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Shaler**

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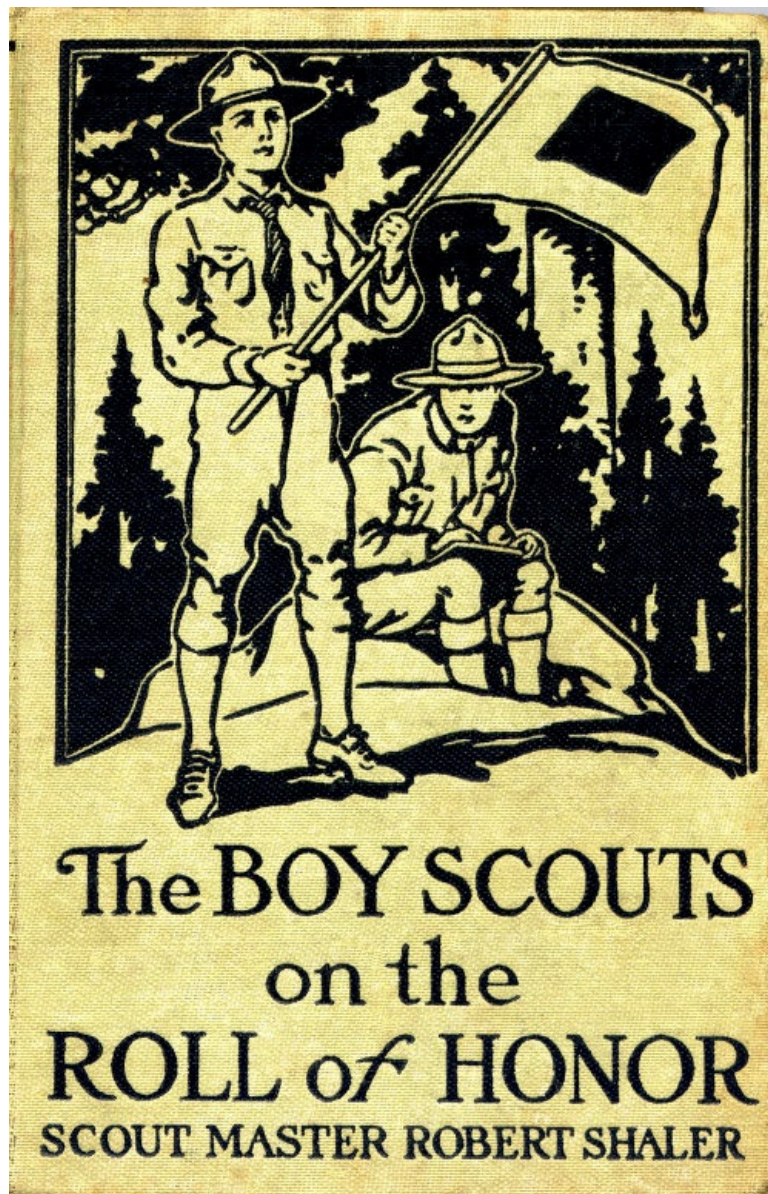
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BOY SCOUTS ON THE ROLL OF HONOR ***



THE BOY SCOUTS ON THE ROLL OF HONOR

BY
SCOUT MASTER ROBERT SHALER

AUTHOR OF "BOY SCOUTS OF THE SIGNAL CORPS," "BOY SCOUTS OF PIONEER CAMP," "BOY SCOUTS OF THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY," "BOY SCOUTS OF THE LIFE SAVING CREW," "BOY SCOUTS ON PICKET DUTY," "BOY SCOUTS OF THE FLYING SQUADRON," "BOY SCOUTS AND THE PRIZE PENNANT," "BOY SCOUTS OF THE NAVAL RESERVE," "BOY SCOUTS IN THE SADDLE," "BOY SCOUTS FOR CITY IMPROVEMENT," "BOY SCOUTS IN THE GREAT FLOOD," "BOY SCOUTS OF THE FIELD HOSPITAL," "BOY SCOUTS WITH THE RED CROSS," "BOY SCOUTS AS COUNTY FAIR GUIDES," "BOY SCOUTS AS FOREST FIRE FIGHTERS," "BOY SCOUTS WITH THE MOTION PICTURE PLAYERS," ETC.

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The Boy Scouts on the Roll of Honor.

CHAPTER I.

THE NUT GATHERERS.

"It's turned out to be a nutting trip worth while, fellows!"

"Three sacks full of black walnuts and shellbark hickories, with a peck of big chestnuts! Well, for one I'm glad Hugh asked me to go along."

"And say, think of those poor little kids over at the orphan asylum—what a high old time they're going to have this winter cracking all these nuts, when the snow that's kept off so long comes to Oakvale!"

"Hugh, it seems to me you're always doing something to make those orphans think a heap of Hugh Hardin, our assistant scout master, eh, Billy?"

"That's right, Arthur," responded the boy addressed by the name of Billy. "Why, only a short time ago didn't I see him put through a neat job that I reckon saved the lives of several of those kids?"

"You must mean, Billy, when Hugh threw that runaway stone-car from the track, after it was headed for a stalled wagon full of children at the foot of the steep incline. I've always felt sorry I didn't see that splendid feat myself."^[1]

"Oh, come, change the subject, please! It is getting to be a regular chestnut with me," laughingly remarked the manly-looking boy in a suit of faded khaki, that had apparently seen considerable wear, and who answered to the name of Hugh.

There were three of them perched upon the broad seat of a wagon drawn by a single stout horse. All were apparently members of the Oakvale Troop of Boy Scouts, if their khaki suits that had seen more or less rough service, campaign hats, and various medals and badges told the story truly.

The driver was a fat, chunky lad named Billy Worth. Billy was noted for his unfailing good-nature, his immense appetite, a certain amount of skill in picture writing after the old Indian style, and last but not least his hero worship of Hugh Hardin as a chum, as well as a scout leader.

Besides these two there was Arthur Cameron, a rather slender boy, but capable of displaying considerable agility and strength on occasion. Arthur was interested in a good many things, such as wireless, and photography. His greatest claim to efficiency, however, lay in his undoubted ability as an amateur surgeon. Indeed, on more than a few occasions the boy had amazed experienced doctors by his astonishing skill at caring for serious wounds and handling cases in a wonderful manner.

Arthur would certainly miss his calling if he later on decided to follow any other profession as a life career.

As for Hugh himself, he was an all-round scout, good at almost everything that goes to make a proficient member of a patrol. In woodcraft he had few equals, and certainly no superior, as many of the boys were ready to attest from having been in his company when tests came.

Oakvale Troop was thriving these autumn days. Time was when many people were wont to look sneeringly down at the struggling organization. Some wise parents, mistaking the true objects of the scout movement, absolutely refused to allow their sons to join, despite much pleading and bitter feelings.

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Those days, though, were now pretty much in the past. It must be a bold man who would dare to argue along such lines, after all the manly things Hugh and his comrades of the khaki had successfully carried out.

These scout activities consisted of so many varieties of deeds that time and space would not allow me to repeat them here. If the reader has not already enjoyed the earlier numbers of this series and feels a desire to know what the Oakvale scouts had succeeded in accomplishing since the time of their organization as a troop, he could not do better than to secure some of the preceding volumes and peruse them in their regular sequence.

At a meeting of the troop in a cozy room under one of the Oakvale churches, allotted to their use by the men who firmly believed in scout work, Billy had only the preceding evening been elected secretary. He was consequently inclined to be full of the subject, and from time to time would burst out in some speech regarding the books he had been poring over.

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So now, as he softly touched the lazy horse with his whip, to coax him to increase his pace, as they were drawing near the outskirts of the town, Billy once again allowed his rather slow mind to recur to the subject of his perusal of the organization books.

"D'ye know, Hugh," he remarked, "I've been making out a list of present members, as well as the patrols to which they belong. It shows that we've struck the thirty-three number, with two patrols chock full, and three lacking seven to be complete."

"How's that come, Billy?" demanded Arthur, who was seated on his left. "Seems to me we ought to have four full patrols out of that number."

"Oh! well, you forget that we lost several fellows when their folks moved away from town," replied the important secretary, "and that some new members joined the latest patrol by choice, which was the Owl, you know."

"I'd like to know just how the troop stands right now, Billy," ventured Hugh, who possibly could read the fat boy as he might a printed page, and hence knew that the secretary was fairly itching to give the details of the scout membership and divisions.

"Huh! that's as easily done as falling off a log," said Billy instantly, taking the bait like a hungry wolf. "Here, Arthur, help me out, won't you? Hold the lines, and be sure not to let old Peter run away while I fish in my coat pockets and find a certain paper I made out from the books."

After considerable hunting, for Billy was a bit inclined to be careless when he put a thing away, so that he really forgot where its hiding place might be, in the end he produced the document, smiling humorously as though he had achieved a wonderful victory.

"Here she is, right-side up with care," he announced grandly, flourishing the paper. "I just knew I had it somewhere on my person, but a fellow has so many pockets that it isn't any wonder he once in a long time gets things mixed a little. Now, listen you fellows, while I read the roster of Oakvale Troop."

In a sonorous voice, as though standing on the rostrum and addressing an audience that filled every corner of the town hall, Billy started in. As there may be some readers who have not yet made the acquaintance of other members of the enterprising Oakvale Scouts, perhaps it would be just as well to let Billy introduce his comrades now.

"First there's the original Wolf Patrol," he started in to say, "consisting of charter members for the most part. These are eight in number, and constitute a full patrol—Hugh Hardin, leader; Billy Worth, 'Bud' Morgan, Arthur Cameron, Ned Twyford, Jack Durham, Harold Tremaine, and Ralph Kenyon.

"Then comes the Hawk Patrol, with one vacancy, owing to a fellow leaving town. It now consists of Walter Osborne, leader; Blake Merton, 'Gus' Merrivale, Anthony Huggins, Mark Trowbridge, Frank Green, and 'Chatz' Marsters.

"Next we have the Otter Patrol, full to the brim. There's Alec Sands, leader; 'Buck' Winter, Chester Brownell, Dick Bellamy, Tom Sherwood, Dale Evans, Sam Winter, and Albert Barnes.

"Then there's the Fox Patrol, with two vacancies, owing to the same cause, families moving away from Oakvale. No scout thus far on our membership list has died. Don Miller is the leader, with 'Shorty' McNeil, Cooper Fennimore, 'Spike' Welling, 'Monkey' Stallings and Addison Prentice making up the rest.

"Last of all is the Owl Patrol, with only four on the roll. Lige Corbley is acting as leader the best he knows how, and the other fellows are 'Whistling' Smith, Andy Wallis and Pete Craig. So you see how matters stand. Strikes me,

Hugh, we ought to fill up the vacancies in the Hawk and Fox Patrols before trying to complete the new chapter, though maybe the suggestion oughtn't to come from so humble an individual as the greenhorn secretary, William Worth, at your service!"

He put away the paper and once more took the reins, whereat the intelligent horse, as though knowing who handled the lines now, once more fell back into his indolent gait, as though time did not matter—like master, like horse, Arthur told himself, noting this immediate change of pace.

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"On the contrary," said Hugh, immediately, "I'm glad you mentioned it, and in fact I consider it a very good suggestion. We'll thresh it out at the next meeting, when we hope to have several applications for membership."

"Gad-up, Peter, what ails you?" exclaimed Billy, flushing with pleasure, for he would rather receive a compliment from Hugh than any one he knew of. "Here we are on the border of town, with your oats waiting for you in the stable, and yet you loaf like that. You must be pretty much of a lazybones, I reckon."

"Don't forget that Peter has traveled quite some few miles, uphill and down," remarked Hugh chidingly. "The load he's pulling now, what with the bags of nuts and three boys, isn't to be sneezed at. We're going to get home in plenty of time for supper, for the sun's just beginning to set now behind the bare ridges of old Stormberg Mountain over there in the west."

"And to-night you promised to drop over to my house, remember, fellows," remarked Billy. "With the Thanksgiving holidays nearly on us, we've got to think up some sort of outing to give us a breathing spell between studies."

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"We'll be on hand, never fear, Billy," chuckled Arthur. "I've got a few ideas on that subject myself, that I'd like to have talked over, though they may not strike either of you as just the thing."

"The fact of the matter is," said Billy seriously, "our bunch has already gone through so many experiences that it's next to impossible to hatch up anything new or novel these days. I've almost cracked my poor brain trying to concoct a scheme that would take you all by storm, but I tell you it can't be done. And Arthur, I'll be tickled half to death if you can invent some fine plan or other."

"Well, here we strike town," said Hugh. "I'll try to offer some idea to-night, but I own up I'm in something of the same fix as Billy here, and afraid we'll, after all, have to duplicate some of our past trips."

"There's some fellow waving to us!" exclaimed Arthur just then.

"I ought to know him all right," muttered Billy. "Yes, it's Gus Merrivale, and he wants us to pull up. Guess he heard we went after a last load of nuts up at the Hatch grove, and wants to see what luck we had."

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Hugh, however, believed differently, for with the

observing eye that had helped to make him the smart scout he was he noticed that Gus looked greatly excited. Therefore Hugh was not so much surprised as his comrades when the member of the Hawk Patrol burst out explosively as soon as he reached the side of the wagon:

"Hugh, I've been looking all over town for you, yes, and Billy and Arthur as well. I've just got to go up to dad's old logging camp, not being used this season you know, and it struck me the three of you might like to go along and spend the Thanksgiving holidays up there. We could have a *glorious* time of it, believe me!"

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CHAPTER II.

AT THE DESERTED LOGGING CAMP.

"Would you mind saying that again, Gus?" asked Billy eagerly.

"Yes," added Arthur, "we were just trying to figure out what we might do over the holidays, because most of the boys can't leave home on Thanksgiving of all times in the year. Tell us some more about your scheme, Gus. I must say it strikes me as something worth jumping at, all right."

Gus flushed with evident pleasure. Hugh instantly began to think there might be something more connected with this suddenly conceived trip than had as yet appeared on the surface; still, he, too, felt pleased to have their difficulties so quickly removed.

"It's just this way," said Gus, speaking quickly, and secretly watching the face of the scout master, because he knew that Hugh would be the one to settle the matter, "my mother wants me to go up there for a certain reason, and, of course, I could hardly think of undertaking it alone. She told me to hire some one to go along to act as guide and companion, but I felt I had too many fine chums among the Oakvale scouts to think of doing that, and as I happened to hear you fellows talking about spending the holidays off somewhere I decided to ask you to go along with me."

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"Let's see," remarked Arthur shrewdly, "unless I'm a whole lot mistaken that lumber camp your folks own is a good many miles away from Oakvale."

"All of thirty-five," replied Gus, without any hesitation, "but what does a little thing like that matter, when you've got a bully seven-passenger car to carry the grub, and everything needed? Mother told me I could take our old car, which was lately overhauled, and ought to run fairly decent. Hugh, please say you'll go with me! I'll be ever so thankful, because— Well, I've just *got* to spend a little time up there, you see, and I'd appreciate your company better than I c'n tell you."

"So far as I'm concerned," spoke up Billy, impulsively for once, "I'm with you on that proposition, Gus. It strikes me as a splendid

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chance to pass away a few days in having a dandy good time among ourselves. Don't forget that this year school closes sharp on Tuesday afternoon, not to open again for a week."

"Thanks to the heating apparatus breaking down in that first cold spell, and the delay in getting new parts from the foundry," added Arthur, gratefully. "And let me add that you can count on my going along with you, Gus. I'm in for the outing every time."

"Hugh, you haven't said a word yet," observed Gus, anxiously.

"Because I've been thinking it over," replied the other.

"Say you'll go along with us, Hugh," urged Billy. "Why, half of the fun'd be gone if you didn't come."

"Gus, we'll call it settled then," said Hugh, vastly to the delight of the stout chum, who looked as though ready to give a regular scout yell.

"Then let's meet to-night at my house," Billy hastened to add, "when we can settle the preliminaries, as they say when a match is being arranged. Just now you see my untamed steed is getting restless; wants his oats, I reckon. Call it seven, Gus, and don't you dare fail us after getting a fellow so excited."

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Possibly it was Peter's hungry master who was growing anxious to satisfy a voracious appetite, for Billy's weakness was well known among his chums, and caused no end of merriment, though he took all the fun poked at him in good part.

At seven that same evening when Hugh, walking along in the light of the almost full moon, reached Billy Worth's home, he found that both Arthur and Gus had already arrived.

