

**The Project Gutenberg
eBook of The Boy Scouts at
the Panama-Pacific
Exposition, by John Henry
Goldfrap**

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: The Boy Scouts at the Panama-Pacific Exposition

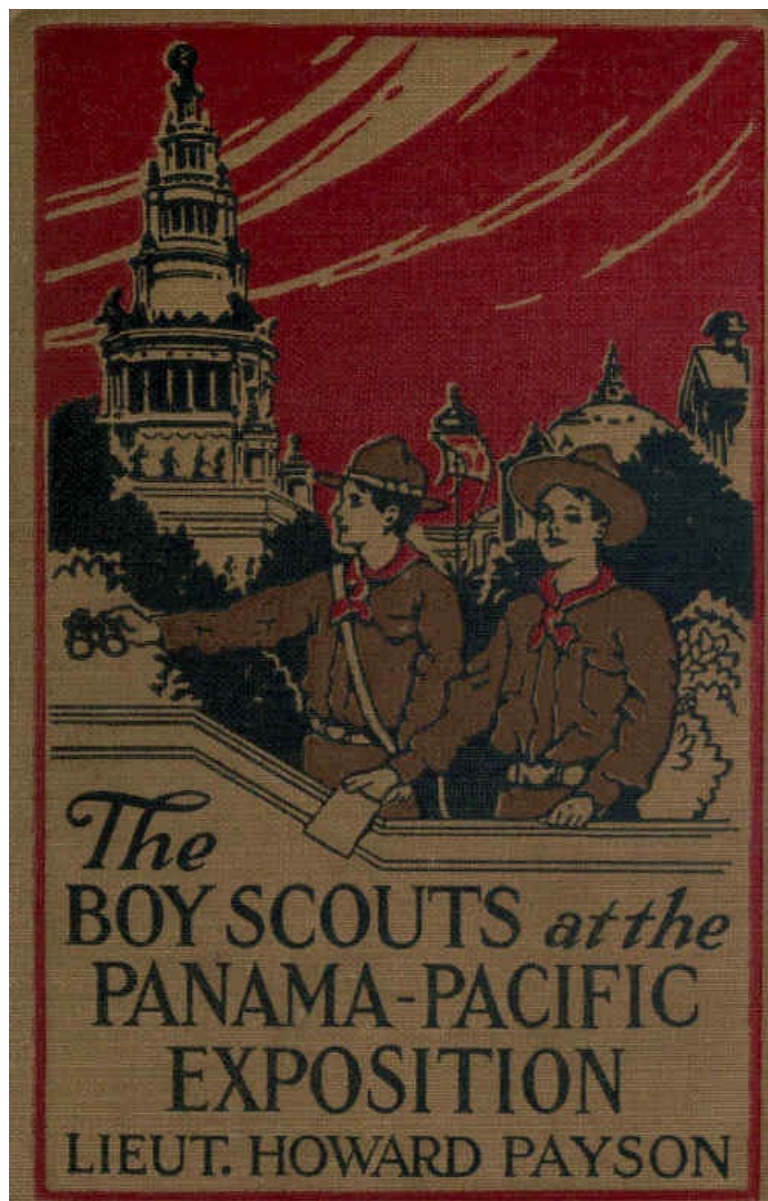
Author: John Henry Goldfrap
Illustrator: Charles L. Wrenn

Release date: February 13, 2013 [EBook #42086]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Stephen Hutcheson, Brenda Lewis
and the Online
Distributed Proofreading Team at
<http://www.pgdp.net> (This
book was produced from scanned images of
public domain
material from the Google Print project.)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BOY SCOUTS AT THE PANAMA-PACIFIC EXPOSITION ***



**THE BOY SCOUTS
AT THE
PANAMA-PACIFIC
EXPOSITION**

BY
LIEUT. HOWARD PAYSON

AUTHOR OF "THE MOTOR CYCLE SERIES,"
"THE BOY SCOUTS OF THE EAGLE PATROL,"
"THE BOY SCOUTS ON THE RANGE,"
"THE BOY SCOUTS AND THE ARMY AIRSHIP,"
"THE BOY SCOUTS' MOUNTAIN CAMP,"
"THE BOY SCOUTS FOR UNCLE SAM,"
"THE BOY SCOUTS AT THE PANAMA CANAL,"
"THE BOY SCOUTS UNDER FIRE IN MEXICO,"
"THE BOY SCOUTS ON BELGIAN BATTLEFIELDS,"
"THE BOY SCOUTS WITH THE ALLIES IN FRANCE," ETC.

*ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLES L. WRENN*

NEW YORK
HURST & COMPANY

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. TWO SCOUTS ON A MOTORBOAT	5
II. PROMPT WORK AND A RESCUE	17
III. WHEN LUCK CAME THEIR WAY	29
IV. A STUNNING SURPRISE	41
V. HEADED WEST	53
VI. A FALSE ALARM	65
VII. ACROSS THE CONTINENT	77
VIII. A SHOCK AT LOS ANGELES	89
IX. TURNING THE TABLES ON TWO ROGUES	101
X. WITHIN THE GATES OF THE FAIR	113
XI. ROB DELIVERS THE GOODS	125
XII. THE PEOPLE OF THE "ZONE"	137
XIII. A STRANGE MEETING IN THE AIR	149
XIV. FOUR SCOUTS IN THE WHIRL	161
XV. TUBBY IS OUT OF HIS ELEMENT	173
XVI. THE ILLUMINATED FAIRYLAND	185
XVII. PRYING FINGERS	197
XVIII. THE THIEF UNDER THE BED	209
XIX. AN ENEMY OF THE PAST	221
XX. LOTS OF EXCITEMENT	233
XXI. THE MAD DOG PANIC	247
XXII. TAKING IN THE SIGHTS OF THE FAIR	257
XXIII. HIRAM FACES THE MUSIC	269
XXIV. A BOY SCOUT'S TRIUMPH	282
XXV. HOMEWARD BOUND	293

The Boy Scouts at the Panama-Pacific Exposition.

CHAPTER I.

TWO SCOUTS ON A MOTORBOAT.

"Seems to me, Rob, I ought to know that old tub of a motorboat we're overhauling."

"Why, yes, Andy, it's Captain Jerry Martin's *Sea Gull*. Time was when she had a reputation for speed, but her engine is a back number now."

"Huh! that must have been away in Noah's time, I reckon, Rob. Why, we could make circles around her, if we chose to drive our little *Tramp* to the limit."

"As we happen to be in no hurry to-day, there's no use making the old skipper feel that his boat is down and out. With vacation opening up before us, I've been trying to settle on some scheme for the scouts of the Eagle Patrol to have a rousing good time this summer."

"Well, I know where I'd be if I had the cold cash to pay my expenses; and, Rob, chances are you feel the same way about it."

[6]

"Now, I suppose you're thinking of Tubby Hopkins' great good luck in having his uncle, Dr. Mark Matthews, the famous globe-trotter, carry him off three days ago for an extended trip to the big show out in California?"

"Just what was on my mind, Rob. I don't believe I ever wished so much for anything as a chance to hike away out to the Pacific. Nothing comes my way any more, seems like. Some of us scouts were lucky enough to have our turn down in Mexico that time Tubby's uncle was taken sick, and couldn't get there to meet his old friend, General Villa, so as to dispose of the cattle on his ranch before they were stolen by the raiding Mexican rival armies. How the rest of the boys envied us that glorious trip, Rob!"

"I admit it was a rare streak of good fortune to have things come our way as they did," the boy named Rob remarked, as he gave a slight turn to the wheel of the bustling little motorboat, aboard which he and Andy were the sole passengers. "We ran up against quite an interesting bunch of experiences, you remember, Andy, that none of us will ever be apt to forget."

[7]

"As if that wasn't enough fun for Tubby and Merritt and you," continued the boy called Andy at the wheelsman, "it came about that you all got a chance to go across the water to England and Belgium late last summer on an important mission for Merritt's family, and saw a heap of what was going on in the fighting zone where the Germans are up against the armies of France, Belgium and Great Britain."^[1]

"We've shaken hands with ourselves dozens of times since, I give you my word, Andy, on account of that fine streak of luck. Yes, we did encounter a whole lot of remarkable adventures over there, and saw sights we'll never forget. Some of them I wish I could put out of my mind, because they were mighty unpleasant. But that page is turned down, Andy; and now the next thing to consider is what we are going to do this summer to make the time pass happily."

"Oh! I suppose I shouldn't complain," Andy Bowles continued, trying to smile away the discontented frown that had settled across his forehead. "Here, in this good old Long Island town of Hampton, there are lots of ways a pack of lively up-to-date Boy Scouts can have good times during vacation. With the big bay at our doors, and a bully little motorboat like this to go fishing or cruising in, there's no reason for us not to be hustling most of our spare time."

[8]

"Yes," Rob Blake went on to add, wishing to soothe the ruffled spirit of his comrade, "and you know what glorious camping trips we can have with a lot of the boys, just as we used to in other summers. There is the full Eagle Patrol, except our fat chum, Tubby, who's gone to see the sights of the Panama-Pacific Exposition, and Merritt Crawford, who expects to be away for a month and more with his folks."

"Besides," continued Andy Bowles, as though the fact gave him more or less solid satisfaction,

[9]

“all the other patrols are full—eight each in the Hawk, the Black Fox and the Badger, with a new one forming in the bargain. Boy Scout activities are at flood-tide around Hampton these days.”

“One reason for that, I take it,” mused the skipper of the little *Tramp*, “is the fact that through our activities in the past we have managed to keep our troop in the public eye, more or less. People know what the Eagles have done, and on the whole they favor their boys joining the newer patrols. There’s been a big change in the young fellows of Hampton, I’m told, since this Boy Scout movement first came to town.”

When the young leader of the Eagle Patrol made this modest assertion, he certainly hit the truth squarely on the head. During the last two years the members of the Eagle Patrol had made a name for themselves in Boy Scout annals—as the new reader will find out for himself if he cares to read the earlier books of this fascinating series.

Among other things they had, through a happy chance, become associated with certain scientific gentlemen connected with the United States Government, who were experimenting with a new and secret model for a big airship patterned somewhat after the famous Zeppelins of the Germans.

[10]

On another occasion they had been enabled to assist in saving the design of a wonderful submarine, also intended for the use of the Government, and the secret of which it appeared was coveted by emissaries of a nation supposed to be hostile to the United States, and desirous of learning all about such an important discovery that was apt to play an important part in future ocean warfare.

Some of the scouts later on were given a chance to pay a visit to the wonderful canal that was then being dug across the Isthmus—at Panama; and the record of how they made themselves exceedingly useful while down there will always be a bright page in the history of the Hampton Troop.

Mention has already been made by Andy Bowles, the bugler of the troop, of the trip to Mexico, with its attendant adventures; and also of the foreign tour undertaken by several of the Eagles on the previous summer, just when hostilities had broken out between the nations of Europe; and Belgium, where they were compelled to visit, was torn from end to end with the mad struggles of warring factions.

[11]

Yes, surely the Eagles could rest upon their laurels from this time on, and history would accord them the laurel wreath as the most enterprising patrol known to the Boy Scouts of America.

Still, what boy is ever satisfied with what has happened in the past? The present and the near future is what engages his attention and excites his interest. Even sensible Rob Blake secretly sighed when he contemplated having to put in the whole summer around the home town while Tubby Hopkins was having such a glorious time out there on the Coast; and his other chum, Merritt Crawford, was up in Canada with his folks at a camp.

It was a beautiful and warm day in the early summer. The sun shone from an unclouded sky, but there was enough sea breeze to fan their heated brows, and to make them think that there could be few things equal to being in a speedy little motorboat, spinning over the surface of that lovely land-locked bay, with the ocean booming on the outer edge of the sandy strip to the south.

They could have quite an extended view from far out in the bay, with the houses scattered along the shore, and the white sails of pleasure craft or fishing and clamming boats dotting the water far and near.

Just ahead of them the old launch that had seen better days was churning up the water with its noisy propeller, though not making remarkable headway at that. As the two scouts gradually drew up on the *Sea Gull*, they made out that besides the ancient skipper there was just one passenger aboard.

"Why," said Andy Bowles presently, as this person chanced to turn his face toward them by accident, "that must be the old gent I saw drop off the nine-thirty train from New York this morning when I was heading for your house. Yes, and now I think of it, I heard him ask Dan Trotter at the station where Judge Collins lived, and how he could get to his house at the Point."

"Some friend of the Judge, then," suggested Rob; "and I guess he has a host of them here and abroad; for he's wealthy, and interested in all sorts of scientific matters. They say that at his city house in the winter he entertains, at times, all the big guns from the different colleges of the world."

"Which reminds me, Rob. There was an odd twang in this old fellow's manner of speech that made me think of Sandy Ferguson, the Scotchman who has the bagpipes, you remember, and always insists in marching in all the parades in Hampton."

"Then, perhaps, he's some famous Scotch professor," observed the skipper of the *Tramp*, "who wants to see the judge so much that he's chased away out here to his summer home on invitation."

"He has a red face, wears big glasses, and is scrawny enough for a Scotchman, anyway," chuckled Andy, "but do you know I always like to listen to one of the Highland folks talk. It was the 'burr' in his speech that made me stop and listen as far as I did. He's got it down pat, Rob."

"Don't say anything more now, Andy; we're drawing up pretty close, and he might not like it if he thought we were talking about him. That old motor does make lots of noise, but sometimes it misses, and then there's a lapse, you know."

"But they're heading straight for the Point where the Collins Castle is located, you notice, Rob, so I guess Cap. Jerry is ferrying him across. I only hope the old tub doesn't take a notion to founder before it gets to the dock a mile away from here."

"Oh! it's stood lots of pounding, and only has to

be bailed out frequently on account of leaking like a sieve," Rob said in a low tone. "Jerry has all that down to a fine point, and just once in so often he gets busy and lowers the bilge water with the pump he keeps rigged handy."

"Excuse me from running around in such a trap," muttered Andy, who was rather inclined to be "fussy" with regard to everything he handled, and tried to have his possessions kept up to top-notch condition—what he himself called "apple-pie shape."

[15]

"The professor is like most Englishmen, for he loves his pipe," remarked Rob, as he watched the passenger aboard the old launch filling his little black pipe with tobacco taken from a rubber pouch. "I hope, when he strikes that match, and then throws it away after lighting up, he knows enough about motorboats to see that it goes overboard, and not into the bottom of the craft. Sometimes a leak will spread a film of gasoline over the bilge water, and there's always more or less danger of an explosion."

"Yes," added Andy seriously, "there have been a number on the bay the last three seasons, and two people that I can remember were so badly burned that they died after being rescued."

Both of the boys watched with more or less interest, and possibly with suspended breath, while the red-faced passenger in Captain Jerry's old launch puffed several times at his pipe, then tossed the match aside.

[16]

"Oh! it didn't go overboard, for a fact, Rob!" gasped Andy; but there was no time to say another word, for suddenly they saw a flash of flame spring up aboard the old *Sea Gull*, and in an instant it seemed as though the launch was aflame from stem to stern!



Suddenly they saw a flash of flame spring up
aboard the old *Sea Gull*.

[17]

CHAPTER II. PROMPT WORK, AND A RESCUE.

Fortunately Rob Blake had wonderful presence of mind in a sudden emergency. Some boys would have been so badly shocked by what was happening near at hand, that for the time being, they must have been unable to make any move toward rendering first aid to the afflicted.

No sooner did the leader of the Eagle Patrol see that terrible outburst of fire than he started his little motor on at full speed, heading straight toward the imperiled launch.

"Quick! get hold of that fire extinguisher we carry!" he called out to his companion, who was staring, with open mouth and awe-filled eyes, at the scene of commotion close by.

"But, Rob, will the fluid put out a gasoline fire?" exclaimed Andy, though at the same time hastening to throw back the lid of a locker and snatch out the brass tube which had been lying there for just such a time of sudden need.

"Yes, that's one of its best uses," Rob told him hastily. "It seems to form a coating over everything it touches that the fire can't break

[18]

through. It kills fire. That's where it gets its name. Be ready now to make use of it when we come up as close as I dare go."

"Both of the men are overboard, Rob!" announced Andy excitedly, "and hanging on to the side of the boat. Wow! but isn't she blazing, though? I can begin to feel the fierce heat even here!"

"Ready to get busy now!" cried the skipper, as he manipulated his engine in such a way as to reverse the propeller, and bring the *Tramp* to a stop close to the blazing launch.

Andy was no coward, and could keep a pretty level head when it came down to doing things; though often he had to be told what to attempt by someone more masterful than himself. As soon as Rob shouted to him to start operations, he worked the fire extinguisher with might and main, and was considerably astonished to discover that just as Rob had said, wherever the magical fluid struck, it seemed to dishearten the conflagration, for the flames immediately died out.

"Whoop! it's doing the whole business, that's right, Rob!" cried the pleased amateur fire-fighter, as he continued to make judicious use of his apparatus. "Why, I tell you nothing can hold out, Rob, against this dandy contraption. Look at it do the work, will you? Oh! it's sure worth its weight in gold when you need something to save your boat with."

[19]

Indeed, to judge from the magical way in which the threatening fire was extinguished aboard the old launch, Rob Blake had certainly made no mistake when he purchased that little fire-fighting contrivance, even though it did cost him close on ten dollars.

Rob, seeing that all danger of the fire communicating to the *Tramp* was now past, slowly started toward the other boat. His intention was to rescue the two elderly men who were in the water. To tell the truth, Rob was very much afraid the passenger may have been seriously burned, and that in his panic he might release his frenzied grip on the gunwale of the boat.

It turned out otherwise, however, for Scotch grit held good, and Rob soon had the satisfaction of helping both men aboard the *Tramp*.

[20]

They had received a number of burns, and presented rather a peculiar appearance, since their eyebrows and beards had been badly singed.

"Fire's all out, Rob!" announced Andy, at this juncture.

"Then fix it so that we can tow the *Sea Gull* behind us," the other told him, "and we'll change our course for the Collins Point yonder."

"It is verra kind of ye to go to all that trouble," remarked the elderly man, looking the young skipper of the rescuing boat over from head to toe, "and I wull not be the one to forget the favor, I assure you, my fine laddie."

"I hope you are not seriously burned, sir?"

remarked Rob, who saw that there were signs of the other's clothes having been afire before he tumbled overboard, possibly urged to this last resort through the energetic efforts of old Captain Jerry Martin.

"I sincerely hope not myself," replied the other, as he felt of his body, and then put up a hand to his blackened face. "I believe I've been well singed, and that until I grow a new crop of eyebrows I will look like a scorched rat; which is verra unfortunate, since I am on a most important errand over in your country. But, indeed, I should be ashamed to complain, for it might have been a deal worse."

[21]

"And how about you, Captain Jerry?" asked Rob, turning to the subdued looking old skipper of the disabled motorboat, who had once been an oysterman, though of late years rheumatism had compelled him to seek another less strenuous means for making a living on the famous bay.

"Nawthin' to count much, Rob," grunted Captain Jerry, "but I'm afraid I'll jest hev to git a new engine aboard the *Sea Gull* arter this accident. I knowed she leaked a mite in the connectin' feed pipe, but I never thought anybody would throw a lighted match down *thar!* I'm glad to be alive still; and I hopes as how the duckin' ain't agoin' to fotch on my rheumatiz agin."

"As I'm altogether to blame for the accident, Captain," said the passenger, "I shall insist on doing my part toward helping you put in that new motor. The chances are I will be marooned at my friend's place now for weeks, until I'm presentable; though what's to be done about getting that valuable shipment out to our exhibit I am unable to say. Perhaps Judge Collins may be able to help me decide. It's a verra odd time to introduce myself, laddies, but I want to know more of ye, and so permit me to say I am Professor Andrew McEwen, from Edinburgh University, Scotland."

[22]

"My name is Robert Blake, and my father is connected with the bank at Hampton. My chum here is of the same name as yourself, professor, Andrew; but his last name is Bowles. I think his family came originally from Scotland. We are Boy Scouts, and out for a little cruise just to pass the time away."

"Which was a lucky thing for myself, I am sure," remarked the elderly gentleman, as he squeezed a hand of each of the young fellows. "And if you will land me at Judge Collins' dock, you will increase the obligations under which you have placed me."

"We are heading straight that way, sir," Rob told him.

[23]

Somehow he liked the stranger from the start. He had shrewd, gray eyes that had been wont, no doubt, to twinkle under bushy eyebrows; but with these now missing his thin face had an almost comical appearance. Still, there was a kindly expression to be detected there, as well as the keen look of a savant. And from the way in which Professor McEwen from time to time watched Rob, it was evident that he had also conceived a great fancy to the fine, manly looking boy who seemed to be able to master a crisis so ably.

Presently they drew in at the dock, where Judge Collins was awaiting them. From the fact that the gentleman gripped a pair of marine glasses in his hand, and had an anxious look on his face, Rob jumped to the conclusion that he must have been on the lookout for the coming of the celebrated scientist from abroad, and might have witnessed the details of the accident and the rescue.

"I dinna doobt but that ye will have some difficulty in recognizing me, Judge Collins," called out the Professor, falling back more than ever into his Scotch dialect in his mingled amusement and chagrin. "My ain brother wouldna know me with this blackamoor face, *sans* eyebrows, *sans* beard, and fortunate to have saved my eyesight. I am a fearsome sicht, and feel unco'-unpleasant in the bargain. But thanks to these braw laddies we were saved from a watery grave, for which baith feel thankful."

[24]

"You must come up to the house at once and wash up," said the judge feelingly. "Then I shall ease any suffering with some magical pain extractor that I chance to have and can recommend. No, please stay with me a little while, boys, unless you are in a great hurry. I want to hear your side of the story as well. And Captain Jerry, what can I do to make you comfortable? An old sailing mate of yours is in the boathouse at work, and if you will join him shortly I will send something comforting out to you."

Rob looked at Andy, who nodded his approval of this idea. Andy had never before met with a chance to see the inside of the judge's house on the Point, which, being built of stone, and boasting a few turrets, had come to be called the "Castle" by most of the baymen. Such a golden opportunity might not come along again; and, besides, they certainly were in no hurry, so they could oblige the judge without putting themselves out at all.

[25]

Shortly afterward they found themselves in the library. Rob had been here before and even spent some hours examining the myriads of curious things among the collections which Judge Collins kept at his country house, where he spent more than half the year entertaining visitors.

Here the judge made an examination of the burns of the little Scotch scientist. It was found that beyond a few painful red marks, and the loss of the hair that had once been on his face, Professor McEwen was all right.

He seemed to take his mutilation greatly to heart.

[26]

"It would ha'e been peetifu' eno' at any time to be transformed into such a scarecrow as this; but think of me on the way out to join some of my fellow workers in the avenues of science, and taking with me the balance of our delayed valuable exhibit. Aweel, aweel, the best laid plans o' mice an' men gang aft a'glee. I shall ha'e to hide my diminished head until Nature restores my looks. Ya maun rest assured I shall not let my friends see me in this way; they wouldna doobt but that it was the Missing Link come to light."

"I shall be delighted," said the judge impulsively, "to have you stay with me as long as you can spare the time, Professor. It will gladden my heart more than I can tell you, for the profit is bound to be all on my side."

"But whatever am I to do about getting that exhibit out to our concession at the Exposition, now that I shall be utterly unable to attend to it myself? I wish I could solve that problem; my own discomfort I wouldna consider so much. In fact, I have undertaken this trip under protest. I care not a rap or a bawbee as to whether I see the Exhibition or not, if only I could make positive that my errand had been successfully carried out."

[27]

"Surely you can send what you are taking there by express, and it will arrive safely?" suggested the judge.

"But I gave my solemn word," expostulated the Scotch professor, who seemed to possess all of the stubborn qualities with which those of his land are said to be afflicted, "not to let the valuable packet go out of my possession for a minute, unless I gave it in charge of an equally responsible messenger. Money would be no object, judge, I assure you, if only you could find me a gude mon; nane ither would I trust."

The judge seemed to be pondering. When Andy caught him looking in a serious fashion in the direction of himself and comrade, somehow he felt a queer thrill pass through his system, though he did not exactly know why it should be so.

Then he saw a smile begin to creep over the face of Judge Collins, as he nodded his head slowly. Whatever had flashed into his mind, it seemed to afford him considerable satisfaction.

[28]

"Professor McEwen," he said slowly, but earnestly, "if you are looking for some trustworthy persons to whom you can delegate your mission, and do not mind what expense there may be attached to carrying it out, I believe I can suggest a couple of dependable young chaps who might fill the bill; they are the wide-awake Boy Scouts who were concerned in your rescue this very morning. How would you like to talk over that business with Rob Blake and Andy Bowles, here, Professor?"

[29]

CHAPTER III.

WHEN LUCK CAME THEIR WAY.

Andy fairly held his breath in suspense when Judge Collins made that astonishing suggestion to the little Scotch professor. He had always known that the judge was a firm believer in the uplift of the Boy Scout movement, for he had never failed to assist the Hampton Troop by every means possible. That he would go so far as to recommend two of the scouts to his friend as responsible enough parties to be entrusted with such an errand filled Andy with both amazement and delight.

Professor McEwen's eyes twinkled as he surveyed first the boys and then their earnest sponsor.

"I ha'e no doobt but that they are responsible and trustworthy, just as ye say, Judge Collins," he proceeded to remark presently, with lines of perplexity visible across his forehead, "and if it were but an ordinary errand I wouldna hesitate a single instant about entrusting it to them. But I ha'e to consider well before makin' up me mind. The property belongs to ithers than mesil', ye ken; and it is of a scientific value beyond compare. In fact, it could not well be replaced if lost in transit; money wouldna be any consideration in exchange, which is why I wouldna wish to send it by express."

[30]

"Be kind enough to listen while I relate a few facts concerning this same Rob Blake, and a couple of his friends," said the judge, smiling, and shaking his head at Rob when he thought the latter looked as though about to protest.

"I should be unco' pleased to hear all you can tell me," declared the scientist, "for I must confess that from the verra beginning these braw lads ha'e made a most favorable impression with me."

And so Rob had to sit there, squirming rather uneasily, while the judge told of the perilous trip he and several chums had made to the troubled republic of Mexico, and how they had cleverly managed to accomplish the delicate mission with which they had been entrusted by Tubby Hopkins' uncle.

Then he took up the subject of the tour abroad, where they had been for days and weeks in the battle zone of the contending armies, managing with consummate skill to avoid complications, and eventually succeeding in attaining the object which had been the cause of their undertaking this perilous mission.

[31]

All this while the little Scotch professor sucked away at his pipe as though he found great consolation in burning the weed that originally came from Virginia in the time of Sir Walter Raleigh, and was therefore a strictly American product. Now and then he would let his shrewd eyes roam from the face of the enthusiastic judge to the burning one of Rob Blake, and at such times Andy always noticed that he would nod slightly, as though better pleased than ever.

Andy, by the way, was enduring all manner of torture on account of the suspense; he had had a glorious prospect opened up before him, if only the curtain would not suddenly fall and shut it out.

"That is not nearly all that these gallant boys have done," declared the narrator, after a time. "I could sit here for an hour and tell you innumerable instances where Rob, and some of his chums into the bargain, did things that would be counted big under ordinary conditions. Why, it has come to that pass in Hampton nowadays that when anything beyond the ordinary is attempted they have to get the scouts interested in it first, and then people begin to believe it must have some merit."

[32]

"What you tell me is indeed wonderful,"

declared the professor. "After that recommendation I am strongly disposed to offer them the carrying out of my mission if they could see their way clear to accept the task."

"It would give them a chance to spend some weeks at the Exposition without incurring any expense, is that the idea, Professor McEwen?" asked the judge, who looked as happy as though he had discovered some wonderful bug which had been eagerly sought after for years and years by all scientists and collectors.

"Yes, a month, if they cared to stay that long," replied the other, who seemed to have been fully convinced, and ready to throw the load of responsibility from his own shoulders to those of Rob and his chum. "The particulars can be gone over a little later, either to-night, if they care to see me again, or to-morrow. There is no great need o' haste, though what I am carrying out to California is being eagerly expected by my colleagues there."

[33]

"Let me congratulate you, boys, on your good fortune," said the kindly judge, as though he wished to settle the matter in such a fashion that there could be no drawing back on the part of the gentleman. He then shook hands first with Rob and then with Andy Bowles.

Rob was looking a little pale from excitement, but there was also a happy glow in his eyes. As for Andy, he could not prevent a wide grin from spreading over his features. His father owned a livery stable in Hampton, but was not considered at all well-to-do, so that the boy had never been able to do more than dream of taking expensive trips. That one down into Mexico had come like a gleam of golden sunshine, for Tubby Hopkins' old uncle had footed all the bills.

"Do I understand you to make this proposition to us, Professor McEwen?" Rob asked bluntly, not wishing to be laboring under any delusion.

[34]

"Aweel, aweel, I dinna ken how I could do better; and I feel that I am indebted to ye baith for my life. After hearing what bonny lads ye are, from my friend Judge Collins here, whose opinion carries great weight wi' me, I am mair than pleased to offer to stand all the cost of a trip to California and back; as well as the expense which you will necessarily be under while seeing the great Exposition in San Francisco. Do ye think ye can ha'e the permission of the auld folks to take so lang a journey?"

"There will be no trouble on that score, Professor," urged the judge. "These lads have so amply demonstrated their sterling ability to look out for themselves that I really believe Rob's parents would not object if he wanted to go to hunt for the South Pole, or explore the unknown regions of tropical Brazil. And so we shall call it settled, I presume, Professor?"

"I ha'e made the offer, and shall tak' it hard if they turn it down," said the peculiar little man of science, whose name, Rob afterward learned, was known throughout the whole length and breadth of the world wherever men of intellect gathered to discuss their theories and discoveries.

[35]

"So far as we are concerned," said Rob, after receiving an entreating look from the excited Andy, "we are disposed to accept right on the spot, subject to the reservation that our parents may have the final deciding of the matter. We will run over here by moonlight to-night, Professor, and if everything is satisfactory, we will talk matters over with you, and make all arrangements."

