. "You boys seem to be able to take care of yourselves."

"You didn't seem to think so a few hours ago," Will answered.

"There's one thing about you boys I really like," the sheriff returned with a hearty laugh. "The third degree makes about as much impression on you as it would on the Sphinx or on the Goddess of Liberty in New York harbor."

"That was the third degree, was it, then?" asked Will.

"Do you think I'd string up a lot of babies?" demanded the sheriff.

"Run along, now!" Tommy exclaimed. "Run along, Mr. Officer, and tell your men to bring up a lot of dry wood."

The officers made their way out, followed by George and Tommy, but Will and Chester still remained under ground.

"Did you hear anything in this tunnel?" asked Chester.

"I thought I did hear a moan, but the sheriff was talking in that voice of his at the time and I wasn't certain."

"Well," Chester said, "I believe father's in here somewhere."

"Why do you think that?"

"I've told you about how he wanted to move to this cavern, haven't I? And how he spent considerable time here?"

"You certainly have."

"And about my suspicions that he informed the outlaws of the underground passages?"

"Yes, you told me all that."

"Then you heard what the robbers said about some one having moved the stone, or gone in during their absence?"

"I had entirely forgotten that!" declared Will.

"Well, then, don't you see," Chester continued, "that they must have been speaking of father? That's why I think he's in here."

"Perhaps we'd better follow this channel and see if we can find him," Will suggested. "It does seem as if he might be here."

The bed of the old channel was very steep, and the boys scrambled up it with difficulty. After proceeding a few paces they heard a low groan and their flashlight showed the figure of a man lying on a narrow ledge of rock on the south side.

Chester darted forward instantly, almost falling on his face in his eagerness to reach his father and bent over the figure.

"It's father!" he shouted back to Will.

"Alive?"

"I'm afraid not."

Will lost no time in gaining the boy's side.

The ex-convict lay with his face turned upward, his arms folded across his breast. At first there were no indication of life.

CHAPTER XIX

SHERIFF PETE'S WINK

"He can't be dead!" cried Chester, trying to lift the still figure in his arms. "The wound he received was not a serious one."

"I'll tell you what I think," Will replied.

"I think he's weak from lack of food and sleep I don't believe these train robbers have been very considerate of him."

"But I don't see why they should misuse him!"

"They probably didn't have enough to eat themselves," Will returned. "Don't you remember how one of them came to camp and set Tommy to cooking for him, and how we frightened him away by saying that the detectives were just beyond the circle of light?"

"That was the night I was loitering around the camp waiting to get to one of you boys in order to ask you to help me find father," Chester replied. "Don't you remember you chased me up that night, and I ran away in the darkness, and one of the boys came upon the train robber and the other came upon one of the detectives."

"That was Tommy and Sandy," Will answered. "George and I were asleep in our tent when all that took place."

"I guess he's about starved all right!" Chester said lifting his father into a sitting position. "We'd better get some of the men down here and have him carried into the cavern."

"But look here," Will warned, "there mustn't a word be said about the detectives coming in here after him!"

"Why not?" asked Chester.

"Because, as I have told you before, if the sheriff understands that your father was a fugitive from justice, he'll send him to Chicago under arrest. It will be his duty to do so, in fact."

"And what do you boys propose to do with him?"

"We're going to take him back to Chicago and keep him out of the reach of the police. He knows something about a case we're interested in which he will never tell if sent back to prison."

"If he's sent back to prison," Chester replied, "you may be sure that he won't be willing to help anybody."

"He is innocent of the crime of which he was convicted, isn't he?" asked Will. "In other words, he was jobbed!"

"That's the truth!" cried Chester.

"Well, what we've got to do is to prove that!" Will went on.

"Can you do it?" asked the son, anxiously.

"We think we can," was the reply.

"If you can, father will do anything he can for you, you may be sure of that," Chester answered warmly.

"But the whole success of our scheme depends on our keeping your father out of the clutches of the officers until we land him in Mr. Horton's office in Chicago. For the first time in our lives," Will continued, "we are opposing the officers of the law. As a rule that isn't a good thing for Boy Scouts to do, but we think we are fully justified in the course we are taking in this case."