Billy, like most boys, had been allowed a "den" of his own, which was quite tastefully fitted up with books and pictures of an exciting though wholesome character. Athletic and other outdoor sports were represented by various things like football guards for nose and shins; a baseball catcher's mask, gloves and breast pad; snowshoes that had evidently seen considerable service, a fly-rod, a stuffed black bass weighing some five pounds, which must have given the fisherman a lordly struggle before consenting to capture, and other articles too numerous to mention.

Billy's den was a favorite lounging place for many of his mates. Here the three guests were told to make themselves at home, and each hastened to ensconce himself in a favorite chair or nook, the comforts of which seemed to be quite familiar to the occupant from previous visits there.

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"It's understood, then," said Gus, after they had been chatting for some time, and, of course, were discussing what they ought to take along with them, "that we start about eight o'clock Wednesday morning next, come rain, come shine."

"Huh! the weather doesn't stop a scout when he's got his mind made up," ventured Billy, with

an expanded chest that bespoke pride. "What would a little snowstorm or even a baby blizzard mean to such veterans as our crowd? If the heavens don't drop, Gus, or one of us falls sick meanwhile, you can count on our being with you on the date set."

"One thing I'm going to ask of you, boys, as a great favor," remarked Gus, with a queer look on his face that interested the observing Hugh considerably.

"As what?" demanded Billy. "Though for that matter, Gus, count it as settled before you speak, that we'll agree to anything you ask. We're going to be your guests up there at the old logging camp, you know, and we understand what that means."

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"Oh! it's only this," continued the other, hesitatingly. "I'm going to ask you not to tell any of the fellows just where we expect to camp. I've got a reason for that request, and later on you're going to know all about it, too. Just now I don't want my father to know where we're headed, though mother is sending me up there, you understand."

Billy's eyes opened very wide at hearing this. Arthur, too, stared, and seemed to be puzzled, but quickly went on to say:

"Oh! that's all right, Gus, we promise to keep as mum as an oyster about it all. No matter what the reason may be, don't think we want to pry into your private affairs. Hugh here has said he's willing to go along, and we'll make up the party without a question."

"Yes, that's so," added Billy, "and while we're about it let's settle on what kind of grub we want to carry along. If we're likely to be gone as long as six days, why, we'll have to figure on enough to last us out. I can't afford to lose any of my weight, in starving myself, you understand, boys."

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This was always a pleasing subject with Billy. He invariably found himself at home when it came to making up a list of eatables to carry along. There was little danger of starvation visiting any camp where Billy Worth was occupying a place at the mess table, and had a hand in ordering the supplies.

So by the time Hugh and the other fellows got up to go home the arrangements for the Thanksgiving outing had been pretty well completed. What little more they might need could be added in the few days that must elapse before making the start. On the way home Arthur and Hugh might have incidentally mentioned the fact of Gus acting so strangely in connection with the trip, only that his being in their company prevented any such exchange of opinions.

Monday came again after a Sunday that did not differ from any ordinary day of rest from school duties and labor. Then Tuesday dragged its weary length along, and finally school was dismissed for the Thanksgiving holidays.

That night the boys again met at Billy's house, where the supplies for the little campaign had been slowly gathered. Hugh was amused at the

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immense heap that filled one end of the "den." Gus, too, wondered whether there would be any room for a quartette of healthy fellows after that load had been placed aboard the car.

"Never fear about that," Billy cheerfully assured them. "You don't know how you can stow things away, once you try."

"Well," laughed Arthur, "we've seen you doing the same stunt lots of times, Billy, and only wondered if your legs were hollow, because none of us could guess where you put it all."

"Leave that to me," Billy remarked complacently, "and I'll guarantee that every bit of this stuff will fit in the car, and then some. I'm an adept at packing; you see I like comfort so much I'm always carrying along heaps more than the law allows; and so I've had to study the subject of getting much in little."

Indeed, when the next morning came, and Gus drew up in his big seven-passenger car, Billy proved the truth of his bold assertion. He did succeed in getting every bit of the luggage aboard, and there was still room for the boys to stow themselves away, though Arthur and Hugh had to let their legs dangle outside more or less.

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The start was made under promising conditions.

"Looks like we might be favored with a spell of real mild weather," Billy observed, after they had left Oakvale some miles behind, and were speeding along the road at a fairly lively pace.

"Indian summer hasn't come and gone yet, they say," remarked Gus. "Like as not this is a spell of the same. But no matter what sort of weather we strike I'm glad as can be we've made the start, and hope things will turn out for the best."

Again did Hugh pay attention to some hidden meaning back of what Gus Merrivale was saying, though neither Billy nor Arthur seemed to notice anything strange.

"I honestly believe Gus has some sort of reason for wanting to visit that deserted old lumber camp just at this particular season of the year," mused Hugh, as he sat there and paid strict attention to the scenery along the route. "Besides, when he says his mother is setting him up to making the trip, and that he didn't want his father to hear about it, it looks pretty queer. But then he promised to tell us all about it later on, so what's the use bothering any more?"

25

They were fortunate not to have any "blowout" or other accident on the way—which Hugh considered lucky, for the car was an old one, only lately repaired. Miles upon miles were passed over. Gus did not try to make undue haste; for he entertained a certain amount of suspicion regarding the propensity of the Atlas to break down.

By degrees they found themselves entering upon a wilder stretch of country than the region bordering Oakvale. Farms became less frequent, and stretches of heavily wooded land took their place. Some great gashes had been made in this valuable timber belt, mainly through the logging operations carried on by Mr. Merrivale's gangs of hardy lumbermen.

This year, however, there was nothing going on. Gus explained something about a strike that had taken place late on the preceding spring, which had so angered the rich owner of the land that he declared he would not cut another stick until he could get the right sort of men to contract with him.

It was not much after ten in the morning when Gus told his chums they were drawing near the camp. Indeed, the other scouts had already seen numerous evidences of this fact around them. They were accustomed to draw their own conclusions.

Gus began to show signs of nervous excitement, Hugh discovered. In fact, the other was trembling like a leaf as they finally drew up in front of a long log building evidently serving as the "bunk-house" of the logging camp.

Without saying a word Gus scrambled out of the car the first thing, and hurried toward the heavy door of the low structure. Billy was so stiff he could hardly move without groaning; but both Hugh and the nimble Arthur were close upon the heels of Gus when he swung open the door, looked within, and then with a deep sigh exclaimed, evidently greatly disappointed:

"Oh! the shack is empty! And poor mother'll break her heart when she finds out that story was only a mean fraud after all."

CHAPTER III. BACKED BY SCOUT COMRADES.

Gus staggered over to a rude chair made from hickory branches, and threw himself down, covering his agitated face with both hands. Arthur looked ruefully at Hugh as though hardly knowing what to make of these strange actions on the part of the boy whose rich father owned this deserted lumber camp.

The coming of Billy, loaded down with traps, broke in upon the dead silence that seemed to grip them.

"Everybody works but father!" sang out the stout boy, cheerfully, as he cast his burden on the puncheon floor, it consisting for the most part of camping blankets of gray material, and which had seen considerable service in times gone by.

"Well, we don't expect you to do it all, Billy," remarked Arthur, as he hurried outside once more.

Hugh, too, busied himself, knowing that in all probability Gus would explain what his queer words meant, in his own good time. The boy was beginning to master his feelings when the others came in again, each loaded with packages of food, clothes-bags, and such things as a camera, a shotgun, an ax, and the cooking utensils they knew so well.

Gus offered to assist them, but Hugh declared they were more than half done, and that another

trip would finish the job.

"When you come back again," said Gus, evidently determined to explain things at the start, "I've got something I want to tell you all."

A short time later, everything having been carried under shelter, Hugh and the other pair gathered close around Gus, who was now smiling bravely, though still laboring under considerable excitement bordering on keen disappointment.

"Don't bother telling us a thing unless you really want to, Gus," said Hugh in his kindly fashion, but the other nodded his head as he went on to say:

"Oh, I meant all along that you should know," he said. "Fact is, I couldn't have gotten along even a little bit without explaining why I was urged to come up here by my mother, and without father knowing a thing about it."

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He sighed again, and then went on bravely. Hugh saw by the way he compressed his lips that it hurt Gus keenly to say what he meant to, but that even this would not keep him silent. After a moment he started to say, grimly:

"Perhaps you'll remember that once upon a time I had an older brother by the name of Sam. Most people believe Sam went out West to live with an uncle who had a ranch there; but the truth of the matter is he had a terrible quarrel with father, and was turned out of the house! That's been the skeleton in the Merrivale closet ever since, and Sam's name has never been mentioned to my father by any of the rest of us."

Gus swallowed hard to master his emotion, and then proceeded with his story.

"Sam was a lovable fellow, only weak, and he fell in with a bad lot who dragged him down. From the day he disappeared, now some four years back, none of us have ever set eyes on him. I've got a suspicion that my mother tried to keep in touch with him, for once I saw her get a letter that had a Chicago post-mark on it; but that was three years ago. Since then I don't believe even she has known whether poor Sam was alive or dead.

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"Then a short time ago she learned something that has caused her plenty of sleepless nights, let me tell you. I don't know just how the news traveled, but it was to the effect that Sam had come back to his old haunts, accompanied by another tramp; he had fallen as low as that, and was believed to be lying sick up here at the old lumber camp.

"My father is an awfully stern man, you must remember, and mother is afraid of his terrible temper, so she didn't dare speak to him about it. Finally, she took me into her confidence, and begged me to fix it so I could go off on a camping trip, running up here to see if there was any truth in the rumor she had heard, and if so to do what I could for my brother Sam. But you can see he isn't here, and I'm afraid it was a false alarm. Oh, I'm sorry for my poor mother, that's all!"

Gus looked as though about to break down

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again, seeing which Hugh hastened to say something.

"But hold on there, Gus," was what he remarked, hastily and cheerfully; "remember that a scout doesn't give in so easily as all that. It's true your wandering Brother Sam doesn't seem to be here now, but that's no reason he hasn't occupied this bunk-house of late."

"Hello, that sounds like you have seen signs, Hugh!" exclaimed Arthur.

"Well, I have," came the answer. "Let's look around a bit before we decide that there was nothing back of the story. Here you can see there's been a fire lately on this broad hearth where the cooking is done. Like as not the last time the loggers were here was many months ago, and the rain coming down the broad chimney would have leveled the ashes, which you see isn't the case right now."

The scout master bent down and placed his hand on the heap of ashes. He quickly drew it back again, and turned a smiling face toward the other boys.

"Try the test and see for yourselves," he urged, which every one of the others hastened to do, also receiving a surprise in turn.

"Why, what d'ye think of that, it's actually *warm!*" exclaimed Billy, as he started to wring his fingers as though he had burned them.

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Gus stared hard at Hugh. The pallor was leaving his face, while a sparkle as of revived expectation and hope could be seen in his tear-dimmed eyes.

"What does that mean, Hugh? Oh, please tell me, because it seems as if I couldn't collect my wits enough to reason it out!" he begged, laying a quivering hand on the khaki sleeve of his chum.

"Well, there's certainly been some person or persons holding forth here not so long ago," said the other, with the positiveness of conviction. "You can see signs where they've done some primitive sort of cooking. Here's the head of a rabbit which no doubt they snared or shot; and over there are scales showing that they found some way of getting fish out of the stream."

"That's so, every word of it!" said Billy Worth, who would, however, have unhesitatingly believed Hugh, no matter what sort of theory the other advanced.

"Now, let's look around a little further, and perhaps we can find out something else," continued the energetic scout master. "For instance, this bunk has been occupied lately, I should say from the looks of it—and the next one ditto."

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"Then that would mean just two men had been in here, wouldn't it?" asked Gus, feverishly. "The report mother received stated that Sam had one pal along with him."

"And over by the fireplace," remarked Arthur, "I saw a couple of old tomato cans that had been used for cooking coffee in, some time or other; which I happen to know is a favorite trick among

hobo—er—traveling men of the railway ties.”

Gus smiled faintly at hearing Arthur so hastily change his words.

“Oh! don’t worry about hurting my feelings when you call my brother a tramp,” he went on to say. “He’s done enough to nearly break his poor mother’s heart, but you know a mother will keep right along loving a fellow no matter how wicked he’s been. So she sent me up here on this wild-goose chase, hoping I might talk with Sam, and find out if he didn’t want to make one last try to be decent again.”

“Well, we’ve got a whole week to find him in,” remarked Hugh, encouragingly.

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“But why do you suppose they cleared out of here in such a big hurry?” asked Billy, seeking enlightenment from the source that seldom failed him.

“That’s a question that might have a good many answers,” Hugh told him. “It may be that, well, the hobo who is with Sam has reason to be afraid of the officers of the law on account of something or other he’s done. I kind of think he must have sighted our car coming along the logging trail several miles off, for you know it took us quite some time to get here from the main road. So he hurried Sam away with him, taking along what little they had.”

Gus bent his head to hide the tears that came unbidden into his eyes. He knew Hugh was saying that partly to shield Sam, for there was nothing to tell them it was not the latter who had good reason to shun the officers of the law.

“Well, we’ll try and unravel all this conundrum a little later,” Billy remarked just then. “Let’s get settled first, and after that look around some. If Sam is sick I shouldn’t think he’d be able to get very far away from here. We’ll find him yet, see if we don’t, Gus! In fact, I feel sure we will!”

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“It’s mighty good of you all to stand by me the way you do,” whimpered Gus, as he shook hands first with Billy, and then the others in turn.

“Shucks!” snorted Billy, himself winking pretty hard it must be confessed, for the stout boy had a very tender and sympathetic heart. “What’re scouts good for if they can’t back each other up when trouble swoops down, tell me? I wouldn’t give five cents for a fellow who wore the khaki and turned a cold shoulder to a chum in time of need.”

“It’ll all come out right, Gus, you can depend on that,” said Arthur, stoutly.

How could any boy give way to despondency when surrounded by such loyal comrades? Gus soon mastered his feelings, and even assisted the others get the various bundles unfastened. There is always something fascinating about this game of preparation, especially to boys who know the delights of camping out; and in good time Gus had apparently decided in his mind that the sky did not look quite so gloomy and forbidding.

Soon they were all working enthusiastically. A lot of things had to be attended to, such as

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chopping firewood, making up the bunks, undoing the food supplies, a task no one but Billy dared undertake, and all sorts of other duties too numerous to mention.

Then they decided to have a warm lunch before looking around outside. Gus had so fixed the car that it could not be stolen; at the same time the top was left raised in order to protect the interior in case of a heavy storm.

The time passed away as the afternoon advanced. Hugh had a dozen things he wanted to do, but for the time being he allowed them to take a back seat. There would very likely be an abundance of time to accomplish them all later on; first in order was this heart service of Gus Merrivale's.

Hugh—yes, and both Billy and Arthur as well—could easily picture the intense anxiety of that poor mother waiting at home to learn about the fate of the wanderer for whom she still yearned. Yes, and what must make it doubly hard was the fact that she stood in such awe of her husband, and dared not even hint at the fact that the long-absent one was again near his old home from which he had been so summarily thrust.

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"I've got in touch with the trail they left when they went away," Hugh announced late that afternoon, coming back to the bunk-house after an absence of half an hour. "I followed it some little distance by means of the holes made by a cane one of the two men was using to help him walk. Then I struck some stony ground where I lost the tracks. But the first thing in the morning I'll lead you to the spot, and we'll see whether scout-craft is worth its salt or not."

Gus beamed on the speaker. It could easily be seen that the boy's heart was in the task that had been committed to his hands by the one he loved so dearly. Hugh only hoped circumstances would be such that Gus could go back home bearing some good news for the suffering mother of Sam Merrivale.

"It's a good thing we've got this comfortable camp, let me tell you, boys," Billy was saying later on, as he listened to the rising wind sighing around the corners of the log bunk-house. "Unless all signs fail, there's going to be something of a storm coming this way before another sunset."

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"I'm afraid you're right, Billy," agreed Arthur, "because it's warm for the time of year. I wouldn't be surprised if we got a regular whooper out of that quarter, with the trees going down all around us like they did two years ago."

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CHAPTER IV.

THE COMING OF THE STORM.

Perhaps it was rather thoughtless of Billy to make such a remark as that. Gus immediately commenced feeling blue again.

"Oh, I hope that isn't going to happen!" he remarked, while helping the stout boy get supper ready.