"That suits me nicely, laddie," declared the visitor pleasantly; "and I shall ha'e to think mysel' unco' lucky to have found competent and trustworthy messengers so soon after the necessity arose. I shall look for ye then this same evening; and I hope that there may be no barrier thrown in the way of your acceptance of my offer. The mair I see of ye the better satisfied I feel that I will ha'e no regrets after entrusting my mission in your hands."

[36]

Soon afterward the two scouts said good-by to the professor, and started down to the dock. Even in his distress of body and mind, the thoughtful scientist had not forgotten Captain Jerry; and the boys were entrusted with a message to him to the effect that ten pounds awaited his acceptance when he was ready to install that new three-horse-power engine in his launch.

The old bayman was glad of the chance to have his wrecked boat towed back home; and when Rob delivered the message of the professor, the look of concern on his weatherbeaten face vanished as the mist does with the coming of the sun.

All the way across the broad bay the two scouts were jabbering to each other in connection with the astonishing streak of good fortune that had just come their way.

"Seems to me I must be dreaming!" Andy declared for the fourth time. "Please give me a pinch, Rob, to let me make sure I'm awake."

[37]

"Oh! you'll get used to it by degrees," the other told him, though he felt somewhat uncertain himself at times, and had to convince himself that it had all actually happened, and was not the result of a fevered imagination.

"Talk to me about luck," continued Andy rapturously, "there never could happen again such a wonderful combination of things. First, that the feed-pipe aboard the *Sea Gull* should be leaking a trifle; second, that Professor McEwen was aboard the same; then he tossed that lighted match the wrong way, so instead of going overboard it fell down and slipped between the bars of the wooden grating into the oil-covered bilge water, and last of all that we chanced to be close by at the critical moment, ready fixed with a fire extinguisher to put out the blaze, and capable of hauling the ship-wrecked mariners aboard."

"Everything of that kind is always a combination of minor happenings that seem to dovetail in with each other," Rob explained. "In this case it worked perfectly. All other boats were so far away that there's no telling what might not have happened."

[38]

"We're getting close in now, and, Rob, there's

somebody waving to us from the dock. Why, it looks like our inventor chum and fellow scout, Hiram Nelson, the queerest fellow in the Eagle Patrol. He must want us to stop and take him out for a ride on the bay. You didn't promise him anything like that, did you, Rob?"

"Why, no, not that I remember," replied the other slowly; "but now that you mention him acting as though he wanted to see us so badly, I remember that Hiram has been talking to me several times lately about some wonderful secret he was carrying around with him. He said he hoped to be in a position soon to open up and take me into his confidence; and that he might have a proposition to make that would give me a great, though a pleasant shock."

"You don't say?" chuckled the happy Andy. "Well, seems to me the shoe is on the other foot just now, and that we've got something to tell Hiram that will take his breath away for a minute. Look at him dancing around, Rob! I suppose now he's gone and invented some sort of contraption that never can be made to work, and he wants to tell you he's saved up enough hard cash to get a patent on the same. But chances are it'll be money wasted, because, so far as I know, nothing Hiram has done so far has proved much of a success."

[39]

"I'm a little afraid it's as you say," added Rob, in a low tone, for they were now fast nearing the dock where the other boy waited for them, his face wreathed in such broad smiles that they could easily see his news was of a pleasant nature. "Three times Hiram has tried to go up in that aeroplane of his and failed. I hope he's switched his genius off on some safer track than this sky traveling. But we'll soon know, for here we are at the dock."

Andy stood by with the boathook to fend off, and old Captain Jerry got in readiness to take charge of his launch and pole it along the border of the bay to the mouth of the creek, up which he had his mooring place.

When Rob had made the motorboat fast to a cleat on the dock, he joined his chum, and the two of them advanced toward the spot where Hiram awaited their coming, his face still betraying the great excitement under which he seemed to be laboring.

[40]

[41]

CHAPTER IV.

A STUNNING SURPRISE.

"He certainly looks all worked up, doesn't he, Rob?" Andy remarked, as he and his companion found themselves drawing closer to the other scout.

"Hiram is a queer stick, you remember," the patrol leader told him, speaking in a soft tone, as he did not wish the other to catch what he said. "Everybody just knows that he's gone daffy over this craze to invent something worth while. But unless I miss my guess we're going to hear some news shortly."

There was no chance to exchange further remarks, because they had reached a point close to Hiram. The latter was a rangy sort of chap. He could talk as well as the next one when he felt disposed that way, but it had always been a sort of fad with Hiram Nelson to pretend that he was a *real* countryman, and many a time had he amused his chums with his broad accent and his wondering stare, as of a "yahoo" seeing city sights for the first time.

Now, however, Hiram apparently was not bothering his head about having any fun with his fellow scouts. There was an eager expression on his face, as though he were bursting with the desire to communicate his great secret to a chosen few of his chums, especially to the patrol leader, Rob Blake.

[42]

"Been alookin' for you all over town, Rob," he started in to say, as they joined him. "Took me an awful long time to get track of where you'd gone. Then just by accident I ran across Walter Lonsdale, who told me he believed from what Sim Jeffords said, that Joe Digby had seen you and Andy here hitting it up for the dock, and so he reckoned you must have gone off on your little *Tramp*. And say, Walter was right that time, wasn't he?"

"He certainly was," replied Rob, while Andy Bowles chuckled at the roundabout way the other admitted he had received his information.

"Well, Rob," continued Hiram mysteriously, "'course you remember my telling you that sooner or later I might have somethin' of *vast* importance to tell you, something that would give you one of the greatest thrills ever?"

[43]

"Sure, I remember that," asserted the other, "what about it, Hi?"

The other leaned closer to the scout leader, and in a hoarse whisper exclaimed:

"The time has come now, Rob!"

"Good enough," said Rob. "Fire away then, Hiram!"

Hiram cast a rather dubious glance in the direction of Andy.

"Oh, don't mind me one little bit, Hi!" sang out that worthy cheerfully. "I'll promise to seal my lips if you give the word, and even being burned at the stake couldn't force me to squeal a syllable. Say on, Hiram; you've got Rob and me worked up to top-notch with curiosity, and I know I'll burst pretty soon if you don't take pity on me."

"Oh! well, I guess it's all right," the other observed slowly. "Everybody'll be knowing it sooner or later. You just can't hide a light under a bushel, anyhow. So I might as well take you at your word, Andy."

"My word's as good as my bond, Hiram," said the bugler of the troop, with some show of pride; whereat Hiram laughed softly, as though possibly he had no reason to doubt that same fact, since Andy would find it difficult work to get anybody to accept the latter.

[44]

"Let's sit down here on this pile of lumber,"

Hiram went on to say, "while I tell you what wonderful things happened. The greatest chance I've ever struck so far, and you can understand that I'm nigh about tickled to death over it."

"Huh! bet you've gone and spent every red cent you could scrape up paying a patent lawyer to put some wildcat scheme through; and that you've got the papers in your pocket showing that you've parted from your hard cash?"

When Andy recklessly said this Hiram turned and looked reproachfully at him, and then with his accustomed drawl remarked:

"Everything we tackle in this world is a chance and a hazard, don't you know, Andy Bowles? And if inventors, people who have the big brains, and get up all the wonderful labor-saving devices you read about, didn't choose to accept risks, why whatever would become of all you ordinary folks, tell me?"

[45]

Andy shook his head.

"Give it up, Hiram," he said blankly. "But please go right along and tell us what you've been and gone and done now. Never mind me. My bark is a whole lot worse than my bite, anyhow."

"That's so," Hiram assured him cheerfully. "Well, you guessed right in one way, Andy, for I have secured the advance notice that a patent is pending on a clever invention of mine, which is as good as saying it's secured. But that's only the beginning, the foundation, or, as you might say, the advance agent of prosperity. The best is yet to come."

"You're exciting us a heap, Hiram, I admit," muttered Andy, "but I hope it isn't all going to turn out a big smoke. There's some fire back of this talk, isn't there?"

"Wait!" the other told him grimly. "Get ready to soak in this information, boys. The invention for which I have applied for patent rights is, as p'raps you've already guessed, in connection with airships!"

[46]

He waited at that point, as if expecting some expression of surprise and wonder; so not to disappoint him, and in hopes of hurrying matters along a little faster, the accommodating Andy gave vent to the one expressive word:

"Gee!"

"Yes, I've been tackling one of the hardest propositions we inventors have ever run up against," continued Hiram pompously, "and to tell you the truth it was only through a happy chance that in the end I stumbled on the key that unlocked the secret. You may know that one of the obstacles to making aéroplanes popular among the masses has been the danger attending these air flights. Even the most experienced pilots are subject to risks that they pretend to make light of. You understand all that, Rob, of course?"

"Yes, I know they are delicate affairs at best when used for sailing a mile above the earth," admitted the patrol leader; "and that a sudden gust of wind, if it takes the voyager unawares, is apt to bring about disaster."

[47]

"That's just it," said Hiram triumphantly. "Rob, I've discovered a way to prevent all these accidents, and made an aëroplane as safe for a novice to run as it would be for an experienced pilot with a license."

"If you have done that, Hiram, you've got a feather in your cap!" Rob told him. "Some of the biggest inventors have been lying awake nights trying to fix things that way, so as to take away most of the terrible risk of flying; but so far it doesn't seem they've met with much success."

"Wait till they hear from Hiram Nelson, that's all," declared the happy scout, as he smote himself on the chest in rather a vainglorious fashion, which, however, the other two boys hardly noticed, for they knew Hiram's fondness of boasting, as he had always been afflicted in that way.

"Tell us the rest, Hi," said Andy, just as if it bored him to hear so much about the "preliminaries," when as the inventor proclaimed the best was yet to come.

[48]

"All right," said Hiram promptly. "Now you know what the scheme is I can go on and get deeper into my yarn."

"Wish you would," muttered Andy, pretending to stifle a yawn back of his hand, but that was only done in order to hurry the long-winded talker.

"I call my wonderful invention a stabilizer, because that's the use it's really intended for," continued Hiram, as though wishing to fully impress that fact upon their minds. "To tell the truth, I've had the legal documents showing that a patent had been applied for, quite some time now, though for reasons of my own I kept it all a dead secret from everybody. Mebbe yeou fellers may have noticed that I've been looking kinder mysterious the last month or two? Well, guess with such a *tremenjous* secret on your mind either of you'd a been equally absent minded. But that is past now, and I've accomplished my aim."

"Good!" Andy burst out with. "Let go your bowstring then and shoot, for goodness sake, Hiram."

[49]

"Well, of course I had it all laid out," continued the other composedly, as if it was beneath him to pay any attention to these pins that Andy was sticking into him, "and my first thought was to get in communication with some enterprising big corporation that manufactured aëroplanes for the market. All inventors have to sell their first few patents, you know, so's to get money enough to push other ideas; and if I could pick up a few thousand that way, why I'd have to let my stabilizer go."

"Then you've been corresponding with such a company, have you?" asked Rob, knowing that he could tempt the other to hurry his story in this way, just as a witness in court is drawn on by a clever lawyer's questions.

"Oh! several of them, in fact," admitted Hiram, as if that were only a minor matter, after all, "but in the end I found that a certain concern meant strictly business, and consequently I dropped all the rest."

"Have they actually made you a definite offer for your valuable invention?" asked Rob, taking considerable more interest in the matter, now that Hiram's undoubted though erratic genius seemed to be steadying down with some tangible results.

"Pretty much that way, I should call it," remarked the inventor, trying hard to appear natural, though trembling all over with excitement. "They went so far as to enclose a check big enough to cover all expenses of myself and a companion—for I was smart enough to say I'd insist on having company for advice along with me—to run out to their main works, and talk the matter over with a view to disposing of my patent rights to the device."

At that Andy's face lost the look of sneering incredulity that had been a marked feature of his listening to all this talk.

"Whew! is that a fact, Hiram?" he exclaimed. "Shake hands on it, will you? Didn't we always say that some fine day you'd be famous, and make the Eagles proud to reckon you as a member? A real check, and not on a sand bank, you mean?"

"Well, I went right away to Rob's father's bank and saw the president. He said the check was O. K. and that I could get the hard cash any time I wanted it. Why, he even called it a certified bank draft, which meant the money had been set aside in the San Francisco bank for that purpose, deducted from the account of the Golden Gate Aëroplane Manufacturing Company."

"What?" almost shrieked Andy Bowles, "say that again, will you, Hiram? Must be my mind's so filled with that Golden Gate business I just *thought* I heard you mention something like that. Repeat it, please, Hiram!"

"Why, the check came from a San Francisco bank, because you see the company is a substantial concern in California. They make some of the most famous aëroplanes on the market. If they adopt my stabilizer it's going to be heard of all over the world. And to think what a magnificent chance we've got to run out there and take in the great Panama-Pacific Exposition at the same time, Rob! It's enough to make you think you're dreaming, eh?"

"Why do you mention *me* in the game, Hiram?" demanded the patrol leader, with a smile on his face, and a knowing wink in the direction of Andy Bowles.

"Because, don't you see, Rob, I knew I didn't have a business head on me, and might get cheated out of my boots if I ran up against a smart lot of manufacturers; and so I was wise enough to insist that I be allowed to fetch along a companion. They never put up a single kick against the expense of the double bill, Rob; but the check covered railroad fare, sleeper, meals, and hotel bills while there a week, as well as the return trip to boot. That means they fancy my invention is going to be a big thing for their house. And, Rob, don't you see, I had you in mind all the while when I wrote about fetching a companion. I want you the worst kind to accept my invitation and go to the Fair at my expense.

CHAPTER V. HEADED WEST.

When he made this alluring offer Hiram Nelson was astonished to see Rob turn toward Andy, and that the pair of them actually laughed. Quite indignant at such a showing of skepticism, Hiram hastened to say:

"Don't believe a word of what I'm saying, p'raps now? Well, seeing that your dad reckoned this little paper was worth every cent it called for, suppose you take a squint at the same, Rob. You, too, Andy, and then you'll laugh on the other side of your mouth, I shouldn't wonder."

He flourished the bank draft in front of their eyes, so that both scouts could see the amount it called for in cash, and that it bore all the marks of being genuine.

"Oh! neither of us is doubting anything you say, Hiram," explained Andy effusively. "The only thing is that Rob here can't accept your generous offer, that's all."

[54]

"Can't accept?" gasped the other, looking terribly disappointed. "Why not, I'd like to know; and me countin' on having him along to advise me, and keep me from being caught napping, or robbed of my valuable papers on the road."

"I'll tell you why he isn't able to take the trip to California at your expense, Hiram," said Andy solemnly. "It's because he's already pledged himself to go with someone else. Fact is, Hiram, I'm the one who holds Rob's word."

"You—agoin' to California, Andy Bowles?" exclaimed the astonished Hiram; and his incredulous manner told that he doubted the truth of the assertion, for where could the son of the liveryman of Hampton get all the money to cover the double expense of such a lengthy trip; certainly not through any invention *his* brain had ever conceived; and no boy could ever hope to save enough out of his spending money for that.

"Yes, we've just made all arrangements for a month at the Exposition," said the Bowles boy; "that is, we have to run over to Judge Collins' place again after supper to-night, and complete the details. We expect to pull out day after tomorrow, and take a through limited train for New Orleans first, then across the plains of Texas, and the deserts of New Mexico and Arizona to Los Angeles."

[55]

Hiram sat there as though changed into stone. He hardly knew whether Andy was trying to hoodwink him or not; for the other had something of a reputation as a joker.

Rob took pity on the poor fellow.

"It's just as Andy says, Hiram," he observed seriously. "We've had a wonderful experience when out on the bay. A fire happened aboard old Captain Jerry's *Sea Gull* on account of a

passenger dropping a lighted match, so that it caused something of an explosion. The two men, somewhat scorched, tumbled overboard. We were close at hand, and by using that fire-extinguishing torch of mine managed to put out the flames before they'd done much damage. We also hauled Captain Jerry and his passenger aboard."

"Well, of all things!" gasped Hiram. "If it don't take you to do wonders, Rob Blake. Go on and tell me the rest, please. My yarn isn't in the same class with yours, it strikes me."

[56]

Rob quickly put him in possession of the facts that followed fast on the heels of the rescue, and their reaching the Castle of Judge Collins. Hiram continued to shake his head, and draw in long breaths as though almost overcome with astonishment.

"The Arabian Nights never was in it with the things that happen to you, Rob," he exclaimed, when the story was complete. "And so both of you are expecting to start overland to California right away? Well, I've got plenty of money right here, and what's to hinder our making it a party of three?"

"That strikes me as a good thing, Hiram," said Rob. "We're all scouts and comrades, after all; and you say you are afraid you'll need advice sooner or later in dealing with the manufacturers. We'll stand by you, Hiram, and there's my hand on it!"

"Bully for you, Rob!" cried the delighted inventor, whose dejected countenance immediately lighted up. "I was mighty afraid you meant to leave me out of the excursion party. Stand by me, and I'll do everything I can to help you. Three ought to be even better than just two, when it comes to counting noses."

[57]

"You made a remark just now that struck me as queer," said Rob.

"Tell me what it was, then, and I'll try to explain," Hiram ventured.

"Well, you spoke of wanting a companion along to keep you from being caught napping, or robbed of valuable papers on the way; what did you mean by the last part of that sentence? Have you any idea anyone covets your papers, and might make an attempt to rob you when you were far away from home?"

"Rob, p'raps I'm silly to think that way, but I can't help it," Hiram confessed. "You see, one of the companies I corresponded with was in New York. They even sent an agent down here to interview me, and see what I had got. I never liked that man the least bit. He struck me as a sneak, and I made up my mind the company was what you might call a snide one—wanting to steal ideas if they could. I declined to have any dealings with them, and their agent went away as mad as a hornet, even threatening that he'd get the better of me by hook or crook."

"You don't say!" ejaculated Andy. "Then, you must have squeezed his toes, Hiram; you made him squeal, and show his true colors. I give you credit for that."

[58]

"Have you heard anything from the company since?" asked Rob, hardly knowing whether to treat the implied threat seriously, or only as the ugly remark of a disappointed man who had found that Hiram was too smart for him.

"Why, every week I get a few lines from this Marsters, the man who came to see me, asking if I'm ready to do business with him. There's no threat in the letter, but there's always something to imply that he's keeping track of what I'm doing, and expects sooner or later I'll be glad to turn to him for a sale."

"And you are afraid that he even knows of your dealings with this Golden Gate Company out on the Coast, is that it, Hiram?" continued the scout leader.

[59]

"I don't know what to think," admitted Hiram. "One letter came that I know had been tampered with. It may be he's got somebody in our postoffice in his pay."

"That would be a serious thing if true," Rob told him.

"It's lucky they didn't keep out the letter that had the bank draft in it," suggested Andy.

"They might have done it," Hiram said, "only the company was smart enough to register that, and it got to me safe and sound. But, Rob, after all this might only be a big bluff Marsters is putting up. He may never bother his head about me starting off on this trip, even if he hears about it through any paid spy in Hampton. And if I've got two good chums along with me, who's afraid?"

"All the same," advised Rob, "you'd better keep this thing a dead secret. We'll agree not to say a word about it to anyone. They can know how Andy and myself have been lucky enough to get a chance to see the Exposition; and let people figure you're in the deal, too. We'll do nothing to make it seem contrary, remember that, Andy!"

[60]

"I'm on, all right, Rob," the other hastened to assure him.

"First of all," continued Rob, "be careful with that draft. If I were you I'd hand it over to my father, and then when you want the money he'll give it to you. Did you think to ask him not to mention it?"

"Yes, and he said he wouldn't, after I'd shown him the letter. He shook hands with me, Rob, and said he was as pleased as pie about it—leastways not in just those words, you know, but it meant the same thing. I'll go up right away and ask him to take charge of it for fear I may lose the paper."

After making arrangements to meet again in the afternoon so as to talk matters over and lay their plans for starting, the boys went home for lunch. All of them, of course, were fairly bubbling over with excitement; and when the story was told of what had happened on the bay, as well as the wonderful thing that came of the rescue, in at least two Hampton homes there were proud parents.

Of course, no one put the least objection in the way of Rob and Andy taking that wonderful trip.

[61]

They were thought to be the luckiest boys in all Hampton; and when the news leaked out every fellow in town flocked around to hear the particulars.

That night after supper Rob and Andy rowed over to Judge Collins' and spent a very pleasant evening with Judge Collins and his distinguished guest. Professor McEwen went into matters with a thoroughness that spoke well for his business ability, in spite of the fact of his being a scientist.

In the end it was all arranged. Rob and Andy understood just what they were expected to do in order to carry out the instructions of the Scottish professor.

"Come over to-morrow afternoon, lads, and everything will be here ready for you to take charge of," the satisfied gentleman told them as they were saying good-night. "The Judge ha'e kindly promised to see to things, sinc' I'm muckle sore, and hardly in condition to show myself in public. What I am giving into your charge can be handily carried in your grip; only I ken ye will want to be chained fast to the same all o' the time fra start to feenish."

[62]

Since there are so many things waiting to be told that befell the boys later on, there is really little need of our lingering any longer at this point than is absolutely necessary.

On the following afternoon Rob and Andy paid their last visit to the Point, and when they came away they carried a packet with them which they seemed to guard most carefully.

Besides this Rob had in his possession plenty of money to see them out to the Coast, as well as a letter of credit on a San Francisco bank that would insure a future supply.

"And if you should need even more," Judge Collins told Rob in parting, "wire to me of your necessities and it will be forthcoming, because we are both determined that you brave lads shall have the time of your lives while out there."

The boys made all their arrangements, and when the second morning rolled around there was quite a host at the station to see them take the morning train to New York, where they expected to start upon the real journey.

[63]

Sleeping-car berths had been secured in advance to New Orleans, and which would in fact carry them all the way through, since it was not their intention to stop over anywhere *en route*.

Among the relatives and friends who had assembled to see the three scouts leave for the far-distant Pacific Coast, were numerous members of the Hampton Troop. Like Rob and Andy and Hiram, these boys wore their khaki suits, and seemed proud of the badges and medals they had won the permission to sport.

Thanks to the caution suggested by Rob, no one appeared to know just how Hiram came to be in the fortunate bunch. Some accounts coupled his name with the rescue of the famous scientist who was visiting Judge Collins; while others were just as firmly convinced that there were

only two on board the *Tramp* at the time.

In the end it was set down as something of a mystery which might not be cleared up until the return of the travelers. They knew that Hiram was a very secretive sort of fellow, and that even if he accomplished something calculated to fetch him in money, he would not tell of it until he chose.

[64]

The train drew in at the station, and the three scouts got aboard amidst a perfect clamor of shouts, above which could be heard the well-known scout salute. As the conductor gave the signal for them to pull out there was a scene such as had seldom been witnessed at Hampton; which proved just how much Rob Blake, the leader of the scouts, was appreciated in his home town.

Hardly had they left the outskirts of the town behind when Hiram, who was sitting just behind Rob and Andy, leaned forward and said in a low tone:

"I'm not dead sure about it, Rob, but there was a man got aboard this train that looked a whole lot like that tricky agent I told you about, Marsters!"

[65]

CHAPTER VI. A FALSE ALARM.

"Andy, would you mind changing seats with Hiram?" asked Rob, upon hearing what the boy behind him had just said.

"Not at all; there's plenty of room still," replied the troop bugler, quickly slipping out and allowing Hiram to take his place, while he leaned forward over the back of the seat so he could join in the conversation.

"Are you sure it was this same man, Hiram?" asked Rob.

"I only had a quick look at him, and his back was toward me," explained the nervous inventor, "but I'm most certain it was that agent. He had a rather odd little limp you see, and this feller did, too."

Hiram had his hand laid upon his chest. Inside his coat he carried the precious papers, and just then the boy seemed to be more concerned about these than he was in connection with the pocketbook that reposed in a back pocket of his trousers, or the tickets he had in another repository.

"Well, keep close to both of us, that's all," said Rob. "Even if it is Marsters, the chances are he's only trying in his mean way to give you a bad feeling. I don't expect we'll be bothered with him after we get fairly started on our trip."

[66]

"But what if he tried to steal my papers from me?" said Hiram uneasily.

"He'd have a hard time doing that, with one of us on either side," affirmed Andy Bowles

confidently.

"And I wouldn't hesitate a second to hand him over to the police if he tried any of his games on us," Rob added.

"It may be he's hired some smart pickpocket to rub up against me when we get in the jam at leaving the train," Hiram told them, showing that his mind was active enough to grasp every sort of possibility, no matter how vague.

"We'll checkmate him on that easily enough," chuckled Rob. "In the first place, we don't mean to allow ourselves to get caught in any jam. When we draw into the station we'll sit tight until most of the passengers have left. Then Andy here can go and get the particulars as to where our train is standing that will take us South; for it's all one Pennsylvania station, you know. And I'll stick close to you every minute of the time."

[67]

"Yes," Andy went on to say, "you know we've got something in Rob's grip that we have to 'guard with unceasing vigilance,' as Judge Collins said, because it is of priceless value in the eyes of scientists; and its safe delivery to the head of the exhibit at the Fair will mean we've earned our trip."

Later on, when they finally left the car, Andy hurried off to pick up the needed information. They had a whole hour before the scheduled time of starting came, so none of them were anxious with regard to being left.

Hiram stood there with his bag between his feet, looking to the right and to the left. He seemed to be in constant fear lest some astonishing surprise might be sprung upon him.

"There he is now, grinning at me like an ape, Rob!" he suddenly muttered, and his voice was certainly anything but firm.

[68]

"So, that is your Marsters, is it?" demanded the other, as he discovered a slim man standing at some little distance from them, and with a satirical smile on his dark face.

"Yes, and don't you think he looks like he'd stop at nothing in order to get to the end he had in view?" asked Hiram.

"He looks like an impudent fellow to me," Rob advised, "and according to my mind he's gone to all this bother just to feel that he's had his nasty revenge on you for treating him so shabbily. To be beaten in a battle of wits by a mere boy must have riled Mr. Marsters a whole lot. Depend on it, he doesn't expect to go any further than this in the game. He's shot his bolt."

"What makes you think so, Rob?"

"The very fact that he's taking all the pains to stand there and let you see him grinning like an imp," replied the scout leader. "Now, if he really meant to chase after you on the trip, don't you see he would be doing everything he could to keep you from knowing he was around, and on the watch?"

Hiram, after he had been shown, began to see it that way, too.

[69]

"Seems as though there might be a good lot of truth in that view, Rob," he admitted. "So let him grin all he wants to. I'll laugh, too, if only to show the feller that he hasn't made me squirm a whit."

With that Hiram bent almost double, like a hinge, and seemed to be tickled half to death over some imaginary joke. He also turned and looked straight in the eyes of the man he had called Marsters, as if to let him know he did not care a snap of his fingers about his continued leering.

"You've settled his case, and cooked his goose for him," commented Rob, a minute later. "See, there he goes over yonder, and I'll be a whole lot surprised if we set eyes on Marsters again."

"But, Rob, I'm determined to act as though I fully expected him to be creeping around all the time. I'm playing up to the old saying that an ounce of prevention is worth more'n a hull pound of cure."

[70]

"It's a good idea," was all Rob told him, for just then he saw Andy hurrying toward them, and from his manner guessed the other must have obtained the needed information.

Once they were settled in the sleeping-car, Hiram began to feel better, though it might be noticed that he eyed every person who came aboard as though he more than half suspected the revengeful Marsters, baffled in securing the wonderful invention for his firm, might assume some marvelous disguise in order to be near the traveling genius, so as to rob him on the road.

"We're off!" exclaimed Andy joyously, as the train started, drawn by an electric motor, and heading through the tunnel that would take them under the North River to Jersey, and thence across the Hackensack Meadows to Newark and beyond.

Everything looked bright and cheerful that morning when the three scouts began their long journey calculated to land them eventually inside the portals of the big Exposition on the Pacific Coast, and which was being held to commemorate the opening of the Panama Canal.

Certainly never before had Boy Scouts been enabled to start forth upon a trip of such magnitude, and under such happy auspices. With all their expenses paid, and the grandest possible time looming up ahead of them, it was not to be wondered at that Rob and his two chums counted themselves the luckiest fellows on the face of the globe.

[71]

All of them were fond of traveling, and that first day was a constant picnic for the scouts. It happened that Rob and Andy had been over the route before, since it was this way they had gone to Mexico when with Merritt Crawford and Tubby Hopkins. On that occasion they had undertaken the carrying out of that mission connected with the disposal of the cattle on the ranch Dr. Mark Matthews, the globe-trotter and explorer, owned across the Rio Grande, his old-time friend General Villa seeing that he was properly paid with the funds held by the Revolutionary party.^[2]

This being the case, they were able to direct the attention of Hiram to many interesting objects on the way. Hiram had never been a hundred miles outside of Hampton in all his life; and therefore he stared and commented continually as the train rushed along through stretches of the country around Washington and beyond as the day drew near its close.

Remembering what Judge Collins, as well as the Scotch professor, had told them in connection with the contents of Rob's grip, they kept it down at their feet constantly; for they had the whole section, Andy having promised to occupy the upper berth, as he knew Hiram would feel safer in company with Rob below.

"You haven't seen anything suspicious the whole day long, have you, Hiram?" Rob asked him, as they prepared to go into the dining-car for their supper, two at a time, and the third staying to look after things, as well as keep his foot on the precious grip.

"Well, not that you could really call *suspicious*" admitted the other, "but seemed like several parties looked right hard at me as they passed through agoin' to that meal car."

"Oh, shucks!" said Andy, leaning across from his seat to speak in a low tone, "that all comes from you being worked up the way you are. Chances are they must a' seen the budding genius breaking out all over your face in the shape of freckles, Hiram, and wondered who on earth you could be."

"Well, I always figger that it's best to be on the safe side, no matter if other people do make out to snicker at you, and call you timid. It's poor policy to shut the door of the stable after the hoss is stolen, my dad says; and your folks would agree with me there, Andy, seeing that they have a heap to do with hosses. Do I go in with you to grub, Rob, or wait here for my turn?"

"I leave that with Andy," Rob remarked indifferently; "if he feels too hungry to stay here for us to come back, let him take the first show. Here comes the waiter to give the call."

Andy immediately said that it pleased him to wait and take his time.