"What is it you want father to testify to?" asked Chester.

"I don't think we'd better stop now to discuss that," Will answered.

"I'm sure it can't be anything dishonorable."

"It's nothing dishonorable," Will assured the boy. "We believe that your father's testimony will save the life of a young man accused of murder. That's all I can tell you now."

"You refer to the Fremont case?" asked Chester.

"Exactly!" answered Will. "To the Fremont suicide case."

"The police call it the Fremont murder case!"

"So you have been reading about that, too, have you?" asked Will.

"I read about it in the newspapers on the day following what took place at the bank," Chester answered, "and I couldn't help a feeling of contempt for the police when I understood how wrong they were."

"So you know about that, too?"

"I know all about it!" replied Chester.

Will could have hugged the boy. He had long been wondering whether the testimony of Mr. Wagner would be accepted in court after the wound which had rendered him mentally incompetent had been discussed by physicians. He knew that in many cases men so injured never fully recovered.

It seemed almost like a miracle that the escaped convict's son should know something of the matter, too. The boy knew that even if Mr. Wagner fully recovered from his injury the police would object to his testimony on the ground of previous insanity. If the boy could corroborate the statements made by his father, that would prove sufficient.

Will was about to ask the lad further questions when the escaped convict opened his eyes and looked about.

His gaze sought the searchlight first, and then rested on the face of his son. Chester drew nearer and bent over him.

"Did I have a fall?" the man asked weakly.

He put his thin hand to his head as he spoke and drew it away covered with blood.

"Why this seems to be a fresh wound," Chester exclaimed, anxiously.

"Yes," replied the father, "I remember of hearing the sound of guns, and sensing the odor of powder smoke, and started to run down the passage and fell. I remember a shooting pain in my head and that's about all until I heard your voices and saw the light."

"Do you know where you are?" asked Will.

The escaped convict looked inquiringly at his son.

"Who is this boy?" he asked.

"A friend who has come to establish your innocence," was the reply.

"That is impossible," replied Wagner. "Every police official in Chicago is convinced of my guilt. They jobbed me to prison in the first instance and they are bound to keep me there!"

"Who were the detectives?" asked Will.

"Katz and Cullen!" was the answer.

"I see," Will said musingly.

"But we mustn't permit father to remain here," Chester cut in. "All these questions can be answered at another time."

"That's right," Will agreed. "And I'll go to the cavern and ask some of the men to carry your father out."

The boy was back in five minutes with Sheriff Pete and Deputy Seth. The sheriff looked down pityingly on the wounded man for a moment and then took him in his arms as if he had been a child and carried him to the cavern, where the boys and the deputies were assembled around a roaring fire over which Tommy and George were broiling bear steaks.

"Say, that listens good to me," George exclaimed, as the wounded man was laid down near the rear. "It appears that we're closing this case up in jig time."

"I guess we've got it about closed up," Will answered.

"There's only one thing we've got to do now," George added, "and that is to get rid of those two bum detectives."

"Last call for dinner in the dining car!" cried Tommy.

They all flocked to the fire, and Tommy and George presented each with a bear steak with the explanation that more would be forthcoming. The two train robbers looked on longingly.

"You boys suggested the bringing in of this meat," Tommy said, after a time, "and so I'm going to cook each of you a two pound steak."

"I guess we can take care of them all right," one of the outlaws replied. "We've been hungry for about a week."

"Say, kid," the other outlaw cut in, "I'd like to be just your age, and be a Boy Scout, with all the medals you've got, and money enough to travel about the world looking for trouble and meeting it like a man!"

"You had a chance once," Tommy answered rather pityingly.

"Never," was the reply. "I was reared in the slums of New York, and became a criminal before I was six years old. There were no Boy Scout organizations in those days, and so I never had any one ready and willing to point out the road that would lead to a successful life."

"Well, if there were no Boy Scouts to help you along then," Tommy replied, "there are plenty now to show the right way."

"And they are doing it, too, so far as I can see," Sheriff Pete cut in. "They seem to be doing a lot of good in the world."