"Why, bless your innocent heart, Gus," said Billy, patronizingly, "no storm that ever blew could hurt us here in these snug quarters, don't you know?"

"But I wasn't thinking so much of our getting injured as something else," remonstrated the other, quickly.

"You mean about that trail, don't you, Gus?" asked Hugh, who happened to overhear this little talk between the *chefs*.

"That's just it, Hugh!" cried Gus. "I'm afraid that if it starts to raining real hard, or snowing, either, for that matter, we can never follow it any further. That would be too bad, you know."

"Yes, that's liable to happen," Hugh admitted. "I'm sorry myself that twilight came along in the woods before I could get track of the trail again, so I had to give it up. But we'll just have to lay on our oars, Gus, and hope for the best."

By the time they had started eating, the wind had increased alarmingly. The moaning of the pines was now broken by frequent roars as the rising gale began to lash the trees furiously.

Although the scouts had weathered full many a storm during their previous experiences in camp, there seemed to be something altogether unusual about this one. It came so late in the season that it was, as Billy called it, "uncanny."

"Why, to listen to that wind rushing through the woods," he remarked, with his mouth filled with food, "you'd think it might be along about the equinox time instead of close on the end of November."

"As for me," declared Arthur, "I absolutely refuse to believe it. We must all be dreaming, or else the times are out of joint. I guess sounds are queer to us, for we've never been cooped up in the bunk-house of a deserted lumber camp before."

"But that howl is made by the wind, you know," urged Gus.

"We imagine it is," grinned Arthur. "I tell you such a thing as a storm like this was never before known in the tail end of November. It just can't be, that's all!"

Now it chanced that all along Arthur Cameron had been looked up to by the rest of the troop as a clever weather prophet. He made it his business to study the various phases of the moon, and read up the reports sent out by the Government Weather Bureau.

Frequently he had been able to predict a change in conditions when no other fellow dreamed it was coming. He knew all about "signs" such as wise old countrymen go by when anticipating a severe winter, or a mild one. As a rule, these were based upon pretty sure foundations connected with the remarkable powers of instinct on the part of squirrels and other little wild animals while laying up their winter's store of food.

Usually Hugh entertained considerable respect for what Arthur had to say concerning weather conditions. On this occasion, however, he laughed out loud.

"Excuse me, Arthur," he said, seeing that the other was looking at him in a surprised way, "but when you said that it made me think of a story I once read."

"Go on and tell it to us then, Hugh," urged Billy, always eager to hear the assistant scout master relate anything, for, as a rule, it was to the point, and well worth listening to. The others also urged him to tell his story.

"There was a fellow who had been arrested and thrown into jail," began Hugh. "He sent for his lawyer, who listened to his story, and seemed a whole lot impressed, as well as indignant. 'I tell you, sir, they can't put you in jail on such a silly charge as that; it's utterly impossible!' The man grinned and remarked: 'But all the same, *here I am*, Mr. Jones; they've got me locked up all right.'"

Billy roared, while even Arthur smiled.

"Well, the story applies to what you were saying about the weather, Arthur," continued Hugh. "Of course it's out of all reason for such a wild summer storm to come down on us away at the end of November; and for one I would never believe such a thing could happen; but, nevertheless, listen a minute to all that racket outside, and you're bound to agree with me that rule or no we're up against it good and hard."

"It's a phenomenon, that's what, and altogether unprecedented!" muttered the amateur weather sharp, at which Billy laughed some more, saying derisively:

"That's right, Arthur; folks would know you had lawyers in your family. When you can't argue against the opposing lawyer begin to abuse him, and make him mad. You want to strike at the weather now because it's got the better of you. But listen to the wind shrieking, will you? Little it cares what you say about it, Arthur."

After they were through supper Hugh made another suggestion.

"There's no telling how long we may be cooped up here by this storm, fellows. On that account let's get busy and fetch in all the wood you've cut."

"A good idea, Hugh," said Arthur. "If it rains hard we'll want a fire to keep ourselves dry and warm."

"Huh! guess you forget we've got to *eat* in order to live," said Billy, sarcastically. "I admire a nice camp fire as much as anybody; but the practical side of my nature always crops up, and to my mind the best result of a fire is what comes from it on to the table."

It did not take them long to carry out Hugh's suggestion. Indeed, the supply of fuel was not nearly as large as Billy would liked to have seen.

"Might do for a couple of meals," he remarked reflectively, eying the heap, "and then there's got to be some tall hustling, no matter what the

weather says. I never could eat cold stuff, and enjoy it. But say, that wind is sure some corker. Like as not it'll knock over a few of these tall pine trees."

"As the lumbermen have picked off the best of them," added Hugh, "it's left gaps in the timber, so that the wind can get a full sweep. On that account I wouldn't be a bit surprised if a lot of them did blow down, providing the storm becomes more furious."

"Well, it's sprung up mighty sudden, I tell you," urged Billy, "and from that I reckon we haven't seen the worst yet, by a jugful."

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Gus, with an expression of gloom on his face, was saying next to nothing. He sat, looking into the glowing fire. Undoubtedly the boy was severely disappointed. He had hoped to find his erring brother Sam in the bunk-house of the deserted camp, possibly sick or injured, but in a condition to be repentant, so that he would listen to reason. Now this wretched storm had chosen to come down on them, threatening to destroy the only clue they had concerning the new whereabouts of the two tramps.

Every time a wilder gust than ordinary would make the windows of the long cabin rattle and the trees outside writhe, poor Gus would start and look anxiously toward the door, which had been closed and barred. Arthur had seen to this latter precaution because there was more or less danger that the storm might blow the door open, and give them a rude shock at some time during the night.

Suddenly there came a new sound that caused every one to jump.

"Oh! what was that?" exclaimed Gus, turning pale with apprehension, for his nerves were far from steady.

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"A tree went down, I guess," ventured Arthur, grimly, and Hugh nodded as if he agreed with what the other had said.

"Not very far away from us, either, I'd wager," remarked Billy, uneasily. "I only hope the next one doesn't smash our roof in."

"Small danger of that," Hugh reassured him. "Those lumberjacks were too smart to take chances. The first thing they did was to fell every big tree close to their bunk-house, and for just that reason, though some people might think it was on account of laziness."

The fact that Hugh was so self-possessed acted soothingly on the excited nerves of Gus and Billy. The scout master, realizing just how depressed Gus must be, skillfully turned the conversation once more in the direction of the two hiding tramps.

"According to my way of thinking," he remarked, earnestly, "the fellow who is not sick must have discovered our car coming slowly along the lumber road, and when it was a good ways off. He would understand that we could only be meaning to strike for the old camp here, and that started him to thinking we might be coming to arrest himself and his pal."

"Why, yes, Hugh," Arthur took up the idea swiftly, "and it wouldn't be the first time these khaki suits of ours had scared a fellow who had reason to fear arrest. It might be he actually believed we were a bunch of State's troops sent out to round up all of his stripe."

"Whee!" gasped Billy, falling in readily with the train of thought thus advanced, "I c'n just imagine how it affected him. He must have made hot tracks for the bunk-house here, and hustled the other tr—I mean hustled Sam away in a hurry. All I c'n say is that fortune played us a mean trick when that hobo saw us coming along."

"It looks that way," said Hugh, "but you never can tell. Lots of times in this world what seems like a misfortune is only a stepping stone to better things. I've heard Lieutenant Denmead, our esteemed scout master, tell of a number of things that happened to friends of his along those same lines."

Of course the patrol leader was saying this partly to lighten the load poor Gus was staggering under. At the same time Hugh really did believe what he told them. It was the duty of a true scout, he argued, to always look on the bright side; no matter how things seemed to be going against him, they might be much worse.

Apparently the strange storm had not yet reached its apex, for as time wore on the racket outside increased instead of diminished.

"If this sort of thing keeps on all night," grumbled Billy, "I c'n see a bunch of sleepy scouts along about daylight. Why, it'll take us all of Thanksgiving to recuperate after our loss of rest. And how about that wild turkey somebody expected to bag so as to celebrate with? Huh! guess I was smart to make sure we'd have a half home-cured ham to boil. If it weren't for me you'd starve!"

"Don't worry, Billy," Hugh told him. "We're bound to get along fairly well. Besides, this is going to be an experience unlike anything we've ever struck in all our trips. Think of the lumberjacks who used to sleep in this place, and hear the roar of the wintry blizzard, being shut up for a week at a time by the drifts around them."

"Huh! it may come to that with us yet," grunted Billy, disconsolately. "When a storm like this strikes up it's liable to turn into anything. Wish now I'd gone 'nd fetched my bully snow-shoes along with me."

Then he took out pencil and paper and started figuring. Hugh guessed Billy must be portioning the supply of food out so as to discover just how long a party of their size could continue to hold body and soul together if reduced to extremes. As his employment afforded Billy more or less entertainment and did no harm Hugh made no effort to stop him.

Indeed, just then Hugh had other thoughts to employ his attention. He did not like the way things were going. They had planned for such a splendid time up in the timber belt, with headquarters in the abandoned lumber camp!

Louder grew the roar of the storm, causing Gus to almost jump with each terrible rush of the wind, or distant crash of a falling pine tree, unsupported since its taller and stouter mates had been cut down.

Suddenly without warning Gus gave a shriek that startled the others. They turned their eyes upon him, wondering if the poor fellow could be going out of his mind. But Gus was pointing with a trembling hand straight at one of the windows, and there pressed against the small pane of glass they could see a human face!

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CHAPTER V. A HELPING HAND.

"Look, oh, look there!" Gus was saying, in a thick voice, as he continued to keep his finger pointed at the apparition beyond the window pane.

Hugh, though almost as startled as the rest, managed to keep a firm grip on himself.

"Is that your brother Sam, do you think, Gus?" he demanded, sensibly, the first thing; for the man still continued to stare in at them, as though trying to make out whether they were only boys after all, and not the dreaded State militia come to arrest him.

"No, n-no, it can't be him!" gasped the other. "Don't you see he's a whole lot older than my brother? Why, his beard's streaked with gray, seems like. Hugh, that must be the other tramp. Then he's deserted poor Sam in the storm somewhere!"

Hugh did not think the idea at all unlikely. He knew that among such men the old rule of "self-preservation first" usually applied. At the same time he did not mean to let Gus read his thoughts.

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"He acts as if he wanted to get in here," suggested Arthur, whose quick eye had noted that the man looked both frightened and weak. "It may be he's been hurt by some falling tree and needs medical aid. Hugh, what shall we do?"

Hugh had already made up his mind on that score. No matter who the man was, or what he may have done to cut him off from the society of others, even a wretched dog could not be refused shelter when such a storm was raging without.

So Hugh immediately made signs with his hands such as might be recognized even among savages as tokens of peace and amity. Then he started toward the door, for all of them had jumped to their feet at the time Gus gave the alarm, after making his discovery.

Cautious Billy held back. As a rule, he was the last fellow to suspect any one, but Billy had a regular antipathy for tramps of high and low degree, and would not trust a single one of the species.

He suddenly remembered that they had brought a double-barreled shotgun along with them; not that they expected to do much hunting, but visions of a fat wild turkey had haunted their minds, especially in connection with the Thanksgiving dinner.

Billy now stepped hastily back and took possession of this firearm. He himself had thrust a couple of loaded shells in the chambers late that afternoon, warning the others at the same time not to handle the weapon carelessly. Billy had an idea some wandering wildcat might come prowling around their door in the night, and while not anxious to figure in the rôle of a mighty Nimrod, at the same time he believed it was the duty of a scout to "be always prepared."

When he once clutched this weapon, Billy breathed easier. Now let that desperate yeggman, if such the fellow turned out to be, look out for himself. Should he try to run things to suit himself he would find that Billy Worth could stand like old Plymouth Rock, or Gibraltar.

Meanwhile Hugh swiftly advanced to the door. As stated previously, a bar had been placed in the twin sockets securing that means of ingress against the rush of the howling gale.

Without hesitating an instant, Hugh started to remove this bar, so that he could throw open the door, and invite the wanderer in. He had noticed that when he started in the direction of the entrance, the face at the window vanished; but Hugh did not believe the man had decamped.

He held on to the door as he cautiously opened it, though all of his strength was needed to successfully combat the fierce swoop of the next squall.

"Come in!" he shouted, upon discovering a bowed figure just without, and his voice could not have been heard ten feet away at that, such was the clamor of the elements.

The fire flared up furiously under the draught that forced itself through the opening. Arthur was compelled to trample upon numerous embers that flew out from the hearth, and threatened to set fire to things, even alighting on their packs.

Perhaps the man must have heard what Hugh called out. At any rate, he had evidently made up his mind that while he might be facing arrest by entering the cabin, the fate that awaited him if he remained outside was surely far worse.

He limped painfully as he pushed past the guardian of the door, showing that as they had already suspected, he must have received some sort of injury.

Hugh immediately threw himself against the door again, and by main strength managed to get it closed. Then he once more applied the friendly bar. After that his part of the work was done, so that he could turn and survey the stranger who had come to their camp for shelter against the wild gale.

The man was apparently "all in," as Arthur would have said. He staggered like many a drunken fellow the boys had seen upon the

streets of their home town in times gone by before the W. T. A. had started their crusade and cleaned things up considerably.

Indeed, before he had taken half a dozen steps the man fell upon his hands and knees, tried to get up, and then rolled over helplessly.

Billy, without a single word, managed to slip away the gun he was holding so tenaciously and belligerently. He acted as though fairly ashamed of his action in anticipating trouble from such a wretched source.

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No sooner had Arthur Cameron witnessed the collapse of the victim of the storm than his professional instincts were immediately aroused.

"He's been badly injured, Hugh, I'm afraid!" he cried, excitedly. "We've just *got* to look after him, that's all there is about it."

Another second and Arthur was bending beside the tramp, whom he rolled over on his back. At the same time he called to Gus.

"Fetch one of those pillows we filled with hemlock browse, Gus, and put it under his head. That's right, only handle him carefully, for I'm afraid he's badly hurt."

Hugh joined the others, ready to lend a helping hand. In like cases Hugh almost invariably deferred to the judgment of Arthur, because he recognized a superior along the line of "first aid to the injured." Arthur, as has been said before, had always shown wonderful ability as an amateur surgeon, and his services were in frequent demand whenever the scouts went on a hike. Indeed, it was no unusual thing for the boys to address him by the title of "Doc," which Arthur must have considered as high a compliment as any one could give him.

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To watch him making an examination of the man's limbs first of all one could easily imagine the boy had been in close touch with some practical surgeon. Had his patient been a king instead of a wretched tramp, possibly a fugitive from justice as well, Arthur could not have been more painstaking and gentle in his work.

"No limbs broken at any rate!" he announced, which gave Hugh more or less satisfaction, because he had feared that the examination might disclose some serious injury along those lines.

The man had not fainted, after all, it appeared, for he now gave signs of having heard Arthur's announcement.

"Hurt all over—got caught under tree—just bruised, I reckon, but played out. It's a terrible night, gents, that's what!"

He used much more vigorous language than given above when expressing his opinion. Hugh would not stand for such a thing a minute.

"Here, no more of that kind of talk while you're under this roof, Mister Tramp," he told the man, sternly. "We're willing to treat you white, and look after you in the way scouts are taught to do, but we'll have no swearing around our cabin."

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Arthur continued his examination. He opened

the man's coat, and presently announced he believed he had summed up all his injuries.

"He's got dozens of bruises and scratches that are going to make him sore enough for a week or more!" he declared. "I'm afraid one of his ribs has been fractured, but it's a whole lot less serious than I thought at first. If he keeps quiet, and behaves himself, we'll have him fit to go back to town with us—that is, if he cares to keep us company."

He added that last when he saw the man squirm uneasily, and look alarmed. It was evident that he did not anticipate being taken to town with any degree of pleasure, and they could easily guess why.

Gus had all this time said never a word. He did whatever any one asked of him, and kept staring at the bearded tramp strangely. Hugh could give a guess what must be in the other's mind. Gus naturally felt a deep interest in the injured hobo, for the man must know about poor Sam, since the other had lately been in his company.

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Where was Sam now? This was the dreadful question that undoubtedly obtruded itself upon the mind of Gus constantly as he continued to stare at the tramp they had rescued from the storm.

Hugh knew what was meant by that mute appeal he could see in the eyes of Gus when their gaze met. The poor fellow was hungry to know the worst, though he did not have the courage to put his desire into words. As usually seemed to be the case when any scout found himself in trouble, Gus turned to Hugh to help him out; nor did he look for aid from this source in vain.