"I like to be easy in my mind when I'm trying to get the worth of a big dollar in dinner," he continued, "and if I keep on thinking of you fellows counting the minutes while I'm gone, it hurries me too much; and that's bad for your digestion, you know. So skip along, and I'll hug the seat here till you get back. Make up your mind, Rob, everything will be safe enough. I'm Johnny on the spot when it comes to standing guard."

In this fashion all of them managed to get their supper. The night closed in and the full moon lighted up the wonderful scenery of the valleys they were speeding through, headed toward the southwest, and into the land of sugarcane, oranges, cotton and rice.

Hiram, when he could take his mind away from the fascinating prospect of doing a lucrative business with the enterprising firm that had invited him all the way out to the Coast, was full

of questions regarding the wonderful things he expected to see later on when they reached a section of the country that was radically different from Long Island.

He had always wanted to visit the South, and this culmination of his hopes filled him with ecstasy. The presence of such a steady chum as Rob Blake did much to add to Hiram's peace of mind, it can be readily believed; for he felt sure that no matter what troubles might spring up to confront him on the journey, the efficient scout leader would be equal to any emergency.

[75]

Hiram had the utmost confidence in Rob Blake. It was founded on what he had seen the other accomplish; and, besides, the things he had heard concerning that Mexican trip, as well as the journey across to the war zone of Europe, had added to his respect.

All that night they boomed steadily on.

Rob slept with Hiram in the lower berth, and occupied the side nearer the aisle, so as to ease the nervous chum's mind as much as possible. Like most new and inexperienced travelers, Hiram hardly slept a wink that first night; much of the time he had the window-shade drawn back, and lay there staring at the ghostly objects that could be seen flitting past the window—cabins, trees, settlements, barns, orchards, rivers and all manner of things the ever speeding train was passing in its wake.

When morning finally came they were so well along their way that the country had taken on a new aspect, and Hiram's interest grew by leaps and bounds. What was more, since he could still feel that precious packet inside his coat, where he had at Rob's solicitation pinned it inside his pocket, Hiram's confidence became much stronger, and the anxious look began to leave his thin face.

[76]

[77]

CHAPTER VII. ACROSS THE CONTINENT.

"We ought to be in Los Angeles inside of five hours, boys."

Hiram had kept his face glued against the window so much of the time during the long journey, when it happened to be closed, that Andy told him he was getting a distinct curve to his classic Roman nose. He turned on hearing Rob make this assertion, after consulting the time-table.

"Well, for one, I must say I won't be sorry," he admitted, with a sigh.

"But see here, I thought you were having the time of your life with all this traveling, and seeing so many wonderful sights?" expostulated Andy.

"That's all right, I am," admitted Hiram. "Still, a feller can get too much of a good thing, can't he? Haven't you stuffed yourself more'n once because you liked the food first-class, and then

[78]

wished afterward you had gone slow? Fact is, I just can't sleep while we're ding-donging along like hot cakes. I want to be on a steady footing for a while, and go to bed like a civilized human being."

"But it's been a great trip," said Andy. "Those Injuns at the stations in Arizona were real true-blood Zuffis, all right. I'm mighty glad, though, we've made up our minds to go back by way of the Canadian Pacific road, so as to see what the picturesque Selkirks look like."

"Yes," added Rob, "I've read so much about the Rockies up in British America I want to see them with my own eyes. The weather will be a whole lot better than in the southern zone, where it's terrible in summer."

"Oh! don't let's talk about coming back before we've even got there," expostulated Hiram, looking unhappy. "I've got an awful lot to do before I turn my face homeward. I hope it all comes out right, and that the Golden Gate Company acts square with me."

"If you get some money, Hiram, I suppose it's all laid out before now in experiments that you've wanted to start and couldn't?" Andy hinted.

[79]

"Well, what would you have me do with the stuff?" demanded the inventor indignantly. "I expect to devote my hull life to science. Hoarding money and discoveries in the realm of science don't go hand in hand. You'll notice that all the big bugs of professors don't seem to care a lickin' thing about the cash they gain. What they're after is fame and glory. Some day—but never mind that now."

"You were going to tell us we might live to see you famous, eh, Hiram?" Andy chuckled. "Well, stranger things have happened. Men have become president of these United States, and those who played with the same as boys never dreamed such a thing would ever come about. There's always room at the top."

"Five hours will soon pass," Hiram went on to say, without paying any attention to the little slur there seemed to be in this remark on the part of the other.

"There's one thing I want to speak to you about," said Rob, his face assuming a look of gravity that impressed Hiram very much.

[80]

"What, me, do you mean, Rob?" he asked hurriedly.

"Yes," Rob told him. "Here's what it is. I've noticed that you keep on putting up your hand every little while, and feeling to see that your papers are safe inside your coat. It's become second nature with you, the habit's grown so strong."

"Well, you told me to keep my mind on that matter, and never to forget it; and so every time it crops up I guess I feel to make doubly sure. What is there wrong about that, Rob, tell me?"

"Only this, Hiram; you're getting so careless that you do it openly, and in such a way as to attract attention. If a person happened to see you do it once and then later on saw the movement

repeated, his curiosity might be aroused, so that he would fall into the way of watching how often you did it."

"He might, that's so," muttered the disturbed Hiram uneasily.

"And then the idea would become a conviction that you must be carrying something very valuable in that inner pocket. You see, if the parties chanced to be crooked, that would make them figure how they could get hold of your property. So the very movement which you meant to be a safeguard would prove your undoing."

[81]

"Rob, I'll try and quit that, if you think it best," promised the other, apparently more or less impressed with the logic the scout leader had brought to bear on the subject.

"That's all very well, Hiram, but I'm afraid your repentance comes too late to do much good," Rob told him, at which the inventor gave a start, and into his eyes there crept a look of concern.

"Whatever can you mean by saying that, Rob?" he asked in a troubled voice.

"I'll tell you," said Rob. "I'm afraid that you've already attracted the attention you wanted to avoid."

"What! here on this train, in this sleeper?" whispered Hiram, appalled.

"Don't look up now, when I mention the matter, because they might see you, for I expect they're watching us. Both of you have undoubtedly noticed two men who sit back of you, and at the end of the car, one of them small and stout, the other tall and slim?"

[82]

"Yes," Andy admitted, "the tall one nodded when he passed, and acted like he wanted to open up a talk with me, but I turned to the window again as if I was too much taken up with the scenery here to bother."

"And the stout one nodded to me when he caught my eye," said Hiram. "Course I nodded back, but made out not to look that way again."

"Well, they've been holding considerable conversation in low tones," explained Rob. "I could manage to glimpse them in the glass at our end of the car, though they didn't suspect me of spying. Every time either of you thought to get up, or even turn your heads they made out to be half asleep, with their eyes shut; but I could see they were talking about you."

"Then mebbe that Marsters did send emissaries along with me to try and steal the product of my brains!" complained Hiram, with compressed lips and stern demeanor.

[83]

"Oh! that doesn't follow at all," Rob assured him. "These fellows may just happen to be a pair of hard cases always on the lookout for signs of a paying haul. When they noticed how you kept feeling of your inside pocket they guessed from the signs you must have something worth while hidden away there. Men who make their living from the world by sharp tricks get to read character wonderfully well."

"Yes," Andy put in just then, "they say that old and experienced customs inspectors can tell from a person's looks in nine cases out of ten whether he or she is trying to smuggle things into the country without declaring them."

"What can I do about it then, Rob?" asked Hiram.

"I've got a plan that would fill the bill," he was told.

"Yes, go on and tell me, Rob."

"You come with me into the car ahead. We'll sit in the smoking compartment for a few minutes if it happens to be empty. There you can give me your packet, and I'll fasten it inside my coat, handing over some worthless papers for you to do up as if they were priceless in value, to pin in your pocket instead. Do you get what I'm telling you, Hiram?"

[84]

"Rob, count me in," the other replied hastily. "It's a good thing, for even if they did happen to rob me they'd be having their pains for nothing. When you're ready, give me the tip and I'll follow after you."

"Andy," Rob continued impressively, "as we pass out you change your seat so that you're facing the two men. In that way you can seem to be watching, and they're not so apt to follow after us."

"All right," muttered Andy; "any time you see fit I'm ready."

Rob first of all made a little packet with some old letters taken from his pocket, and which he had been thinking of discarding for some time. This he could do without exposing his hands above the shelter afforded by the back of the seat.

"All ready, Hiram; get up, and seem to be coaxing me to go with you. Finally, lay hold of my sleeve and pull me. I'll act as if I didn't much care to accompany you. That will serve to divert attention; and as you pass the men turn your eyes the other way. If you can be saying something about some one being glad to see me, it would make them believe we knew a passenger in one of the forward cars."

[85]

How Rob did look to the small details of everything he undertook! He knew from past experiences that after all these are what bring success in the long run.

Although Rob had told Hiram to turn his head the other way while nearing the two suspicious men, he himself gave them a nod in passing, just the salutation one traveler is apt to bestow upon another when they have been fellow passengers in the same car for hours, perhaps days.

Rob did that purposely; he knew it would serve to allay any suspicion that may have been bred in the minds of the men to the effect that their actions had been observed.

Once in the car ahead, they found that for a wonder the smoking compartment happened to be empty. Taking advantage of this chance, Hiram hurriedly unpinned the packet he had guarded so closely, and gave it into the

[86]

possession of his chum. In its stead he secured the dummy in his pocket.

All this had consumed hardly two minutes of time. Rob was careful to notice that not a single soul had passed the door of the compartment; and as soon as the exchange had been effected he stepped out in order to take a survey of the car, to find that neither of the two suspicious men had actually followed them from the other sleeper.

"That job's finished, and I feel a whole lot easier in my mind," admitted Hiram.

"No matter whether I was right or not, there's no harm been done," Rob told him; "and now, Hiram, see that every five minutes or so you keep on feeling your coat as you were doing it before. I'm more than curious to know whether they'll try it or not."

"Well," chuckled the other, as if amused, "if they don't it isn't goin' to be for want of chances, I tell you that, Rob."

[87]

"Let's get back to our places," the scout leader added, "because I don't feel altogether safe away from my suitcase, with all that wonderful stuff in it the professor said represented so much research and effort that made it priceless."

The two men were there as they had left them. Rob again nodded carelessly when he found that the short man was eagerly watching to catch his eyes; but he did not stop to enter into any conversation when the other made some casual remark, only replying over his shoulder as he passed on.

"They kept talking like a blue streak while you were gone," said Andy, after the other two had seated themselves. "Twice the tall man stepped off as if he meant to follow you, but he must have thought better of it, for he turned back before getting out of the car, and shook his head at the other one. They are up to something evil, Rob, take my word for it."

"We only have one more meal aboard the train, and then comes the hotel at Los Angeles," said Hiram. "I guess we can hold 'em off that much longer."

[88]

"You see how you can overdo things by being too much on your guard, Hiram," Rob explained. "Only for the way you kept on feeling your pocket they would never have suspected that Boy Scouts traveling alone could own anything worth stealing. The best way to do is to make things secure, and then appear to forget all about them."

"I will at another time, Rob; but between the way that Marsters acted, and the caution these people on the Coast impressed on me, it all got on my nerves. You see, I thought it was only business to tell the Golden Gate people how Eastern concerns had men buzzing me continually to sell to them. That made them warn me not to take anyone into my confidence while traveling. They know some unscrupulous firms would steal an idea as big as my invention, if they could get away with it. But it's all right now, and they can whistle for their prize for all I

CHAPTER VIII.

A SHOCK AT LOS ANGELES.

The time passed, and when one of the waiters passed through to announce supper, the boys had laid out their program. As before, Rob and Hiram were to go first, while Andy held the fort for them.

"Remember and don't leave the seat under any condition while we're gone," was what the scout leader told Andy.

"Do you suspect that they might even try to get away with our hand baggage?" asked the other. "I thought it was only Hiram's pockets they wanted to explore."

"If they are thieves nothing is safe from them," explained Rob. "'An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.' Keep your foot on my bag as you sit here. If anybody tries to tempt you to change seats just say you've got a bone in your leg, and don't care to move around more than you can help."

"Sure thing!" chuckled Andy; "it hurts terribly, too; and the only thing that is able to make me use it is the walk to the dinner—the cake-walk I call it. Leave it all to me, Rob; I'm frozen to this seat."

Accordingly, the pair passed along the aisle and headed for the dining-car. Again the two men did their best to be civil, even nodding and smiling genially as the two boys passed them.

"Rob, they're chasing after us!" muttered Hiram, in some little anxiety, just as he and his chum had entered the next car and were passing along the narrow corridor.

"All right, there's no law to prevent them from getting hungry at the same time we do," replied Rob over his shoulder.

"But they may choose to sit down with us at the same table, and make themselves chummy," objected the other.

"I guess not if we know it," Rob told him.

"How can we help it without making some sort of scene?" asked Hiram.

"That's easy enough, if we can pick a table that only accommodates two," explained the scout leader, "and as we're in the advance, we have our choice."

"Oh!"

Evidently, Hiram was considerably relieved by what his comrade had said. He once more realized that Rob promised to be equal to the occasion. Indeed, the record of past achievements should have told Hiram this long ago; but in the presence of new dangers he was apt to forget what splendid things Rob had

accomplished on other occasions when the tide seemed adverse.

Upon entering the dining-car Rob smiled to see that there was just one table seating two that did not have some one at it.

"There's our chance, Rob, down at the further end of the car!" said Hiram hastily, as though he feared the other might not see the table.

Rob took the chair that placed his back against the partition. This allowed him to survey the rest of the car. Nothing could have suited his plans better, for there was a small mirror that he could use to spy upon the two men who were now sitting facing him, halfway up the car.

As the meal progressed and evening drew on, the electric lights in the diner were turned on. Hiram somehow seemed to lack his voracious appetite.

[92]

"Don't just know what's the cause, Rob," he remarked, when the other accused him of not disposing of much of the food he had ordered, "it may be the rocking of the car, which is fierce just now; or else it comes of my riding backward. I've been told that some people never can stand for that. But I guess I won't starve to death between now and morning."

The two men talked a good deal, but then there was nothing suspicious in that. Rob also noticed that they watched him and companion from time to time, as if their interest kept on growing.

When Hiram happened to think of his instructions, and occasionally raised a hand to feel for his coat in the region of that inner pocket, Rob kept a close watch on the men. He could plainly see the shorter one nudge his companion in the side, and say something, for his lips moved. Undoubtedly he was calling the other's attention to Hiram's suggestive movement, and while not a lip-reader, Rob could easily imagine him saying half under his breath:

[93]

"See, there he goes at it again! Just as we decided, he must have something rich hidden away there. And we're fools if we don't make a big bid for it!"

Rob was by this time fully satisfied that the men had evil designs on his comrade's inside pocket. He was determined to be unusually careful about riding in a public conveyance while in Los Angeles, since that would give the rascals a chance to accomplish their purpose.

"If you're satisfied, Hiram, let's be getting out of here," said Rob, who had seen the two men getting an extra portion of food, believing that this might be a good chance to leave them in the lurch, since they would hardly jump up and accompany the boys, for fear of attracting attention.

The two scouts quickly arose, seized their hats, and passed along between the tables, which were pretty generally occupied by that time. Rob took occasion to keep his eyes on the two men, for several reasons. He even returned their nods as though no such thing as a suspicion regarding their honesty had come into his head.

[94]

"They missed that chance, anyhow!" Hiram remarked, as with some difficulty they threaded their way through the next car, for the train was making fast time, and things rolled more or less.

"We've got to keep on the alert all the time if we expect to leave those smart chaps in the lurch," Rob told him. "You know the old saying, 'eternal vigilance is the price of liberty,' and it applies to us right now."

"Then you don't think they've given up all hope yet, Rob?"

"That kind of men never do until they've exhausted every plan," the scout leader replied. "I expect that right now they've got some scheme in mind they mean to spring on us if they get but half a chance."

Reaching their section in the sleeper, they sent Andy ahead to get his supper. He told them he was as hungry as a wolf, and would make up for what Hiram failed to dispose of, so that the company should not get too rich off what they paid into its coffers.

[95]

After a while the men came in and took their seats. Rob was a little afraid one of them might be bold enough to push himself upon them. He had prepared for this during their absence by having Hiram sit alongside of him next the window, while the other seat was piled high with some of their luggage, thus offering no chance for a third party to find room.

But it proved a false alarm. Neither of the men made any advance whatever, and Rob believed they had figured that action on their part while on the train might get them into trouble.

"The time will come when we are in the station at Los Angeles," he told Hiram.

"Do you really think so?" asked the other curiously; and it might be noticed that he did not seem to be trembling any longer; for since his packet was safe in the possession of Rob Blake, Hiram did not see any necessity for further worrying over the matter.

"We must be careful every minute of the time until we reach the hotel," the scout leader explained.

[96]

"Huh! do you know, Rob, what I've got a good notion to do?"

"Be reckless, perhaps," chuckled the other, guessing this, perhaps, from the little boastful strain he detected in the language Hiram used.

"Why, to be frank with you, Rob, I really feel sorry for those chumps. They've taken a whole lot of interest in a poor country chap like me, and it seems a shame they should be bitterly disappointed."

"Oh! that's the way things set, do they?" continued Rob. "You feel so bad on their account that you're tempted to give them a chance to steal that dummy packet you have fastened inside your pocket?"

"I've gone so far as to take the pin out, you see," chuckled Hiram. "If they do get busy they needn't have the worry of that to keep them

back. And when you look at it in the right light, Rob, wouldn't that be just the quickest way to get rid of the slick rascals?"

"Well, the chances are that if they did manage to lay hands on your packet, they'd disappear in a big hurry, Hiram."

[97]

"All right, then. Let them make the opportunity, and I'll try to be as accommodating as possible. You know, Rob, that I'm said to be an easy mark among the boys of Hampton. I hate to disappoint anybody in the worst way."

"Here comes Andy, and he looks as if he has enjoyed his supper first-rate, too," Rob remarked. "I hope he doesn't let them get him into conversation for an entering wedge. I forgot to warn him about that."

Apparently Andy was wise enough on his own account to know the folly of such a move, as he pushed past the two men, paying no attention even when one of them plucked at his sleeve.

"One more hour and we'll be there, the conductor told me," he announced.

"Then we must be about on time, according to the schedule," said Hiram, who had worn his time-table almost to shreds by consulting it so often on the long journey from New York City.

They proceeded to get all their belongings in shape, so there would be nothing to delay them, once the station was reached. Rob had decided to take a carriage to the Hotel Alexandria, and thus avoid all possible contact with strangers.

[98]

When the porter announced that they were entering Los Angeles there was considerable confusion, as passengers caught up such of their hand luggage as had not been already piled near the door by the porter.

Rob had resolutely declined to let the negro touch his suitcase, though his liberal tip to the man made him eager to be of some assistance. The boy knew that at this point there was apt to crop up a crisis; and also that the good record held up to that time might be shattered through any carelessness on his part.

Consequently, he held fast to his grip as he followed Hiram out of the car, this mode of procedure having all been settled upon beforehand. It gave Rob a chance to keep his eagle eye on the figure of Hiram; and so long as he was able to do that he did not believe the other could be spirited away, or his pocket picked.

"Look out for getting in a crush, Hiram," Rob whispered in the other's ear as they passed along the narrow corridor.

[99]

"They went out ahead of us, Rob," Hiram informed him, as he turned his head.

"Yes, I know that, but we're going to run up against those men again before we are out of this scrape," the scout leader prophesied.

"Well, I'm awful glad we're in at last. That was a long trip, and I'm tired of the old car," said the one in the lead. "Thank goodness we'll soon be landed in San Francisco, where my business can

be settled, one way or the other.”

“I see them, Rob!” announced Andy, just then.

“Yes, and they’re waiting for us, just as I thought,” ventured Rob. “We’ll push straight on to where we can get a carriage, and then leave them in the lurch. Above all, nobody must stop to talk; keep walking, and stick together!”

“That’s understood, Rob!” came from Hiram; while Andy in the rear gave a grunt as if to signify that he had it all fixed in his mind.

There was a lively scene as friends rushed this way and that to find those for whom they were waiting; and as the three scouts walked steadily along in line, headed for the exit where the carriages were to be found, the two men suddenly appeared alongside them.

[100]

“Sorry to bother you young fellows,” said the tall man, in a low but commanding voice, “but we are United States marshals, and you must consider yourselves bound to come with us, for you are under arrest!”

[101]

CHAPTER IX.

TURNING THE TABLES ON TWO ROGUES.

“Arrested! Oh! my stars!” ejaculated Hiram, falling to trembling when he felt the hand of the tall stranger drop heavily upon his shoulder.

“Whew! this is a warm reception to California for a fact!” burst out Andy, in considerable consternation, as he dropped his bundles, and stood there staring at the two mysterious men.

Rob, too, was somewhat staggered at the abrupt accusation, though he quickly rallied his senses, and found his tongue.

“Where’s your warrant for doing this?” he demanded of the shorter man, who immediately flipped back his coat to disclose some sort of nickel badge pinned to his vest, not giving Rob enough time to make it out.

“We don’t need any warrant, being in the service of the Government,” this worthy assured him in as gruff a tone as possible.

“But who do you take us for, and what are we accused of doing?” asked Rob, continuing to keep a firm grip on his suitcase through it all, though he allowed his eyes to rove around in search of a policeman.

[102]

“Never mind about that, my boy; you will find it all out after we have arraigned you before the United States Commissioner. We’ve been watching your party for some time, and believe we’ve bagged the right birds. Now, for your sake, we don’t want to make a scene, so we’ll just lock arms with you, and pass out of the station that way to take a vehicle. If you know what’s good for you, pay no attention to any one; and if you attempt to escape, remember, we’re

prepared to shoot.”

The tall man at that eagerly thrust a hand through the left arm of Hiram, who made no resistance. Rob, even in that exciting moment, noticed that he had managed to get on the side nearest the pocket where the inventor had placed his valuable papers, now snugly reposing on Rob’s person. It was very significant, to say the least; and Rob began immediately to discover what Hiram would have called “the nigger in the woodpile.”

“Come on, then, boys,” said Rob, “we’re in for it, and there’s no need of kicking up any disturbance. We’ll go before the Commissioner and prove our innocence.”

[103]

“That’s right sensible of you, young fellow!” declared the shorter man, as he took hold of Rob’s arm and escorted him along.

Other people were pushing past, but were so busy with their own affairs that they did not seem to pay any attention to the little drama being enacted on the station platform.

A minute later and Rob believed the time had come to act.

“Not that way, son; we’re meaning to take a carriage over here,” said the tall man, designating the opposite direction to that in which Rob had turned.

“Please yourselves, gentlemen,” said Rob, suddenly displaying quite a different manner. “We’ve decided that *we* want to go out this way; and that policeman standing there has his eye on us this very minute. I think I had better call him over and ask him to get you to show your colors.”

“That’s the stuff!” said Andy, recklessly, all the pent-up indignation that had been boiling within him breaking loose.

[104]

Had a bomb fallen near them, the two men could not have shown more concern. They must have realized that their shrewd little game had been called.

“Guess we’ve made a mistake about this business, McGuire!” said the short man, hastily looking around him as though desirous of discovering a good opening for flight.

“Seems that way to me, Colonel; and we’ll say good-by to you, boys!”

“Why, they’ve gone!” cried Andy, as though he could hardly believe his eyes.

Rob had really been on the point of summoning the officer standing there; but since the rascals had chosen to run and mingle with the out-pouring crowd, and Rob did not wish to have attention called to himself and chums, he wisely held his tongue.

Hiram was laughing to himself as though it struck him in the light of a good joke.

[105]

“What ails you, Hiram?” asked Andy, not yet able to grasp the situation sufficiently to see the humorous side of it.

"I'm only wondering what they'll say when they come to find out how they've been so badly sold, that's all," replied the inventor, again indulging in one of his laughing fits.

"Did they get it?" demanded Rob, instantly, guessing that there was a reason for all this hilarity on the part of the other chum.

"Oh! he slicked it out of my pocket the cutest way you ever saw," replied Hiram. "I felt his hand going in, so I held my breath to give him all the chance I could; and he did it, too, sure he did!"

"Got the papers, you mean, don't you, Hiram?" asked Rob.

"The dummy you made up for me, Rob."

Then both the others had occasion to smile broadly.

"Hope they'll enjoy reading those letters the boys wrote me while we were over in Europe last fall," Rob remarked.

"I'd give a heap to see them when they find what a wonderful windfall they've struck to pay them for all their trouble," said Andy.

"Well, let's get a conveyance and start for the Alexandria without any more delay," advised the scout leader.

"Me for a comfy bed to-night," Hiram laughed; "better get a room with plenty of space for all of us, Rob. After this excitement to greet us on reaching California, I think it would be as well to stick together till we've unloaded our cargo, and have our time to ourselves."

They were soon at the hotel. They were taken up to the fifth floor, on which were three connecting rooms.

"High enough up so we needn't be afraid of any one climbing in at the window," Hiram remarked, after he had first of all taken in the view, with the late moon just peeping above the mountains in the east.

"Oh! no danger of those two fellows chasing after us any longer," laughed Andy. "They got their fill of it, and will pick out somebody besides scouts for their next victims. Who got bit, I want to know?"

As everybody laughed and seemed satisfied, it could be set down as positive that the three scouts were not feeling badly over the adventure that had marked their introduction to the Coast.

The night passed without any incident worthy of recording. Hiram declared that he never knew a single thing after his head touched the pillow; he was so much in need of a good night's sleep that he must have dropped off instantly, to be finally aroused by hearing Rob announce it was time for breakfast.

They determined to put their valuables in the hotel safe, and spend several days in and around Los Angeles, though they would not have time to run down to San Diego and visit the other big exposition which was in full blast there.

[106]

[107]

This they did, and enjoyed every minute of the time, though they were never long in one place, so many things did they have to see.

It being Hiram's first chance to look upon tropical vegetation, he was highly delighted with what he saw in the streets and public gardens of the bustling city.

[108]

Then they went out to visit an orange grove, and besides that, inspected numerous enterprises connected with the great fruit-growing belt around Riverside. This place the boys were ready to declare—with its groves covering the broad valley, and with the mountains, their tops snow-covered, looming up beyond—to be the most delightful town on the face of the earth.

But the boys came to the conclusion that while all these things were truly wonderful and especially delightful, they had not come out to the coast on a pleasure jaunt; and hence no further time should be spent in this way until they had accomplished the several duties that awaited their attention.

"I've made arrangements for seats in the parlor-car with the train leaving to-morrow morning," Rob announced on the second evening, as they discussed supper and the many things they had seen since early morning.

"When will we get to San Francisco then?" asked Hiram.

[109]

"After dark," Rob informed him. "It's more than three hundred miles away, you know, for California is a big State, especially from north to south."

"According to that, then, Rob," continued the other, "on the day after to-morrow we ought to be taking in some of the sights of the World's Fair."

"That's our programme," admitted the leader and guide of the expedition, as he threw down his napkin, and pushed his chair away, in which he was copied a little reluctantly, perhaps, by both his companions.

"Excuse me for not asking if you were through, Hiram," said Rob in an aside, "but honestly I was afraid Andy would founder if he ate any more. He's developed such an enormous appetite since landing here, there's liable to be an explosion unless we watch him pretty close."

"He'll eat up all your spare cash, that's the worst of it," complained Hiram, who was a little inclined to be close with his money as a rule; possibly because he had found a pressing need for every dollar in conducting his numerous experiments, for it costs more or less to "potter" with schemes along the line of invention.

[110]

Rob only laughed, and it was very evident that this contingency did not worry him to any great extent. He knew there were ample funds at hand for all ordinary expenses, with more coming if needed.

They were off on the morning train, and all through that day enjoyed the scenery that was spread out before them—through Santa Barbara and on up until it reached San Francisco.

That day's journey would never be forgotten by any of the three scouts. They stored a thousand incidents away in their memories for future enjoyment.

As evening came on they knew they must be getting in the vicinity of the great city that had recovered from the horrors of the earthquake and destruction by fire with such marvelous speed as to awaken the admiration of the whole world.

"You can see the light in the sky whenever the train makes a turn," remarked Andy to Hiram who, as usual, had his nose glued against the glass.

[111]

Taking a carriage after they had left the train they soon found themselves installed at the Fairmont Hotel, which Rob had been told to patronize by Judge Collins, because of its fine view of San Francisco Bay, and the Golden Gate, as well as possibly the glimpses to be obtained of the illuminated towers in the Exposition grounds along the shore.

It was after nine when they arrived, and of course the boys were not foolish enough to think of attempting anything until they had slept, and felt reinvigorated.

Looking from the windows of the large room they had taken, with two double beds in it, they went into raptures over the scene. The moon, though due before long, had not yet risen, and it seemed as though a million lights dazzled their eyes in every direction, and made it look like a scene from fairyland.

And so, in due time, they sought their beds, and slept so close to the Great Exposition that it would seem as though the whirr of innumerable wheels in Machinery Hall, or the murmur of the multitude of visitors roaming about the extensive grounds, must of necessity be borne aloft to the ears of the three eager lads who had come thousands of miles to view the wonders of the display.

[112]

But, at any rate, they managed to put in a restful night, and when morning routed them from their beds, they were in fine fettle to begin the first day's sight-seeing.

[113]

CHAPTER X.

WITHIN THE GATES OF THE FAIR.

"What about those papers of mine, Rob? Had I better take charge of the same now, or let you continue to keep them?"

Hiram asked this question as they arose after finishing their breakfast, and found themselves facing the business of the first day at the Exposition. The whole city, as far as they could see, was in gala attire. Bunting and flags were everywhere visible; and it was evident that the good people of San Francisco, in spite of many great discouragements, such as the breaking out of the World War abroad, and the failure of the

canal to stay dug on account of the slides, were doing all in their power to make the fair a huge success.

"If you leave it with me to decide, Hiram," the scout leader remarked, "I'd say no to both your propositions."

"But what's to be done with them, then?" cried Hiram, as though puzzled by what the other had just said.

[114]

"He means to duplicate our plan down at Los Angeles," spoke up wideawake Andy.

"Oh! put them in the hotel safe till they're wanted, is that the idea, Rob?" demanded the owner of the said packet that had been giving them all manner of trouble since the time they left San Antonio in Texas.