"We try to," Tommy said, and turned back to cook the steaks promised to the outlaws. "And most of the time we succeed," he added.

"What was it one of you boys said about these two detectives?" asked Sheriff Pete, as he stood talking with Will, busy at the same time with a slice of bear meat.

"Why," Will answered, "I guess the remark was that the next thing for us to do would be to get rid of those detectives. They think they own the whole state of Wyoming."

"Chicago men are they?" asked the sheriff.

"Yes," was the answer.

"Do they claim to be here on business?"

"Why," replied Will in a hesitating tone, "they claim to be here after a fugitive from justice, but I guess they're on a hunting trip."

"If they're here on official business," the sheriff said, "I should think they'd report to me."

"It may be," Will suggested, "that they are in some way associated with these train robbers."

The sheriff looked at the boy with wide open eyes for a moment, and then drew one eyelid down in a long, significant wink.

"You really think they stand in with these outlaws?" he asked.

"Why," replied Will, with an equally significant wink, "I think they ought to be taken out to Lander or Green River and made to give an account of themselves."

"Come to think about it," the sheriff said, with a smile, "I've noticed several suspicious circumstances lately, and I think it really might be a good thing to take them to the county seat and make them give an account on themselves."

CHAPTER XX

DETECTIVES IN TROUBLE

While the sheriff and the boy were talking, Katz and Cullen came tramping angrily into the cavern. They stood regarding the sheriff and his deputies with scornful glances for a moment and then, ignoring them entirely, strolled up to where Will was standing.

"You are under arrest," Katz said.

"What for?" asked Will, as the others gathered around him.

"For participating in the escape of a fugitive from justice."

"Where is the fugitive from justice?" asked Will.

"I can't place my hands on him at this moment," was the arrogant reply, "but I'm going to know where he is before I permit these men to depart. I've stood about all the impudence I care to."

"What's that making all that noise?" called Tommy, from the fire.

The two detectives turned toward the boy.

"You are under arrest, too!" Cullen shouted.

"Why don't you take some one of your own size?" asked Tommy. "Why don't you go on and arrest some of these men?"

"I'll do that if it's necessary!" Katz exclaimed. "And look here," he went on. "I command you all to assist me in the capture of a fugitive from justice named Warren W. Wagner, as escaped convict who is wanted in Chicago for the crime of murder!"

"Do you think this Wagner person is here?" asked Seth.

"I haven't a doubt of it," was the angry reply.

"Then, like a good little boy, you chase out and find him."

"I'll find him quick enough," retorted Katz, advancing toward the spot where Wagner lay. "I'll find him too quick to please most of you fellows! Perhaps you can tell me who this man is."

The Boy Scouts gathered about the detective and Chester even sprang forward as if to defend his father from the officer's touch. It was Sheriff Pete, however, who prevented the actual arrest of the escaped convict at that time.

As the two detectives moved forward, attempting to brush the boys rudely aside, the sheriff seized Katz by the shoulder and swung him over to Sheriff Gilmore. Then he grabbed Cullen by the scruff of the neck and sent him spinning into the arms of Seth.

"What do you fellows mean by coming here and taking possession of our camp?" he thundered. "I'll teach you to get fresh around here! Put the handcuffs on the fellows, boys!"

One of the wounded outlaws raised himself from the floor and chuckled viciously as the two men were adorned with the manacles.

"Say," Katz exclaimed, trying to move toward the outlaws, "how did you get here? I've a great mind to put you both under arrest for your treatment of me a few hours ago."

"You're under arrest yourself!" laughed the outlaw pointing to the handcuffs. "You're a pretty skate to talk about arresting me."

"I protest against this, sir," exclaimed Katz, turning to Sheriff Pete. "I am Joseph J. Katz, detective of Chicago, and this is Edward E. Cullen, my associate. We are here under protection of the laws of your state, in quest of a fugitive from justice and I protest against this outrage."

"Where are your extradition papers?" demanded the sheriff.

"We don't usually get extradition papers until we get the man," scoffed Katz. "You ought to know that, if you're an officer."