Bending over the man who now lay there on the floor, though they expected to fix up one of numerous bunks for him near the fire, the scout master caught his eye and then went on to say:

"I suppose you've got a name, and as you may be with us for some little time we'd like to know it."

"Call me Casey, then," came the muttered reply, though for that matter Hugh took it that any other name would have answered just as well, because he did not believe Casey was what the man had been known by in days gone by, before he took to the road.

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"Well, Casey, you were not up here *alone*," said Hugh, steadily. "We know from the signs you had a pal along with you, and that he's been a pretty sick man lately, though he must be on the mend if he could go away from here in a hurry, and with only a cane to help him along."

The man looked surprised to hear Hugh say all this. Like many other people, possibly, Casey may have entertained a contempt for the ability of boys, who dressed in khaki and called themselves scouts, to read signs, and figure out things accurately without once seeing those whom they were following.

"Sure, that's so!" he exclaimed, in wonderment; "though I don't know how ye guessed it."

"Your companion's name was Sam, wasn't it?" asked Hugh immediately.

"Just what it was," came the reply, while the increased look of astonishment on the man's face caused several wrinkles to cross his forehead.

Possibly his guilty conscience was giving him cause for alarm. If this boy could tell so many things that were supposed to be secret, how was a fellow to know about keeping his own private affairs hidden?

"Well," continued Hugh, "we have come up here on purpose to find Sam, I don't mind telling you. He used to live not forty miles away from here before he took to the life of a hobo. Perhaps you knew this, and then again it may be he never whispered a word of it to you. But this boy here is his younger brother, Gus, and your pal's real name is Sam Merrivale."

Casey seemed to be impressed with the sincerity in Hugh's tone. He looked again at the eager Gus, now hanging over him with an expression that could not be mistaken on his drawn face.

"Is that so?" he finally asked, as though convinced that Hugh spoke the truth. "Then I'm sorry we didn't get on to it before we flew the coop here. If we'd just made up our minds to face the music and stick it out, I'd be feelin' a heap easier in my body right now, and pore Sam wouldn't 'a' been a goner!"

At hearing the tramp say these dismal words Gus gave a low groan, and put his hand up across his eyes as though he feared the worst.

CHAPTER VI. THE DUTY OF A SCOUT.

Hugh's first act was to throw a reassuring arm across the shoulders of Gus Merrivale. The action was intended to quiet his fears and revive hope. Somehow it seemed as though mere personal contact with so magnetic a fellow as Hugh Hardin was usually enough to generate a new feeling of ambition in a despairing scout, for undoubtedly Gus immediately began to show signs of fresh anticipation.

"What do you mean by saying your pal is a goner?" demanded Hugh, looking down at the tramp as he spoke.

The man lifted one of his arms, though the effort caused him to groan with pain.

"Hark to that howling blast, will ye?" he called out. "It's by far the worst storm I ever stacked up against, and I've seen some in my time. The trees, they're just goin' over like ten-pins in a bowling alley. It's awful, that's what it is, and there's a mighty slim chance poor Sam could pull through such a fiendish gale if it near did for a strong man like me, and him that weak."

"You deserted him then, did you?" demanded Billy, filled with indignation.

If such a thing as shame could ever make its presence felt in so hard a face as that of the so-

called Casey, it did at that moment.

"Listen, gents!" he called out so as to be heard above the noise with which the storm was beating against the end of the bunk-house. "I stuck by Sam till I knowed it was no more use. I couldn't lift a hand to help him along any further. So I made up my mind I'd try to find me way back here and get help for me pal. That's gospel truth, every word of it. Even then I believed I was sticking my own silly neck in danger comin' back—well, never mind why I thought that way."

Hugh was looking straight into the man's face as he said this. Somehow the scout master felt that Casey might actually be telling the truth. Men like him have been known to do wonderfully fine deeds once in a while, though no one would ever expect to find such a diamond in the rough.

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He remembered the famous poem of Jim Bludsoe, which only the other day he had been reading—Jim, it may be remembered, was only a rough Mississippi steamboat pilot who might be set down as a fair sample of his kind, and looked upon as a swearing type of river man; yet when the *Belle* took fire he manfully stuck to his wheel and held the nose of the boat against the bank until every "galoot" had jumped to safety on the bank. Jim lost his own life, it is true, but the memory of his glorious deed has thrilled tens of thousands ever since it was recorded in verse.

Yes, somehow Hugh began to believe that Casey might be built something along those lines. Such a man, to save a comrade, would even risk arrest and imprisonment. He could have found shelter from the storm so far as he himself was concerned. The sick pal, however, needed a safer refuge from the howling gale that might yet turn into one of those dreaded blizzards through means of which so many of his wandering kind have met their fate.

"Tell us all about it," was what Hugh said. "You hurried away from here after you discovered the car coming along the logging road, headed for the old camp, didn't you, Casey?"

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"Yes, because ye see I thought youse might be some people I wasn't carin' much about meetin' just now," came the ready reply.

"Go on, then, from that point," urged the scout master, persistently.

"Well, we went as far as Sam could stand it, and then pulled up, meanin' to put in the night there. I reckoned that when mornin' kim along I could sneak back an' find out the lay of the land, and whether you uns had vamoosed or not. If ye had we meant to climb back here, an' stay a while longer."

He stopped to rub his injured side softly and grit his teeth, evidently to suppress the groan that Hugh could see welling to his lips; for the man was undoubtedly in great pain, despite the ointment Arthur had rubbed upon his bruises.

"Then the wind began to rise, and I knowed we was goin' to have some sort of a storm, which I tell ye I was sorry to see, 'cause bein' out in one with winter hangin' fire close by wasn't appealin' none to me. We snugged up closer

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when it got worse and worser. Sam he begged me to go back to the cabin and try to get some help for him. I held out as long as I could, and then I sensed that it'd be the only thing like as not that'd save him, he was that weak, you see. So I says I'd go, an' I left Sam there among the fallin' timber."

"You must have been a pretty good woodsman to find your way back here in the dark, and with such a storm blowing," remarked Hugh, for the purpose of drawing the other out still more.

"Oh! I used to be a lumberjack a long time ago," explained Casey. "Once ye larn the tricks o' the woods they ain't so easy forgot. I made a bee-line back here, but all the same I came mighty near never arrivin', with that tree ketchin' me when it came down with a smash."

He gritted his teeth again at the recollection of his recent almost miraculous escape. As a lumberman Casey must have been well acquainted with the perils of falling timber. He could figure what small chances a man would have should one of those tall pines topple over on him when driven by a ninety-mile-an-hour gale.

Hugh was thinking seriously. What was their duty under such circumstances? Should some of them risk going out into the stormy night, and try to find the abandoned Sam Merrivale, so as to save his life? He figured that if the erring brother of Gus, weakened by illness as he was, should be left to the full and protracted rigor of the storm there was small chance of his ever surviving the night.

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Hugh never had a question to decide that worried him more than this one did. He wanted to do his duty, yet wondered whether it would be right to imperil the lives of himself and one or more of his chums in trying to save so miserable a wretch as Sam Merrivale.

The mental combat was short-lived. Hugh could not evade the issue which was presented so squarely to him. He believed that it would be possible to rescue the miserable Sam, providing the other tramp would direct them to the scant refuge where the prodigal son of Mr. Merrivale was doubtless cowering beneath a scanty shelter that served to protect him from the chilling blasts.

Of course they would have to accept a certain amount of risk in carrying out this plan. Hugh felt that for them to remain there in their comfortable quarters, all through the long night, knowing that a fellow human being, and poor Gus' brother at that, was perishing close by, would be something that would haunt them with shame and regrets as long as they lived.

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So he turned again to the tramp, who may possibly have guessed what had been passing through the boy's mind, for he immediately called out:

"I kin direct ye to the place, all right, mister, and it ain't so very fur away from here, either; but better think twict afore ye starts to try it. Chances are three to one ye'll be sorry when ye git a hundred yards away, with them pines a fallin' like hail all around ye."

Gus held his breath, and kept those eloquent eyes of his glued fast upon the features of Hugh. It seemed to Gus just then as though the life of his erring brother were hanging by a slender thread. In fact, it depended upon the decision of the scout master. If Hugh decided they would try to find him perhaps Sam might yet be saved; but if the decision were adverse there was scarcely any hope for the lost one.

Hugh did not fail his comrade. He quickly made up his mind where the path of duty led as seen by a scout's eyes. Doubtless, Gus was thrilled to the bone when he caught the reassuring glance Hugh shot in his direction, for it told what was coming even before a single word had been uttered.

"Suppose you tell us, then, Casey," said Hugh, soberly, "just how to reach the place where you say you left your pal?"

Gus did not utter a word—he was really too full for that; but he allowed a hand to steal out and clasp that of the scout leader, which he squeezed again and again in a way that told of his gratitude more than mere words could ever have done.

"Ye have got to foller the crick down," began the injured tramp, "till ye come to where it makes a second bend, turnin' to the right. It might be all o' a quarter o' a mile from here. Then strike out as the rocks run. When ye come to a dip in the same 'tis there ye'll find Sam alyin', dead or alive, I can't say which. But no matter, ye'll have to fetch him back between ye, 'case he's too weak to walk."

"You'll let me go along, of course, Hugh?" pleaded Gus, still clinging to the other's hand.

Hugh hardly knew what to do about that. Some one must stay with Casey, and under ordinary conditions he would have detailed Billy and Gus to perform that duty. But he knew how the poor fellow was fairly hungering to be able to do something personally for the brother whom his mother had sent him out to find.

His decision was quickly made. It was very hard to say no when Gus was looking so appealingly into his eyes. After all, three might be better than just a pair of them. And surely Billy ought to be able to take care of the camp while they were away.

"Yes, you can keep company with us, Gus," he told the other.

"Then I suppose you mean for me to stay behind, and not Arthur?" ventured Billy.

"Arthur will be of more help to me in case we find Sam than you could, Billy," Hugh told him frankly, "because I depend so much on his first-aid knowledge. And Gus ought to go because you must remember it is his brother who's out in all that storm."

So it was settled, considerably to the chagrin of Billy, who was to stay behind; but then he knew the scout master too well to dream of argument when once the other had laid down the law. Obedience to authority and discipline is one of the fundamental rules which every member of a

patrol learns early in his career as a scout; it is one of the finest things taught by the organization, and calculated to be of great assistance to boys in later life.

Accordingly, Hugh, Gus and Arthur immediately commenced making preparations looking to sallying forth. They went about this in a matter-of-fact way, just as though they did not know they would literally be taking their lives in their hands by braving that fearful storm.

Hugh did not neglect a single thing, for he was always thorough. He even made sure they carried plenty of matches along, and some food as well.

"Goodness gracious! I hope now you don't expect to get lost in the woods, and wander around ever so long," ventured Billy, when he saw this, although secretly he must have also commended the wisdom of the move.

"There's no telling what may happen in a case like this," Hugh replied. "Besides, we might find Sam pretty well exhausted, and chilled to the marrow. Then if only we can build a bit of a fire, and warm up this can of soup, it will give him a whole lot of new strength."

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"Wait a minute, Hugh!" cried Billy, excitedly; "here's a can of soup of new-fangled make. It's meant to be used when a fellow isn't able to have *any* fire, if only he can get a little water. You cut a hole in the outer can, for there are two, one inside the other. The space between is filled with unslacked lime, I guess. Anyhow, as soon as the water gets to it a heat is generated, and in a few minutes you take out the inside can, open it, and you'll find the contents steaming hot!"

"I've read about those modern sportsmen's supplies," said Arthur, "but never tried anything along those lines. I'd say it might be a splendid thing for an occasion of this kind. I'll report to you how it goes, Billy, in case we have to make use of it."

"Wish you would," said Billy, eagerly.

Presently the three who were to brave the storm announced themselves ready. There was a hearty hand-shake all around. Then Billy carefully opened the door part way, holding his breath in very awe as the others pushed through the stingy gap.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE PERIL OF THE FALLING TIMBER.

No sooner had the trio of venturesome scouts found themselves outside the friendly shelter of the bunk-house than they faced the full rigor of the storm. As yet the air had not turned cold, which was a remarkable phenomenon in the eyes of Arthur Cameron, whose study of weather conditions had made him something of an authority along the lines of predictions, among

his chums at least.

The wind was howling madly through the trees, making all sorts of weird and actually terrifying noises, Gus Merrivale thought, as he cowered a little closer to Hugh, who was on his right.

Gus was not a coward by any means, but he might have shuddered at finding himself abroad in such a gale, only that his heart was now bound up in the idea of finding his lost brother, who was somewhere out yonder, exposed to the full fury of the storm.

He had long in secret envied those of his chums who were entitled to wear upon the breasts of their khaki coats one of the three emblems given to show that the bearer had been found worthy of having his name inscribed on the roll of honor kept at scout headquarters. Fortune, however, had, up to this time, never knocked at the door of Gus Merrivale, perhaps partly because of his lack of "push" and zeal, such as had taken the others to the front. Then the want of a suitable opportunity may have had something to do with it.

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They found the going pretty hard. Hugh wondered how Casey had ever managed to make his way back to the lumber camp, after once leaving it, because of his weak condition and the fearful nature of the storm. Then he remembered several facts that helped explain this puzzling thing.

In the first place the tramp was injured while on his way back to the bunk-house, and may even have been almost at his destination when caught by that falling tree and knocked down as its branches struck him. Then again his back was toward the worst of the gale, so that it even assisted him along.

The scouts had another story to tell of their progress, for they almost faced the wind, and at times had to bend low in order to simply hold their own against its mad fury.

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Every yard covered counted in the race to find and rescue Sam Merrivale, Hugh realized, as he plodded steadily along, yielding nothing to the elements that sought to hold them in check, but surely gaining ground.

Several times they were compelled to stop behind some shelter in order to regain their breath. All the while Gus was trembling like a leaf, in constant expectation of having a tree topple over upon them, just as had happened to Casey. If the tramp, who confessed that he had once been a lumberjack himself, could be caught in such a trap, it was evident that greenhorns like the three boys were taking desperate chances indeed.

Still, where Hugh led his comrades were always willing to follow; and Gus told himself over and over again that perhaps this would all turn out for the best. If only they could find poor Sam, and manage in some way to get him under shelter, who could prophesy what wonderful results the experience might not bring about in the heart and mind of the erring young man?

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Gus himself had laid out a campaign in which he intended to appeal to whatever element of good

remained in the breast of his brother. The devoted mother would largely figure in this, and he hoped through some such means to reclaim Sam. Indeed, although Gus had as yet said nothing about it to his chums, a little scheme had been arranged between his mother and himself, whereby Sam, if he could be coaxed to agree to the conditions, was to be hovering near his old home at a certain time when the wife and mother meant to make a last great effort to placate the stubborn father, and secure his consent to give the boy one more trial.

All these things, then, must have been gripping the mind of Gus as he labored with set teeth and tense muscles to keep alongside his mates. The thought of that little woman at home, and how her prayers were following him in his venture, gave Gus additional courage to face the difficulties that beset him. He was resolved to keep on to the end though he died for it. If Sam were to be saved, there must be no sign of weakness on the part of any scout.

Several times a tree did go down close by, and gave them all a severe shock, such was the terrific crash accompanying its sudden fall. Even Hugh was bound to confess that his heart seemed to stand still when, directly across their very path, one of these lofty pines came whirling down in the grip of the wind, now raging at hurricane force.

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All this while it required considerable ability to keep going straight. Hugh did not forget a single word of the scanty directions given by Casey. The night was not absolutely dark, even though heavy clouds obscured the moon, near her fourth quarter, so that they could manage to avoid collisions with such trees as came in their way.

Hugh was following the downward course of the creek, and if at times the nature of the obstacles they met forced them to turn aside, he always took his bearings, and managed to get back again to the little zigzag stream.

A quarter of a mile may not seem much of a jaunt under favorable conditions. To Gus, who was a pretty good stepper, it had indeed many a time looked very small; but as long as the boy lived he would never forget what he experienced on this occasion when pitting his puny strength against the herculean force of a veritable cyclone of wind.

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If he had felt any reason to hope that Hugh could hear a word of what he said, Gus, no doubt, on more than one occasion would have endeavored to ask eager questions concerning the possibility of accomplishing the task they had set out to perform.