"That seems the best scheme, according to my mind," Hiram was told by the one in whom he felt such abiding faith. "Then, no matter what you find out about those people you've come to see, the papers needn't worry you."

"Guess you're right about that, Rob, and it's a go. Just as like as not I would be doing some fool play, and mebbe losing the precious documents that are to prove my case with the Golden Gate folks. I'll go to the desk with you any time you're ready, and see that the clerk gets my property snugged away in his safe."

When this had been done they set out. Rob, of course, had his suitcase along with him. He had taken out what few things of his own it contained, and now it held only the precious documents and other small exhibits that Professor McEwen had been carrying in person to his scientific colleagues at the Exposition, where they were to be placed with other articles.

[115]

What those numerous small rolls and packages contained none of the scouts really knew. From some remarks, let fall by Judge Collins, Rob had an idea they might be papyrus records found in some old ancient tomb or pyramid, and said to have come down from thousands of years back. To the boys these would not have been worth their bulk in sandwiches, possibly, because they could not appreciate their intrinsic value; but in the eyes of such men as the Scotch professor they represented treasures beyond any computation, far too valuable to be intrusted to a common express company that might lose them, or deliver them in a crushed condition.

"There's a tower I can see; it must be the one that from our window last night seemed as if a million fireflies had lighted on it," announced Andy, with more or less excitement as they found themselves close to one of the gates where entrance to the Exposition grounds could be had.

"Yes, that must be the Tower of Jewels," said Rob, "and I should call it pretty well named in the bargain. They've certainly chosen a splendid spot for the Fair, fronting, as it does, on the bay, with its wide sweep of water, and with the city rising up on tiers of terraces back of it."

[116]

"That must be the Zone over there," Andy

continued, eagerly; "because you can see a monster seesaw, with one arm away up hundreds of feet in the air, and what looks like a car on it full of folks. Yes, I remember it now; it is called the Aëroscope."

"Just what it is, Andy," said Rob, "and when we get up there for a look over the harbor, the Exposition grounds and the city, we'll find ourselves just three hundred and twenty-five feet off the earth—high enough to make you dizzy."

"Huh! seems like they do things on a big scale out this way," grunted Hiram.

"I reckon our Coney Island would hardly be in the swim with this show," Andy declared, as they paid their way at the gate and entered the grounds.

[117]

Colossal buildings could be seen on all sides, most of them dazzling in the sunlight. Rob had studied the arrangement of these buildings so well that he appeared to recognize them now as though entirely familiar with his surroundings. It was evident that the little party would not have much use for a guide as long as Rob was along to serve them in that capacity.

"I calculate that this is the Panama-Pacific Court of the Universe," he told his chums, "and that building over there is the Palace of Agriculture, while this other must be the Palace of Transportation; then there's the Palace of Horticulture where you can see that huge glass dome. Over there is the Column of Progress, more than a hundred and fifty feet high, and overlooking the Marino."

The boys surveyed these sights with more or less awe.

"I suppose," ventured Hiram, "after we've nosed around here for a week or two we'll feel as much to hum with these big buildings as if we were in Hampton, and lookin' at our Odd Fellows' Temple. But what a heap of things they must all of 'em hold. It'll keep us hustlin' to see the hull lot, workin' ten hours a day for weeks."

[118]

"Oh! well, none of us expect to see everything that's on exhibit here," said Rob. "Our tastes are not wholly alike, either. I may want to spend most of my time in a certain quarter that wouldn't interest you other fellows to any great extent; and on your part I've no doubt there are certain things that will hold you spellbound, yet which we may only care to take one good look at."

At that Andy started to chuckle.

"I warrant you I can guess where Hiram will be found pretty much all his time at the show," he remarked, pointedly; and of course the other scout felt impelled to take him up on that positive assertion.

"Say where, then, if you know so much, Mr. Smarty," he asked Andy.

"Just as soon as he gets the locations down pat," began the other, "you'll never see him a great way off from the quarter where the inventions are being exhibited. He's daffy on mechanics

[119]

and such things; and he'll be worse than any sticking plaster you ever saw, once he gets planted in front of the booths, or finds out where the aëroplanes are going up every little while."

"Oh! well, I own up that's mostly what I wanted to come all the way out here for," said Hiram, frankly. "But it's a toss-up, Andy, that once you get in that amusement park they call the Zone, a place of more'n sixty acres, I read, you'll spend most of your time watching the Fiji Islanders dance, or riding around on that observation car to view the wonders of Yellowstone Park, or mebbe the Great Colorado Canyon."

"I can't get there any too soon, I'm telling you, boys," Andy confessed. "Both of you have come out here on business as well as sight-seeing; but it's different in my case. I'm carefree, and bound to enjoy myself to the limit. In good time I'll wander all over every building in the grounds; but first I want to be amused so as to forget the troubles of our long trip here."

"It's very evident," began Rob, "that we'll have to settle on some particular place as a sort of general round-up. If each one is going to start off on his own hook, now and then, unless we fix it that way, we might wander all day long through the enormous buildings, and the grounds covered by this Fair, and never meet."

[120]

"Well thought of, Rob!" cried Andy. "Let me suggest that we take this queer-looking tobacconist shop as our rendezvous. We can make an arrangement with the owner for a couple of dollars or so, to take messages, and hold the same for the rest of the bunch."

"The sooner that's arranged the better it'll suit me, I guess," said Hiram, who was plainly on needles and pins while being kept from hunting up the building in which he would find myriads of remarkable devices illustrating the inventive genius of the world, and particularly of those from the American nation.

"Of course I'm going at once to the exhibit in which Professor McEwen is interested," said Rob, after they had arranged with the proprietor of the Oriental tobacco booth, "because I'll not feel easy until I've done my part of the contract, and delivered the stuff he intrusted to our charge."

"H'm, that means me too, I suppose, Rob," observed Andy, sighing.

[121]

"Oh! I could do it alone," Rob started to say, when Andy braced up, bit his lip, and continued:

"That was the old selfish streak in me speaking then, Rob. You'll have to overlook it once more. Of course, I'll not let you finish this business by yourself. It would be a fine way of acting on my part, now, wouldn't it—taking the goods and then refusing to pay for the same? Here, let me carry the bag a while. I'm going to be your shadow for this one day anyhow; though p'raps, after all, we can manage to drop in at the Zone, and see what's what in that interesting district."

Rob laughed.

"I'll make a special point of it to oblige you, Andy," he said, clapping the other on the

shoulder. "As for Hiram, I can understand why he's so anxious to find out where the aviation field lies. We've got to remember that his business is with parties who are altogether interested in airships and flying."

"Thanks, Rob," said Hiram, nodding his head in that quick jerky way he had. "It stands to reason that I want to pick up a few pointers on the sly before I show myself to the Golden Gate people. By hanging around I'm apt to hear some talk, and learn a few facts that may stand me in good later on."

[122]

"You'd better go some slow, Hiram," cautioned Andy. "Remember that we had it arranged to back you up when the time came to interview your people. So don't spoil all our plans by being too precipitate."

"Meaning, I figure," Hiram answered, wincing under that last word, "that I mustn't be rash, and put my foot in it. I promise you I'll fight shy there, Rob; and when we meet here to get a bite of lunch together, p'raps I'll have some news for you."

"I hope it will be the right kind of news, then, Hiram," Rob told him, seriously; "though for that matter it seems to me this company has treated you splendidly already, and that they must be on the square."

[123]

"And after that affair is all settled up," continued the other, drawing a long breath of anticipation, "think of the great times I'm going to have mousing around the building that houses the inventions. I tell you I'm the luckiest dog that ever lived to get this big chance thrown right at me."

So Hiram hurried away, having already marked out his course from long study of the little chart each one of the scouts possessed, and which gave what might be called a "bird's-eye view" of the extensive Exposition grounds, where the most prominent buildings were located, and the shortest way to get from one point to another.

Rob looked after him with a smile on his face. He turned to Andy and laughed.

"Isn't he the greatest crank in his line you ever saw?" asked Andy.

"Oh! it's hardly fair to call Hiram that," expostulated the scout leader; "he's enthusiastic over inventions, but what of that? Every fellow who's dead in earnest could be spoken of as a crank. And it's the cranks, as you call them, who make the wheels of progress go around."

[124]

"Yes," added Andy dryly, "I've noticed that some of them even seem to have wheels in their heads, though they get hopping mad if you mention it, or turn your hand this way," and he indicated a revolving motion with his finger that could hardly be mistaken by a sensitive person.

"All I know is that Hiram is due to enjoy the greatest feast his soul ever could imagine. But don't let us waste any more time here, Andy; I've got my bearings by now, and can take you straight to the building where the scientists love to gather and gloat over the queer things that are so wonderful to them. Come along!"

CHAPTER XI. ROB DELIVERS THE GOODS.

"What's that splendid looking arch over there meant to represent, Rob?" asked Andy, as he pointed to the right.

"They call it the Arch of the Setting Sun," replied the scout leader.



"They call it the Arch of the Setting Sun,"
replied the scout leader.

"A mighty good name, considering how we're at the jumping-off place of the United States. Seems to me, Rob, that the Far West has always gone by the name of the Land of the Setting Sun."

"That's why the arch has been built," Rob told him. "You see, in pioneer days the constant drift was always this way. Men who founded homes in what was then the wilderness along the Ohio kept hearing wonderful stories about the richness of the soil farther west, and what unlimited fur-bearing animals were to be captured by those daring enough to take the risk."

"And so they kept pushing farther and farther, year in and year out. In this way settlers finally

overran the prairies, and crossed the Rockies?" asked Andy, as he surveyed the beautiful arch that had been raised to commemorate the dreams of the men who blazed the way of civilization through the wilderness.

"Yes, and here along the shore of the Pacific lay the end of the dream," explained the scout leader. "California represented the foot of the rainbow of promise those hardy men had seen painted in the sky. The western sun meant a whole lot in those days; it shone over the Land of Promise; it was the hope and ambition of almost every settler. No one drifted East; it was always into the mysterious and beckoning West that families emigrated."

Around them were crowds of eager sight-seers. At times they jostled elbows with representatives of numerous foreign nations.

"But there are not near so many foreigners visiting the Panama-Pacific Exposition as there would have been only for the terrible European war that's raging across the ocean," Rob happened to remark a little later when the other scout called his attention to a group of dark-featured men wearing the red fezzes of Orientals, and passing along as though viewing the wonders of the exhibition with a lively interest.

[127]

"I suppose the building erected by California is reckoned the largest one of all on the grounds, isn't it, Rob? How much space does it cover, do you know?"

"They say five acres, Andy, which you must own is a shack of some size."

"We haven't been in it yet," said Andy, "but I should imagine it must hold about everything connected with the life of the big State. Why, it would take a whole day to get around there, and see half of the things on exhibition."

"Plenty of time for all that when we settle down to the business of sight-seeing," Rob told him. "First of all I want to get this load off my hands," and he moved the suitcase as he spoke; "not that it's very heavy, you understand, only it weighs on my mind; but what it holds means sleepless nights for our good friend, Professor McEwen, until he gets my wire that it has been safely delivered."

"I declare if those two girls over there don't make me think of Lucy Mainwaring and Sue Clifford away back in Hampton!" exclaimed Andy suddenly. "Oh! excuse me, Rob, I didn't mean to give you a start by mentioning Lucy's name. Of course it's only a chance resemblance, for neither of the girls we've left behind us could be here at the Exposition. But I'm a great fellow, you remember, to imagine people look like some I've known."

[128]

"Yes, and lots of times that failing has gotten you into a peck of trouble, too, Andy," Rob remarked, laughingly; "there was that boy in scout uniform this very morning that you rushed up to with outstretched hand, and calling him Sim Jeffords. I nearly took a fit to see the blank look on your face when he drew himself up and gave you the cold stare."

"Yes, that's a fact, Rob, he did freeze me. Chances are to this minute that boy thinks I was a fraud, perhaps some new sort of confidence operator. I saw him grab at his watch-chain in a hurry. He backed away, too, and never gave me half a chance to explain."

"I'm expecting right along," Rob told him, "to have you discover some of our old enemies hovering around, and waiting for a chance to give us a jolt on account of the grudge they bear us. There's Jared Applegate, for instance, the last we ever saw of him was at the time he was down in Mexico, having been compelled to run away from home after getting himself into a scrape by using some money that didn't belong to him."

[129]

Andy, instead of appearing dejected while Rob was "rubbing it into him" after this fashion, really seemed to enter into the joke himself.

"Well," he went on to say with a snicker, "honest to goodness a little while ago I did see two fellows walking along who made me think of Max Ramsay and his pal, Hodge Berry, the two meanest boys of our home town. Gave me something of a thrill, too, and I even had a sneaking notion to run over and shake hands with them; though back home I would cross the street rather than meet them face to face."

"Yes," said Rob, "that's always the case with people who're away from home. They get so tired of seeing strange faces that the sight of one they know makes them friendly. But I suppose you've noticed that the scouts seem to have quite a share in the running of things at this Big Show?"

[130]

"For a fact I've seen quite a number of them about, and it strikes me they are a busy lot in the bargain," Andy admitted.

"I understand they have a permanent camp on the grounds," Rob explained, "which later on we must visit, and make acquaintances. They seem to be a hustling lot, and a credit to the khaki they wear."

"But what d'ye suppose they're doing here?" asked the other.

"Oh! there are dozens of things Boy Scouts can find to do at a monster Fair like this," said the patrol leader. "I think some of them are acting as guides to parties of women and children. Others run messages for the department heads, because there must be a tremendous lot of that sort of thing that has to be done here. I saw one batch of scouts carrying a man on a litter, and from that I concluded they must have a scout emergency hospital somewhere on the grounds, where those who have been taken suddenly sick or become exhausted from the heat in the machinery buildings could receive first aid to the injured."

Andy's face took on a look of pride. He even tenderly stroked the sleeve of his khaki coat and touched the badge on his lapel as though he considered it a great honor to be wearing that insignia of his rank in the troop to which he belonged.

[131]

That is one of the finest things about scout

membership; it stimulates boys to aspire to emulate those who are striving to help others, or alleviate suffering in some way.

"We ought to be nearing that building you spoke about, Rob," Andy remarked, after more time had elapsed. "Seems to me we've covered miles since we saw Hiram streaking off for the aviation field and the Hall of Inventions."

"I think that is it on our left; but to make sure I'll ask this scout hurrying along as though the whole show would have to close its doors unless he managed to do the important errand he's sent on."

"I'll hang back while you do," suggested Andy jokingly. "Seems like they think I'm a sort of suspicious looking person, though nobody ever told me so in Hampton."

[132]

The messenger condescended to slacken his speed sufficiently to catch the question which Rob asked. After saluting, as became a fellow scout, he nodded his head in the affirmative, being apparently too winded to say even a single word.

Accordingly the two boys entered the building and threading their way among a multitude of exhibits, with a sprinkling of people examining the same, most of them rather sober-looking in appearance, they managed to find where the offices of the director were located.

"We wish to see Professor Marsh, who is in charge of this building," was what Rob said to an active little man wearing large glasses, and with all the earmarks of a scientist.

"That happens to be my name, son; what can I do for you?" replied the other, as he bent a pair of exceedingly penetrating eyes upon the scouts.

"We have come to you," Rob explained, "from Professor Andrew McEwen, of Edinburgh University, who met with an accident while visiting an old friend near our home, on Long Island, New York State, and while not seriously injured could not finish his journey across the continent."

[133]

The little man immediately showed signs of tremendous excitement. He glued his eyes on the suitcase Rob was carrying.

"Yes, yes, glad to hear that he is not seriously injured. Professor McEwen is one of the most famous of his class, and the world could ill afford to lose him at this interesting stage of events. But he was to bring with him a collection too precious to trust to ordinary channels. I sincerely trust that it was not harmed when he met with his accident?"

"Oh! no, sir," exclaimed Rob, hastily, "not in the least, since he did not have it with him at the time. But he grieved to think it might be delayed in reaching you, and so he intrusted it to the keeping of myself and my comrade here, as we happened to be of some assistance to him at the time."

The scientist seemed to be actually dumfounded. He stared from Rob to Andy, and then looked hard at the suitcase.

[134]

"Can it be possible that Professor McEwen intrusted those priceless papyrus relics to the care of two mere boys? I am astounded, and likewise worried. Oh! I hope you have taken great care with them. Give me the bag, and let me see for myself. It would be a shock indeed if anything had happened to destroy the labor of years, and caused such a dreadful loss to science."

He almost snatched the suitcase from Rob's hand and vanished like a streak through a door that led to another room, leaving the two boys exchanging amused glances.

"Whew! I'm sorry for you if anything *has* gone wrong with those rolls, Rob," said Andy, making a wry face. "We're apt to go out of this building faster than we came in, I'm afraid."

"No danger," Rob told him; "they were prepared to resist ordinary shocks in transit, and we've handled them as carefully as Professor McEwen himself could have done. But he did look actually frightened, for a fact."

"Isn't it queer what a pile these learned scientists think of things that other people wouldn't give five cents for?" remarked Andy.

[135]

"Oh! well," said Rob, "that's because we're in the dark concerning their real value. Look in through the half-open door and you can see several men like Professor Marsh undoing those same rolls with trembling hands."

"Yes, and notice the awed look on their faces, will you, Rob? The director is shaking hands all around now, and beaming on his colleagues, so I guess he's found things O. K. and hunky dory. Here he comes out to tell us so."

The look of deep anxiety on Professor Marsh's face had vanished, and there was a trace of a pleased smile there when he again confronted the two scouts.

"The letter inclosed from Professor McEwen speaks in the highest terms of you young gentlemen," he said, effusively, as he stretched out both hands. "He writes that you were instruments in the hands of Providence of saving his life; and for that let me remark that you deserve the heartfelt thanks of all who are interested in the work that distinguished gentleman is doing for science. I am proud to shake you by the hand. To think that you have come three thousand miles bearing those priceless rolls, and delivered them to us here without the slightest damage. And this very night I shall write to Professor McEwen to that effect."

[136]

"We are instructed to wire him in your name with your permission, professor, that you have received them intact," ventured Rob.

"I will sign any message you choose to send him, son," declared the happy director of the building devoted to the interests of science.

"And now, sir," said Rob, "would you mind returning my suitcase?"

[137]

CHAPTER XII.

THE PEOPLE OF THE "ZONE."

When Rob and his chum left the building they carried the empty suitcase; and besides, Professor Marsh had written and signed a long and effusive message to his learned colleague in care of Judge Collins, at Hampton, Long Island, which Rob was empowered to send, at his own expense, by wire as a night letter.

"That job is done," said Rob, with the air of one who has gotten rid of a load that had been on his mind.

"And just to think how we can enjoy ourselves for weeks if we feel like staying that long," pursued the happy Andy, fairly bubbling over with enthusiasm and joy.

"Even when we decide to start back home," laughed Rob, "the fun isn't over by a huge sight."

"You mean, Rob, we'll have the time of our lives traveling across the Canadian Rockies, taking in wonderful scenery that is better, lots of people say, than anything across in Switzerland?"

[138]

"Yes," said the scout leader, "and if we choose to stop over for a day or two to try the trout fishing at a lake we were told about, haven't we got our rods and other material along in our trunk?"

"It takes a wideawake fellow like you to think of every little detail, for a fact!" declared Andy, with genuine admiration.

"Oh! I'm far from perfect, I want you to know," the other told him. "I can remember plenty of times when I've found that, after all, the very thing of most importance was forgotten or neglected. But it pays to try and cover the ground. It saves lots of trouble and disappointment in the long run."

"I believe you, Rob; with me it seems as though I fall into the way of letting some other fellow do my thinking for me. I know it's wrong, but anyhow it's satisfying to have that confidence in your chum."

"You didn't think of letting some other scout do your work for you at the time you were learning the various bugle calls, I noticed, Andy."

[139]

"Shucks! that's different," returned the other, hastily. "Now that you mention it, I can't remember ever asking a substitute to do my *eating* for me when meal time rolled around. Guess you must be right, though, Rob; some of these days I intend to wake up and even think for myself."

"Believe me you can't make that day any too soon, Andy. If you happened to find yourself cast adrift on a big desert you would be sorry you delayed so long, though, if you pulled through alive, it might be the making of you."

"Oh! I'll buckle down to the job without being forced that way," Andy hurriedly assured the scout leader. "What's the next thing on the program?"

"I know you're just dying to get into the amusement section of the Exposition called the Zone, and which is a good deal like the Streets of Cairo and the Midway of the Chicago Fair. I'll make a bargain with you, Andy."

"All right; let's hear the particulars," exclaimed the other eagerly.

"First of all," began Rob, "I want to get rid of this suitcase, and we'll make for that tobacconist's odd booth, to leave it with him until we're going back to the hotel."

[140]

"That's over this way, past the big California building, with the Oregon one that has a colonnade of logs alongside. Well, after we've shunted the bag on the man who runs the tobacco shop, what next?"

"We'll put in the rest of the morning," Rob explained, "in rummaging through some of these places clustering around the Tower of Jewels. I've got a string of things I'm wild to see, and that's as good a place to make a start as anywhere."

"That brings us to noon, when we agreed to meet Hiram, you remember, for lunch?" Andy reminded his chum.

"Yes, and I understand there are dozens and dozens of eating places to be found in the Zone. If you want you can have an Arab dinner, a Chinese chop suey, a French meal *à la carte*, a German one, or anything your taste calls for. So we might as well head that way for our lunch, and pick out a place that seems to promise good things for hungry fellows."

"Huh! after I once get inside the Zone, Rob, nothing can drag me out again for the whole afternoon. So, I hope you've concluded to make a sacrifice, and devote the rest of the day to keeping me company in roaming around among all the queer sights they tell me you can run up against there."

[141]

Rob nodded his head and smiled.

"I promise you that, Andy, because I know you too well to believe there could be any peace until you have had your way. Yes, and I admit that I can get a lot of enjoyment out of seeing all those foreign things, as well as the more important exhibits in Machinery Hall and such places."

"Sure thing," said Andy, with an assumption of great sagacity. "In one case we are shown wonderful development in the world's progress along the lines of science and commerce; while in the Zone you can see man himself as he appears all over this ball, how he lives, what his forefathers have done for ages and ages in the past, and in fact study human nature. To me that is better than gazing at some machine I never could understand in a lifetime."

By this time they had reached the shop where arrangements had been made with the obliging proprietor to act as a medium of exchange between the three scouts during their stay. The empty suitcase was disposed of and once more the boys started out to gaze upon some of the myriad strange sights that were to be met with on every hand.

[142]

Doubtless Rob took a considerably greater amount of interest in what they viewed during those several hours than did his companion, though now and then Andy managed to display more or less enthusiasm.

It would be utterly impossible to mention the things they saw as they wandered hither and thither about that section of the grounds. Even a guide-book of the Exposition would have to skim over the details, such were the numberless attractions on every hand.

"Getting on toward noon, Rob!" suggested Andy, finally, as he laid a hand on his stomach, as if to call attention to the fact that it was unusually flat.

[143]

"And there's Hiram coming this way, too, as if he was beginning to remember his promise to meet us for lunch. I wonder if we can keep him with us the rest of the day?"

"Not unless you get a rope and tie him," chuckled Andy, "for he's clean gone daffy over the line of exhibits he fancies most, and will haunt that part of the Exposition nearly all the time we're here."

Hiram caught sight of them about that moment, and hurried over.

"Just on the way to the meeting-place," he announced. "Knew it was near grub time and wanted to get it over with. Say, they've got the greatest lot of things worth while on exhibition over there in the building devoted to inventions you ever saw. And the aviation field is a peach. My stars! but they're a busy bunch of willing, hustling workers there."

Rob had been studying the other's face, and it told him something.

"You found your firm represented there, of course, Hiram?" he remarked.

[144]

"Course they are, and cutting some high jinks, too," came the reply. "They've got some of their finished products working in the field, with air pilots of national renown in charge of the flights. You must get over that way some time and see."

"We will, perhaps before the day is done," Rob assured him; "but I suppose now, Hiram, you didn't introduce yourself to the Golden Gate people?"

"Naw. I just took it all in, and browsed around everywhere, laughing to myself to think how surprised they were going to be when they found out that the Hiram Nelson, inventor of the wonderful stabilizer for aëroplanes, was only a Boy Scout. But what are we going into the Zone for, tell me?"

"Why, to get something to eat, to be sure," remarked Andy.

"But I'm no cannibal," expostulated Hiram, holding back in pretended alarm; "even if they do have that stripe of people here on exhibition. I don't hanker after trying a roast Fiji Islander, or a fricasseed Igorrote from the Philippine Islands—I'm not *that* hungry."

[145]

"Oh!" Andy told him, tugging at his sleeve, "we'll

find a thousand places here where they cook meals after the fashion of every nation under the sun. I hope we pick out one that is close to that giant seesaw; because I'm wild to go up in it so as to get a magnificent view of the harbor, the Exposition grounds and the City of San Francisco."

It was found to be an easy matter to accomplish this, and they were soon being served at a table that stood out-of-doors, so that as they enjoyed their lunch they could watch the endless procession of people passing and repassing.

As so many attractions in the amusement concession were connected with foreign countries, it was really almost as good as being abroad to see the various representative types that sauntered or hurried by.

"I wonder how many of those Arabs, Turks, Algerians, Persians, Hindoos, Hottentots and others are the real thing, and how many rank fakes," suggested Hiram.

[146]

"That's more than anybody can tell," laughed Rob. "It's the easiest thing to put stain on the skin of an Irishman, dress him in the Oriental style, clap a red fez on his head, and then call him a Turk. Only he has to keep his tongue tight-locked; because his brogue would give him away. If you listen to them chattering in their own tongue you can tell which are the real thing."

"As for me," spoke up Andy, frankly, "I just don't question any of them, but take it for granted they're what they make out to be. And I want to say, fellows, it's the biggest treat to me to be here, watching the congress of all the nations and people on the globe."

Hiram's lip curled and he snickered, but Andy pretended not to hear. To Hiram's mind any one who could confess to caring for such frivolous things when there was a building not far away just jammed with the most marvelous inventions known to modern science and ingenuity—well, it bordered on silliness. But then "many men, many minds," and perhaps it is just as well that people do not all think alike. There is a deal of truth in that old proverb to the effect that what is "one man's food may be another's poison."

So they sat there for a long time while the procession of Head Hunters from Borneo, natives of the island of Ceylon, South American *vaqueros* in their picturesque attire, pigmies from the heart of Africa, Mexican bull-fighters, Moros from our island possessions in the Orient, Chinese, Japanese, Servians, Tyrolese mountain climbers and yodlers, and a multitude of others continued to pass, many of them coming from the villages and side shows of the great amusement park.

[147]

From time to time the amazing arm of the giant Aëroscope would project up against the heavens, the car filled with those visitors who wished to obtain a view of their surroundings.

Every time it arose, slowly but majestically, Andy would stop talking to gape and watch, as though just then the one longing in his heart was to take that skyward trip.

Rob knew it would be the very first thing Andy would want to do after they left the table; and indeed, he was not feeling at all averse to complying with such a request, for it seemed as if the extensive view to be obtained must be well worth the price charged for the trip aloft.

"Three hundred and sixty-five feet they say in the guide book," Andy gushed; "and all for a small sum in the bargain. I wouldn't miss that sight for ten times fifty cents. Why, only for the Rockies being in the way, with a *real good* glass you might get even a peep in at Hampton town, unless one of those nasty sea fogs blocked you off," and then, of course, he had to laugh himself at the idea of any glass being able to cover a distance of something like three thousand miles.

CHAPTER XIII.

A STRANGE MEETING IN THE AIR.

"Hiram, it's only fair that you stay with us for a while this afternoon," Rob mentioned as they were leaving the table.

"Oh! I expected to put in say an hour or so with you, Rob; and then later on I hope you'll make your way over to the aviation field, where you'll just as like as not find me hanging around, still picking up points."

"That's a bargain, then, is it?" demanded Rob.

"Just as you say," Hiram declared. "I guess now I c'n hit on the fust thing our chum Andy here'll be wantin' to do. I've been watchin' him stare at that old arm every time she rose up with the car; and I see we're headin' that way right fast now."

"Yes, it's a good idea to take that trip the first thing," said Rob, "because you get a comprehensive idea of the lay of the land that serves you better than any map you can buy. They don't stay up very long, though, because there are more dollars waiting to be picked up from the crowd that's always in line to occupy the car."

"Three hundred and sixty-five feet up is going some," muttered Hiram. "I hope now they don't have any accident to the machinery while we're taking our look. I must see how they work this trick; it ought to be interesting."

He would have started to carry out this intention then and there only that Andy held on to his coat and would not let go.

"The machinery part can keep, Hiram," the impatient one declared. "Some time when you're alone poke around all you like; but my tastes run in another channel. You're like the geologists, with your nose pointed toward the ground all the while; I'm built more after the style of the astronomers who keep looking up and see the glories of the firmament that beat the fossils all hollow."

"H'm! you don't say!" was all the remark Hiram made, but it contained considerable skepticism concerning Andy's sweeping assertion.

They fell in line, and were fortunate enough to be able to get aboard without having to wait, as they might have done later in the afternoon.

"This thing must have cost a raft of money to build; it beats the old Ferris Wheel to pieces, I should think; and that was a wonder in its day."

"Yes," said Andy, "but think of the money they must take in, running it all the time from February up to December. Why, I should think they'd have millions of passengers in that time, and at so much a head it would be like a regular gold mine."

About that time the car was closed and locked, so that by no mischance could any reckless passenger be tempted to jump when it was high in the air, so as to accomplish a spectacular suicide.

"And they've got the windows screened in, too," remarked Andy.

"They knew you were coming, I kinder guess, and wanted to make sure you wouldn't lose your head up there so as to fall overboard," Hiram told him.

The car was crowded, so that they could not see who all of their fellow passengers were. There was also considerable shouting going on, some of those aboard bidding farewell to friends who had been unable to make that trip, as though they fully expected to keep right on going up, once they got started toward the blue heavens overhead, until they landed in Glory.

"Here she goes!" announced Andy, eagerly, as the car was felt to vibrate.

With that they left the ground and commenced to ascend. The motion was fairly steady, as the weights on the other end of the great seesaw had been adjusted to correspond to the number of those in the car, so that after all the engine did not have a great deal of hard work to do in lifting that load.