"I mean your authority from the Governor of Illinois," said Sheriff Pete angrily.

"You can wire to the Chief of Police at Chicago, and see if what we say is not true," Katz answered.

"But your papers," insisted the Sheriff.

"They were to be forwarded to us," replied Katz.

"I don't believe they're detectives at all!" Tommy cut in.

"I don't think they have any authority to make arrests," Will said, with a sly wink at the sheriff. "If they have, where are their badges?"

"They were stolen!" shouted Katz. "These Boy Scouts took mine, and those train robbers, who seem to be under arrest now, took Cullen's."

"You want to look out when you come down into Wyoming," said the sheriff with a chuckle. "I've known Chicago detectives to come down here and have their socks stolen off their feet!"

"Aw, they ain't detectives," argued Tommy. "They belong to this bunch of train robbers. I saw 'em talking with the robbers not very long ago. You just ask these robbers if these two men don't belong to their gang."

As Tommy spoke he turned to where the two robbers lay and gave a very grave and significant wink.

"They belong to our gang, all right enough," one of the outlaws stated, remembering various indignities they had received at the hands of detectives.

"That's a lie!" thundered Katz.

"Lie nothing!" replied the outlaw. "These fellows brought in two burros loaded with provisions for us, and we haven't been able to get to them yet. If you go back in the valley to the west, and travel north a few miles, you'll find where the burros and provisions are hidden away."

Tommy drew nearer to the outlaw and under pretense of picking something from the floor whispered in his ear:

"We'll see that you get a year off your sentence for that. We've just got to get rid of these imitation detectives."

"I don't believe you can make it stick, Katz," the other outlaw cried out, apparently in a very serious tone, although there was a wrinkle of humor about his grim mouth. "When we started out to rob the Union Pacific train you promised to see that we got provisions, and you didn't keep your word!"

The eyes of the two detectives stuck out, as Tommy afterwards expressed it, far enough to hang a coat and hat on. They almost foamed with rage as they stamped about the cavern, still linked together with the steel handcuffs.

"We're being jobbed!" Katz shouted.

"It's a frame-up!" echoed Cullen.

"Frame up nothing!" laughed one of the outlaws.

"Do you mean to say," said Sheriff Pete, turning to the two prisoners, "that these two men who claim to be detectives are actually connected with your gang?"

"That's what we'll swear to!" declared one of the outlaws.

"Two years off for that!" chuckled Tommy in a low tone.

"I tell you it's a frame up!" shouted Katz. "It's a dirty trick to get us out of the state without arresting this fugitive from justice."

"I'm sorry boys," Sheriff Pete said to them, with official gravity, although there was a twinkle in his eyes, "but under the circumstances, it's my duty to take you to Lander and give you a hearing before the grand jury. Personally, I have my doubts as to the truth of the charges made against you, but at the same time I've got to take ministerial cognizance of them. I'm sorry, but it's my duty."

"And in the meantime," yelled Cullen, "these Boy Scouts will get this fugitive from justice out of our reach!"

"I don't know anything about that!" said the sheriff, "but if they try to do anything of that kind, I'm afraid they'll succeed."

"Well," Gilmore, the Sweetwater sheriff said, "I presume we'd better be moving along with the prisoners. If it's true that these two alleged detectives, who now turn out to be train robbers," he added with a glance at the boys, "have a camp with plenty of provisions at the north end of the next valley, we'd better take the whole bunch there and get the provisions and pack the whole outfit over to Lander with us."

"Are you going back to camp now?" asked Sheriff Pete, turning to Will.

"Just as soon as Tommy gets filled up on bear steak, I think we'd better be moving."

Sheriff Gilmore and the deputies now started away with the four prisoners and the boys watched them sliding and scrambling down the slope to the gully.

Will reached out and took Sheriff Pete by the hand.

"You're a brick!" he said. "You not only know how to do things, but you know how to do them right. If you ever come up to Chicago, don't forget to call on Lawyer Horton, and he'll tell you where we are."

"I'll not fail to do so," the sheriff answered, "but, in the meantime," he went on, "it ought to take about a week or two for these detectives to establish their innocence, eh?"