Still, though he could not get such comforting assurance in words, Gus at least felt that all must surely be well, else Hugh would not be pushing so steadily onward as though he had every confidence in his ability to attain his end.

It might be noticed that the scout master was commencing to be more vigilant than heretofore. When next he stopped it was not to regain his breath in a sheltered spot, as had happened several times before. On the contrary, Gus noticed, though his eyes were dim with tears on

account of the sting in the wind, that Hugh was intently examining the ground. Gus could not help but admire Hugh.

When the other arose from his feet he drew first one of his chums toward him and then the other. A temporary lull in the roar about them gave him a chance to shout a few words, though Hugh was chary about wasting his breath, feeling that he needed it all.

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"This must be the second bend Casey told us about," he explained. "Here are the rocks on the right. We must go this way!"

Neither of the others attempted to make any answer. In fact, they had submitted so many times to Hugh's guidance that they were ready to do anything he said without a word or question as to its advisability.

At least one thing favored them—a change in their course was bound to work more or less to their advantage, since it would no longer be necessary to plunge directly into the teeth of the biting wind.

Gus was almost ready to drop. He staggered like a drunken man at times. Part of this came from exhaustion, but no doubt the despair that was commencing to tug at his heart had much to do with the state of his near collapse. Could he have been assured of success just then, probably he would have felt quite invigorated, and capable of enduring much more than had already come his way.

Hugh must have guessed this much, for somehow he managed to take hold of the other's arm while pushing steadily on along the rocks, as called for in the scanty directions given by Casey the tramp. And no one but a fellow who has been in somewhat similar conditions bordering on collapse could understand just how much this friendly act did for poor Gus. He would never forget it, he told himself again and again, as he plucked up a little more courage just through sheer contact with the boy with the valiant heart.

82

Hugh knew they must by now be close to the spot where they hoped to come upon the castaway. He was hoping for the best, even while gritting his teeth, and preparing to face the worst. His one thought was Gus. He expected that if they were doomed to meet with bitter disappointment the other might give way utterly, and even faint, such would be the shock of his discovery.

Well, it was a comfort to Hugh to remember that he had Arthur along, Arthur who would be quick to meet just such an emergency as that, and who it seems had before this made out to grip the other arm of Gus in order to add to his stability.

83

Arthur may have been worrying greatly to account for this remarkable phenomenon of Nature, when an actual thunder-storm could come along on the eve of Thanksgiving, a thing never before known in all his reading of weather freaks. At the same time he was not giving up any time just then to bothering about such things. It was a condition that confronted them, not a theory, and they must devote all their attention to weathering the gale and finding

Sam Merrivale.

Suddenly Hugh stopped short, and seemed to be trying to look around him.

"Oh! is this the place, Hugh?" almost shrieked poor Gus, overwhelmed with renewed anxiety.

"So far as I can tell it must be," replied the other, loud enough to be heard.

Upon hearing this Gus shivered with a new dread, for there was certainly no sign of his brother.

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CHAPTER VIII. THE RESCUE.

"Hugh, he's gone, don't you see?" cried Gus, staring around helplessly in the dim light given by the moon that was hidden somewhere behind those heavy clouds overhead.

It chanced that the wind slackened its force for a brief spell just then, allowing them an opportunity to exchange a few sentences, just as if the elements felt sorry for the misery of the poor fellow whose heart was full to overflowing.

"Yes, it looks like it," Hugh admitted, "but if what Casey told us is true he must have been too weak to go far. We'll find him, Gus, I hope."

The other did not seem to be overconfident, even when he heard Hugh, whom he trusted as he did no other comrade, try to cheer him up in that way. A reaction was already setting in. Gus had been buoyed up much of the time by the hope that kept his heart warm, and now that this seemed gone a dreadful chill settled down upon him.

Hugh did not mean that this should be the end. He planned to bolster up the courage of his chum by prompt measures.

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"Come," he told the others, shouting aloud because the wind was rising again, with all those noises breaking forth around them once more, "what do we call ourselves scouts for if we can't handle a little thing like this?"

"But what can we do, Hugh," asked Gus. "Which way would we figure we'd better try and follow, when a dozen directions are open to him?"

"Stop and think," said the other, quickly; "would a fellow who was weak, and ready to shrink from the storm, start out by *facing* it, or going the other way?"

Gus gave vent to a cry. New hope immediately started to tug at his heartstrings. Surely, as a scout, he should likewise have reasoned out things. But then Gus found himself the prey to contending emotions, and in no condition to figure what the answer to a conundrum might be, as under more comfortable conditions he would possibly have done.

Yes, it was certainly plausible to believe that the

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weak and tottering steps of Sam would carry him with the wind, and not against it. His one desire, when he moved away from the spot where Casey had left him, must have simply been to better his condition; and so he would drift along, the sport of the elements.

Gus watched Hugh as a cat might a mouse upon which it meant to presently pounce. The scout master was moving slowly up the little gully in which the tramps had hidden themselves, meaning to go back to the cabin should the intruders leave the vicinity, sooner or later.

While the place had offered a certain amount of shelter before the coming of the storm, it was a mere apology of a camp, once that driving wind started in to whipping the last remaining dead leaves from the hard wood trees, and levelling many of the pines. Sam must have stood it as long as he could, and then yielded to the impulse to let the gale urge him along, in hopes of finding a better shelter.

Hugh was alert and watchful, because he knew that it was an easy thing to go wrong in a case like this. A false deduction in the beginning would send them on a wild-goose chase, and with it would go their last feeble hope of finding the lost tramp.

87

Hugh even got down on his hands and knees and started to crawl laboriously up the slight ascent of rocks. At first Gus was bothered to account for this action on the part of his chum, and even feared that Hugh may have been more fatigued than he cared to admit. On second thought Gus arrived at the true explanation of the mystery.

Hugh was acting on the old principle of putting himself in the other fellow's place. He meant to try and do just what he imagined the weak and distressed Sam must have attempted when making this desperate move.

The gully was really nothing more nor less than a slight depression of the rocks. Its edges were not high enough in any place to effectually shut out the sweep of the wind. On this account it was likely to prove a poor sort of shelter, though, for one thing, the danger of falling trees was not so great here as in many other places, and Sam may have understood this.

Gus was using his eyes on his own account as they crept along up the rise in this slow and laborious fashion. In spite of their weak condition, owing to the wind and the gathering tears, he could manage to make out some object lying huddled just ahead of them, and toward which Hugh was moving steadily at the time.

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As yet they could not tell exactly whether this might prove to be the object of their search, or simply an outcropping mass of rock. Another half minute would tell the tale, and therefore Gus shut his jaws firmly together, determined to prove himself a credit to his organization.

All doubt was quickly removed when Hugh, turning his head, called back:

"Here he is; we've found him!"

It was only natural that the first wild sense of exhilaration that swept through the breast of the

eager brother should be instantly succeeded by another spasm of acute doubt. Was Sam still alive, or had he made his very last bid for existence when creeping away from the storm, as he believed?

Hugh was already bending over the recumbent figure that was huddled in a knot, as though in the endeavor to better resist the plucking fingers of the wind. Arthur, too, had pushed forward, his professional instinct aroused, since it seemed likely that poor Sam would be in need of more or less help.

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Only Gus, who had much more at stake than either of his mates, hung back, consumed with mingled hopes and fears. He waited to hear whether good news or bad was coming, after Hugh had learned how matters stood. And so Gus Merrivale with clenched hands and set jaws held his breath, and felt his heart beating like mad in his bosom. What agonies the boy suffered, and how the few seconds must have seemed to him like long hours—afterwards, under far different conditions, when he allowed his thoughts to draw him back again to that dreadful moment he always shuddered at the recollection of what he passed through in so brief a period of time.

Then a spasm of supreme joy flitted through the heart of Gus. He saw the recumbent figure on the cold rocks move. Hugh, yes, and Arthur, too, bending over the tramp had managed to let him know assistance had arrived, though it must have been hard for him to understand it.

"We have come to try and help you get back to the cabin again," was what Hugh was shouting in his ear. "You can't stay here through the night, because the chances are this storm will turn into a blizzard before morning, and you'd freeze to death."

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The castaway upon the rocks seemed to try and stare at them. He doubtless had hard work convincing himself that he was not dreaming.

"How'd you know I was out here?" Hugh managed to hear him say, as though that strange fact impressed him most of all in his weakened condition.

"Casey told us," said Hugh, thinking to humor him a little. "Casey is back there by the fire in the bunk-house, where we'll have you in a jiffy. Do your best to help us, Sam Merrivale."

"Who are you?" demanded the other, apparently staggered at hearing his name spoken by one of those boys whose faces he could just dimly see.

"Never mind about that now," Hugh told him, with that old touch of authority in his voice that usually carried his point. "In good time you'll know all about it. Let us help you get on your feet. You're to lean on two of us, while we start back to the creek bed. After that it won't be quite so hard going, for we can have the wind at our backs. Now, Arthur, give me a hand!"

91

It was really strange how Hugh managed to make himself heard in all that racket; but then he had one of those voices that carry in spite of all obstacles. Arthur needed no urging, for he was ever ready to perform the highest functions

of a scout, and put himself to any amount of trouble in order to relieve distress, or succor a fainting heart.

Sam seemed stiff and weak. At first he could hardly do a thing for himself, and Hugh seriously considered whether they might not after all be compelled to carry him on some sort of a rude litter, fashioned on the spur of the moment.

After he had been enabled to work his limbs a little, however, it seemed as if some sense of initiative must have come back to the wanderer, for he even put out one foot and took his first step, without being urged by his attendants.

Slowly they moved along, down the slight grade, and facing the worst of the still bitter wind. Gus hovered close behind the others, feeling ever so much better, now that his worst fears had not been realized. If Sam could only be taken to the cozy cabin in the old lumber camp owned by his father, all might yet be well. Gus had great faith in the ability of Arthur to pull a fellow through when he seemed to be on his last legs. Yes, he certainly had cause for great rejoicing, and no doubt there was a song of thanksgiving welling up in his heart that could not wait for expression until the dawn of the National Day devoted to gratitude wherever true Americans are found, the world over.

Now they had managed to reach the creek at the second bend, and from this time on it might be expected they would find the going much easier, although bad enough at the best. The storm was at their back, and the haven of the bunk-house just a quarter of a mile away, as they made the turn, and pushed on resolutely, the two scouts who flanked Sam and gripped his arms, steadying his feeble steps.

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CHAPTER IX.

GUS IN THE LIME-LIGHT.

This lasted only a short while. Then a change came about that put quite another face on the matter, and one that looked much less rosy.

Gus, hovering close behind the others, trying to figure out how his brother was going to take it when he eventually learned of his identity, and heard the message he was bringing from their devoted mother—Gus felt his heart apparently jump up into his mouth, when he saw that Sam had drooped, and was hanging helplessly on his guardians.

Undoubtedly Nature had played out, and the exhausted young fellow could not go another step of his own volition. He had been sick of late, and besides that must have suffered considerable privations while leading that roving, reckless life into which he had latterly drifted.

Had Billy been present his first remark would probably have been, "here's a pretty kettle of fish." On the part of Gus it was a feeling of intense dismay that gripped his anxious heart.

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Still that confidence in Hugh Hardin remained, and so long as the scout master stood by there was really no reason to give way to utter despair.

He waited only long enough to make sure that they were lowering their charge to the ground. Gus had no fear that two such staunch fellows as his chums would dream of giving up the game and deserting Sam then and there; they were not made of such base stuff as that.

He could see that they had their heads together, and eager to learn what was in the wind, he pushed up very close, so that he could catch their words. It was, of course, necessary to almost shout so as to be heard, and sometimes a sentence was utterly drowned by the crash of falling timber close by. Nevertheless this is about what the strained ears of Gus caught.

"He's all in and done for, that's sure, Hugh," Arthur was saying.

"No question about that," the other went on to say. "I began to guess it was coming from the way he hung on us. He couldn't walk ten steps further if his life depended on it. Poor chap, he's game, though!"

"Then I reckon we'll have to carry him," cried Arthur. "The only trouble about that is it's always mighty hard to get a proper grip on a limp body, and walk for any distance. And I'm afraid it's going to tax us to the limit to do that same thing, with this wind blowing forty ways for Sunday."

"No use talking, we ought to have some sort of stretcher," Hugh admitted. "That's what makes me feel silly, because of all the things I thought to fetch along the camp hatchet wasn't among the lot."

"Too bad," said Arthur. "What under the sun will we do about it, Hugh? To make a stretcher without anything to cut poles with is going to be a tough job."

"Oh! Hugh, Arthur, I've got it, I've got it!" shouted Gus just then, so excited that he could hardly frame his words coherently.

From his actions any one might think Gus had suddenly been bitten by a rattlesnake, for he was jumping wildly up and down, and seemed to be pawing at his leg in a most idiotic manner.

"Got what?" burst from the astonished Arthur.

"The hatchet, don't you know!" came the answering whoop. "I don't understand why I ever thought to snatch it up, and tote it along, but say, I'm mighty glad now I did. See, here it is, Hugh, and oh! I'm ever so pleased to handle it."

When the scout master heard that he gave a shout of joy.

"You've saved the day, I tell you, boy!" he exclaimed, slapping the delighted Gus heartily on the back. "It was an inspiration that made you think of the hatchet. The credit of the whole undertaking rests on your shoulders, Gus! Here, give me the blade, and see me get busy."

"By great good luck," added Arthur, also decidedly pleased by the new twist fortune had taken in their behalf, "here are all the poles we need close by, though without that hatchet they might as well have been in Africa."

Hugh had not wasted a second of time.

"You look after Sam, both of you, and rub his limbs," he told his chums. "Leave the cutting of the poles to me, though I'll need help when it comes to binding them together."

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He said no more than the law allowed, because it was a most arduous task to do any sort of decent talking in the midst of all that clamor. Already Hugh had turned in the quarter where Arthur's extended finger had pointed at the time he spoke of the "poles" being conveniently near by.

Long practice had made the scout master a clever hand at using a hatchet. When a fellow has cut cords and cords of wood for campfires from time to time, he gets considerable experience in swinging both ax and hatchet. Besides, Hugh always took especial pains to have every tool he handled well sharpened, under the plea that a good working edge saved "heaps" of muscle.

The "poles" mentioned by Arthur were really second-growth ash springing up all around the butts of several trees that had been cut down a year or so ago by the lumbermen. They grew straight up, and would possibly have been used sooner or later by any nomad hoop-pole man wandering that way in search of material to eke out his scanty winter's wages.

One after another those slender but stout saplings fell before the keen edge of the camp hatchet wielded so skillfully by the scout leader.

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When Hugh considered that he had felled enough of the stuff, he paused and began to fumble in his pockets. There was no doubt about his action this time, because he knew full well he had hurriedly thrust a bundle of stout cord somewhere about his person before starting forth, under the conviction that it was going to come in handy.

Meanwhile, Arthur, assisted by Gus, had been rubbing the limbs of poor Sam, who could not raise his weak voice loud enough to make himself heard, but by certain gestures gave them to understand that he appreciated their efforts in his behalf.

"You go and help Hugh, while I stay by Sam, and keep the circulation of his blood up!" Arthur shouted in the ear of Gus.

The latter, while a little loth to turn aside, knew that he could do more to help his brother that way than by lingering over him. Accordingly he hastened to join Hugh, who was already busily engaged in trying to fasten some of the poles, so as to make the framework upon which the real stretcher would immediately afterwards be constructed.

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Every scout is taught how to do this, for it is a very useful accomplishment to know, since there is no telling when one of their number may meet

with some accident while in the woods, necessitating his being carried, perhaps a distance of several miles, and on such an occasion a stretcher is invaluable.

Possibly, if left to himself, even Gus, although not claiming to be adept at this sort of work, with the aid of a greenhorn, might have made some sort of clumsy contrivance that would have answered the end in view. Fortunately there was now no need of his depending on himself when in the company of such a clever artisan as Hugh Hardin.

The latter had made stretchers on numerous occasions, but if asked later about it he would certainly have admitted that never in all his experience had he worked under such a serious handicap as when that storm howled about his ears, taking his very breath away.

Gus managed to make himself useful in holding the pieces that were thrust into his hands, as well as in other ways. His heart was in the work, and for a good reason. It was his own brother whose life lay in the balance. He, Hugh and Arthur might survive the night, even if compelled to remain out in the gale, with the mercury constantly sinking, but such exposure would undoubtedly be the finish of sick Sam.