"Whee! I only hope none of the balancing weight slips off!" said Hiram, who appeared to be rather nervous.

"I'm surprised at you, Hiram," remarked Rob; "it seems queer for a fellow who aspires to be a bold air pilot some of these fine days, and who has even been up several times as high as three thousand feet, to be shivering with fear now, when at the most we're only going to get three hundred odd feet from the ground."

"Oh, well, that's a horse of a different color," Hiram explained; "when you're up in an aëroplane it depends on your own self whether you come down safe, or have an accident. In this case you haven't got a single thing to do with it, but just trust to a mechanic, who may be as reliable as they make 'em, but could make a mistake just once. That's what gets my goat; my efficiency don't count for a cent in this game."

"Well, there is something in that," Rob admitted; "but let's try to find a place and look out as we keep on rising. Already the view seems to be getting pretty fine."

There was more or less talking and laughing and

all that in the car, for when there happens to be a spice of danger connected with any of these amusements many people become half hysterical.

The view was, indeed, becoming grand, as Rob had said, and both boys were soon copying Andy, who was staring first one way and then another, as sea and shore began to be spread out before him like a Mercator's chart.

Although the huge arm of the giant Aëroscope had by no means reached the upper limit of its sweep, the great buildings lying below had the appearance of squatty "ant-heaps," as Andy termed them; and the crowds that swarmed many of the walks of the Exposition looked so minute that it was hard to believe they were human beings.

[154]

All at once, the working arm of the big seesaw stopped with a rude jerk that caused a number of girls aboard to give vent to cries of alarm. Even strong men had a nervous look on their faces, Rob immediately noticed.

"What's this mean?" demanded Hiram, laying a hand on Rob's arm.

"We haven't reached the highest sweep yet, I'm dead sure," complained Andy, in a petulant tone, just as though he believed the management meant to cheat those aboard out of the full benefit of their money. "We want a better view than this. All the others went to the top, and I don't see why we shouldn't, too."

"Rob, this stop wasn't meant, was it?" demanded Hiram, insistent as usual.

"Don't talk so loud, Hiram," he was advised. "You'll only frighten those girls all the more if they happen to hear you. No, I don't believe it was intended that we stop this far up, and with such a bump, too."

[155]

"But is there any real danger of an accident? I wouldn't care so much if I had my new-fangled parachute with me, and could only get outside; for even if the old car did drop, I'd be able to sail down like a feather."

"Danger—of course not a bit," Rob told him sternly. "You don't suppose the managers of this big Exposition would allow a mechanical affair like this Aëroscope to be run day after day unless the owners had made it absolutely accident proof. Just hold your horses and we'll soon be moving again."

"Yes, and Hiram," said Andy just then, "don't put yourself on a par with those silly screeching girls over there, who are hugging each other so. Poor things, they don't know any better! But you're a scout, Hiram, and have been taught never to show the white feather. Brace up! You're wearing khaki right now, and for the sake of the cloth show yourself a man!"

That brought Hiram to a realization of the fact that he was indeed hardly proving himself a worthy scout. He pretended to be indifferent.

[156]

"Shucks! who cares?" he exclaimed. "I do wish them girls'd let up on their racket; it gets on a feller's nerves to hear 'em shriek that way."

"Well, I know what ails the old thing!" suddenly announced Andy, with a grin on his face that told how his love for joking exceeded any faint feeling of alarm that may have seized upon him.

"Let's hear it, then!" demanded Rob.

"Oh, if you had only guessed it before we started it would have saved lots of bother!" called out Hiram.

"They miscalculated the weight, you see!" continued Andy. "Some fellows are so deceptive in their looks. Now right across from us there's a fat boy with his back turned this way, and staring hard out of the window. I bet you they figured wrong on him, and that's why we've got stuck up here four-fifths of the way to the top."

The other two now looked, and owing to some of the passengers in the car crowding together an opening was made like a little lane. At the end of this they discovered, just as Andy had said, an exceedingly fat boy occupying more than his share of space, with his chubby legs braced under him, and his face pressed against the heavy wire netting that covered the open windows.

[157]

Rob stared, and looked more closely. He half opened his mouth to make some sort of remark, and then as though seized with a second thought, refrained.

"Do you really think so, Andy?" asked Hiram, in a half-awed way, as though he actually took some stock in the ridiculous assertion made by the other.

"Well, tell me a better explanation if you know one!" demanded Andy, which was a queer way of clinching an argument.

"Then the quickest way to mend matters would be for you to go over there and toss the heavy-weight overboard, don't you think, Andy?" asked Rob, entering into the spirit of the joke, especially since he really believed he held the whip-hand over the fun-loving Andy.

"Huh! think so, do you, Rob?" said Andy, making out as though he felt in a fighting humor. "Well, now, perhaps that would be the easiest way to fix things. I've got a good mind to try it. Watch my smoke, Hiram!"

[158]

With that he actually squared himself, rolled up the sleeves of his coat, and even started across the car. Hiram turned pale. He seemed to forget that there was no possible way in which any one inside the car could manage to effect their escape so long as the great arm of the giant seesaw was elevated in the air.

"Rob, are you going to stand for that?" he burst out.

"No use trying to stop him now, Hiram," he was told.

"But look at him squaring off, Rob, like he really means it!" cried Hiram. "It would be just like Andy, he's so rash, you know, to get us all arrested. What if he did knock that fat boy off the car! Why, Rob, don't you see the sudden jolt when the weight was changed might make us fly up, and bring about a catastrophe?"

"That's so, it might, Hiram," said Rob, trying hard to keep a straight face.

"Oh! it's too late to stop him, Rob!"

"Yes, I see it is," replied the scout leader, and somehow there was not much of excitement about either his voice or his manner, only an apparent inane desire to grin, Hiram thought as he looked at his chum.

"There, he's actually grabbed hold of the fat boy, and is trying to lift him up so as to get him out of the window."

"You're a little off there, Hiram. Seems to me I would say Andy was trying to hug the poor fat boy, because he's certainly thrown his arms around him, and acts as if he might be glad to meet him!"

"Why, Rob, whatever can that mean! He is acting just as you say, and it seems to me Andy isn't doing all the hugging, either."

At that Rob broke into a hearty laugh.

"You know what it stands for, and you won't tell me a thing, which I think is a mean job," complained Hiram.

"Look again," Rob told him. "Now the fat boy happens to have his face turned this way. Don't you think you've seen that same moon phiz before, Hiram? Doesn't it somehow take you back to dear old Hampton, and the many jolly times we've had on our camping trips? Say, you ought to know that boy, Hiram."

[160]

As soon as he could catch his breath, Hiram gave a shout.

"Why, consarn my picture if it isn't our chum, Tubby Hopkins!"

[161]

CHAPTER XIV.

FOUR SCOUTS IN THE WHIRL.

"Come on, let's join them," suggested Rob, as he led the way over to where Andy Bowles and the stout youth had started to shaking hands as though they never meant to stop, chattering away like a pair of magpies, and utterly unmindful of the fact that others aboard the car were shrieking aloud with growing fear.

But as it happened just then, whatever may have been the cause for the sudden stoppage of the car suspended in midair, the trouble seemed to have been rectified; for even as Rob led Hiram over to the other pair of Hampton boys, the upward passage was resumed as smoothly as though nothing had occurred.

"Well, well! if this isn't the biggest surprise ever!" Tubby exclaimed as he seized upon a hand of each of the two newcomers, and then looked around just as if he had begun to believe the whole of Hampton Troop of Boy Scouts must have come on to take in the sights of the big show.

"Only three of us, Tubby," Rob told him. "We consider ourselves the luckiest scouts in the whole U. S. A. to get a chance to make this side of the slope. Of course we knew you were out here somewhere, but you might as well hunt for a needle in a haystack as to think to find anyone in this mob."

"But tell me, won't you, please, how did you make it?" asked Tubby, whose round, rosy face seemed redder than ever under all this excitement.

"Wait till we get down out of this high box," said Hiram. "We came up here on purpose to get the grand view, you know. Besides, there are too many ears around for *my* private business to be talked over."

"Whew!" said Tubby, surveying the speaker with more respect than he had ever before felt toward Hiram, whose many attempts to invent wonderful things had never been taken seriously by his companions.

"But Hiram is right," said Rob. "We'll only be up here a short while, so let's use our eyes the best we can. It's well worth coming a long way just to get such a panoramic view of the City, Bay and Fair."

"Panoramic—whew!" whistled Andy; "but I guess that covers the ground as well as any word you could scare up, Rob; for it is a panorama a whole lot better'n any I ever saw painted on canvas, like the Battle of Gettysburg and such."

They remained at their several posts drinking in the wonderful features of the magnificent view until finally the machinery was set in motion again, and they found themselves being gradually lowered toward the ground. The buildings lost their squatty appearance, the moving throngs of human beings ceased resembling crawling flies, and finally the four boys issued from the cage satisfied that they had experienced a sensation worth while.

"Now, let's sit down here in the shade for a little while, where we can talk," suggested Tubby Hopkins, who had been one of the scouts with Rob over in Belgium and France on the previous late summer and fall when the war was going on, and consequently could be looked on as having passed through some lively experiences.

"Just a little while," agreed Andy; and Hiram, after looking longingly away, no doubt in the direction of the quarter given up wholly to recent remarkable inventions, seemed to resign himself to martyrdom for a spell, for he, too, found a seat close by.

"Now tell it all to me," demanded Tubby, "because I'm just sure it must be a story worth hearing. What happened to bring you three fellows out here? Did some one die and leave you his fortune? It takes a pretty hefty wad of money to pay all the expenses of a jaunt across the continent."

"A poor guess that time, Tubby," said Rob. "We'll have pity on you, and give you the details before you lose weight trying to hit on the true explanation. To begin with, Hiram won the trip

his own way, while Andy and myself just happened by a stroke of good luck to run upon our chance."

"Tell that to the marines, will you, please?" scoffed Tubby. "Things don't just happen to you that way, Mr. Assistant Scoutmaster Blake. Every time I've known you to get a thing you earned it by the sweat of your brow. I'd rather believe it was the other way, and that Hiram had dropped on a piece of good luck."

[165]

"Well, mebbe I did, Tubby; but then I showed perseverance and grit such as a true scout should allers possess, they say; and so I claim I earned my right to be out here at the Exposition. Go on and tell him the hull story, Rob."

Seeing that he was expected to undertake the job of being spokesman for the entire party, Rob started in. He was not the one to embellish facts, or try to make things seem of more importance than they really were. Indeed, if anything, Rob was apt to go to the other extreme, especially if he figured at all in a leading rôle in the narrative.

In this way Tubby was finally put in possession of all the needful information connected with their coming. He heard about the smart way in which Hiram had conducted his negotiations by mail with the company that made a specialty of aviation goods, and which apparently had so much faith in his patent stabilizer that they had advanced sufficient funds to enable the inventor to come out and visit them at their headquarters in San Francisco.

Then followed the account of how Rob and Andy had been of such signal service to Captain Jerry and his famous scientific passenger at the time the old naphtha launch took fire while crossing the bay to Collins' Point; together with what resulted from that rescue.

[166]

It was all very interesting to Tubby, who asked many questions when he thought Rob was holding back certain facts that had a direct bearing on the narrative.

"You see, my uncle has gone up to Portland for a week or more on business," Tubby told them. "He left me to enjoy myself at the Exposition as I pleased. I'm not going around in my scout clothes, but I've got the khaki suit at the hotel; and now that I've met you fellows, of course, I mean to wear it right along, even if I astonish the natives."

"Oh, boys wearing khaki are such a common sight these days!" Rob told him in a consoling way, "that you'd not be apt to attract any person's attention, even if you are stouter than any other scout going."

[167]

"Yes, I've met quite a few of the boys and chatted with them, too," admitted Tubby. "You see, I always make it a point to wear my badges under my coat even if I am in mufti—is that what they call it, Rob, when a military officer dresses in civilian garb? Yes, the scouts are everywhere, and it doesn't surprise you one bit when you see a couple of them taking part in a camel race, as I did."

Having finished their explanations, and urged on

by the impatient Andy, the little party began to make the rounds of the amusement zone. It was laid out on such an extensive scale that one could hardly expect to do it justice in one afternoon; indeed, Andy announced that he anticipated putting in a full week there, taking in the sights, and feasting his eyes on the wonders that had been collected from the four corners of the earth for this special occasion.

"Here's where we can see in miniature what some of us have actually looked on before when building—the working of the great Panama Canal," announced Tubby, as they arrived at the panorama section. "Shall we pay and take chairs on the moving platform for a trip around?"

[168]

Of course there was not a dissenting voice, for they were boys, and had plenty of spare change and wanted to see all the sights, at least once.

After that nothing would do for Andy but that they must embark on the train for a trip through the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, which was well executed with regard to color effects so as to excite their ardent admiration.

"I was sorely tempted to take that side trip on the way here," Rob confessed. "We could have done it easily enough, but you see I didn't know what to do with that priceless stuff we had charge of for Professor McEwen. I couldn't carry it on mule back, and didn't dare leave it behind at the hotel. Besides, we promised him we wouldn't linger on the way going, but do all our sight-seeing coming back."

"I'm going to fix it with uncle," asserted Tubby eagerly, "so that I can hold on with you fellows if he has to return sooner, or by another route. I believe I'd enjoy seeing the Selkirks up in Canada first-rate, 'cause I've heard a lot about that wonderful scenery."

[169]

"We'll be glad to have you along, Tubby," said Andy.

"That goes without saying," added Hiram; while Rob smiled, and nodded in a way that Tubby knew meant "those are my sentiments, too, every time."

The next thing on the program was seeing Yellowstone Park, another scenic trip so realistic that Andy declared he would always have trouble convincing himself he had not actually been through the National Reservation where the hot springs and geysers flowed, some of the latter rising a hundred and fifty feet into the air, with steam and vapor forming a dense canopy around.

It was just after they had come out from this that the absence of Hiram was discovered. Tubby professed to be somewhat alarmed, and feared their old chum might have fallen from the observation car; but Rob set his mind straight when he admitted that he had seen Hiram sneaking away.

"He'd reached his limit of endurance," he told Andy when the latter expressed his opinion of one who cared so little for amusement; "and we've got to remember that our chum is a queer fish at best. Besides, his heart is wrapped up in things along a certain line. Let him go his way;

[170]

and later on, perhaps, when some of us have grown a little tired of all this clatter in the Zone, we'll hunt up the aviation field and see what Hiram is doing."

Andy had many more things on his list, but Rob told him not to try and rush it all into one afternoon.

"Take it easy, Andy," he advised. "'Rome wasn't built in a day,' you remember. We're going to be around these haunts for a good long while, and one by one we can see all the shows that are gathered here—that is, all worth seeing. These odd people from the wilds interest me considerably, too, so that I wouldn't miss looking in on their villages, where they're genuine, as most of them are, because the management stand for that fact."

It may have been nearer four o'clock than three, when, being more or less tired with their first day at the Exposition, the three chums turned their faces in a quarter that up to then none of them had visited save Tubby, and he only casually.

[171]

"We'll take a look in at the *aéroplane* boys first," said Rob; "and if we don't run across Hiram there, we will go over to the building where he says many of the latest inventions are on exhibition."

It was not difficult to discover which way to go, for overhead several *aéroplanes* were whizzing this way and that. Far up in the heavens they could see a small speck which was no doubt some daring pilot trying for an altitude record.

"Makes me think of those days over in Belgium and France, eh, Rob?" remarked Tubby Hopkins, "where we saw German and French and British and Belgian fliers; yes, and even a big Zeppelin that was meaning to bombard some city."

"Well," Andy told them, "here we are on the field, and like as not we'll find our aviation mad chum over in that crowd around the machines on the ground, where the starts are made."

[172]

"I rather think those must be the various models of new machines," observed Rob, and immediately adding, "There's Hiram now; he's sighted us, and is heading this way."

"Yes, with a grin as big as a house on his face," asserted Tubby; "which I take it must mean he's struck something that tickles him just fierce."

Hiram joined his three comrades a minute later.

"Well," he said, in a mysterious fashion, addressing himself particularly to Rob, "the Golden Gate *Aéroplane* Manufacturing Company has a contraption on one of their machines, intended to equalize shifting weights; but shucks! it isn't in the same class with my dandy little stabilizer. I guess they mean business in my case, with a big B."

[173]

CHAPTER XV.

TUBBY IS OUT OF HIS ELEMENT.

If there had arisen any doubt in Hiram's mind as to the deep interest those chums were taking in his enterprise, it must have been quickly dispelled when he made this announcement, and saw the looks of delight spreading over their faces.

"Bully!" cried Andy.

"Best wishes, Hiram!" added Tubby, genially, as he patted the other fondly on the shoulder.

Rob did not say anything, but if looks could speak Hiram might easily see that he had the sincere sympathy of the scout leader; though he knew that much before.

"While I've been hovering around here," continued Hiram, "making myself useful whenever a flier was going up by running with the machine to give it a good start, I've kept my eyes and ears wide open, let me tell you."

"So as to learn all you could about the Golden Gate Company, of course?" remarked Andy.

"Yes," Hiram told him, frankly enough, "and soak in any sort of knowledge that might be useful to a feller that's got the aviation bee abuzzin' in his bonnet. And I've learned a heap, let me tell you, boys. Why, it's paid me already for my long and arduous trip across country. I c'n start on as many as *three* schemes I've been hatchin' in my fertile brain this long time. I was up agin' a blank wall, you see; but now I've got ideas worth a hull lot to me."

[174]

"That sounds all right, Hiram," Rob told him; "only I hope you go slow about this business. Don't overdo it, or we may have to take you home in a strait-jacket yet."

"Nixey, not for me," jeered the other; "my head's as clear as a bell. Fact is, I never felt half as bright as I do now. The clouds have been scattered, and seems like the sun was shinin' all the time. Once I get this stabilizer business well off my hands, and have some coin to go to work with, you'll see the dust fly."

"And he belongs to the Eagles, too!" said Tubby, in wrapt admiration. "Seems as if you just *can't* suppress 'em, no way you try. There never was a patrol of scouts organized that had as many bright minds on the roster roll as ours contains."

[175]

Andy immediately took off his campaign hat and made Tubby a low bow.

"That's nice of you, Tubby, to say such sweet things of your chums," he remarked, just as if it sprang straight from his heart. "And we want you to know that with the other seven the name of Tubby Hopkins will go ringing down the ages in Boy Scout history as one who always made his mark. And I can testify to that from my own personal knowledge."

From the way in which Hiram and Rob tittered when Andy said this it could be inferred that they knew very well to what those last few words referred. The fact of the matter was that once upon a time Andy had had the misfortune to be under a tree when Tubby was knocking down nuts; and the fat scout, losing his grip on a limb, came down with tremendous force directly

on Andy, who was flattened out on the ground like a pancake.

He carried the bruises he received on that occasion for quite some time; but no one could bear malice against Tubby, who, scrambling to his knees, had immediately expressed great solicitude for his unfortunate comrade, saying:

[176]

“Oh, excuse me, Andy, I didn’t know you were right under me, or I might have chosen some other place to land.”

“You don’t wonder at me being chained to this place, do you,” asked Hiram, “when there’s so much happening all the time, with pilots going up and coming down, agents explaining the use of new designs of aeroplanes they are putting on the market, and everybody ‘talking shop’? They reckon I’ve been employed in some place where they make these fliers, because I know somethin’ about them. So they let me help in a lot of ways. It’s fun, I tell you, the best fun I ever knew.”

Anyone could see that Hiram was right in his element. His freckled Yankee face seemed to glow with enthusiasm, and his little eyes shone in a way Rob had never noticed before. Indeed, if the scout leader had been inclined sometimes to fear Hiram would develop into a harmless crank, with only vague unreasonable ideas rattling about in his loose brain, that suspicion was rapidly vanishing.

Perhaps it had commenced to have an effect upon Rob’s opinion when he read that letter from the Golden Gate people. They were hard-headed business men, and not visionary dreamers; and surely they would never have advanced all that money to a strange inventor unless they believed in him, and meant to attach his genius to the fortunes of their company.

[177]

“I own up, Hiram,” said Andy, as they stood there and watched the many things that were going on all the time around them, “that there must be a sort of fascination about this thing to fellows who have a leaning that way. But as for me you never could tempt me to climb up thousands and thousands of feet like the air-pilot in the monoplane that looks like a swallow against the sky.”

“It takes some nerve, I’ll admit, Andy,” said Hiram, modestly.

“Huh! plenty of people may have nerve enough,” objected Andy, “but all the same they’d be laboring under physical disabilities.”

[178]

“As how, Andy?” asked the other.

“Oh, well, take our chum Tubby here; you never could expect him to make a flier, and bore up into the clouds. In the first place, it wouldn’t be fair to the people down below. He nearly killed me once by dropping just ten feet; think what would happen to the poor chap who happened to get in the way if Tubby came down from where that aviator is now?”

Even Tubby had to laugh at that highly colored supposition.

“Well, one thing sure!” he exclaimed, “I wouldn’t

have to beg pardon for squashing him."

"But think of the mess," chuckled Andy.

"Watch that man who has just gone up in a monoplane. He's the best there is on the Coast, next to Beachey himself, who is a native of California. You'll see him turn flip-flaps to beat the band presently. Why, I've watched him go around twice, and as neat as a circus tumbler would do it off a springboard over the backs of three elephants. There he goes! What d'ye think of that?"

"Whew! he's a corker, for a fact!" ejaculated Tubby, as he stood with open mouth, gaping at the wonderful exploits which the reckless air-pilot was engineering far up above the earth.

[179]

Rob, chancing to turn toward the stout boy, saw to his amusement that there was something of a wistful expression on his rosy face. Tubby could at least feel the charm that this hazardous sort of life might possess for venturesome boys, even though he knew he could never hope to attain any standing in the ranks, owing to what Andy had well called "physical disabilities."

Athletes alone make good air-pilots, and a fellow who had the shape of a tub would only be useful as an anchor, or something like that.

Poor Tubby! It did seem that Fate was cruel to him, since he was debarred from taking an active part in so many sports such as boys enjoy. But Nature had at least given him a cheerful disposition, so that no matter how keenly disappointed he might be, he never allowed this to sour his temper.

They stood there and watched the trick aviator doing what Hiram called "stunts." Sometimes the boys fairly gasped with sudden fear lest the man aloft had made a miscalculation, and would come plunging down like a stone to his death; but his agility and quick wit always served him faithfully.

[180]

"Some of these fine days something will happen that he doesn't count on," Rob said, soberly, "a flaw may develop in some part of his machine, just where it counts the most; and then—well, it will be his finish."

"That depends," remarked Hiram, quietly.

"On how high he happens to be at the time, you mean?" asked Andy. "Oh! just a few hundred feet will be enough to put him out of business for keeps."

"Not if he is a wise man, and has a patent Nelson self-acting parachute fastened to him all the time!" declared the other, proudly. "It'll open and allow him to drift slowly down, like you see hot-air balloon performers come to the earth after they've cut loose above."

"Good for you, Hiram!" exclaimed Tubby; "I reckon folks have got to sit up and take notice, now that you've come to town! Young blood will tell every time. Oh, but I'm glad I met my chums! It was getting mighty lonesome for me, in a crowd all the time, but with not a solitary fellow to speak to. And Hiram, I'm glad you coaxed us to come over here. I'm getting

[181]

interested in flying; p'r'aps if I cut down my feed, and knock off a hundred or so pounds I might have a show in this business yet."

As they did not know whether Tubby was joking or really meant it, no one laughed at his strange remark; for they did not want to hurt his feelings. But when they glanced from the corners of their eyes at his girth the absurdity of his hope was manifest. Perhaps they may even have remembered a remark once made by Joe Digby to the effect that Tubby would have to have an extra big pair of wings given to him if ever he became an angel.

"There's another exhibition pilot going to start up, boys," said Hiram just then. "Suppose we walk over closer, and you can watch me lend a hand to shove him off on a good start."

"That's right, let's get closer and see how things are done," added Tubby, as he bent over, and, picking up a stick of clear pine that had caught his eye, he took out his penknife and commenced to whittle away just as though he might be the representative Yankee of fiction.

[182]

But whittling had always been a favorite occupation with Tubby; somehow it seemed to soothe him and cause his thoughts to flow more smoothly. He never could resist an extra fine bit of wood, though besides shavings he had never been known to produce any especial result from the use of his keen-edged knife-blade.

There were quite a number of people around, and they seemed to be more or less interested in the claims made by the representatives of the different aëroplanes that were being displayed, and in the practical demonstrations.

Tubby listened with rapt attention as some of the men talked, explaining what improvements had been made in the working construction of the machine just then about to be put to the test.

Hiram was doubtless dreaming of the hour of his triumph when one of these aëroplanes would be equipped with his wonderful stabilizer, and he might stand there listening to the fulsome praise of the Golden Gate Company's demonstrator, before a practical test was made, to show how impossible it would be for a flying machine that carried such a life-saving device to be upset by flaws of wind, or the sudden movements of the pilot.

[183]

When all was ready for the flight, Hiram was one of those who laid hands on the aëroplane with the intention of running a score or two of feet, so as to assist in the start. Unnoticed by Rob, Tubby, too, had copied Hiram's example, urged on by some irresistible impulse approaching madness, perhaps.

When the word was given, and with propeller whirling, the aëroplane started along on its bicycle wheels, with a dozen pushers to assist, there was Tubby in the midst.

Suddenly there arose a series of shouts of alarm.

All of the other willing helpers had dropped off, only Tubby was sprinting furiously after the aëroplane, which was bumping along over the ground with ever increasing momentum. Rob

[184]

felt a thrill of real alarm when he believed he saw that the left arm of the stout boy was drawn out, as though in some unfortunate way it had become caught in a trailing cord, so that he was compelled to keep on, no matter how much he wanted to break away!

[185]

CHAPTER XVI. THE ILLUMINATED FAIRYLAND.

"Oh! Tubby!" Andy was heard to cry out above the clamor.

It was all over in a few seconds. Rob believed he saw the fat boy manage to get his other hand out; and it flashed through the scout leader's mind that the last he had noticed Tubby was gripping his open knife in that hand.

They saw the stout boy roll over and over like a big rubber ball. At the same time it became evident that the shouts of sudden alarm and horror bursting forth from the crowd must have warned the aviator that something was wrong, for he instantly shut off the power, and the monoplane was now slowing up instead of increasing its speed over the level ground.

Rob, Andy and Hiram joined in the forward rush, everybody fearing the worst with regard to poor Tubby. But when they arrived on the spot they were more than pleased to see him calmly brushing off his clothes.

[186]

"Did you get hurt, Tubby?" demanded Andy, anxiously.

"Never a bit," replied the grinning Tubby. "That's the good of being encased in fat, you see. If it had been you, Andy, you would have gotten a broken rib, or something like that. Oh! thank you for my hat, mister. Did anybody see my knife; it slipped out of my hand just as I cut the cord that was holdin' me to the machine?"

"Good for you, Tubby, if you had the presence of mind to do that!" cried Hiram.

"And here's your knife, my boy," said an air-pilot, advancing. "You had a narrow escape, and if I were you I would let it be the last time I ever tried to run with a machine. If you had fallen over you might have been dragged and killed."

"Not by that cord, I should think, mister," declared Tubby, holding up the piece that still dangled from his left arm, where a loop had accidentally become fast. "It would have broke short on me; but all the same I'm through trying games like that. I'm not built for it, I guess."

They were pushing the monoplane back for another start. The aviator stopped to survey Tubby from head to foot.

[187]

"So, it was you holding me back, was it? Didn't get hurt any, I hope? But looky here, young fellow, when I want an *anchor* I'll get a real one, and not just a tub of jelly; understand that, do you?"

It was pretty rough on Tubby, for the crowd laughed uproariously, but he disarmed the anger of the air-pilot by joining in the mirth.

"I meant all right, mister," he told the aviator, "and it would have been easy only for that cord that was hanging out. It got caught around my arm, and I couldn't break away. Thank you for letting me off so easy."

After that the boys walked away. It had threatened to be a serious matter at the time, but now that everything was over Andy and Hiram were secretly exchanging nods, and chuckling over the remembrance of their fat chum sprinting after the swift monoplane, going faster no doubt than he had ever done before in all his life.

"I see the finish of the rest of the boys in Hampton when the foot races are on next fall," Andy complained, in what he meant to be a serious tone, "if you take to doing your practicing that way, Tubby."

[188]

"Yes," added Hiram, "when it comes to the point that Tubby can keep along with a racing aëroplane, or a speeding motorcar, the rest of us might as well throw up the sponge and quit. He'd make circles around us like Rob's boat the *Tramp* could with the old *Sea Gull*."

"Make your minds easy, boys," Tubby told them pleasantly. "I'm going out of training. Once is enough for me. You can have the field to yourself, Hiram; only if I were you I'd quit that running business. An inventor has no right to take chances; and what's happened once may happen again."

"Well, now, I never thought of that, Tubby," admitted the other, shaking his head seriously. "Just as you say, an inventor has no right to expose himself like an ordinary person. No telling what he might not think up some day for the uplift of the civilized world. He sorter belongs to science, don't he? Yep, I'll stop chasing after aëroplanes; but of course I'll have to go up once in a while in order to keep in touch with things."

[189]

"We're about ready to start for the hotel, Hiram," announced Rob; "and if you've decided not to introduce yourself to the Golden Gate people to-day, you might just as well come back with us."

Hiram sighed, and allowed his glance to rove over to where the crowd still gathered around the demonstration station.

"I s'pose I'd better," he replied with an effort. "I don't want to be greedy, and overdo things; but it's giving me a jolt to have to break away from here. How about you, Tubby; coming along and have dinner with us to-night?"

"Of course he is," said Rob immediately. "Tomorrow he must change hotels, so he can be one of our party."

"Why, you took the words right out of my mouth, Rob," declared Andy.

"That makes it unanimous," added Hiram, vigorously; "so you see there's no way for you to

[190]

back fire, and break away from your moorings from the same old crowd, Tubby."

Tubby smiled, and looked pleased.