"I should say about two weeks," replied Will. "And see here," the boy went on, "I hope you won't be too hard on those train robbers. They're pretty decent fellows after all."

"They're the first men that ever held me up!" laughed the sheriff.

"Forget it!" exclaimed Will.

"Oh, I don't lay that up against them!" the sheriff replied. "After all," he continued, "they were careful not to injure any one on the hold-up they're accused of, and I don't think they'll get more than five or six years."

The officers and the boys parted with feelings of mutual regret. They had not had much faith or confidence in each other at first, but in the end each group knew the worth of the other. The parting between the boys and Seth was particularly heartfelt. Although Sheriff Pete had been trying to reach information he sought in his own way, the deputy had faced him down when he believed that the boys were to be lynched. There was many a good laugh after that, in the room of the Sheriff at Lander.

When at last the boys reached their camp and the two men who had brought the escaped convict down had disappeared, Sandy came creeping out from under a pile of blankets in one of the tents.

"What do you know about that?" asked Tommy, pointing to the boy.

Sandy yawned and rubbed his eyes.

"Say, what time is it?" he asked.

"Four o'clock!" replied Will.

"Is it yesterday or today?" asked Sandy.

"It's the day after tomorrow!" grinned Tommy.

"Don't get funny, now," Sandy advised. "Whatever day it is, I've been asleep ever since you boys went away."

CHAPTER XXI

CONCLUSION

"You never have!" declared Tommy.

"Honest!" replied Sandy. "I filled myself up with provisions and crawled under the blanket and went to sleep just after you went away to get some bear steak for breakfast. Did you get the steak?" the boy added with a grin.

"You bet I did," answered Tommy, "and I brought it back with me," he added, stroking the waistband of his trousers. "How's your shoulder?"

"Fine as a fiddle," was the reply. "I'm not going to have any trouble with it after this! Did you find Chester's fond parent," he added, glancing in the direction of the escaped convict.

"Sure we did," replied Tommy. "And, do you know," the boy went on, "that we needn't have bothered about finding him at all. Chester knows everything about the Fremont case that the father does."

"Is that right, Chester?" asked Sandy.

"Now you come on over here to father," Chester said, "and we'll ask him what took place in the private room of Fremont's bank that night, and we'll see if his memory of the things which occurred there is the same as mine."

The boys now all trooped to the tent where Mr. Wagner had been placed and Chester asked:

"Do you know why these boys are here, father?"

"To take me back to prison, I suppose," was the almost sullen reply.

"They are here to establish your innocence," the son went on. "Do you know why?"

The father glanced keenly from his son to the others and finally asked, his voice trembling with excitement:

"Why should they take an interest in me?"

"Because," Will broke in, "you can help us, and we want to help you. We have information that you are innocent of the crime of which you were convicted, and we believe that you have information which will prevent the conviction of an innocent man."

"Do you refer to the Fremont case?" asked Wagner.

"Exactly," replied Will. "And I'd like to ask you now," the boy went on, "before anything more is said, why you never communicated with young Fremont's attorney. He advertised for you extensively, and you might have held conference with him without subjecting yourself to arrest."

"I saw the advertisement," was the reply, "but I thought it was only a trap set by the police. I was determined not to go back to the penitentiary. If I had been captured by the police, I would have killed myself. I had no money, no influence, and it would have been impossible for me to establish my innocence, so I decided to let young Fremont look out for himself. I know now that I was wrong."

"You were in the bank that July night?" asked Will.

"Yes, I was there with my son," was the reply.

The boys looked wonderingly at Chester.

"What took place?" asked Will.

"Fremont was working late in his private room, and the janitor and nightwatchman were moving about the building, from the deposit vaults in the basement to the ironclad room which enclosed the big safe.

"I went there to see Mr. Fremont in order to secure financial help. He had been an old friend of my parents, and I had every reason to believe that he would assist me if I could get to him. After a long time I attracted the attention of the night watchman, and he admitted me at a side door on the request of Mr. Fremont."

"Who else was in the building at that time?" asked Will.