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The job was really completed in a wonderfully short time, considering all the difficulties Hugh faced. He often mentally congratulated himself afterwards on that task, and Hugh ought to be a pretty fair judge of such things.

Gus, however, was laboring under such a strain that it seemed an interminable time before he knew from the actions of his comrade that Hugh considered the rude stretcher fit for service.

The next thing was to get Sam on the same. Of course, the stretcher had no legs, so that it had to be laid directly on the ground. That mattered little or nothing, however, for in all probability it would only be required for this one occasion.

"Got it ready, have you, Hugh?" was the boisterous way Arthur greeted the others when they came hurrying up with the clumsy but serviceable stretcher held between them.

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"Just as I promised, and done with a rush, too, but it's going to hold all right. How is Sam getting along?" Hugh asked, his lips close to the other's ear.

"He's recovering some from his weak spell," came the reply, as Arthur drew the scout master's head down near his lips. "But he never could walk it, never, Hugh. The sooner we get him under cover the better I'll be pleased, for I'm afraid he's in a bad way."

It was lucky for the peace of mind of Gus Merrivale that he did not overhear those last words spoken by Arthur. The sense of exultation and triumph that was filling his brotherly heart would have received a rude jolt had he suspected that Arthur, so experienced a physician, considered the case of Sam as bordering on the desperate.

They quickly placed the almost helpless young fellow on the litter. He tried the best he could to

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assist himself, but if the success of the undertaking had depended on Sam's ability to do things it would have been an utter failure.

Gus pushed forward, and somehow Hugh seemed to be able to sense what was in his mind, for he immediately jerked at Arthur's sleeve and called in his ear:

"Let Gus have the rear end of the stretcher, Arthur. He wants to feel that he's having a big share in saving a life, and it's an old story with us, so you won't miss anything."

Arthur was only too willing. He was one of those fellows who like to go about doing their work without the least bluster or boasting. Indeed, times without number Arthur Cameron had been known to do his best to hide his light under a bushel; for he took much more satisfaction from the inward consciousness that he had done his part manfully than in the thought of any reward.

When Gus realized that he was to be allowed to handle one end of the litter on which his erring brother was stretched he showed by his eagerness that his heart must be filled with gratitude toward these fine chums who were always doing things to please others.

Hugh himself took the forward end, with Arthur going ahead in order to pick out the easiest path, though truth to tell there was very little choice, so long as they were compelled to keep the creek on their right.

Manfully did Gus struggle along. If he staggered at times under the many difficulties that beset his wavering feet it was only to shut his teeth together harder than ever, and mentally take a fresh grip on himself. All that was best in the lad's nature came to the surface in that trying hour, and he rose to meet the occasion in a manner that was bound to give him great satisfaction later on, when memory again brought the thrilling episodes of that stormy night vividly before his mind.

Thus stumbling, yet always pushing onward, they gradually drew nearer the vicinity of the old lumber camp, though poor Gus feared he would never be able to hold out to the end.

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CHAPTER X.

THINGS CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.

"Whoopee!"

That was Arthur shouting at the top of his voice, and the sound thrilled Gus in a wonderful manner. He realized that Arthur would not give vent to such a cry if he did not mean to infuse them with new hope.

Staring ahead, Gus discovered a light. Yes, it must be coming from one of the small windows of the bunk-house, where possibly Billy, good old Billy, had set a candle to burn with the idea of shedding hope abroad as well as he could manage it.

Perhaps Gus realized as never before what that old song really meant when it went on to tell about the "light in the window placed as a guide to wandering feet."

At any rate, the sight gave Gus new strength and inspiration. He stumbled again and again, but would not allow himself to fall, neither could Arthur coax him to relinquish his end of the litter. Gus could be very stubborn when he wanted, and as this quality is closely allied with determination he was likely to amount to something, once he found his proper mission in the world.

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Finally they arrived before the door of the bunkhouse. Here their loud shouts must have been heard by Billy, for the door was suddenly thrown open and a bulky figure came rushing out, eager to assist in any way possible.

Two minutes later and the entire party had found shelter under the friendly roof of Mr. Merrivale's big cabin, where Billy had kept the fire going merrily all the time.

Sam was immediately placed upon several blankets close to the fire, where the genial warmth would do much to restore his fast ebbing strength.

With the closing of the stout door much of the clamor of the storm that had been beating in their ears so long was deadened, so that talking became possible again without straining their voices unduly.

Sam Merrivale lay there, white of face, and with his eyes closed. Gus stared hard at his brother, and then looked pitifully toward Arthur. The latter did not need to be asked any question in order to understand what fear was gripping the heart of Gus.

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"He'll be feeling better shortly, when the warmth of the fire begins to get in its work," he told the other.

After that Gus kept somewhat in the background, where he could see what went on and at the same time not be noticed by Sam, should the latter open his eyes and look at his rescuers.

This was the time for Billy to make his bid for recognition.

"Hugh," he went on to say, confidently buttonholing the scout master, "I went and heated up a can of mutton broth, thinking it might come in handy when you got the poor chap back here."

"Bully for you, Billy!" exclaimed the other, slapping the broad back of the speaker with unctiousness. "Just the thing to revive his energies. They always give mutton broth to invalids, because it gets in its work quicker than almost anything else going. Hurry it along in a tin cup, and don't have it steaming hot, so it'll scald his lips."

Arthur meanwhile had succeeded in getting Sam into a half reclining position. He was talking to the late tramp, and in this way trying to arouse him.

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"You're all right now, Sam," was the burden of Arthur's communication. "No danger of your being left to the storm. See what a fine fire we've got here. Billy is coming right along with some jolly stuff that will warm your insides, and do you heaps of good. Everything is lovely and the goose hangs high, Sam. There's your partner Casey, watching you, and see how glad he looks to be with us. Chances are Billy's been and fed him to the limit while we were getting you here. This way, Billy, with that broth!"

Sam smiled wanly. How could he help but feel interested when treated so like an honored guest rather than a homeless tramp?

Just then Billy came up bearing the big tin cup full of steaming broth that gave out a most appetizing smell. Sam must have been pretty near half starved, for what did he do but reach out a trembling hand, help to guide the cup to his lips, and then proceed to gulp down the contents with the avidity of a hungry dog.

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Presently the cup was empty. Billy looked at Arthur as much as to say there was more where that came from, if the "doctor" considered it wise that Sam be given a second helping.

"A little later on you can feed him the rest, Billy," he was told. "Better not go too heavy all at once, or his stomach may reject it, and he'd lose the benefit."

One thing sure, no person seemed to be taking any notice of the storm now. It could howl its worst, and turn bitter cold for that matter; so long as they had a stout roof over their heads, plenty of food to eat, and the ability to dash out, ax in hand, to cut a fresh supply of fuel, what did it matter?

The warm and strengthening mutton broth had already affected Sam wonderfully, as could be seen in the way he began to look around, and take notice of things. He even smiled at Casey, which fact appeared to give that individual more or less satisfaction, for he grinned broadly and nodded back, muttering something to the effect that the two of them had good cause to be grateful for the favors that had come to them when things looked blackest.

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It was evident that Sam was puzzled. Hugh could see his eyes, no longer dim with weakness and lack of energy, roving around. First he would stare at bulky Billy, who beamed down upon him good-naturedly; then he would turn his gaze on Hugh himself, and finally Arthur came in for a share of his attention. He gazed at them all long and steadily.

"I seem to be dreaming," he told Hugh, when that worthy bent down closer to him. "There's something about you all I seem to know, but when I try to place you my mind gets in a whirl again, and I think I'm seeing things like I did the time I was down with fever, and father——"

He stopped as he inadvertently said that word, which possibly had not passed his lips for a long time. Hugh saw a flash of color mount into his white cheeks as some bitter memory gripped his soul.

Wishing to change the subject as quickly as he

could, Hugh hastened to say:

"You're not dreaming after all, Sam; you ought to remember all of us here, for you used to know us some years back. I'm Hugh Hardin, this is Arthur Cameron, and the kind chap who looked after your appetite is Billy Worth!"

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Sam uttered a cry. He seemed startled, and even tried to raise himself on one arm as though to stare around him.

"Oh! the boys from Oakvale, where I used to once live!" he exclaimed, weakly. "How strange for you to be up here, just when I needed help as I never did before in all my life. What brought you up in this region? Is that a fair question, Hugh?"

He had hold of the scout master's hand, and was patting it as though the mere contact gave him fresh courage; for like many another fellow Sam had recognized in Hugh a source of new strength.

Hugh knew that Gus was hovering close behind him, fairly quivering with eagerness. He also felt that it was high time Sam understood to whom he had been so heavily indebted for the saving of his life.

"We came up here on the invitation of one of our chums who wanted us to help him find something that was lost," was the way Hugh put it.

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"Yes, there *was* a fourth scout with you, I remember now," said Sam, trying to discover the object of his solicitude, but as Gus kept behind Hugh he failed in doing this. "Where has he gone to, Hugh? I'd like to thank him, too, for all that's been done for such a worthless fellow as I."

"You'll get the chance soon, Sam, never fear," assured Hugh. "It was this chum who really saved your life, for if he hadn't thought to fetch the hatchet along with him we couldn't have made that litter, and carrying you here would have been a risky job. I'm afraid you would never have stood the trip. Then again he held one end of the stretcher every foot of the way, and wouldn't let Arthur here take hold. You owe that chum the heaviest debt of gratitude going, Sam. There's nothing you could do that would cancel your load to him."

"But tell me, why should he do all this for a poor dog like me that's down in the gutter, and almost out?" cried Sam, excitedly.

With that Hugh swung Gus around so that he faced the one upon the blankets, and at the same instant exclaimed:

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"Because he's your own brother, Sam, the little Gus you left at home when you went away after quarreling with your father! He's been sent up here through the love your mother still bears you, to try for the last time to bring you to your senses, and fetch you to your knees asking pardon. Now you know why we're in the old logging camp, Sam. Your mother learned that *you* were here; she would have come herself if she had been able; but in her place she sent a messenger in Gus."

The young fellow on the blankets stared at Gus as though he could hardly believe his ears and eyes. The bitter thoughts that had held possession of his mind all these years struggled desperately to keep possession of his soul, but the hour had come when their knell was to strike.

He thrust out and seized the eager hand of his younger brother, which he pressed to his lips. Nor was Hugh at all surprised to see him burst into tears, as though the long-pent-up emotions had suddenly swept everything before them.

“Oh! what wouldn’t I give to be able to see her again!” he cried. “No fellow ever had a better mother than she always was to me; and how basely I treated her. I’ve been sorry so many times, but in shame I didn’t dare write to her. And so it’s to my own brother Gus I owe my life, do I? Well, it was worth coming all the way from the West to learn that they do still think of me at home—some of them.”

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He would not let go of the hand he had taken. Hugh and the others were intensely interested in everything that was said, though the scout master had a little suspicion that it might not be the best thing they could do to let Sam excite himself so much in his present weakened condition.

“Oh! no danger of his feeling it,” Arthur told him when he mentioned something of his fears in this respect. “He’s buoyed up now by a new hope that’s going to do more toward bringing him around than all the cordials or broths he could take. See how the color’s come to his face, will you? And his eyes fairly sparkle. Joy seldom kills, you must know, Hugh. Sam is already beginning to get glimpses of a new life. It’s all right, and don’t stop Gus from talking all he wants to about home and mother. He knows what he was sent up here to do. It’s all for a purpose.”

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“We’d about given up hope of hearing from you again, Sam,” Gus was saying. “It must have been all of three years since you wrote that last letter in which you said you meant to try your luck up in Alaska. Day after day, and month after month, mother would watch for the mails until even her dear heart grew sick with the suspense. Why didn’t you let her hear from you once in months, Sam?”

“I was a wretch not to do it,” admitted the other, contritely; “but I had vowed I wouldn’t let any of the home folks hear from me again until I had won out, conquered my evil nature, and actually done something to show father I wasn’t the good-for-nothing he called me. So I made my way to the mines up in Alaska, and began work at the bottom. In a year I bought a piece of ground of my own, a mine that was supposed to be played out. Then later on I struck it rich, and began to hug myself in thinking how I would appear before you all a wealthy man. Then there came a claimant for my property. The court decided against me, and I lost all I had believed I owned. I fell sick after that, and it was an uphill fight; finally I gave it all up and came back to the States as poorly off as I started.”

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Sam looked very dejected when he reached this point in his brief story. Gus, however, seemed to

see the circumstance in a different light.

"But you did stick at it as long as any fellow could, you see, Sam," he hurriedly observed, with a touch of pride in his voice. "That shows you've got it in you to do the right thing when you get another chance. Mother wants to see you. She has something to give you, Sam, money that will start you going in some business, away from Oakvale. She has saved it dollar by dollar, doing without things she had expected to buy for herself. Oh! you ought to buckle down and make a man of yourself for her sake, Sam—our mother!"

"I can, and I will, Gus," said the other, firmly. "I told you I'd managed to throw off my bad habits, and there's no danger of them ever getting the better of me again. If I have just one more chance to make good you'll see how I can lie awake nights trying to get there. I'd give ten years of my life just to prove to father that I had it in me to do things worth while."

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Gus looked around toward the others. His eyes were moist, and it was evident that the boy was laboring under a tremendous strain. Still, through it all he could give Hugh a happy smile.

"Tell him what he needs to do to get there, Hugh," he pleaded. "You can do it better than any one else I know. Things seem to be working out right, don't they, Hugh, when just a little while ago it looked so terribly gloomy?"

"They're going to get just where you and your mother have been hoping would be the case, Gus," said Hugh. "And I must say that it would spur almost any sort of a fellow on to doing his level best if he had such a loyal mother as you've got, Sam. As for telling you what's best to do, what's the use, when you know deep down in your heart there's only one way you can repay her for all her love and prayers. I firmly believe you will make good, Sam Merrivale, and if I can do anything to help out, you can count on my services. Gus is a particular chum of ours, and scouts always stand up for each other, you know."

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Sam was nearly overcome at such hearty offers of assistance.

"I'm going to get well in a hurry, don't you see?" he told them. "Why, even now I feel a thousand per cent better than I did before I skipped out of this place when Casey told me we'd have to leave as there was danger staying here. By the time you're ready to go back home I'll be fit to meet my mother and tackle anything she wants me to do so as to wipe out the shame I've brought on her."

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CHAPTER XI. GOOD NEWS.

Billy now came up bearing the big tin cup again.

"About time he had the second dose, I reckon, Doc?" he asked Arthur, and upon that worthy

nodding his head in the affirmative the good-natured cook guided the drinking vessel to the lips of the repentant boy lying there.

He drank every drop of the contents, and seemed to relish it amazingly.

"You're all so good to me, fellows!" he said, after draining the cup to the very dregs. "It's almost like getting back home again to meet Oakvale boys up here, and my own brother Gus among the lot. I guess it must have been my good angel that guided me to this place, where I knew we'd find shelter; for I thought father's loggers would be working here, and I might get a job on the sly, till I could communicate with my mother. Oh! I'll never stop being thankful it's all come out as it has."

"There's something I ought to tell you, Sam," remarked Gus, a little later, after some of the excitement had worn away, and they could manage to sit or lie around enjoying the cheery fire, and thanking their lucky stars, as Billy said, that the fates allowed them to be so comfortable when it was getting bitter cold outside with a shift of wind into the northwest.

The prodigal looked anxious upon hearing his brother say that.

"Nothing bad, I hope, Gus?" he observed.

"You must settle that with yourself," the other replied, "after you've heard what I say. But, Sam, I've got some reason to believe father is beginning to feel sorry for what he did years ago. You know he's got an iron will, and even mother is afraid to stir him up. But just the other day something happened that made me think he's breaking down."

"Tell me, Gus, please tell me!" urged Sam, eagerly.

"Why, it happened this way, you see," resumed the other, quickly. "I was passing the door of the library and chanced to look in just in time to see father put something down in the corner of the big secretary that stands there, you remember, Sam. He started to blow his nose, too, and turned his back on me; but I give you my word, Sam, when I saw him a few minutes later his eyes were red!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Sam, with his face as tense as it could well be.

"That made me mighty curious, I tell you," Gus went on to say, "and when I had a half-decent chance I just slipped into the library and looked to see what it was father had been staring at when I startled him. Sam, would you believe it, I found that little picture of *you* there, that mother had in a gilt frame, and kept on the parlor mantel up to the time you went away!"