"It's nice to know you're appreciated, let me tell you, boys," he observed. "I'll be only too glad to join you at dinner. Yes, and in the morning I'll pack my grip so as to change base. I can leave a letter for Uncle Mark that he'll get as soon as he comes back from Oregon."

So that much was settled, and somehow all of them seemed to feel pleased over the addition to their ranks. Tubby Hopkins was always like a breath of Spring and a welcome guest at every camp fire. Gloom and Tubby never agreed; in fact he radiated good cheer as the sun does light and heat.

"What's the use of going to the city, and eating an ordinary dinner at some hotel or restaurant, when we can get such a corking fine spread at the place where we had our lunch?" asked Andy.

"Well, there's a whole lot of sense in that," admitted Rob. "We can sit around and get rested, then go to our dinner before the evening rush starts in; and by the time we're through, the illumination of the Exposition will have gotten fully under way. And that's a sight we're wanting to see, you know."

[191]

Hiram fell in with the idea at once, and Tubby declared it suited him perfectly. So once more they headed toward that section of the Zone where the giant Aëroscope lifted up its cage of sight-seers hundreds of feet every few minutes, for the eating-place had been close to this spot.

Since they were looking forward to several weeks at the Fair, no wonder the boys felt very satisfied and happy. There was so much to see that they believed they could put in all the time to advantage without duplicating anything.

When they were seated at the table, Tubby kept his chums in a constant roar of laughter by his many quaint remarks. Sometimes these were called forth by some queer type of foreigner chancing to pass by; and then again it might be Tubby would revive some ludicrous memory of past events in which he had figured.

They certainly seemed to enjoy their "feed," as Tubby called it; it was not unlike a camp supper, when eaten under such odd surroundings. Andy openly declared that with so many swarthy turbaned Arabs strolling by, not to mention Egyptians, Hindoos, Algerians, Moors, and the like, he could easily imagine himself away off on a sandy desert, with camels as the only means of transportation.

[192]

"Makes me so thirsty just to think of it that I have to keep on drinking all the time; so please get me another cup of coffee, waiter," he said.

"A poor excuse is better than none," remarked Hiram. "Now, I'm going to have a second helping of that ambrosia nectar just because I want it. I don't have to ring in all that taffy about hot deserts, camels and such stuff."

By the time they were through with dinner the illumination of the Exposition grounds was in full

blast. It certainly looked like fairyland to Rob, Andy and Hiram; though the last named seemed to be more interested in figuring how an improvement might be made in the wonderful electrical display than in admiring the amazing effect of the myriads of colored lights.

The roofs of buildings, the domes, the turrets and the towers, as well as the Triumphal Arch of the Setting Sun were all aglow. It made a spectacle not easily forgotten, and which the boys were never weary of gazing at.

[193]

As all of them felt pretty stiff and tired from having been on their feet so much that day, and not being used to it after sitting so long on the train, it was determined that they would not linger any longer.

"We'll be here on plenty of nights up to the closing hour," said Rob, "and I think it would be poor policy to overdo things in the beginning."

"Yes," added Tubby with the air of an oracle, "I never forget what I was once told, that it's very unwise to press your horse in the start of a long journey. Let him generally get used to going, and by degrees he'll be able to do better work right along—and finish strong."

"Same way," added Andy, "the jockeys hold back racers till they reach the last lap. The one that's the freshest on the home stretch is the one that's going to win, nine times out of ten."

[194]

"I'm going with you, boys, and see all I can of my chums," announced Tubby, who undoubtedly hated to spend even one more night alone. "I can engage a room near yours for to-morrow, p'r'aps; and besides, Rob has something he promised to show me, which won't keep over the night."

What he referred to happened to be some photographs Rob had taken on the way to California, and which would have looked just as good on the next day; but then Tubby was hunting for even a poor excuse to hang on to the party as long as he could.

They took a carriage at the exit. At the office of the hotel they waited until Tubby had interviewed the clerk, with Rob at his elbow to vouch for him.

"Great luck, fellows!" announced Tubby, as he rejoined Andy and Hiram. "I got my room all right, which in itself is a wonder with all the crowds in the city right now; but would you believe it I'm next door to you!"

"It's some more of that everlasting Hopkins' luck," Andy told him. "You can't be kept down, Tubby, no matter how they try it. We've seen you bob up on top before now. And look at you chancing to have that open knife in your hand this afternoon, when that cord held you! One chance in ten thousand of such a thing happening, and yet it did with you. Sometimes I wish my name wasn't Bowles; if I couldn't have it that I think I'd choose Hopkins. Sounds lucky to me!"

[195]

Chattering as they went, the four chums sought the elevator, and were soon on the fifth floor where the boys' connecting rooms were located.

Rob had secured only the one key at the desk. With this he opened the door, and stepping inside reached out his hand to switch on the electric light. As this flashed up the boys stared about them.

"Wrong room, Rob, I bet you!" exclaimed Andy. "We never left things scattered around on the floor like this."

"But that looks like your suitcase, Andy; and this open steamer trunk is mighty similar to the one we fetched along to hold our extra clothes!" exclaimed Rob.

[196]

"Looks like somebody had been in here looting!" remarked Tubby, whose eyes seemed as round as saucers as he turned from one object to another.

"Well, what d'ye think of that?" cried Hiram, bitterly; "here's my bag turned inside out, just like some sneak thief had been looking for money or jewelry. There's been an attempt at robbery here, fellows, as plain as the nose on my face!"

[197]

CHAPTER XVII. PRYING FINGERS.

"Let's see if there's anything missing!"

As Andy made this remark he started to gather up some of his possessions that strewed the floor close to his suitcase, where they had been hastily thrown when the leather receptacle was emptied.

"Wait a minute," said Rob, halting him in the work; "let's take a general look around first. It seems to me as if they hadn't gotten more than half-way through our trunk. That would indicate something had alarmed the thief, and caused him to leave in a hurry."

"Oh, mebbe I'm not tickled nearly to death!" exclaimed Hiram, suddenly, beaming on the others as though he felt like shaking hands with himself over something.

"What about?" asked Tubby.

"I can give a guess," said Rob. "It's about the papers we left in the safe downstairs, eh, Hiram?"

[198]

"Just what it is, Rob," admitted the other, continuing to show his pleasure. "Only for your smartness in getting me to deposit the packet with the clerk under a seal, it might have been in my bag right here. Say, I wonder now, if that was what the thief wanted?"

"But no one out here would suspect that you carried valuable papers, Hiram," objected Rob.

"How do we know that?" asked the other, who had seized upon that explanation of the mystery, and saw no reason as yet to abandon his theory. "Didn't I tell you how several companies I approached had men in their employ who tried

to play smart games on me, so as to steal the fruits of my labor? Rob, you haven't forgotten that unscrupulous Marsters, have you?"

"Why, no, but there's a whole lot that would have to be explained about him before I could believe he had anything to do with this game," Rob told him.

"Then you're of the opinion it's just an ordinary everyday hotel sneak thief who's been looking through our stuff in hopes of finding some spare money hidden away in one of our grips, is that it, Rob?" and Andy started in once more to gathering up his scattered property, rubbing at the bosom of a shirt where it seemed to be marked with dirty fingers.

[199]

"I don't believe he found anything worth taking," said Hiram, "because we made it a point never to keep valuables in our bags, outside of those rolls belonging to your Professor McEwen."

"If anything worth a considerable amount had been stolen," ventured Rob, "I'd have stopped Andy before now from destroying one of the finest clues that could ever be found. I mean that finger-print so plainly marked on the bosom of your white shirt. With the modern methods used by the police to fix a crime on a criminal, that dark impression of his fingers would prove the fellow guilty in case they could use a drag net and round-up a bunch of suspects."

Tubby stood and watched the others work, gathering their belongings together. Both Hiram and Andy growled occasionally because the thief in his haste to look through everything had jumbled things considerably.

[200]

"What did he want to waste his precious time for trying to find anything worth while in the belongings of three boys?" Andy asked, as though he had a personal grievance against the rogue who had entered their rooms with a duplicate key, since they had certainly found the door locked.

Struck with an idea, Rob stepped over to one of the windows and looked out.

"Think he may have climbed in from some fire-escape, don't you, Rob?" demanded Tubby, who had noted this move on the part of the scout leader.

"The idea struck me," admitted Rob, "but it only took one look to tell me such a thing is quite impossible, and out of the question. No, he must have come in by the door."

"And went out the same way?" continued Tubby.

"Yes, after upsetting our things in the way he did," pursued Rob.

"I s'pose he found out that the owners of the trunk and bags were only three boys," Tubby went on to say in his logical way, "and then he threw up the game; no use expecting to run across jewelry or any extra cash in baggage belonging to boys seeing the Fair."

[201]

"Seems like it's the old story over again," Hiram remarked, "and there's no end to the queer things we run up against. I'm getting so nowadays I expect some surprise to break in on

me any minute, day or night. If it isn't one thing then it's another. And when all else fails why we c'n depend on Tubby here to keep the wheels spinning with some of his antics."

"Antics!" echoed Tubby, indignantly. "I object to you giving my adventure of this afternoon such a name as that. You must think I would purposely tie myself to a speeding aëroplane, and then have to run after it just for the fun of the thing. Antics nothing. Misfortunes, you'd better call my troubles after this."

"Oh, never mind, Tubby! After all, you didn't get hurt," said Andy. "In this case it looks like the thief had had his troubles for nothing."

"I've got a theory," said Rob, "but of course there's no way of proving it. It's connected with those two fellows who tried to play a smart game on Hiram here at Los Angeles, and got left for their pains."

[202]

"Hello! I haven't heard anything about that up to now," exclaimed Tubby. "Who and what were they, Rob? Ten to one you engineered a scheme to block them, because it would be just like Rob Blake to do that."

So Andy, having a glib tongue, took it upon himself to relate the adventure of the through train, and how the two clever rogues had tried to get them to enter a carriage as prisoners, meaning, of course, to rob Hiram as soon as the chance came.

Tubby laughed when he heard how their plan was brought to naught. His merriment grew even more boisterous after he learned that Rob had taken Hiram's papers to secrete them on his person, while the other hid some old letters in an inside pocket, which were deftly "lifted" during the short time the boys happened to be in close touch with the pair of rogues.

"Just to think of the bitter disappointment they met with," said Tubby between his gasps. "I'm sure they'll remember you fellows with anything but pleasure. Every time they glimpse a boy in khaki they'll be apt to utter some hard words."

[203]

"Well," continued Rob, "it was on what they must feel that I based my theory. You see, they must have been coming to one of the expositions, probably the big Panama-Pacific show, to ply their trade. That would take them here to San Francisco. By some chance or other they may have seen us, and found out where we are stopping; and this raid was carried out more with a desire to have revenge on us than anything else. If some one hadn't alarmed the fellows they might have amused themselves destroying everything in our bags and trunk."

"A mean revenge, but I wouldn't put it past a thief who was boiling mad because three Boy Scouts had managed to get the better of him," Andy declared, with considerable emphasis, which looked as though he rather favored the theory advanced by the scout leader.

"Whee! I hope this thing isn't as catching as the measles," ventured Tubby. "You know, I've gone and paid out some good money for several things that caught my eye in the booths at the Exposition; and I'd hate to have some one get

[204]

away with them during my absence.”

“Oh, small chance of that happening, Tubby! And if you’re afraid to stay alone to-night, why, I’ll go over with you to get your bag, and come on here,” Andy told the anxious one.

Perhaps Tubby was at first sorely tempted to accept that offer; but then he chanced to catch a gleam of amusement on Hiram’s face. That settled the matter. Pride stepped in and took the reins.

“Oh, never mind about that, Andy!” he hastened to say. “It’s very kind of you to offer me help, but I think I had better wait until morning. I’ll be around early and take breakfast with the bunch, remember. What time do you eat?”

Hiram and Andy allowed Rob to settle that for them.

“Call it eight o’clock, then. We’ll wait that long for you, Tubby,” the scout leader said.

“I’ll be on the move by seven, and as I expect to pack my bag to-night before turning in, it isn’t going to take me long to finish.”

[205]

Tubby got up as though he knew he ought to be going; but apparently he hated to part from his chums. They had been together so much of recent years that they were as thick as peas in a pod.

Rob somehow did not seem to be altogether satisfied with the result of his first examination of the room; he was heard moving around in the second apartment. When he joined the rest again, Andy, who must have guessed what he had been about, began to question Rob.

“Find anything to give the game away in there, Rob?” he asked.

“Well, no, not that I could see,” the scout leader replied. “The door, as you may remember, is locked, and the key at the office, where we haven’t bothered taking it out. Besides, when we left this morning I shot the bolt home, so that no thief could have entered by that door; and certainly no one left the room that way, or the bolt would not be in the socket as it is.”

“Oh, well, what’s the use of bothering about it? We don’t as a rule believe in crying over spilled milk. If that’s the case, why should we fret when there’s been no damage done at all, except my white shirt being soiled by finger prints?”

[206]

“Send that to the hotel laundry and forget it,” advised Tubby. “Where did I leave my hat? Oh, here it is! By the way, don’t be surprised when you see me in the morning, because I expect to be togged out in my khaki uniform, which Uncle had me fetch along in my big collapsible grip.”

“We’ll try and stand the wonderful sight the best way we can,” Hiram told him; “but break it to us by inches, please, Tubby, so as to avoid as much risk as possible. I’ve got a weak heart, you know, and a sudden shock might be serious.”

“Too bad you made your bargain with the hotel clerk before you donned your khaki, Tubby,” ventured Andy. “He might have given you the room at half the price you expect to pay for it

now on the European plan. Your presence here would be a standing advertisement for the place. They could afford to let you stay for nothing if only you'd agree to stand outside the restaurant door an hour each day, and pick your teeth."

All this kind of "joshing" had no effect on Tubby, who really seemed rather to enjoy being a target for these shafts of sarcasm leveled by his comrades, for his smile was as bright and cheery as ever.

[207]

"I'll tie my shoe first, and then skip out. Must be going on nine o'clock now, and I've got some lost sleep to make up."

Saying which he dropped down on one knee and set to work. The others accommodated themselves to the several easy-chairs, Hiram swinging one of his long legs over the arm of his seat in real Yankee fashion.

Rob yawned, and then taking out his little notebook—in which he was particular to jot down every daily event of any consequence on the trip—he felt in his pocket for a pencil.

"By the way, Hiram, you borrowed my pencil this afternoon, and didn't return it," he remarked, stretching out his hand toward the other scout, who, with a sheepish shrug of his shoulders, fished the article in question out of his vest pocket and handed it over.

It was just then that Tubby fairly scrambled to his feet. Rob looked up in some surprise, when to his further astonishment the fat boy tiptoed over, bent down, and said:

[208]

"Please don't give me the grand laugh, Rob, when I tell you I saw something moving under that bed there—a pair of shoes!"

[209]

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE THIEF UNDER THE BED.

"Hey, what's that, Tubby?"

It was Hiram who whispered this in a rather hoarse and strained voice. He had managed to just barely overhear what the fat scout was telling Rob, and could hardly believe his ears.

Rob instantly held up a warning finger. His face looked serious for, while after all it might prove that Tubby's imagination was playing tricks with him, there were circumstances that gave the matter a suspicious look.

Some one had certainly been in their rooms turning things upside-down, as though searching for articles of value, or with the intention of creating as much havoc and confusion as possible.

Besides this, had they not already concluded that this person must have been disturbed in his vandal work? They believed he had fled, but after all it was possible that, hearing them at the door, he had made the utmost haste to conceal himself in the first hiding place available, which

[210]

was under one of the beds.

Rob had to think quickly.

The man must be a desperate rascal or he would never have taken the chances he did in entering their apartments bent on such work. Consequently he would, of course, be armed, and if given half a chance, might make things exceedingly disagreeable for the four scouts.

What should be done?

Hiram was already pointing toward the house telephone, as though suggesting the use of it to bring help from below. Rob shook his head to indicate that the plan did not seem to appeal to him when there might be a better one to adopt.

They were four in number, and pretty husky fellows in the bargain, who in times past had accomplished quite a few feats worth mentioning. It would be too bad if a squad of scouts of their caliber and experience could not manage in some way to smother a single concealed thief.

Of course, by this time, Andy had come to realize that there was something very exciting and mysterious going on. He wanted to burst out with a plain question, and ask Rob what it was all about; but reading the signification of that upraised finger, and the frown on the scout leader's face, he simply put out a hand and rested it on Rob's sleeve while a pleading expression gripped his face.

[211]

Taking pity on Andy, and believing that they must all work together if they expected to accomplish anything, Rob bent over and whispered in his ear.

"Somebody's hiding under the bed, Tubby says. Now laugh out loud as though we were having a joke; that is to keep him quiet a while longer."

Fortunately Andy Bowles was quick-witted enough to grasp the peculiar situation. He understood just why Rob wanted him to make it appear as though things were moving along as usual, and that no suspicion had been aroused.

So Andy laughed. If there was a queer, husky touch to the sounds he emitted to order surely Andy could hardly be blamed, for he must have been quivering all over just then from hysterical excitement.

[212]

Rob drew the heads of Tubby and Andy down close to his mouth. They knew he meant to issue instructions, and hence eagerly strained their hearing so that not a single syllable might be lost. Meanwhile Hiram was standing near by, and busily engaged in taking off his khaki coat which, being quite new, he evidently did not mean to have mussed in any rough and tumble work.

At another time Rob would have smiled to see Hiram carefully folding his coat and then softly depositing it on the bed that was held under suspicion; but it did not cause a ripple of amusement to cross his serious face now.

"You and Tubby pass around to the other side of the bed, and try to act as if you were cutting up," Rob whispered. "Keep your eyes on me, and

when I give the word lay hold of his legs and yank him out. Tubby, we depend on you to keep him from getting to his feet; squash him if necessary. Get that, both of you?"

Both heads eagerly nodded an affirmative reply. The plan was so extremely simple that there did not seem to be any possibility of confusion.

[213]

Tubby's face was not quite so rosy as usual, perhaps, but no one could say he looked frightened in the least. He immediately started some "horse-play" with Andy, laughing as he pushed the other around the foot of the bed so that they could presently bring up on the other side.

Taking advantage of the very first opportunity, Tubby, even while continuing to pretend to wrestle with Andy, pointed a finger downward. Knowing what this was meant for, Andy ducked his head in order to also get a glimpse of the object the fat boy considered so suspicious.

Meanwhile Rob and Hiram were holding themselves in readiness to jump around to any point where they could make their presence count. The former was keeping an anxious eye on Tubby and Andy. When he saw the latter make that quick movement, Rob knew what it meant, and understood that considerable would depend on how Andy came to decide.

So Rob fairly held his breath awaiting the verdict. If after all Tubby had allowed his imagination to get the better of him, and had mistaken some simple object for a pair of shoes under the bed, Andy's keen eyes would quickly detect the illusion, and they might expect to hear him give a roar of amusement.

[214]

Nothing of the kind happened, it turned out. Instead of this, when Andy once more straightened up he nodded his head toward Rob in a way that could have only one meaning—he was ready to risk his reputation for veracity along with Tubby in admitting that the facts looked suspicious.

That settled the matter with Rob. They must combine to make a sudden assault on the concealed thief and try to overpower him before he could place himself in a condition to do them harm.

Like a wise general, the scout leader took one last look around in order to see that his forces were all in their respective positions before he gave the signal that would precipitate action.

Andy, impatient to get busy, made a significant gesture, opening and shutting both hands rapidly, while a faint grin could be seen on his face. This was intended to convey the intelligence that he was eager to lay hold on the lower extremities of the sneak thief cowering under the bed, and start to drag him out from his place of concealment.

[215]

There was no need of any further delay, and so Rob made a quick movement with his hand, at the same time exclaiming:

"Now's your time; get him!"

Before the last word had been uttered Andy was

bending down and hurling himself part-way under the bed. He immediately began to back out, tugging with all his strength at something upon which he had pounced.

Tubby also took hold and united his power with that of the other scout. They made short work of it, once that combination got started. Out from under the bed they dragged a struggling figure that was scratching, clawing and trying in every possible way to swing around so that he would not be taken at such a terrible disadvantage.

By that time Rob and Hiram had managed to arrive, the latter scrambling directly across the bed in his hurry to get into action.

[216]

There was a lively little scene for a brief interval, with all of them trying to keep those kicking legs and violently driven arms pinned down.



There was a lively little scene for a brief interval.

A few blows were given in the struggle, and not all on one side, since Andy had a thrust in the eye that made the tears come, and Tubby received a kick which forced a grunt from his lungs.

Whoever the fellow might be he evidently was convinced that his condition was desperate, judging from the wild way he fought, to break away, with the intention of bolting from the room.

In the midst of the *mélée* Tubby settled the affair in a unique way all his own, and which none of the others could have imitated even though they sought to do so.

He simply allowed himself to sit down squarely

on the squirming figure with which they had been battling so fiercely. When that heavyweight settled down, it was like a stone wagon dropping into a hole in the road. They heard a gasp from the unfortunate wretch underneath, whose struggles immediately began to lose much of their former vigor.

It happened that at the time the thief was lying on his stomach, so that Tubby perched on his back, which might have been broken had the fellow been less sturdily built.

[217]

After that there was really nothing more for the others to do; Tubby was equal to the task of keeping his victim pinned there in spite of anything the wretched fellow might try to do.

It was then they heard him wheezing as though short of breath, and saw his hand moving as if in abject appeal.

"I give up! I'm all in! Please don't kill me, Rob and Andy! Won't you let Tubby get up off my back; he's smashing my ribs, I tell you!"

Rob, Andy and Hiram stared at each other as though they hardly knew whether they could be awake or dreaming. Why, the squirming wretch whom they found hidden under the bed, and who had undoubtedly been searching their effects with robbery in view, had actually mentioned the name of Rob and that of Andy. Yes, he had even begged that Tubby be restrained before he utterly crushed his back and sides!

It gave them one of the greatest surprises in all their experience; for how a common hotel sneak thief should know who they were, and address them so familiarly, was past their comprehension.

[218]

Tubby, too, looked astounded, though he made no move to get up in response to the pitiful wheeze of the wretch he was pinning to the floor. Perhaps it filtered through the slow-moving brain of the fat scout that this might be only one of those clever tricks known to sharpers, and entered into simply to gain some advantage.

Rob knew differently. There seemed to be something about that whine on the part of the prisoner that was familiar, though on the spur of the moment Rob could not have told where he had last heard it.

Accustomed to prompt action, the scout leader motioned to Andy and Hiram to hold themselves in readiness to seize upon the fellow's arms, and in this manner keep him from taking advantage of his newly acquired freedom when Tubby arose.

"Now you can get up, Tubby!" said Rob.

[219]

Tubby thereupon gave one of his satisfied grunts and commenced to roll off his human cushion for, as a rule, when he wished to gain his feet, like the elephant he resembled in many ways, the fat boy had to get upon his knees first of all, and then make a further effort.

"Turn him over, Andy, Hiram; and if he tries any funny business he'll wish he hadn't, that's all!" Rob told the others, who immediately started to

obey.

"Oh, believe me, I've had enough as it is, Rob! I hope you won't be too hard on me this time! I was wild to get back home, and that's the truth," the fellow was crying as Andy and Hiram turned him on his back.

The former bent down to stare into the thief's face. Rob fairly held his breath, awaiting the explosion something told him was due. Nor was he mistaken, for Andy drew back, uttering exclamations of wonder.

"Why, who d'ye believe it is," he burst out, "but that sneak of a Jared Applegate who had to skip out of Hampton when things got too hot for him, and who you last ran across when you were down in Mexico? Rob, he's up to his old tricks of trying to steal what belongs to others. Say, this is one of the biggest surprises that ever came our way. Old Hiram Applegate's bad boy, and a common hotel thief!"

[220]

[221]

CHAPTER XIX.

AN ENEMY OF THE PAST.

They all recognized Jared now, although he had grown considerably since last Rob had seen him, and was a husky looking fellow, easily capable of doing a man's work.

In other days he had been a thorn in the flesh of the newly organized troop of scouts in Hampton, doing every mean thing his wits could devise in order to annoy them. Then, later on, when some of the boys had visited the Panama Canal, in process of being dug at the time, they ran across this same young reprobate, and found him associated with a number of desperate foreigners who were trying to blow up the locks of the canal in order to effect the ruination of the whole grand project to unite the two oceans across the isthmus.

Still later, Rob had run across Jared down in Mexico, where he was having a hard time of it, having joined forces with some of the rival warring elements that at the time were smashing things right and left. Whatever became of Jared, Rob had never learned, nor had he bothered himself very much over the disappearance of the unscrupulous young rascal.

[222]

And now, to find him trying to steal things from their baggage, was enough to make them believe the world was a pretty small affair after all. Of the hundreds of thousands of people in San Francisco it was certainly queer that Jared, their old-time enemy, should be the one to attempt this thing.

"What's this checkered jumper he's wearing mean?" remarked Andy, when he could find his breath, which had really been taken away by the astonishing discovery.

"Looks like Jared might be doing some honest work at last," added Hiram. "Else he's just put it on to make people believe he belongs here in the

hotel.”

“No, no, that isn’t so, Hiram!” hastily cried the wretched Jared. “I’m really a sort of porter here, you see. I fetch trunks up to guests’ rooms, and all that. Mebbe you didn’t know it, but I brought that steamer trunk of yours here when you were out. That’s how I got my first knowledge some of my old schoolmates had come on to the Fair, because I read the name of Robert Blake on the same, and Hampton, L. I., ditto.”

[223]

“Oh!” said Andy, “and you felt so warmly drawn to your old schoolmates, Jared, didn’t you, that you just couldn’t resist sneaking up here when they were out, and rooting all through their baggage in hopes of picking up a windfall?”

The wretched Jared groaned in a way that told how badly he felt, not because he repented for anything he had done, as Rob well knew, but on account of having had the ill-fortune to be caught in the act. That was what pinched the most, though it was not to be expected he would admit as much; for Jared had always been one of those tricky, whining, cowardly fellows who make big promises when in trouble, but forget all about them as soon as the wind blows fair.

“I’m just sick to get back home again, and that’s the truth, I give you my word it is, Rob!” he said, trying to appear very dejected and humble, because he knew from past experiences that this was the best way to work upon the sympathies of these good-hearted former school companions.

[224]

“And ready to rob us so as to get the money to take you there, you mean, don’t you, Jared?” Rob demanded.

“Oh, it was wicked, I realize that now, but everything has been against me out here,” whined the one who lay on his back on the floor. “I get to thinking of the folks at home on Long Island and it seems I would go crazy I want to get back there so bad again. If I ever do, I’m meanin’ to be a different feller than in the past. I’ve had my lesson, Rob; I’ve been kicked around like a dog till I came to hate nearly everybody that lived. But if I could only have one more chance I’d try awful hard to make good, sure I would. Oh, I hope you’ll believe me, Rob Blake!”

Now Rob, through so many dealings with this treacherous fellow in the past, had lost all faith in his possessing the least trait of decency in his composition. In most bad boys with whom Rob had ever had anything to do he could discover some sign of decency, even though it required considerable searching to find it; but upon Jared he had come to look as worthless.

[225]

All these promises Rob believed were only made with one idea in view, and this a wild desire to escape the punishment he so richly deserved.

Caught hiding under the bed after their effects had been searched and thrown recklessly around, Jared must certainly be treated as a common thief if arrested, and the management of the hotel would take great satisfaction in prosecuting him if only to discourage other employees from copying his example.

“Let him sit up, boys!” the scout leader told the

two who had been pinning both of Jared's arms to the floor.

They did as Rob requested, but from the way in which Andy and Hiram seemed to watch the culprit, meanwhile holding themselves in complete readiness to hurl their weight upon him at the first show of aggressive action on his part, it was evident that they attached small importance to his claim of repentance.

Rob hardly knew what to do. They had no reason to think well of this scamp who, in the past, never lost an opportunity to do them an ill turn, whether in the home town on the shore of Long Island, down at Panama, or upon the wide plains of Mexico. In Rob's mind there was no shadow of belief with regard to that promise of reformation, or the gnawing desire to return home.

[226]

Still, so far as they knew, nothing had been stolen, so that there was no real reason why they should sink so low as to want to revenge themselves on Jared.

He certainly presented a most pitiable object as he sat there and turned his anxious eyes from one face to another of the four boys with whom he had gone to school for years, and who now held his fate in their hands.

"If I got anything, Rob, I meant to make it up to you later on when I could earn the money," he was saying again, mistaking that serious look on Rob's face and fearful that he meant to turn him over to the police. "I'm ready to go back to the farm and work it with the old man. This thing of knockin' about the world ain't all it's cracked up to be, and I'm dead tired of going hungry half the time. Let me off, Rob, won't you, please? It'd nigh 'bout kill the old woman if she learned I'd been caught tryin' to steal from my schoolmates."

[227]

Like all cowards, Jared, when he found himself face to face with the consequences of his folly, was ready to play the part of the prodigal son, and bring in his parents as a reason why he should escape punishment. Rob and the other scouts knew his mother and father, and while they had no reason to respect Farmer Applegate, still the fact that Jared was his son and must have almost broken the hearts of his people at home, was bound to influence Rob.

"Get up, Jared!" said the scout leader, shortly.

Andy gave a grunt of displeasure. He could guess what Rob was about to do, and felt like expressing his disgust, though it was seldom any of the boys ventured to differ with Rob, such confidence did they have in his long-headed policies.

Hiram simply contented himself with shrugging his shoulders. If Rob considered it best that they let the contemptible sneak thief off, after catching him in the very act as it were, well, it must be all right. Scouts were taught that when a foe was on his back and begging for mercy they must not be too hard-hearted. Jared was deceiving them, Hiram felt sure of that, but after all why should they bother with punishing him any further?

[228]

"Are you meanin' to let me go, Rob?" quavered the fellow, as he managed to get upon his feet, with the four scouts clustered around him.

"Yes, because we haven't lost anything through you as far as we can find out," the scout leader told him, at which Jared's face lost some of its strained look, and Andy thought he caught some of the old-time crafty gleam in his shifting eyes.

"I give you my word for it, Rob, I never took a single living thing," he hastened to say.