"No one that I know of," was the reply. "I stated my case to Mr. Fremont in the presence of my son and he handed me one hundred dollars in small bills, advising me to remain in hiding until I could arrange for a new trial. He said when he gave me the money that the sum was more than he had left, but that he would never again feel that he needed money.

"I did not understand what he meant, and said so. He told me then that he had been plunging heavily in Wall street. He said that he had lost every dollar he had in the world, and that his interest in the bank would be taken from him the next day unless a wealthy friend he was depending on came to his assistance that very night."

"Did he tell you the name of the man he expected there that night?" asked Will.

"He did," replied the escaped convict, "but I do not now recall the name. I can't for the life of me bring it back to my mind."

"The name," Chester interrupted, "was Myron M. Douglass."

"A Chicago multi-millionaire!" exclaimed Will.

"I asked Mr. Fremont what course he intended to pursue, and he replied that there was only one thing he could do if the man he had appealed to refused to aid him. As he told me this he opened a drawer in his desk and pointed to an automatic revolver lying on top of a pile of papers."

"And you left it lying there?" asked Will.

"No," Chester answered, "I snatched the revolver out of the drawer and brought it away with me. When we left the private room by the side door, Mr. Fremont was standing beside his desk with a smile upon a very white face. He said he had another revolver in another drawer, and would use it if he did not hear from Mr. Douglass before midnight."

"Did you believe him to be in earnest?" asked Will.

"I did not think he would kill himself when it came down to the real point."

"Did you immediately leave the vicinity of the bank?" asked the boy.

"No," replied Chester. "We walked about the building until after twelve o'clock."

"Did you hear any significant sounds?" asked Will.

"Pistol-shots," was the reply.

"Then you knew what had taken place?"

"Yes, sir, we thought we did."

"What next?"

"While we stood at the side door of the bank, wondering what we ought to do, Mr. Fremont's son came running up the steps. At first I felt disposed to give him some intimation as to what had taken place, but I hadn't the courage to do so. He opened the side door with a key and entered, and we left the city and the state. We came here, and I was dazed by a fall, but this last hurt has corrected the injury done by the first one."

"There you are!" said Will. "The case is closed. The Boy Scouts may as well go back to Chicago now. There's one more mystery. Who built the fire in your old cave?"

"I did before the last fall," Wagner said.

"Of course, we can stay here and fish and hunt if we want to," laughed Will, "and I think it may be well to do so for a week or so, but right now we have come to The Ending of the Trail."

The boys spent two very pleasant weeks in Wyoming without further annoyance. When they returned to Chicago, Wagner and Chester went with them. The case against young Fremont fell to the ground as soon as the testimony of Wagner and his son was taken, and the innocence of the escaped convict was established so thoroughly to the satisfaction of the police that he was never tried again.

The boys saw both Wagner and Chester were provided with congenial situations. After the boys had been in Chicago a couple of weeks they met Katz and Cullen on Clark street. The detectives flamed red in the face at sight of the boys, but were very humble when addressing them.

"We have forgotten what took place in Wyoming," Katz said significantly.

"And so have we," replied Tommy. "No one here knows anything about it! It was rather a mean trick to play on you, but we had to do something to get Wagner to testify in the Fremont case."

"Forget it!" cried Katz, and the two went on their way, after receiving their badges from Tommy.

The boys had been in Chicago not more than a month when a letter from the famous criminal lawyer brought them to his office again.

"Are you boys ready to take a trip to the north?" he asked. "I want you to go way up into the Hudson Bay country and do a little work that a group of Boy Scouts can do better than any one else in the world."

"Sure, we'll go!" answered Will. "We were saying last night that we were getting tired of hanging around Chicago."

The boys started away the very next day. What they saw and did on the journey will be found in the next volume of this series entitled:

Boy Scouts in Northern Wilds; or, The Signal from the Hills.

The End.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BOY SCOUTS ON THE GREAT DIVIDE; OR,
THE ENDING OF THE TRAIL ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with

this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement

or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation’s EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state’s laws.

The Foundation’s business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation’s website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of

equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.