Sam gave a low bubbling cry. He was evidently greatly shaken by this intelligence, the very first news he had received to show that, after all, the suffering had not fallen to himself and his mother alone.

"So that's one reason why mother, when she heard that you had been seen here, and were sick, sent me up to find you, because we both

believe father is weakening. He isn't the same man he used to be, Sam. His shoulders are bowed these days, and he hasn't much to say to anybody. He was always a proud man, you remember, and I guess he hates to admit that he was harsh and unforgiving when he sent you away from home; but I do honestly believe, Sam, he's near the turning point now. A little thing would make him break down."

Hugh could not help feeling pleased. Indeed, looking backward to many things that had happened in his past he could not think of any that gave him greater reason for thankfulness than the fact of his agreeing to accompany Gus on what to some might have seemed like a wild-goose errand into these woods.

"We expect to stay up here a few days, you see, Sam," he explained, as they sat there and talked of many things that interested them all. "By the time we're ready to fold up our blankets and start in the big seven-passenger car back home, you'll be fit to travel. By then you can have made your plans, just what you expect to do, though the chief thing, I expect, will be to meet that good mother of yours, and fill her brave heart with new hope."

"I tell you, Hugh, and the rest of you good fellows," said Sam, "the minutes are going to drag like lead to me till the time comes when I can feel her arms about my neck again. Oh! none of you can ever understand what it means to a fellow to know that thousands of miles, yes, and something worse than that even, stands between him and his mother. How many nights I've dreamed I saw her, only to wake up and realize the terrible truth! A stronger hand than my own has guided me here, I honestly and truly believe."

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"Oh! I nearly forgot something else I meant to tell you, Sam!" exclaimed Gus just then, "not that it's a matter of any particular importance, you see, but then, Mr. Jones, the post master, called me into his office to show it to me, and ask if I knew whether you expected to be back home soon. You see, he knows a little about what happened years ago, though few people in Oakvale do."

"Why, what did he have to show you that was for me?" asked Sam, apparently puzzled to understand it all.

"It was a letter that had come by registered mail," explained Gus, smiling fondly at his brother.

"For me, do you mean?" demanded the other.

"Yes, and from Alaska, too," he was told. "I already knew that you had been seen near the camp up here, but I didn't want to tell Mr. Jones that. So I just said it was possible you might be dropping in to sign for that letter yourself before a great while, if so, would he hold it for you, which he said he would, and gave me to understand he meant to keep it quiet."

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"A letter registered, and from Alaska," Sam went on to say as though to himself. "That's a queer thing. Few people up there knew that I came from Oakvale in this far Eastern State. I wonder who could have sent it?"

"Oh! as a scout," Gus proudly told him, "who has been taught the value of observing things, I made sure to notice that up in the corner there was a printed slip that read this way: 'Jenkins and Pratt, Attorneys, Nome, Alaska.' Now, may be that'll give you a clue to the senders, Sam."

"It certainly does, Gus, thanks to your scout tactics," the other quickly responded. "That was the name of the law firm I employed while fighting for my title to that mine that swamped me. I wonder what they are writing to me about. The chances are, though, they find they didn't charge me enough for their services, and this is an extra bill they want me to pay."

"Oh! perhaps they're sending you some good news, Sam!" suggested Gus, as a sudden wild hope possessed him. "It would be just like it to have things take a turn up there, and that mine come back to you again."

"No such good luck, I'm afraid," remarked Sam, shaking his head skeptically. "I've been up against hard luck all my life, you see. Everything goes crooked with a fellow who's gone and made a mess of his prospects like I did."

"But you've reached the turn of the lane, Sam, you see," ventured the other. "From now on things are going to right-about face, and be just the opposite from what they used to strike you. Once the tide of good luck sets in there's no telling what will happen. Say what you will, I'm going to hope it's that way."

They sat there and talked for a long time afterwards. Indeed all of them were so excited that it was with considerable difficulty that Hugh could coax them to consider going to bed.

Before they retired he had some of the wood that had been taken into the cabin placed conveniently so that when any one chanced to awaken during the night it would be a simple matter to step over and cast a log on the fire. There would apparently be more or less need of extra warmth in the bunk-house before dawn came, what with the storm changing its course and bringing the bitter breath of winter out of the great Northwest.

They were short in blankets, but then Hugh expected to make himself comfortable with some of the bags they had found in the place, left behind by the loggers, as well as some extra clothes he had along with him. Sam had been given Hugh's covering, and Gus would have forced the scout master to accept his blanket only he found himself up against a wall of adamant when he tried that sort of thing. In some matters Hugh could be very stubborn.

"This is an old story for me, Gus," the scout master had told him convincingly, as he shook his head and pushed the proffered blanket back into the other's hands. "In fact, to tell you the truth, I rather enjoy being put to the test this way, and having to hustle for bed clothes. I'll keep warm enough, never fear; and besides, we mean to have a fire all night, so there you are. Thanks just the same, but it's impossible, Gus. So stow yourself away in one of the bunks closest to the fire, and go to sleep happier than you've been this many a day."

"I guess I will, Hugh," admitted Gus, smiling at the other with eyes that sparkled as though they contained dewdrops, "because I'll be dreaming of *her*, and how glad she'll be when she knows I've succeeded in the mission she entrusted to my hands, thanks to the help of my chums."

"Yes," said the scout master, with a hand on the shoulder of Gus, "and depend on it, old fellow, before many moons pass by I'm going to see to it that your name is written on the Roll of Honor they keep at scout headquarters for all those who save human life at the risk of their own. You're entitled to wear a medal on your coat for what you've done this night, if any of us won the honor." And doubtless Gus Merrivale would sleep all the sounder that night on account of knowing that the ambition he had so long cherished above all other scout aims was in a fair way of being realized at last.

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CHAPTER XII. THANKSGIVING IN CAMP.

The last thing before crawling under his blanket, Arthur, the "seasoned weather-sharp" of the troop, had called the attention of his mates to the fact that, just as he had predicted, the wind was commencing to come out of the Northwest, so that the rain that had been blown so wildly before the gale had already, no doubt, commenced to turn into sleet.

"We're going to have the queerest Thanksgiving ever heard of in this section of the country," Arthur had said. "Mark my words if it doesn't change into a regular baby blizzard. Oakvale fellows won't want to bother much with any football this year, if I know what's what."

All night long the wind whistled and moaned, and even howled at times around the corners of the bunk-house. Inside, it was fairly cheerful, for many times did Hugh get up and renew the fire which ate up the fuel at an alarming rate, as always happens when the wind blows at a gale. Finally, when morning came, and there were heard sounds to indicate that some of the sleepers had awakened, the place felt pretty cold. That was remedied, however, after the fire had been built up so that it fairly roared.

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No sooner was Gus up than he went to where his brother lay.

"How are you feeling, Sam?" he asked, upon discovering that the other was awake.

"I hardly know yet," came the reply. "I reckon I'll be weak for a short spell, but that doctor of yours has done me heaps of good, and you can wager I'm bound to pull through all right. I've got a new lease of life, Gus, since you told me what you did about father. I'm crazy to see mother, and little baby sister Amy, too."

Gus laughed. He was feeling ever so much more light-hearted himself, now that things had turned out so well.

"You forget that nearly five years have gone past since you were home, Sam," he went on to say. "Amy isn't a baby any longer, but the prettiest little girl the sun ever shone on. Wait till you see her, that's all. She's as sweet as she is pretty, which is the best part of it all. We worship her as if she might be a fairy queen in our house."

Sam thereupon gave a half groan.

"I guess it goes without saying," he remarked, sadly, "that all the badness in the Merrivale family was concentrated in me. Oh! how bitterly I've repented some of the mean things I did in those wild days; and nearly broke my mother's heart. I've tried again and again to lay all the blame on father for being so strict; but, Gus, I know just as well as anything that I was at fault, too. But I'm going to make it all up, if I live long enough."

Breakfast was eaten amidst considerable merriment. Everybody seemed to be quite cheerful, considering the fact that they were snowbound on the one great day of the fall which all true Americans celebrate at home or abroad, the Thanksgiving handed down from the Pilgrim Fathers.

"There's something that's bothering me," remarked Billy, "and that's *grub!*"

"What about it?" demanded Arthur. "So far as I can see it's just prime, and as good as anything we ever packed into camp. Please put a couple of pieces of that bacon on my pannikin, will you, Hugh? It certainly goes to the spot. I never smell bacon or ham cooking at home but what my mind goes out to camp life. They seem, as Billy here would say, intimately connected."

"Oh! the quality is gilt-edged," the fat scout hastened to admit. "It's the quantity that's bothering me. Look what a hole we've made already in our stack, will you? Where will we be three days from now, tell me?"

Hugh laughed at hearing this complaint, because it was not the first time by any means that he had listened to Billy holding forth along similar lines.

"Oh! no use borrowing trouble, Billy," he said, consolingly. "Don't cross a bridge before you come to it, as lots of people do. There are several remedies to your disease. If necessary we can cut our outing short and speed back home in the big auto. Then again, if we conclude to stay, a couple of us can scour the country around this section, and visit several farm houses, where money will talk, and buy all the eggs and chickens we want. It's all right, Billy, make your mind up to that."

As the morning advanced none of them cared to stay outdoors more than was absolutely necessary, so keen was the wind. One by one they took turns wielding the camp ax, and bringing in stacks of wood.

Billy, remembering the day, laid out quite an extensive menu for Thanksgiving dinner, nor did he have any trouble about finding plenty of recruits ready to assist in peeling potatoes and doing the other chores.

"I did hope," he announced, when asking their opinion of his intended bill of fare, "that somebody'd be smart enough to bag a plump gobbler. It would have been a splendid thing to grace the head of the table. But let's be thankful we've got what might be called the poor man's turkey—pork. That half ham is going to take the place of the National bird for this once. First time, though, since I was knee-high to a duck that I haven't eaten real turkey on Thanksgiving."

"There must always be a first time, Billy," was Arthur's consoling remark.

They put in most of the morning getting ready for the dinner. Billy fairly outdid all his previous efforts along the line of preparing a grand feast. He had looked ahead when laying in his stock of edibles, as was apparent when the meal finally was placed on the table.

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The bill of fare Billy had written out and placed beside every tin pannikin was as follows:

Tomato soup,
Celery,
Tuna fish, à la Camp Merrivale,
Boiled Ham (home smoked),
Potatoes mashed ("Irish"),
Yams, baked camp-style,
Yellow turnips,
Bread and butter,
Pumpkin pie,
Cheese, crackers and coffee.

Who cared because there was no table cloth, and that the dishes were of tin or granite or aluminum? What did it matter if the supply was so limited that often during the meal some one had to scurry over and do a little dishwashing before he could take the next course?

The ham was unbeatable, the fish just prime, the vegetables as "good as mother herself could have prepared them," so they all admitted, and even the pumpkin pies that dear old Billy had smuggled into camp so carefully without any of the others knowing about it, came through in pretty good shape. The fact that they were broken a little mattered nothing to those boys who ate and ate until they could only look helplessly at one another, and wonder how under the sun they could ever dream of wanting anything more for forty-eight hours.

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Perhaps that was one of the biggest events in Casey's whole life. It must have been many a year since he had filled himself with such a choice collection of good things. Possibly it brought back memories that had almost faded from the mind of the old tramp, for to be sure he had once been a boy, and lived upon a farm. During the remainder of that whole day Casey was unusually quiet. When Sam asked him if he felt ill he shook his head and grinned, and simply said he was resurrecting dead recollections that he had never thought would rise again to haunt him.

Hugh only hoped they might continue to pester the old chap until finally he decided to give up this wandering life, and go back to see if any of his own kindred were still alive.

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Casey did not intend going to town with them.

They could guess why, for he as much as admitted that in times past he had been guilty of appropriating certain things to which he had no legal claim; and there was always a haunting fear in the mind of the old tramp that he was going to be jailed for these petty acts.

Sam was improving rapidly. Indeed, the fact was, it would have been most singular if such had not proved to be the case—with those merry fellows in his company to keep him laughing much of the time, so that his troubles fell from him very much as water does from a duck's back.

Occasionally during that day he and Gus and Hugh talked matters over. Something in the shape of a plan of campaign was arranged, whereby Sam might in good time meet his devoted mother, and something be done looking toward a reconciliation with the stern father. So Sam declared, when night again drew near, that he believed he was far along the road to full recovery.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAM REDEEMS HIMSELF GLORIOUSLY.

The rest of their stay in the lumber camp passed away without any further remarkable occurrence. It seemed as though after that big blow the weather had cleared for a long spell, although remaining quite cold. Hugh took the gun and did a little hunting just to please the insistent Billy, who was still clamorous for a turkey, and would not be happy until they had at least done their part toward procuring one.

Sure enough Hugh did succeed in bagging a gobbler, and as it turned out to be a young and tender bird they did enjoy a turkey dinner after all. Better late than never, as Billy told them, after he had succeeded in roasting the turkey by means of a rude spit before the fire, which had to be turned from time to time until Billy's arms ached and his round face rivalled the setting sun in color.

But it was a feast none of them would ever forget, and that repaid all those who had had a share in getting it up, as well as "putting it down."

The morning finally came when they had planned to return to town. It was Tuesday, and while another holiday still remained before school would convene, Hugh thought it might be as well they got home, as there would be certain things needing attention, as well as a meeting of the scouts scheduled for that night.

Casey was mighty sorry to see the boys making preparations for departure. That period would always remain as one of the happy times in the life of the old tramp. He privately informed Hugh, to whom he had taken a great fancy, that he was almost persuaded to look up his people, and see if he could spend his last days in a civilized way; and it can be put down as certain

that Hugh applauded his determination and urged him not to change his mind.

They left all their provisions with Casey, though the supply was not very bountiful. When the car started off, with the scouts cheering like mad, Sam with the rest, Casey stood there in the doorway waving his greasy old hat after them, and apparently quite moved.

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As we will have no further occasion to mention him again, it may be said here, in passing, that several months afterwards Hugh did actually receive a letter from the man, telling him that he had now reformed, was living with his married daughter, who had forgiven him freely, and that he still saw a chance to make an honest living at his old trade of a cooper; so that it seemed as though another besides Sam had profited by the Thanksgiving outing taken by Hugh and his chums up to the deserted lumber camp of the Merrivales.

Hugh had arranged to take Sam home with him. He felt sure that after his mother learned the whole story she would be only too well pleased to have a hand in bringing about a reconciliation between the erring and repentant boy and his stern father.

Gus had explained that he meant to tell his mother everything; and in some way an arrangement would be made whereby Mrs. Merrivale might call at Hugh's house to see the boy who had been in her mind and heart these five long years.

All of the boys were feeling in fine spirits. They believed they had enjoyed the trip immensely, and felt many times repaid for what little trouble they had gone to. Indeed, Hugh, Arthur and Billy told Gus how glad they were he had thought to ask them to accompany him on his singular mission.

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"We've had a bully good time!" Billy had said, and his eyes glistened as if fond memories of that groaning Thanksgiving table still haunted him.

"I ought to be satisfied," asserted Arthur, "since my two patients came out with flying colors. Sam here declares he hasn't felt so well for a long time."

"Which is only the truth," the person referred to declared vehemently. "I'm just as hearty as ever, and I will say that Arthur here is the best doctor I've run across in all my wanderings."

"Perhaps the only one in the bargain," laughed Arthur, jokingly. "Makes me think of the little fellow who came home from school one day and boastingly said to his daddy: 'I'm next to the head of my class now, father!' And after he had been complimented on his smartness, and I guess received some pennies in the bargain, the father happened to think to ask him how many there were in his class, when he said: 'Oh! me and a wee lassie.' But I'm head, foot and the whole shooting match."

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The old car broke down a few times on the way home, necessitating considerable repairing on the part of Gus, assisted by those of his mates who knew something about mending a tire or

pottering with balky machinery.

Instead of arriving at Oakvale by noon they were many miles away when the sun drew near the zenith, a fact that began to give poor Billy, always in fear of starving to death, cause for uneasiness.

It happened, however, that there was a friendly haven close by in the shape of a prosperous farmer's home, and upon their applying for "first aid to the injured" they were immediately asked to come back in an hour and have dinner with the family, hired man and all.

So as Billy admitted, "Heaven tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," and they did not have to go hungry the rest of the day. Things would have to be pretty serious for a party of lively lads like those scouts, with money in their pockets, to want for a meal when in a semi-civilized section of country.