"Well, we'll make sure of that by taking a look through your pockets!" declared Rob, sternly. "You don't seem to like that, do you? But make up your mind that if you start to show the first sign of resistance we'll not only pile on you, but hand you over to the police afterward without listening to any more promises. Andy, you tap his pockets, and see what he's got."

[229]

Andy did not hesitate an instant; indeed, to see the way he started in one might believe this was an avocation with the scout, and that he had been employed a long time at police headquarters searching the pockets of prisoners before they were thrust into cells.

A number of things were brought to light, which did not possess any particular interest for the scouts. When, however, from an inside pocket Andy drew a roll of bills, fastened with a rubber band, Tubby was heard to give a "whee!" and Hiram nudged Rob in the side as if to say: "See how he yarned when he vowed he wanted to get back on the farm, but didn't have the railroad fare East!"

Andy deliberately proceeded to count the contents of the roll, while the wretched owner followed his every move, as though he feared that by some hocus-pocus or sleight of hand process, with which he himself was possibly familiar, some of the money might take wings and fly away.

"Just ninety-seven dollars here, Rob!" announced Andy.

[230]

"Yes, that's right," declared Jared, cringing before Rob's look, "and I earned every cent of that roll by honest days' labor, every cent of it. I thought I needed just a little more to see me through all the way East. I was told it'd take about—say a hundred and ten clear. But I c'n wait now till I get my next wages. I was a silly fool to think to rob my old pals of the days in Hampton."

"You never said truer words than those, Jared," Rob told him, plainly, but with a feeling that nothing the other declared would be believed under oath, for truth and Jared Applegate had never been friends.

"But, Rob, I hope now you ain't a-goin' to keep any of my cash roll, or hand it over to the manager of the hotel. I've been working here quite some time now, and they treat me white so I'd hate to get bounced when I'm so near makin' up the amount I need. It's all clean money, Rob, you believe me, don't you? Look at my hands and see how calloused they are? That's a pretty good sign, I take it, that I ain't been layin' around, or playin' cards like I used to."

[231]

He had certainly been doing some sort of hard labor, though Rob was rather inclined to believe Jared must have been working in the mines with pick and shovel, and had only come to the city when driven out of the camp because of some crooked doings.

"You shouldn't judge everybody by your own standard, Jared," he told the other. "None of us could be hired to take a single cent of yours, no matter how you got the money, which is no affair of ours. Give it back to him, Andy; and I guess you've searched enough to satisfy us he is carrying away nothing that belongs to us."

Jared clutched the money as might a miser, and hastened to stow it away again.

"And you mean me to go, don't you, Rob? I take it you're too high-minded to want to have revenge on a poor devil who's down in the world, even if he has done you dirt in the past. Say I c'n skip out, won't you, Rob? I'm a changed boy, I tell you; and you'll never be sorry you acted white with me!"

[232]

"Open the door, Tubby," said Rob, and the fat scout did so, though with apparent reluctance, for Tubby did not have the slightest faith in Jared's wonderful reformation, and thought he ought to be punished in some way.

"Now go, and I only hope we never set eyes on you again, Jared Applegate. Only for the fact that you've already brought enough trouble on the heads of your folks at home I'd be in favor of handing you over to the police to deal with. Hurry up and leave before I change my mind."

Jared did not linger a second longer than he could help. He gave each of the three scouts a look, and although he tried to appear grateful, they could see that there was the same old crafty gleam in his eyes as though deep down in his heart there existed not a trace of the desire to reform of which his lips had boasted. Passing through the open door, he vanished from their sight.

[233]

CHAPTER XX.

LOTS OF EXCITEMENT.

After all that excitement, Tubby could not immediately tear himself away from his chums.

"Why, seems as if all the sleep had been chased out of my eyes!" he declared, as he once more composedly sat down; and of course a general discussion took place in connection with their past experiences with Jared Applegate.

In the end they had to fairly pry Tubby away from that chair, and put him out of the door, in a friendly scuffle; he protesting to the last that as he had no expectation of getting a wink of sleep that night, there was no need of hurrying.

"Why, it's half-past eleven right now," Andy told him. "We'll be a nice lot of blinking owls tomorrow unless we hit the hay in a hurry. You come back when you promised, and join the

bunch. Good-night, Tubby!"

With that the door was closed, and of course the unwilling Tubby found there was no use trying to change the program; so he headed for the elevator, smothering a tremendous yawn by the way.

[234]

He made his appearance promptly on time when morning came, and they started for the Exposition grounds in a squad, all of them filled with lively anticipations of another great day of sight-seeing.

Of course the most anxious one of the company was Hiram. His business had not as yet come to a focus, and he was not at all certain how it might turn out. The others did not wish to hurry him unduly, for they knew Hiram to be very set in his ways; but at the same time they gave him plain hints that he would be unwise to wait too long.

"They're expecting me any day now," Hiram had explained in answer to these remonstrances, "and I'm just keepin' 'em on the fence, you see. When I kinder guess the time's ripe I'll drop in on the company and tell 'em who I happen to be."

"Hiram means he's engineering a sort of climax," explained Andy; "but the rest of us will be as mad as hops if he pulls the thing off without giving us a chance to see the fun."

[235]

"You wouldn't be so mean as that, I hope, Hiram?" pleaded Tubby.

"What d'ye take me for?" the other had exclaimed, in seeming indignation. "Guess I ought to know what my duty to my chums is. You'll all have front seats on the band wagon when the music begins. Consider that as good as settled, Tubby. I'm having an extra big chair fixed for you, too, so you'll be comfy."

Tubby beamed his gratitude, and as they had arrived at the turnstile by that time the subject was dropped.

It was decided that they should keep together, for a while at least, though anyone could see that Hiram was wild to hurry over to where the Golden Gate Aviation Supply Company had its headquarters adjoining the field where the airships gave frequent exhibitions.

The crowd had not begun to make itself felt as yet, so that they found splendid opportunities to inspect numerous things that attracted their attention in some of the many immense Fair buildings.

[236]

An hour was spent among the pictures in the art building. Rob enjoyed this, for he was very fond of paintings, and at some future date he meant to put in a whole morning here.

Tubby soon tired of it, and as for Hiram it seemed to be pretty much of a bore. One whose heart and mind were wrapped up with all sorts of inventions could not be expected to content himself gazing upon works of art; they were too tame for his spirit; what Hiram delighted in was the whirr of machinery, the clack of the aeroplane propeller, and kindred objects that

meant real *work* for him.

Just how it happened that about the middle of the morning they found themselves once more treading the devious ways of the Amusement Zone neither Rob nor Tubby nor Hiram could somehow understand. They dimly suspected, however, that the artful Andy must have managed to coax them in that quarter under a specious plea that he wanted to show them something wonderful.

The first thing they knew they were seated in chairs on the moving platform, and viewing the scenery along the stretch of the Panama Canal, which had a very realistic look for those who had been there themselves.

[237]

Each chair had a dictaphone attachment connected with the arm, and by applying this in the proper manner to their ears the occupants were enabled to hear a description of each section of the great ditch as it was reached.

Taken in all, it was a novel experience, and one they enjoyed very much; though in the end it required the strength of the other three scouts to drag poor Tubby out of his chair, which happened not to have been capacious enough for the standard requirements of the fat boy.

"Honestly," said Tubby, in explanation of his sticking so tight, "I believe some skunk went and put a piece of shoemakers' wax in that chair; and I feel that I'm lucky to have saved the seat of my new khaki trousers. If it had been the old ones there's no telling what might have happened."

"H'm! a poor excuse is better than none, they say," muttered Andy; "but seems like instead of calling these chairs comfortable they might have added that they were the 'Fat Man's Misery.' But forget it, Tubby; you're safe and sound again, breeches and all. Come on and see what there is in this Bedouin Camp. The camels look like it ought to be a heap interesting."

[238]

The others were not as much taken with the show as Andy. To him it was all real, and breathed the atmosphere of the desert and the traders' caravan; but Rob saw how much was tinsel and make-believe, and really suspected that some of the so-called Arabs talked among themselves in pretty fair English.

It happened that shortly after they had issued from this concession, and Hiram was commencing to show signs of uneasiness, as though wanting to be off, something came to pass that for the time being made them forget their plans.

"Hey! what's all that running about over there?" suddenly exclaimed Andy. "Mebbe there's goin' to be an Oriental elopement or a wedding? Let's hurry over and get in line to see!"

"More'n like a dog-fight," grumbled Hiram; "for I've noticed that in some of these squalid villages of foreigners they have some ugly yellow curs hanging around, which I should think the Fair people wouldn't stand for."

[239]

All the same, Hiram ran as fast as his mates to see what was going on. They made a discovery

before they were more than half way to the spot. Indeed, the loud outcries borne to their ears, as well as the smoke that came from a building where the signs indicated that a celebrated Egyptian fortune-teller could be consulted, made this very manifest.

“Whee! it’s a fire!” gurgled Tubby, who was puffing very hard in his effort not to be left in the lurch by his more agile companions.

The excitement can be easily imagined in that always thronged section of the Exposition grounds. Scores of persons, many of them turbaned Arabs, Turks with red fezzes on their heads, or other foreigners were rushing this way and that, all wildly shouting, and wringing their hands as though they expected that a dreadful misfortune threatened that part of the Amusement Zone.

The gayly-dressed fortune-tellers were apparently up against a hard proposition. They could pretend to tell what the future held for others, but apparently had not been able to foresee such a common everyday occurrence as their booth taking fire.

[240]

No one seemed to be thinking of trying to do anything. The authorities of the Fair had provided arrangements for such accidents, and in due time, doubtless, the fire company would dash upon the scene, ready to pour a stream of water on the flames.

But seconds count when fire is seizing hold of flimsy curtains and woodwork. A minute or two in the commencement of a conflagration means that it may be smothered before it gets a firm clutch on the building.

Rob possibly remembered what had happened on that Long Island bay at the time he and Andy saved the naphtha launch owned by old Cap. Jerry.

Just then he discovered a couple of local scouts hurrying up. They were small lads, and might hardly know what was to be done in such an emergency. Rob seized hold of the first one.

[241]

“Tell me, do you know where the nearest fire extinguisher is fastened; I remember seeing some around the grounds here?”

No sooner had Rob put this question to the small scout than his face lighted up eagerly.

“That’s the ticket!” he exclaimed, shrilly. “I knew there was something a fellow ought to do! Why, yes, there’s one right back yonder, mister. All you got to do is to grab it off the stand and get busy. I know where another is further on!”

With that he darted off, followed by his companion. Rob had not even waited to hear all that was said. He had his eye on that little extinguisher immediately, and was leaping toward it, followed by the gaze of his admiring chums.

Why, it seemed almost no time at all before the scout leader had wrenched the extinguisher loose. His first thought was that luck favored him because lo! and behold it chanced to be one of the same pattern he always carried aboard his

little motorboat, to provide against a catastrophe by fire.

Thus armed and equipped, Rob started into the small building from which the dense clouds of smoke issued, and amidst which tongues of angry flame were to be seen.

Andy, Hiram and Tubby followed close on his heels. They had nothing with which to fight the fire, but somehow seemed to consider it a part of their duty to back their energetic leader up to the full limit of their capacity.

It was, after all, nothing of moment, once Rob got the little stream started on the flames. The fire had not gained sufficient headway to make a stubborn resistance of it, and inside of three minutes Rob had it entirely subdued.



Inside of three minutes Rob had it entirely subdued.

“Back out, fellows; it’s all over!” he managed to exclaim, though half choked by the penetrating smoke.

Just as the scouts came out, and by their smiles assured everybody that there no longer remained a spark to endanger the neighboring flimsy structures, the fire squad came hustling up. Of course there was a perfect mob gathered by this time, and Rob found it hard work to try and make his way through.

The man in charge of the fire-fighters hunted the scouts up and insisted on shaking hands with

them, a procedure that many in the crowd copied, greatly to the displeasure of Rob, though Tubby and the others did not seem to mind it in the least.

One alert young fellow, who announced that he was a reporter on a San Francisco daily, tried his best to get an interview with Rob, who positively declined to say anything except that they were scouts from Long Island.

As this persistent newspaperman kept after them, and was seen in eager conversation with Tubby in the rear, it might be taken for granted that the fat scout was of a different mind from Rob. Trust Tubby to "blow the horn" good and strong, especially when he could sing the praises of one he cared for as much as he did for Rob Blake.

"Seems like things keep on happening wherever we go," said Andy, after they had finally managed to shake off the last of the curious crowd, and retreated to another part of the Zone. [244]

"It's lucky for some people that such is the case," asserted Tubby, promptly. "If we hadn't happened to be around I reckon that fortune-teller's place would have been burned to the ground. Some time we may be sorry we bothered with it. They're all a lot of fakes, say what you will."

Andy chuckled audibly at hearing that remark.

"You mustn't mind Tubby, fellows," he said, pretending to whisper, though he knew the fat scout could hear every word plainly; "ever since that time we were down at Coney Island, and a woman seeress there told him he had a glorious future as the world's most famous fat man, Tubby has been sore on the craft. Now, that same wise woman told me I was going to be the greatest traveler since Livingstone's time. She read my longings and aspirations, and I often think she could lift the curtain and see into the future."

"Aw! you're silly if you believe a single word they say!" burst out Tubby, with wrath and indignation; but in less than two minutes he was as amiable as ever; the unpleasant incident was forgotten; for Tubby could not stay out of humor long, and as Hiram was accustomed to saying, "trouble and anger slipped from Tubby just like water does from a duck's back!" [245]

More people were coming as the morning progressed, though the crowds would not begin to compare with those that the afternoon and evening would bring; when the band concerts were an added attraction, with numerous other events going on in every direction, until one would wish they could have a thousand eyes and ears so as not to miss anything.

Rob was tired of the scenes in the Amusement Zone, and ready to suggest that all of them make a change of base, though he knew it would not be an easy task to tear Andy away from the sights his heart yearned to keep in contact with.

"There's one of the yellow curs we saw in that Indian village," remarked Tubby; "and some boys are plaguing the life half out of him by [246]

throwing sticks, and trying to round him up. He must have broken loose from the enclosure where he was confined, and don't know how to get back again. Look at the way he acts, will you? They'd better go slow, or he'll bite one of those sillies! Oh, look at him snapping, will you, Rob? Makes me think of the mad dog that ran through our town last——"

"Stop that talk, Tubby!" ordered Rob, sternly; but apparently it was too late, for some one gave a shout, and like magic the cry was taken up until dozens of frightened voices sent it rolling along the street of the Zone:

"Mad dog! mad dog! run for your lives, everybody!"

[247]

CHAPTER XXI. THE MAD DOG PANIC.

No more dreadful cry can be imagined than the one the four scouts now heard rising all around them. It made many faces turn deathly white, and there was a hasty flight on the part of the more timid in order to gain the shelter of the adjoining walls of the booths.

Some boys and men also remained, and commenced to pelt the wretched cur still further with stones, sticks, or anything they could lay hands on, meanwhile keeping up more or less wild shouting.

"The fools!" exclaimed Rob, indignantly; "that dog is no more mad than I am; but they're doing everything they can to make him so. He's already scared half out of his head with all those things being shied at him. He snarls and snaps because he's at bay, and the old wolf nature shows then. All he wants is to get back home somehow!"

The clamor grew in violence as new voices joined in. Those who came running up, always eager to see whatever was going on, began to hurl things at the cringing yellow cur flattened against the wall; though when the poor beast once started toward them it was amazing to see how the mob melted away, men falling over each other in their frantic fear of being bitten.

[248]

Rob was growing more and more indignant. He tried to speak to some of those nearest him, but he might as well have tried to stop the flow of Niagara for all the effect his words of expostulation had upon the shouters.

Women and children were shrieking in fright, even though they were apparently safe in the various buildings that lined the sunny street of the Zone.

"I just can't stand for this racket!" the others heard Rob say, as he suddenly left them and sprang forward.

Immediately loud voices called out, some warning him not to be rash, and others applauding his daring, for it is always so easy to stand back and clap hands when some one is

taking the chances.

"Oh! what does Rob mean to do?" cried Tubby, who had seen the mad dog killed in the main street of Hampton the previous summer, and had a perfect horror of being brought into personal contact with any animal suffering from the rabies.

[249]

"He isn't intending to try and grab the beast!" explained Hiram. "Rob knows better than that, even if the dog is only scared, and not mad. It would bite him just as quick, I guess, as if it was rabid. Watch and see what his game is, fellows; Rob knows what he's about, you'd better believe!"

Every eye was centered on the form of the boy as he advanced toward the cowering dog. Rob was snapping his fingers, and acting as friendly as he could, wishing to assure the beast he had no hostile motive in approaching. This he did in order to keep the frenzied and tortured dog from jumping at him before he could manage to put his little plan into operation.

At least it held the attention of the dog, though the animal suspected the genuine nature of his advance, and cowered there watching him, still snarling viciously.

[250]

It required considerable nerve to keep on in spite of the increasing growls of the dog at bay. Rob was ready to act in case the beast did spring toward him, for he certainly had no intention of allowing its jaws to come in contact with his flesh.

Most of the shouting had died out by now. Everybody was watching with held breath to see what that venturesome boy in khaki would attempt. Many doubtless believed, as they stared with distended eyes, that Rob actually meant to grapple with the animal and throttle it.

"It's a burning shame to let a boy try what men might have done!" one white-faced woman near the other scouts was heard to say; and they could readily imagine that she had boys of her own at home, of whom she was doubtless thinking as she watched Rob walking forward into the danger zone.

But Rob had another scheme in view. Unarmed, he did not covet an encounter at close quarters with that yellow dog, whether the beast was mad or only frenzied with fear.

In fact, Rob meant to try and cage him, if it could be worked. He believed that if given a chance the dog would only too gladly slip in through any opening that seemed to offer him a temporary refuge from all those shouting tormentors.

[251]

Rob, in taking a rapid survey of the situation, had noticed what seemed to be a partly finished booth which was being erected for some late coming concession owner. The small building was almost finished, and had a door, which he had seen was ajar, though not fully open.

It was the boy's plan, made up on the spur of the moment, to reach that door and push it wide open. Then in some fashion perhaps the frightened dog might be influenced to enter,

when the door could be closed, and thus he would be held in a trap.

Perhaps Rob's heart beat like a trip-hammer within him as he came close to that door, and he fancied he saw the dog starting to jump toward him. He snapped his fingers again and spoke kindly. It may be these expressions of good-will had a little effect on the beast; at any rate the advance movement was delayed, though the vicious snarling and whining continued.

Then Rob found that he could stretch out his hand and reach the door. He started to push it open, though it was no easy task.

[252]

Having accomplished this to his satisfaction, he began to back away, still keeping his eyes on the dog, and ready to seek some friendly place of safety in case of necessity.

The dog had seen his action. It must have known that an avenue of escape had been opened up by the pushing back of that door. Possibly the poor beast anticipated a safe return to the village where it had been at home among its kind.

"Look! it's going to accept Rob's invitation!" cried Tubby, excitedly.

"Smart dog!" said Andy; "he may save his bacon by that clever move."

"There he goes in; now what d'ye think of that for a bright trick?" Hiram shouted.

That was just what the badgered dog did—slipped along the wall until it came to the partly open door, and then vanished from view.

"There goes Rob back! What's he meaning to do now, I wonder?" Tubby exclaimed, in fresh consternation.

[253]

"He wants to complete the job by shutting the door," explained Andy, who could grasp a situation like this much better than the stout scout, because his wits worked quicker.

All sounds ceased again as Rob pushed along the wall of the new building until he could reach out his hand. Then the door began to close, faster and faster until the yawning gap was entirely filled.

Hardly had this been done than there arose a deafening cheer. Everybody seemed to be wild with delight, and shook hands with one another in their excitement. Now that the terrible "mad dog" had been caged, plenty of weapons would be remembered; and it would be so easy, and safe, to shoot through the windows of the building.

"Let's get out of this, fellows!" said Rob, when he managed to worm his way through the crush and join his mates.

Tubby frowned as though it was against his principles to run away when people were wanting to shake hands, and call one a hero; but not wanting to be left behind the others, Tubby had to go.

[254]

They had not reached a point far distant when the report of several firearms reached them. Rob shook his head and frowned.

"That's about the silliest thing I ever ran up against," he said. "The dog was no more mad than Tubby here is. Those boys pestered him, and got him scared. Then all that shouting and waving of hands and throwing of things at him finished the business. It was a foolish scare, and I guess nine out of ten mad dog hunts are in the same class."

"Well, they've finished the poor thing now, I guess!" ventured Hiram.

"It sounds like it the way they're cheering, just as if they've done something mighty heroic!" added Andy.

"The only thing worth a cheer," remarked Tubby, emphatically, "was when our chum Rob walked right at the snarling beast, and took all sorts of chances of getting bit and clawed up. That needed nerve, let me tell you!"

[255]

"Oh! not any to speak of," said the scout leader, hastily. "I made sure to have my eye on a shed close by all the while; and if he'd really made a jump for me you'd have seen a mighty fine exhibition of high and lofty climbing. Mad or not, I wasn't meaning to stay there and tackle him, without a thing to hit him with."

"But it all worked well, as nearly always happens with you, Rob," said Tubby; "though once my heart seemed to be up in my throat; that was when you had to snap your fingers and coax him, Rob. Only for that he'd have made for you, thinking you meant to strike him."

"I'm glad it's over," observed Hiram, shuddering.

"That dog belonged to the Injuns we saw in the village," ventured Andy, thoughtfully; "and you know Injuns think roast dog is the finest dish ever. I expect they'll want to claim the remains. Little they'll bother about any talk of mad dog; it's more likely to be mad Injun when they find out what's happened."

And after that they tried to put the latest incident out of their minds, though Tubby would explode some new idea concerning it every once in a while, as they wandered about the Fair grounds taking in new sights.

[256]

[257]

CHAPTER XXII.

TAKING IN THE SIGHTS OF THE FAIR.

"Well, he's gone, Rob!" said Andy, as they were coming out after an hour spent in the wonderful Transportation Building.

"Oh, you mean Hiram?" remarked the scout leader, after taking a comprehensive glance around. "Well, I've been expecting him to give us the slip for some time. He held on longer than I thought he would."

"No trouble guessing where he's bound for," laughed Andy. "That hall where the latest

modern inventions are on exhibition draws him like sugar or molasses does the pesky flies in summer time. He sticks there nearly as hard as—well, as Tubby did in that skimpy chair at the Panama show.”

“Bring it nearer home, can’t you, Andy, and say about as well as you *want* to stick to that Zone of freaks and flimsies and Coney Island shows,” ventured Tubby, with singular quickness, for him.

[258]

“I arranged it with Hiram to stay with us just as long as he could stand for it,” explained Rob; “and that when he did feel he had to go, to call at the little booth of the tobacconist where we’ve arranged to meet, not later than four this afternoon.”

“Remember that, you Andy,” warned Tubby, shaking a fat finger in the direction of the other, “in case we *happen* to get separated! Accidents will come along sometimes, you know; and you’re likely to feel that call to the wild again any old time.”

Andy only laughed. Apparently he had a tough hide when it came to resisting such harmless blunt-nosed shafts as Tubby could launch against him.

“I’ll keep it in mind, Tubby, I promise you,” he remarked; “but after we’ve had something to eat, you won’t try to keep me any longer. We’re all here to enjoy ourselves according to our bent, you must remember.”

“And your bent runs along the line of the spectacular display of gaudy tinsel and all sorts of make-believe frauds!” continued Tubby, pretending to curl his short upper lip in disdain, though truth to tell he rather enjoyed a little of the same pleasures himself.

[259]

“Have it as you please, Tubby,” Andy told him. “To me they’re all real, and when I find myself surrounded by that wonderful foreign atmosphere, it’s just like I’d taken wings and flown over there to Africa, or Asia, or the islands of the Far East. Rob, make him stop trying to interfere with my pleasure. Just because one fortune-teller riled him, Tubby sneers at everything that wears a Turkish fez, a Bedouin bournoose or a Persian caftan. I guess I know how to sift the chaff from the wheat. And a fellow who means to be a world traveler some day ought to rub up against these sort of people all he can.”

Tubby gave it up. He knew nothing he could say would alter Andy’s deep-rooted convictions. Indeed, it was more to get even with him that the stout scout spoke as he did.

Later on they hunted up a dining-place where they could secure a fair meal for their money, at least as good as was to be expected under the circumstances.

[260]

“Now laugh if you want to, Tubby,” said Andy, boldly, after they had issued forth from the restaurant. “I’m going to break away, and you know where I’ll be heading. You keep Rob company the rest of the day. He’s got a list of things he’s fairly itching to see, and it’s as long as my arm, at that. Good luck to you!”

He hurried off without waiting to hear what Tubby might have to say; but the latter only shook his head as he caught the amused look in Rob's eyes, and shrugged his fat shoulders as though ready to give Andy up as beyond redemption.

"Let him go and enjoy himself as he feels like," commented Rob. "That's everybody's privilege when they come to a show as tremendous as this one is. And, Tubby, I think you're too hard on Andy. I happen to know that he's been devouring every book on travel and exploration he can find anywhere. The subject fills his mind."

"Then he really does mean to make that his life work, Rob? I thought it was just a sort of cloak, as you might say, to cover his wanting to see these Oriental humbugs carry on. Fortune-tellers ought to be suppressed by law; they do lots of harm, I understand, especially where silly people believe in 'em."

[261]

Rob came very near remarking that, for one who scorned their class, Tubby himself seemed to be bothered considerably over a certain foolish prophecy; but on second thought he concluded not to add to the color in the fat boy's cheeks by embarrassing him.

Being now free from the two chums who had such peculiar and strong notions as to what they wanted to devote all their time to, Rob and Tubby started in to spend several hours to the best possible advantage.

They were not merely seeking amusement, but instruction as well; and there were copious fountains to be tapped within the borders of those extensive grounds of the wonderful Exposition that would repay the laborer manyfold for his trouble.

"I tell you I'm mighty glad I happened to run across you, Rob," Tubby remarked, for perhaps the tenth time, as they watched the process of the Government fish hatchery, where millions of eggs were transformed into tiny objects that looked like animated specks in the water, but which under proper care would some day be placed in certain lakes or rivers or in the sea, to add to the prosperity of the nation that was fast learning how to conserve its food supplies.

[262]

"And I'm just as pleased on my own account," the scout leader told him. "You see how my two chums are bound to desert me, each crazy along his own particular line, and bound to follow his pet whim through thick and thin."

"Haw! then I'm the only *sensible* one of the lot, seems like!" grunted Tubby, with beaming face. "Thank you for intimating as much, Rob. I do seem to fancy many of the same things that strike you as worth seeing. 'Course I sort of enjoy the humbug of the Zone, but a little goes a great way. My better nature craves educational value for the time spent in coming away out here!"

When Tubby said this so grandly he tried very hard to keep a straight face; but discovering the gleam of merriment in Rob's eyes, he burst into a laugh.

[263]

"Well, it's part way true, anyhow, Rob," he

declared. "I am having a real good time keeping up with you, even if we're walking miles and miles, and my shoes are getting to pinch me something fierce."

"Let's get somewhere and sit down for a spell," Rob suggested, for he awoke to the fact that poor Tubby was not built for getting over acres and acres of ground with all that flesh to carry along.

"Now, isn't that queer, Rob; but d'ye know I was just going to dare you to go me a plate of that ice cream over there. We can sit at a table and get rested while we partake of the stuff. Excuse me for calling it that, but the chances are against getting anything first-class when you're dealing with a man who put up an enormous sum to pay for his concession, and has to get it back somehow out of the public."

They spent almost half an hour there, watching the crowds and resting. Then as Tubby declared he felt capable again of almost any exertion, they resumed their sight-seeing walk.

[264]

"I notice, Rob, that you're working around so as to come on our meeting-place after a while," suggested Tubby.

"I was waiting to see if you'd pay attention to that," the other told him. "I'm glad to find you did. A scout must have his eyes on the alert all the while if he wants to keep up with the procession, Tubby."

"Oh! I'm improving right along, Rob; my folks at home tell me that, too. Time was when my favorite occupation used to be to stretch and yawn. All that's changed now, for I yawn and stretch, you see. This scout business does work wonders, doesn't it?"

But then everyone knew that Tubby had changed wonderfully since he joined the troop. Considering the handicap under which he labored on account of his size, and the difficulty he had in doing things that were easy for his chums, he managed to get along tip-top. Rob always gave him more credit than the rest when an object they had been laboring to accomplish had been attained; because the one who overcomes the most strenuous barriers deserves greater praise than those who have not been compelled to draw upon their reserve powers.

[265]

They stood there looking up at the vast Triumphal Arch of the Setting Sun, which, it seemed to Tubby, was the most beautiful thing in the whole Exposition. It appealed to him in a way he could hardly explain, except that something seemed to draw him back there again and again.

"Why, before you came, Rob," he remarked, "I used to just haunt this place, together with the vicinity of the Column of Progress looking out on the Marino. I'll see them in my dreams long after all the other effects of the Fair have faded away. And I reckon now every visitor will somehow have a certain thing stay with him through all time, as a memory of the greatest Exposition that ever was given."

"Step back here, Tubby!" said Rob, as he took hold of the other's sleeve and drew him swiftly

around a corner.

"Why, what's all this mean?" gasped the stout boy, looking startled.

[266]

"Oh! I saw that hustling newspaper man again," explained Rob, "and I was afraid he'd corner us and try to worm out something of our past."

"Shucks! is that all?" said Tubby, in disgust. "Why, Rob, honest to goodness now, if I didn't think it might be another mad dog scare we were up against."

"Well, it was something I dislike almost as much," vowed Rob. "And if he ever got *you* cornered I'm pretty sure you'd give him all the details about that other little happening that would make me look silly in the paper. Now he's gone, and it's safe for us to step out."

Tubby shook his head, and sighed.

"You sure are the queerest fish ever, Rob," he observed, with a disappointed air. "I never yet ran across the fellow who wouldn't be only too glad to see a write-up about him in the paper where he was called a hero, and all that. Why, they'd hurry off to buy a dozen copies, and mail the same to all the girls they knew. But say, whenever you do a thing worth mentioning you try to sneak away as if it was something to be ashamed of."

"I don't like it, and that's the only explanation I can give you, Tubby. Come, let's go into this building, and then half an hour from now it'll be time to make for our meeting-place so as to pick up the other fellows."