It was at evening that they finally came to the home town. In fact, the lights had already commenced to spring up, and Billy could catch the odor of many suppers cooking as soon as they began to pass houses on the outskirts, a fact he hastened to announce to his comrades after his usual way.

Sam and Hugh were first of all let out at the latter's cottage home, and the brothers parted with a hearty shake of the hand. Gus was as happy a boy as could well be found when he alighted in his own yard after dropping the other fellows at their respective homes. He only feared he might arouse the suspicions of his father by an unusual flow of spirits. He also knew that an anxious mother was waiting up there behind those curtains in her bedroom to hear the report he was bringing back with him.

Just as Hugh had anticipated, his mother, while surprised at seeing Sam (for she was one of the few who knew the real reason for his absence from home), only too gladly agreed to do everything possible for the young fellow. Her heart went out to that other mother who had so long mourned for her boy, not knowing whether he might be living or dead.

"You shall stay with us until it is all settled, Sam," she told him, looking straight into his eyes as though able to read his firm resolution there. "Anything we can do to help bring about a happy ending, you may be sure will be freely done. No one need know you are here, and you have changed so much that you could walk about the town without a soul recognizing you."

She did even more than this, for Sam's clothes were anything but nice after the wandering life he had led. Gus had given Hugh some money which his mother placed in his keeping for the purpose of buying Sam a new outfit, if, indeed, it turned out that the sick hobo up at the lumber camp were the missing one.

So Mrs. Hardin took Hugh out after supper, as he was about the same build as Sam. Some of the shops kept open up to nine o'clock these evenings, since there was a feeling in the air that Christmas was coming before a great while, and night shoppers had begun to be numerous.

It was an easy matter for them to select such clothes as they considered Sam should have, outfitting him completely from hat to shoes, as well as undergarments calculated to withstand the winter cold, socks, handkerchiefs, shirts, collars, gloves and even neckties.

After they came back home they sat up quite late, for Sam wanted to tell something of his life during the years he had been gone. Hugh's gentle mother did not wish to hear about his temptations, and the many times he fell, but encouraged him to speak of his resolution to make a man of himself, when up there in the mines of Alaska.

So Sam told all about his sudden rise to fortune, his high hopes of coming back wealthy, when his folks would be proud of him, and then the dismal drop when it was apparently proven that, after all, his title to the valuable mining property that had promised so much was founded on a "fluke," so that he had to hand it over to another claimant.

"And it galls me," he told them bitterly, "to think that after almost reaching the top of my ambition I'm come back home only a forlorn tramp, just because I couldn't stay away from mother any longer. It's broken my pride down, that's one thing, and I'm ready to eat humble pie."

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"And, Sam," Mrs. Hardin told him, "perhaps that's why it was ordained by a Higher Power than your will that things should happen in this way. You were coming home to show your father that you had succeeded. You would have, perhaps, put on airs in your pride of having accomplished something big. Now you have had a lesson, and if a reconciliation does take place, both you and your father will meet on the common ground of humility. I am glad it's happened as it has, Sam; and some day you will see the reason for my saying this. I am a mother, and I know what is in the heart of the one who has never ceased to love you through good and evil report."

So Sam Merrivale took a warm bath that night, and for the first time in years found himself between clean sheets, in the guest chamber of the Hardins. It must have been a revelation to the reformed tramp, and strengthened his resolution to hereafter lead a life above reproach. Like a good many other young fellows, Sam had had to learn his lesson through bitterness of spirit. He told himself scores of times that nothing could ever tempt him to go back to that life of wandering and wretchedness, even though his father continued to hold out against him. Gus had confided to his brother what their mother meant to do if her first plan failed; and that there was an uncle in a city who would take him in and give him a place in his store.

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Perhaps after Sam finally got to sleep he had happy dreams. Certain it was that when Mrs. Hardin came into the dining-room on the next morning from her duties of superintending the preparations for breakfast she could hardly believe her eyes when she saw the fine looking young fellow with a touch of red in his hollow cheeks, and a flash of conscious assurance in his eyes, who greeted her by kissing her on the

cheek in a most respectful fashion.

It had been planned that, circumstances permitting, Mrs. Merrivale would call that afternoon to meet Sam. Meanwhile, the young fellow, feeling more or less curiosity to see what changes had taken place in the old home town since his leaving five years back, strolled forth for a walk.

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"No danger of anybody guessing who I am," he had laughingly told Hugh's mother, "because I've changed a whole lot, and look ten years older. The life I've led has been a hard one. So I'll just walk about, and perhaps take a look at home from a safe distance."

And Mrs. Hardin did not dissuade him, because she knew only too well that the boy's heart was hungering for a view of his mother. A glimpse of her would do him good.

It chanced that Hugh had gone over to Billy's house on some errand. Here he found both Arthur and Billy, who had dropped in to talk over their recent outing and wipe out certain indebtedness on their part with regard to expenses incurred on the trip.

After this had been all settled up Billy made a proposition.

"I've got an errand up the road, fellows," was what he said. "Why not keep me company, and on the way back we'll see if the ice is strong enough on Danforth's pond for skating. I know some of you are fairly wild to get going on runners again, and I wouldn't mind it myself, since I've found my arnica bottle, and got the same handy."

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So it came about that, having finished the errand Billy had mentioned, the four chums left the main road, and struck into another that ran close by the big pond.

"I can see some children playing on the ice," remarked Billy, presently. "It strikes me that's pretty dangerous business when the water was so warm before the recent cold snap that the ice can't be very thick as yet. Listen! you can hear it crack whenever they start to run."

"Oh! new ice always does that, you must remember, Billy," said Hugh. "Like you, I don't think it's exactly safe for children to be playing here, and not an older fellow around to do anything if one of the kiddies did break in. We'd better hustle along and warn them to get off the ice until it's been tested."

"Oh, look!" cried Billy. "There's one little girl starting out as if she had been dared by her companions. It's that sister of Gus Merrivale, too, the prettiest child in Oakvale, everybody says. Get a move on, boys! We ought to be handy in case anything did happen, which I hope won't—oh! my stars! she's fallen in, boys!"

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Hugh was already starting to run at top speed, with the others at his heels. Unfortunately, they were still at some distance from the pond where the child could be seen struggling in the water, and despite their good intentions, possibly the scouts might have arrived too late to be of any real help.

But Hugh's heart beat high with hope, for he had seen a figure swiftly rushing over the thin ice, the very rapidity of his passage preventing his breaking in before he arrived near the hole. Hugh had also recognized the suit of clothes worn by this person as the one he and his mother had purchased on the night before!

Yes, it was Sam Merrivale, who, on walking around to see the well-remembered old pond, had arrived to be just in time to rush to the rescue of his own little sister.

They saw him go crashing in as the thin ice gave way under his weight, but that cry of joy welling from Hugh's lips told that Sam had attained his object.

"He's got her all right, boys!" he gasped, as he still ran like wildfire toward the spot, for he knew very well there would have to be some further help for Sam if the young fellow was to be saved from breaking the ice all the way to the shore of the pond, holding his burden above the water.

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Hugh knew just how to go about it. He had already noticed an old boat close by, and with the help of his chums he pushed this ahead of him. Billy had been ordered to stay ashore because his weight would be sure to cause trouble; besides, three of them ought to be enough to propel that boat along in order to reach Sam and Amy.

The thin ice crackled and swayed, but as the weight was now distributed over a greater surface it did not give way immediately. When the crash did come the boys had poles with which to push, and in this way, after scrambling into the boat, soon reached the spot where Sam was treading water valiantly, hugging the precious form of little Amy, whom perhaps he had recognized, to his breast.

They soon had the child safe, and Sam told them to push to the shore, as he could hang on behind. Hugh, though, made sure to keep a firm grip on the swimmer, because he realized that the water was very cold, and also remembered that Sam had only lately been quite sick and weak.

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Making desperate efforts, the boys managed to gain the shore at last, where the group of crying children had gathered to meet them, also Billy. Hugh for the first time noticed that a big touring car had swung along the road and stopped. He felt a thrill upon recognizing the three who were now springing from the automobile, for one of them was Gus Merrivale, yes, and the man and woman coming back of him as fast as they could run were his parents.

Surely a strange Fate had interposed to bring about such a situation. No fellow could ever have dreamed of planning so happy an ending to all the troubles that had beset the Merrivale family.

The mother had already recognized the child as her own darling, and she snatched little Amy from the arms of her dripping rescuer. Hugh and the others stood there riveted to the spot, and waiting for what was going to happen next, for Gus was tugging at his mother's dress, and

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saying something, though so excited he could hardly speak intelligently.

Then they saw Mrs. Merrivale turn and stare into the face of the young man to whom she owed her darling's life. She hastily handed Amy over to her husband, and threw her arms around the neck of Sam, regardless of his soaking condition, while they could all hear her joyous cries:

"It's our boy Sam, don't you see, Nelson; oh! today he has wiped out all the bitter past, please Heaven. My boy! My boy!"

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CHAPTER XIV. THE HONOR MEDALS.

Things moved swiftly after that, and presently Hugh felt ready to fairly hug himself when he saw that Mr. Merrivale had handed back the little girl to her mother and was wringing Sam's hand heartily.

The stern man was very much overcome, just as might be expected. He had not known whether his erring boy were dead or yet in the land of the living, and to have Sam thus suddenly bob up, and prove to be a hero, staggered Mr. Merrivale greatly.

Hugh knew it was all right when he heard the gentleman say earnestly:

"Both of us were in the wrong, my boy. I confess it to you now. But from this time on we will begin all over again. Your old room is waiting for you, Sam. Believe me, I shall be well pleased to see you in your accustomed place at table once more."

Which words told the observing scout master that while most people believed Mr. Merrivale to be a stern and proud man, he may have been suffering even more than his own wife realized.

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So they hurried to the car, where the drenched ones were bundled up in all the robes that were handy, after which Gus headed for home at a fast clip. Hugh felt a little anxious about Sam, remembering that the young fellow had been seriously sick lately; but for all that he and his chums were fairly bubbling over with joy as they made for town again.

Billy seemed to be tremendously tickled at the way things had turned out. Every now and then he would nudge Hugh in the ribs, to say something like this:

"Will you oblige me, partner? Then give me a good hard pinch please, right here in the thigh where it's going to do the most good. Ouch! but that did sting though; and say, I guess I'm awake after all. You see I had begun to be afraid I was asleep and dreaming all these fine things. But Sam did jump in and save the little girl all right, didn't he? And that was decent of his dad to tell him the old score had been wiped out as if it had never been. Hugh, if I wasn't in this car along with all the rest crowded together I'd feel like

letting out a big whoop, I'm that chock full of enthusiasm."

Thereupon the scout master begged him to restrain his bubbling spirits until another and more propitious time.

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"We're going to strike the outskirts of the town right away, Billy," was what he told the scout chum, "and if you started to cheering it might be some folks might think you had gone looney. You wouldn't want a certain pretty girl I could name to hear such a report of you, I'm sure."

That sort of counsel caused Billy Worth to change his mind. Nevertheless the whole party looked so excited, and what with the two boys being so bundled up in fur wraps, all sorts of wonderful stories soon drifted like magic around town. In good time, of course, everybody would learn what a strange thing had happened; and how Sam Merrivale, the runaway son, had come back as poor as Job's turkey, yet able to show himself a hero by risking his own life to save that of his precious little sister.

Sam did not seem to feel any ill effects from his cold immersion in the icy waters of the pond. Perhaps his heart was beating so happily that it kept away the germs of pneumonia and like ills; at any rate he dropped in that afternoon to thank Mrs. Hardin most heartily for all she and her boy had done.

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"Everything is working just fine over at our house," was the report Sam brought with him. "Father has made me tell him everything I've done, and I didn't spare myself one whit either. And would you believe it, he says he's glad I lost that mine, because if I'd come home feeling that I'd done something *great*, the chances are we never would have come to understand each other as we do now. I expect to go into business a little later, after I've picked up some more flesh; and I give you my solemn word, Mrs. Hardin, I'm going to make good, if grim determination can do it."

"I believe you will succeed, Sam," she told him simply, "because you've had a lesson that is going to last you the rest of your life. I'm pleased also to know Hugh had a hand in helping to bring about this happy ending of all your trouble. Just because I have been so blessed in my own little family is no reason I cannot sympathize with others who have had deep troubles. And no one will be prouder of the success you expect to win than your mother, Sam."

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Thus it appeared that everything had come out splendidly, "just like the ending of a fairy story," as Billy said.

It was on the following day that Hugh, meeting Gus and his brother on the street while on the way home from school early in the afternoon, happened to think of something.

"I wonder now, Gus," he remarked, "if in all this excitement you've chanced to remember that registered letter Mr. Jones told you about?"

"Well, I'm glad you spoke of it, Hugh," Gus hastened to reply, "because to tell you the honest truth so much has been going on every

minute at our house that for one I forgot all about that letter. So did Sam here, because he's never mentioned it. Let's all walk over to the post office now, and he can get his delayed mail."

"Oh! I'm not overcurious about it," remarked Sam. "It's probably only a few lines from my lawyers up in Nome telling how they neglected to charge me for some item, and asking me to remit. Well, they'll have to wait until I get to earning some money, because just now I've only got the five dollars mother gave me."

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When the letter was produced Sam was rather surprised at its size. His hands, too, trembled a little as he started to carefully open the envelope; but then his recent weakness might explain that.

Hugh and Gus watched him as he started to read. Suddenly Sam gave vent to a whoop that must have rather astonished some of those good people of Oakvale who chanced to be in the post office just then.

"Bully! Well, what do you think of that?" he exclaimed, his old Western cowboy instincts causing him to snatch off his felt hat and slap it against his leg with a vim.

"What is it, Sam; tell us, please?" begged the now equally excited Gus.

"Great news, Gus, glorious news, I tell you!" cried the other, his face beaming with joy. "My lawyers write that it has been learned that the mine belongs to me all right. Seems that there was foul work done, and the fellow has confessed his share in the game. They say the court has opened up the case again, and reversed its former decision on the strength of the new evidence, so that my claim holds good. And there is a big company that intends to make me a splendid offer for my property, so that I may not have to go back there."

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Such hand-shaking as followed, and then a rush was made for the Merrivale home to tell the wonderful news. Hugh could see that both parents were well pleased with the bright future that loomed up for Sam. He also understood just what the tender mother-heart meant when Mrs. Merrivale, looking at her husband, nodded her head wisely and said:

"Well, it's safe enough for this to come *now*, because everything is working together for good, please Heaven!"

And Hugh knew she was thankful that Sam had for a time believed himself to be wretchedly poor, and ready to come back home to once more look upon the faces of those who, in years gone by, had loved him as a child. Had it been otherwise, Sam might never have truly repented, and found the peace of mind that he now enjoyed.

Later on Gus was one day greatly surprised when Hugh came over and showed him a wonderful medal with his name inscribed on it. It was the "badge of courage" that a wise committee in the headquarters of the Boy Scouts of America sees fit to bestow upon each and every member of the organization who at peril to

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his own life succeeds in saving that of some one else, whether a comrade of the khaki or even a stranger.

Gus, as has been mentioned before, had long envied some of his chums who wore one of the bronze, silver or gold medals that distinguished them above their mates; and it had been the height of his ambition to some day have a chance to win such a proud trophy for his very own. Now he found his name inscribed on a gleaming silver medal that placed him on the same Roll of Honor with Hugh and Arthur.

Billy Worth, too, had been remembered in a similar manner, and the other two might have been had they not already possessed the highest mark of esteem that it was in the province of the Boy Scout Court of Honor to bestow.

Hugh would often look back with considerable satisfaction to the little excursion undertaken by himself and several comrades, at the suggestion of Gus Merrivale. They had certainly enjoyed their Thanksgiving outing up in the timber belt, and memories of that night of the great storm would never leave them.

Then again, fortune had allowed them to be of considerable assistance to both Casey the tramp, and Sam Merrivale, so that they could always believe they had succeeded in all they planned when agreeing to accompany Gus on his then mysterious errand.

But there were other things beginning to occupy a prominent place in the ever restless mind of the young assistant scout master. What some of these new duties and ambitions were will be told in the pages of the next story, under the title of "The Boy Scouts for Home Protection," and we certainly hope that all who have enjoyed reading about the camp in the lumber wilderness will make sure to secure a copy of the new volume, where Hugh and some of his chums figure very prominently in scout activities.

THE END.

Footnotes

[\[1\]](#)See "The Boy Scouts as Forest Fire Fighters."

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