[267]

"I hope Hiram has made up his mind it's about due to spring his surprise on the company he's come all the way out here to see and talk with," Tubby said, as they started into the building mentioned by Rob.

"I've got a hunch that he will, after to-day, Tubby. I mean to speak with him about it this very night, and see if it can't be settled to-morrow. Hiram looks so anxious every little while it's too bad he doesn't take the bull by the horns and settle the matter once for all."

When the half-hour was up the two boys issued forth, and headed in the direction of the tobacconist's booth, which was not a great way off. Tubby was again feeling tired, and seemed pretty well used up.

"We'll go home as we did last night, right after eating," suggested Rob. "Then to-morrow we needn't hurry around, for we'll stay until the gates close at ten, so as to see the illumination, and the play of the electric fountains."

[268]

"That suits me first-rate, though I've seen all those things already, and more than once," the other told the scout leader.

A few minutes later and Tubby burst forth again.

"There's the booth we're aiming for, Rob," he declared; "and isn't that our chum Andy walking up and down like a tiger in its cage? There, he sees us now, seems like, and he's beckoning. Let's hurry on," and Tubby actually forgot that he was tired in his eagerness to learn why the

other was showing such signs of excitement.

"A note from Hiram that he left here for us, fellows," Andy hastened to say as the others reached his side; "and he wants us to chase around there hot-footed, because there's something big on the bills."

[269]

CHAPTER XXIII. HIRAM FACES THE MUSIC.

"Read it out, Rob, please," pleaded Tubby, with round-eyed wonder.

Thus urged, the scout leader proceeded to oblige.

"This is what he says here," he announced. "Come around to the aviation field as soon as you possibly can. Something doing. Guess my chance is knocking at the door like opportunity that comes once to everybody, they say. Please *hurry!*"

"Signed Hiram."

"Do we go, Rob?" gasped Tubby, with intense eagerness in his whole manner.

"Without losing a single minute!" declared the other.

"Well, I should remark," added Andy. "We've been up to our ears interested in this affair of Hiram's from the day we left home; and we mean to see him through his troubles to boot."

"So let's be on the move," suggested Rob.

[270]

"That suits me," breathed Tubby. "You see, I've gotten over my tired feeling. There's nothing can revive a weary scout half so quick as a chance to get in the swim. Why, I feel as fresh as a daisy, whatever that can mean."

"Well, toddle along with us then, Tubby," said Andy; "and take my advice—don't talk so much when you're hurrying; it's a bad thing, because you need every bit of breath you c'n get."

Evidently Tubby realized this fact for himself, because he subsided from that moment; all they heard from him were frequent heavy sighs that accompanied his strenuous efforts to keep at their heels.

They knew the way to the aviation field, and took as direct a course as possible when aiming for that favorite portion of the grounds. There could always be found a large crowd watching the bird-men in their preparations for going aloft, and making landings after showing what their airships were capable of doing.

As a rule most of the spectators were debarred from getting too close to the aëroplanes, for many reasons; but Hiram had made himself so useful on former occasions that no one questioned his right inside the ropes. So also the other three scouts would doubtless be allowed to loiter near the starting point, where there were

[271]

always a dozen or two air-pilots gathered, comparing notes and joking each other after the manner of daring adventurers, which all of them undoubtedly are, since they take their lives in their hands every time they ascend.

Hiram was waiting for them on the border of the great throng of deeply interested spectators. They saw immediately that the inventor scout was very much worked up over something or other, and naturally all of the other boys were deeply curious to know what had happened to excite him.

Hiram was evidently on the lookout for his three chums, since he beckoned them over as soon as he caught their eyes.

"Well, we've come!" said Tubby, breathlessly, as they lined up alongside the other.

"Now tell us what's in the wind!" added Andy, impatiently.

"Something has happened," began Hiram, mysteriously.

[272]

"You said that in your note," grumbled Andy.

"The Company," Hiram continued, "have been waiting for me to show up, and they're just so eager to find out what my stabilizer can do that they can't stand for the delay any longer."

"Great governor! they don't mean to steal your idea, I hope?" asked Tubby.

"Oh, no, I guess not!" replied the other, calmly. "You see they've applied it to one of their best machines to give it a try-out."

"Bully! that suits you all right!" urged Andy, enthusiastically.

"I should say yes!" declared Hiram, with a wide grin. "And if you crane your necks right now so as to rubber and look up you'll see that same aëroplane soaring along there!"

"That monoplane you mean, don't you, Hiram?" asked Andy, after all of them had taken a good look to where the other was pointing.

"Yep, she's the one, and my stabilizer's aboard," Hiram went on to tell them, with a pardonable touch of pride in his voice, though he was careful that no one else should hear him speaking.

[273]

"Have they tried it out yet, d'ye know?" inquired Tubby.

"I think the pilot's just starting in now to see what she can do," he was told.

"Oh! Did you see him tumble then?" ejaculated the fat boy, gripping Hiram's arm nervously as he spoke.

"That was looping the loop," explained the inventor; "lots of pilots c'n do that trick nowadays; why, I've heard that Beachey even makes two complete turns. That bird-man up there is second only to Beachey, I'm told. Watch some more of his bold stunts; and hold your breath, Tubby, for he'll give you lots of thrills."

"But I've got to breathe, don't you see," complained the fat scout, who was already unduly red in the face from his exertions in this line.

They watched the aviator go through a number of hazardous exploits. It was doubtless generally known among the pilots assembled that he was testing some new idea, for he seemed to be closely observed by everybody within the enclosure.

Hiram could see that some of the bird-men were pleased, for they nodded their heads as they exchanged remarks. Fancy how this fact thrilled the boy, for it was *his* invention that interested these veterans among air-pilots.

[274]

"Now I kind of guess he's exhausted every trick he knows, and is goin' to come down," said Hiram, presently. "We'd better be gettin' inside, for I want to be as close as I can when he makes his report to the folks."

Accordingly he led his chums inside the roped enclosure. He seemed to have made good with the attendants, for they smiled and nodded to Hiram. That Yankee "gift of gab" which Hiram possessed was very apt to get him into the good graces of those upon whom he chose to exercise it.

The scouts presently found themselves in close touch with many of the participants in the exhibitions that were hourly taking place. Here were men famous in their line, from aviators to makers of machines. Here also had collected those who were interested in the future of aviation, and thinking more or less seriously of embarking in the business.

[275]

As may be expected, the talk was "shop" every minute of the time. No matter what terrible distress the war over in Europe might be causing, these enthusiasts could only think and speak of matters that were connected with the game of rivaling the birds in their flights. If they mentioned the battles that were taking place day in and day out, it was only in connection with the exploits of the aviation corps on the side of the French, the German, the British or the Belgian armies.

"See that gentleman with the white mustache, the one that looks like a Kentucky colonel, or an army officer?" whispered Hiram. "Well, that's the head of the Golden Gate Aviation Supply Company, and the person I expect to do business with pretty soon."

"He's a fine looking gentleman, I must say," admitted Rob. "I think you'll have no trouble making fair terms with him, if I'm any judge of faces."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Rob," breathed Hiram, with a sigh, "because one minute I think everything looks rosy, and the next I'm groveling in the dust. But the agony will soon be over. There, he means to land this time; get ready to stick by me, because I want to be near when he climbs out of his seat and meets that boss of the whole company face to face."

[276]

The monoplane came swooping down, and like a great bird with wings extended, sailed along

close to the ground, with constantly decreasing speed, as the power had been shut off.

Now the wheels under the frame had come in contact with the ground, and a dozen eager hands were outstretched to bring the machine to a full stop on the border of the group. This assemblage was being constantly augmented by fresh arrivals, all eager to pass the good word with the pilot, and possibly congratulate him on the fine showing he had just made.

Hiram was looking as sharp as a fox as he strained his ears to catch every syllable that the air-man uttered.

He leisurely climbed out of his seat and reached the ground. There was a satisfied smile on his face that sent a wave of delight to the anxious heart of the waiting boy, to whom the success or failure of this, his first real invention, meant so much.

[277]

The pilot looked around. He was evidently expecting to make an immediate report to the gentleman with the white mustache, and Hiram had been very careful to keep in close touch with that man.

Yes, the pilot, after exchanging a little badinage with some of his comrades, immediately pushed directly toward the spot where the four chums stood. Straight up to the head of the large firm by whom he was employed the bird-man strode.

"Well, what is the decision?" Hiram heard the gentleman say, a note of anticipation in his voice.

"Decidedly favorable, Mr. Curley. In fact, with only one trial I am convinced that it is going to be the best stabilizer so far on the market. You have made no mistake, take my word for it!"

Rob almost feared Hiram was going to faint. He leaned so heavily against him, as though for the moment his heart had ceased to beat. And yet, strange to say, the very first thing the overjoyed inventor did was to turn and clap his mouth close to the ear of the scout leader and mutter in trembling tones:

[278]

"By jinks! Did you hear *that*, Rob? Say, I meant to ask 'em just twenty-five hundred cash for the patent, but she's doubled in price now. And don't you think they'll pay the five thousand all right, Rob?"

The Yankee in Hiram was on tap, Rob saw with amusement. At the same time he hastened to assure his chum that he was well within his rights in demanding all he thought he could get for his cunning device.

Evidently Hiram had determined to break the ice while the opportunity lay within his reach. Long had he waited for this glorious moment to arrive. By day he had pictured it in a dozen fantastic forms, and while he slept his dreams must have carried him through numerous interviews with the powers that swayed the fortunes of the wonderful Golden Gate Aviation Supply Company.

He pushed forward a little further. If some of those present noticed the boy in scout uniform

[279]

they paid little attention to him, being taken up with what was passing between the pilot and the builder.

So Hiram managed to squeeze himself along until he could put out his hand and actually touch the two central figures in the discussion.

Rob and the other boys were not quite so fortunate, but being within easy hearing distance, they believed they would not be apt to miss anything that went on.

They saw Hiram put out his hand and give a tug at the coat of the fine-looking gentleman with the white military mustache. The latter looked down and was apparently annoyed to see that it was only a youth who sought to distract his attention.

"What do you want, boy?" he was heard to ask, impatiently.

Then Hiram spoke up. If his voice quavered a little that was not surprising; indeed, in Rob's mind the wonder was that the excited scout could find his tongue at all.

[280]

"Do you think, Mr. Curley, that the little stabilizer has proved to be all that was claimed for it, sir?" was what Hiram asked.

The gentleman stared hard at him. Others who heard his question did the same, and Rob saw a smile as of amusement appear on the bronzed face of the noted air-pilot who had just come down, after experimenting with the device, bringing a favorable report; it was as though he had begun to smell a rat, and realized what a joke it would be to have a boy invent such an important appendage to a heavier-than-air flying machine.

"Why, what business is that of yours, may I ask, boy?" demanded the business head of the big company, as he continued to stare at the eager, flushed face of the lad who wore the khaki of a Boy Scout.

"Oh! Because I happen to be the Hiram Nelson you've been corresponding with, sir, that's all!" said Hiram. "I used the money you sent me to come out here, but was a leetle bit afraid to face you. But I guess it's all right now, Mr. Curley, because I heard your pilot say the thing worked fine. That suits me; and I'm ready to talk terms with you right away!"

[281]

[282]

CHAPTER XXIV.

A BOY SCOUT'S TRIUMPH.

"What's this you are telling me?" asked Mr. Curley, quickly. "Have you the proof of what you claim with you, young man?"

Rob noticed that it was no longer "boy" with the gentleman; Hiram was evidently climbing in the scales, and rapidly at that.

"Oh, yes, sir, I've got everything to show you; and my patent right papers are in the hotel safe

ready to be turned over in case we can reach a bargain."

The gentleman looked hastily around him. There were representatives of other makers of aëroplanes present who might endeavor to bid against him if only they knew he did not as yet have any positive agreement with the inventor of that successful stabilizer.

"Please say no more until we are in my office, Mr. Nelson," he remarked, softly; "and if you have the time now we might as well adjourn there. I'll ask a few of my people to accompany us, as well as this pilot who has just given your little trick its first try out."

[283]

"I'll be glad to enter into a talk with you, Mr. Curley," declared Hiram; "but I must insist that my friends, who have come out to the Coast with me, be along."

He beckoned to Rob and Andy and Tubby, who immediately started to push their way through the crowd to where Hiram and the gentleman with the white mustache stood.

"Certainly, it is only fair that you should have equal backing with us," observed the gentleman, whose eyes twinkled with amusement now, as he began to grasp the situation, and realize that his company was up against a boy who knew his rights, and was possessed of considerable business sagacity, as well as inventive talent.

Accordingly they all headed for some buildings not a great ways off, and thus it came that presently the scouts found themselves behind closed doors with Mr. Curley and a number of others.

The head of the manufacturing firm was frowning a trifle, Rob noticed, even if there were times when he allowed a trace of a smile to steal across his face on glancing down at the figure of Hiram Nelson. Rob knew why this should be so, and he considered that it was only natural.

[284]

As a shrewd business man Mr. Curley realized that Hiram had been too smart for them. Instead of announcing his presence immediately, and taking what they chose to offer him for his clever device, the young Yankee inventor had hung around and waited for the climax to come. He had heard the favorable report made by the bird-man, and of course that had strengthened his case.

The gentleman understood that this unfortunate happening was likely to cost them dearly, since the inventor, knowing the value of his patent, would be likely to hold out for a much larger sum.

"Now, if you will let me see some papers to prove your identity, Mr. Nelson, we will talk shop with you; and I might as well confess in the beginning that if you are inclined to treat us fairly we can come to terms with you; but please consider that only one trial has been given to your stabilizer; and it may, after all, be of less value than appears at this moment."

[285]

Hiram needed no second invitation to get busy. He immediately unloaded a mass of proof upon them to show he was all he claimed, and that he

also had the papers connected with his patent.

"I am satisfied, so far as that goes," announced the gentleman, as though desirous of arriving at the most important part of the whole proceedings as soon as possible. "Now will you please state the very lowest cash price you will accept to turn the patent over to this company?"

"Five thousand dollars, sir!" replied Hiram promptly.

Rob was watching the other's face. He saw something there that told him Hiram had at least not exceeded the amount which would have been reckoned a price limit for the invention. Mr. Curley, however, was too good a business man to show any eagerness in the transaction, though there was certainly a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes as he seemed to consider the offer.

"I am going to be frank with you, Mr. Nelson," he remarked, presently. "The sum you mention, although somewhat larger than we had contemplated paying for an invention the value of which has still to be fully proved, is within the amount we could afford to risk in the hopes of getting a really dependable stabilizer. Now, if we agree to do business with you, would you consent to sign a paper here and now to turn over your patent right entirely to us on the receipt of the sum you mention, five thousand dollars?"

[286]

Hiram was holding his own remarkably well. He refused to show any signs of being overwhelmed by his great good fortune, and seemed to be capable of displaying his customary shrewd Yankee bargaining qualities.

"I'll agree to do it, Mr. Curley," he said deliberately, "if your company also makes the bargain so it can't be broken. It mustn't bind only me. Pay a certain sum in hand, and agree to give me the balance to-morrow, and I'll sign the paper you speak of, handing over the patent rights transferred to you when the balance is put in my hands."

"That's strictly business acumen, Mr. Nelson," said the gentleman, now smiling broadly, for there was no longer any danger of a backdown, and the wonderful little invention could not be taken away from them by some rival and wealthy company; "and with your permission, then, here is an agreement, in duplicate, with the amount left blank, which I will fill in according to your proposition; and if everything is agreeable, we will both sign it in proper form."

[287]

A few minutes later the agreement, filled out as settled upon, was handed to Hiram to look over before signing. He immediately backed over to where his three comrades stood.

"I want you to go over it word for word with me, Rob, and if there's any sort of hitch or trap, tell me; though I don't expect to find that sort of thing, because I guess Mr. Curley is too straight a gentleman to try and take advantage of a boy."

They weighed every sentence, and fortunately the agreement was very simple, so it was easily understood.

"How about it, Rob?" asked Hiram, trying to control himself as best he could, for he knew curious eyes were upon him, and he did not want any of the men to believe this was his first venture in the realm of finance, which in fact was the actual truth.

"It seems to be all right, Hiram, and I wouldn't hesitate to sign it," the scout leader advised him. "If you want a witness allow me to put my signature on it. I'll be proud to know that I've had something to do with your first real success."

"Something to do!" echoed Hiram, with considerable emotion, "why, Rob, you've been my backbone up to now. Only for you I'd have made a botch of the hull thing. I owe you more'n I c'n ever tell."

He went back to where Mr. Curley was waiting, a little anxiously Rob saw, as if he feared Hiram might be overcome with greed, and attempt to boost the price he had already named.

"I see you agree to give me a check for five hundred dollars right now, Mr. Curley," Hiram commenced, "to bind the bargain with. Well, I would be tempted to say I didn't want you to do that, but I know it's a poor thing to refuse money in hand, and also that it fixes it so neither of us can back out. So I'll accept the sum, sir, and sign the agreement."

[289]

This he hastened to do, and Rob was called on to add his name as a witness; then other names were placed upon the agreement, as well as the duplicate which was to be given into the possession of Hiram as the other party.

When that check for five hundred dollars was placed in Hiram's hand he smiled, and then coolly doubling it up, placed it carefully away in his pocketbook.

"That, for a beginning, isn't so bad, Mr. Curley," he said, as the gentleman was shaking hands cordially with him. "I'm meaning to use every cent of this money to advance several little schemes I've got started. Only for my need of cash to push them along mebbe you mightn't have got that stabilizer without a few bids from other companies; but you sure treated me white, Mr. Curley, and I wanted you to know I appreciate it."

Possibly Mr. Curley may have thought that Hiram had worked a pretty sharp trick on them in hanging around, and learning what they thought about his invention before disclosing his identity; but then certain things are allowable in business, and at least he had shown himself capable of looking after his own interests.

[290]

"If any of your later ideas happen to be in line with our work, Mr. Nelson," the head of the firm said, "I hope you will give us a look at them before you approach any rival company. In one way it is a good thing for an inventor to keep advancing with the firm who first patronized him, of course, granting that they will meet any price he may be offered elsewhere."

"I guess I c'n promise you that, sir," said Hiram, who was very happy, and at that moment felt drawn toward the fine-looking gentleman who

had treated him so splendidly.

So the four boys wended their way toward the gates of the Exposition. Hiram hardly knew whether he was walking on air or on ground. It seemed to him that his heels must be made of some magical rubber that kept pace with his ecstasy of mind, for he came near dancing at times, much to the amusement of Rob.

"First thing for me to do, fellows," Hiram said, as they reached the hotel, "is to send a night letter to my folks telling 'em that I've got the coin. My maw she believed in me right along, but dad he's allers been kinder skeptical, you know, and used to say I was spendin' heaps of money on foolishness. Guess he's due to change his tune after this, hey?"

[291]

Rob found that there had been a telegram for him that morning which somehow he had failed to receive before leaving for the Exposition grounds. It was a night letter from Professor McEwen in answer to the one he had sent, signed by the name of Professor Marsh, who was in charge of the exhibit.

In this communication, limited to fifty words, the Edinburgh scientist tried to express the deep satisfaction he felt because Rob and Andy had successfully filled his place, and handed over that precious packet to the gentleman in charge, without any accident. He declared that he would remain until their return home, and that he hoped to be able to thank them again most heartily.

The boys were a happy lot that evening. They attended a theater where there was an instructive show well worth seeing by all scouts. Indeed, Hiram seemed to have actually grown two inches since morning.

[292]

Of course his chums gloried in his success; so that the rest of their stay at the City of the Great Exposition was likely to be one long picnic, with not a single hovering cloud to mar their pleasure.

[293]

CHAPTER XXV. HOMEWARD BOUND.

On the following day, at the appointed hour, Hiram and his three chums turned up at the offices of the Golden Gate Aviation Supply Company, where the final exchanges were made. Hiram handed over his papers to the new owners of his invention, and received their check for the balance of the purchase price.

At Rob's solicitation he proceeded to the city and opened an account at a bank, against which he could check from time to time as he needed cash in pursuing his work.

Then, having now relieved themselves of all source of worry and anxiety, the four Eagle Patrol members gave themselves up to the full enjoyment of their holiday.

What wonders they continued to see as they

daily visited the great Fair, would take volumes to describe. New and amazing things were constantly cropping up as they prowled hither and thither through devious ways that up to then they possibly did not know existed. There was a constant succession of surprises awaiting them with each new day.

"Why, I honestly believe," Tubby declared many times as they discovered some display that up to then had eluded them, "everything that was thought of in the whole world must be included in the exhibits inside this enclosure. I'll never get over being thankful to Uncle Mark for fetching me here. And to think that I was given a chance to be with the dearest chums any scout ever had—that's a whole lot the best thing of it all. Oh, it was certainly my lucky day when I decided to go up on that Aëroscope, because only for that we never might have met at all; and just think what I would have missed."

"The sight of Hiram here winning his prize for one thing; that was a spectacle for sore eyes, let me tell you!" remarked Andy. "We're all proud of him, and we want him to know it too."

"Then there was that fire scare," said Hiram, "when Rob got the blaze smothered with that little extinguisher before the regular department arrived on the spot—don't forget to count that as something, Tubby."

[295]

"And the mad dog chase, with our leader again demonstrating what a scout should be able to do when an emergency arises," Andy added. "The poor dog got shot, but there was no human being injured in the panic, which there might have been only for the handsome way Rob coaxed the cur to slip inside that inclosure."

"Yes," added Tubby, anxious to display his view, "and we don't want to forget about Jared Applegate, either. He gave us something of a racket, you remember, by sneaking into that room at the hotel, and hiding under your bed when he heard us coming along the hall."

"It makes me laugh when I remember how he almost licked Rob's hand, and promised to be good if only he was let go," said Hiram, rather disdainfully.

"That sounds as if you didn't have much faith in Jared's promises to reform?" said Rob, smilingly.

"He never meant a word of it, and I know it!" declared Hiram. "I could see the nasty snap in his eyes just like they used to be. Haven't we known him to crawl and make all sorts of big promises before, but always to break the same the first chance he had? Huh! that money in his pocket was never earned honestly, I'd like to wager; and it won't be used either to carry him back home."

[296]

"Oh, well, he's left the hotel, which is one good thing," said Rob. "I thought it was my business to find out this morning, for as we knew him to be a thief it hardly seemed fair to keep quiet, and not put a flea in the ear of the management here."

"He saved you the trouble then by skipping out?" remarked Andy.

"Yes, I suppose he imagined we might tell on him as a duty, and thought he had better leave between two days," Rob explained. "Of course, when I learned he had thrown up his job, been paid off, and was gone, I concluded it was no use saying anything more about it."

"Like as not Jared's been doing more than one shady job since he came here," suggested Hiram, shrewdly, "and he was afraid they'd take him to task for the same, p'r'aps shut him up in a cell; so he concluded to get away while the going was good. Well, here's hoping we may never run across the snake again."

[297]

"I don't know," ventured Tubby. "Seems like there's some queer fatality about it, but we do come on that scamp in the most remarkable ways. There he was down in Mexico, and before that at Panama. To think that he'd be out here where the Big Show's going on, and of all places acting as a porter in the very hotel where we took up our quarters."

"The pitcher that goes once too often to the well comes to grief,' they say," mentioned Rob. "If Jared keeps on bobbing up as he has been doing, and getting in our way, he'll rue it some time or other."

As the days came and went, Rob and his three chums certainly managed to have the time of their lives. If there was one part of that mammoth Exposition that they failed to investigate it was not because they wasted any of their time; at least this could be said for Rob and Tubby, who were most energetic in making the grand rounds.

As was to be expected, the other two were so wedded to their idols that it was not an easy task to tear them away; and at times Rob had to insist on their accompanying himself and Tubby to other parts of the inclosure.

[298]

Andy never tired of watching the quaint scenes in the Zone, where the tides of humanity from all over the world ebbed and flowed through all the hours of the day and evening. He dearly loved to just imagine himself in far-distant lands, close in touch with these brown or yellow people. And the resolution to become a world traveler when he grew to manhood seized hold of Andy with renewed vigor.

As for Hiram, he could not be blamed for haunting that section where his heart found the greatest charm of the entire Exposition. Here he pored over the various ingenious inventions fashioned in the clever brains of the foremost among the nation's talented men and women, from Edison down to the most humble.

And Hiram, having already reaped the fruits of his first venture in this fascinating field of human endeavor, naturally looked forward to the time when perhaps his name, too, might be linked with those for which he felt such reverence.

[299]

When Tubby's uncle returned he was well satisfied to go East alone and leave his nephew in such good hands.

During the remainder of their stay in San Francisco the boys never once caught a glimpse

of Jared Applegate. If he still remained in the City he made it a point to religiously avoid meeting any of his former school companions.

Rob had determined that he might let the crabbed old farmer and his wife know they had met Jared while on the Coast, so as to ease their minds, if they had not heard from their bad son for a long while, though he decided he would say nothing about the deplorable circumstances under which the meeting had taken place.

"I never liked the old farmer and his wife," Rob had said to the others, when they were discussing the matter their last evening at the Fair, sitting at their ease, disposing of some ice cream, and watching the throng pass by. "But I suppose they have feelings like the rest of us, and in their own way, care for their boy. It would only give them a new stab to be told that Jared was as bad as ever, and do no good; so I hope none of you will whisper anything about that little episode."

[300]

Being true scouts, and with malice toward none, the others readily agreed to do as Rob asked. They could easily afford to forget that unpleasant adventure, since things had turned out so wonderfully well for them.

"And to think that this is our last night at the Exposition," said Tubby, with a vein of despondency in his voice. "I tell you I'm awfully sorry, much as I want to see the folks at home again. I'll never, never forget all I've seen out here, let me tell you; for even if half of the civilized world is at war and killing each other off by tens of thousands each day, you'd never know it in this beautiful land of peace and plenty."

"Hear! hear! Tubby's getting poetical!" exclaimed Andy, pretending to pound on the table with his fist.

[301]

"Well, it's enough to stir anybody up that's got a soul for things besides old fakers with red fezzes and turbans, who make out to be fortune-tellers from Egypt and such places, when the fact is they were born in Cork or Hoboken!" the other shot back at him.

"It is the greatest Fair that ever was held," said Rob. "When we get back home to Hampton we'll tell every boy we know that if he has a chance to come out here and fails to take advantage of the same, he's missing the treat of his life, barring none!"

"We all can subscribe to what you say, Rob," agreed Tubby.

"And that isn't all," continued the scout leader. "Think of the things we've been allowed to put through. There was the fetching of that fragile exhibit all the way across the continent, without any accident. And Hiram here has struck the first round on the ladder of fame. Even that doesn't exhaust the list of our pleasures, because we've still got another treat before us."

"Meaning the homeward trip, I guess?" ventured Hiram.

[302]

"Yes, when we find ourselves among the mighty Rocky Mountains that the Canadian Pacific

Railroad climbs in passing from Vancouver to the East, we can feast our eyes on the grandest natural mountain scenery of the world. As for me, I'm anxious for the time to come when we'll be enjoying it."

As they were starting for Vancouver in the morning, with the intention of passing over the railroad line that pierced the famous Selkirks, it would seem that Rob would not have long to possess his soul in patience.

And since they finished with the Great Panama-Pacific Exposition on going to their hotel that night, it would seem that this is the proper place for us to say good-by to the four chums. But while our story must end here, there can be no telling what the future may have in store for Rob and his comrades of the Eagle Patrol; and if fortune is kind enough to throw them in the way of further adventures and triumphs, we hope ours may be the pen selected to place these events before the readers who have so long accompanied them in their numerous journeys.

[303]

THE END.

^[1]See "The Boy Scouts on Belgian Battlefields," also "The Boy Scouts with the Allies in France."

^[2]See "The Boy Scouts Under Fire in Mexico."

[304]

HURST & COMPANY'S BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

A Volume of Cheerfulness in Rhyme and Picture

KINDERGARTEN LIMERICKS

By FLORENCE E. SCOTT

*Pictures by Arthur O. Scott with a Foreword by
Lucy Wheelock*

The book contains a rhyme for every letter of the alphabet, each illustrated by a full page picture in colors. The verses appeal to the child's sense of humor without being foolish or sensational, and will be welcomed by kindergartners for teaching rhythm in a most entertaining manner.

*Beautifully printed and bound. In attractive
box. Price, Postpaid One Dollar.*

HURST & COMPANY, Publishers, NEW YORK

FRANK ARMSTRONG SERIES

By MATTHEW M. COLTON

Cloth Bound. Illustrated. Price, 75c. per vol.,

postpaid

Frank Armstrong's Vacation

How Frank's summer experiences with his boy friends make him into a sturdy young athlete through swimming, boating and baseball contests, and a tramp through the Everglades, is the subject of this splendid story.

Frank Armstrong at Queens

We find among the jolly boys at Queen's School, Frank, the student-athlete, Jimmy, the baseball enthusiast, and Lewis, the unconsciously-funny youth who furnishes comedy for every page that bears his name. Fall and winter sports between intensely rival school teams are expertly described.

Frank Armstrong's Second Term

The gymnasium, the track and the field make the background for the stirring events of this volume, in which David, Jimmy, Lewis, the "Wee One" and the "Codfish" figure, while Frank "saves the day."

Frank Armstrong, Drop Kicker

With the same persistent determination that won him success in swimming, running and baseball playing, Frank Armstrong acquired the art of "drop-kicking," and the Queen's football team profits thereby.

Frank Armstrong, Captain of the Nine

Exciting contests, unexpected emergencies, interesting incidents by land and water make this story of Frank Armstrong a strong tale of school-life, athletic success, and loyal friendships.

Frank Armstrong at College

With the development of this series, the boy characters have developed until in this, the best story of all, they appear as typical college students, giving to each page the life and vigor of the true college spirit.

Six of the best books of College Life Stories published. They accurately describe athletics from start to finish.

Any book sent postpaid upon receipt of 60 cents, or we will send the six for \$3.50.

HURST & COMPANY, Publishers, NEW YORK

Transcriber's Notes

- Copyright notice provided as in the original printed text—this e-text is public domain in the country of publication.
- Silently corrected palpable typos.

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.