WESTY MARTIN IN THE YELLOWSTONE

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WESTY MARTIN IN THE YELLOWSTONE

HOW CHEERING IT WAS—LIKE A FRIEND FROM HOME.

WESTY MARTIN IN THE YELLOWSTONE

BY
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Author of
THE TOM SLADE BOOKS
THE ROY BLAKELEY BOOKS
THE PEE-WEE HARRIS BOOKS

ILLUSTRATED

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WHOSE MEMBERS HAVE SHOWN THEIR VITAL INTEREST
IN THE FUTURE CITIZENSHIP OF OUR COUNTRY BY
THEIR SPLENDID WORK AMONG THE BOYS OF AMERICA

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WESTY MARTIN IN THE YELLOWSTONE

CHAPTER I
MR. WILDE AND THE THREE SCOUTS

When Westy Martin and his two companions, Warde Hollister and Ed Carlyle, were on their long journey to the Yellowstone National Park, they derived much amusement from talking with a man whose acquaintance they made on the train.

This entertaining and rather puzzling stranger caused the boys much perplexity and they tried among themselves to determine what business he was engaged in.

For a while they did not even know his name. Then they learned it was Madison C. Wilde. And because he kept a cigar tilted up in the extreme corner of his mouth and showed a propensity for "jollying" them they decided (and it was a likely sort of guess) that he was a traveling salesman.

Mr. Wilde had the time of his life laughing at the good scouts, and, moreover, he humorously belittled scouting, seeming to see it as a sort of pretty game for boys, like marbles or hide-and-seek.

He had his little laugh, and then afterward the three boys had their little laugh. And he who laughs last is said to have somewhat the advantage in laughing.

Mr. Wilde told the three scouts that Yellowstone Park was full of grizzlies. "Oh, hundreds of them," he said. "But they're not as savage as the wallerpagoes. The skehinkums are pretty wild too," he added.

"Is that so?" laughed Westy.

"You didn't happen to see any killy loo birds while you were there, did you?"

Mr. Madison C. Wilde worked his cigar over to the corner of his mouth, contemplating the boys with an expression of cynical good humor. "Do they let you use popguns in the Boy Scouts?" he asked. "Because it isn't safe to go in the woods without a popgun."

"Oh, yes," said Warde Hollister, "and we carry cap pistols too to be on the safe side. Scouts are supposed to be prepared, you know."

"Some warriors," laughed Mr. Wilde. "You'll see the real thing out here, you kids," he added seriously. "No running around and getting lost in back yards. If you get lost out here you'll come pretty near knowing you're lost."

"What could be sweeter?" Ed Carlyle asked.

The foregoing is a fair sample of the kind of banter that had passed back and forth between Mr. Wilde and the boys ever since they had struck up an

acquaintance. They had told him all about scouting, tracking, signaling and such things, and he had derived much idle entertainment in poking fun at them about their flaunted skill and resourcefulness.

"I'd like to see some boy scouts up against the real thing," he said. "I'd like to see you get really lost in the mountains out west here. You'd all starve to death, that's what would happen to you—unless you could eat that wonderful handbook manual, or whatever you call it, that you get your stunts out of."

"We eat everything," said Westy.

"Yes?" laughed Mr. Wilde. "Well, I'm pretty good at eating myself, but there's one thing I can't swallow and that's the stories I hear about scouts saving drowning people and finding kidnapped children and all that kind of stuff. You kids seem to have the newspapers hypnotized. I read about a kid that put out a forest fire and saved a lot of lives at the risk of his own life. How much do you suppose the scout people pay to get that kind of stuff into the papers?"

"Oh, vast sums," said Warde.

Mr. Wilde contemplated the three of them where they sat crowded on the Pullman seat opposite him. There was great amusement twinkling in his eyes, but approval too. He did not take them too seriously as scouts, *real scouts*, but just the same he liked them immensely.

"I bet you've been to the Yellowstone a lot of times," said Ed Carlyle.

"Oh, a few," said Mr. Wilde. "I've been up in woods off the trails where little boys don't go—without their nurse girls."

"I've heard there are bandits in the park," said Westy.

"Millions of them," said Mr. Wilde. "But don't be afraid, they don't hang out at the hotels where you'll be."

"Is it true there are train robbers out this way?" Westy asked.

"Getting scared? Why, I thought boy scouts could handle train robbers."

"We can't even handle you," Warde said.

CHAPTER II
MR. WILDE HOLDS FORTH

Indeed the three boys seemed on the point of giving Mr. Wilde up for a hopeless case.

"Why? Do you want to go hunting train robbers?" the exasperating stranger asked.

"Well," said Westy, rather disgusted, "we wouldn't be the first boy scouts to help the authorities. Some boy scouts in Philadelphia helped catch a highway robber."

This seemed greatly to amuse Mr. Wilde. He screwed his cigar over from one corner of his mouth to the other and looked at the boys good-naturedly, but seriously.

"Well, I'll tell you just how it is," he said. "There are really two Yellowstone Parks. There's the Yellowstone Park where you go, and there's the Yellowstone Park where I go. There's the tame Yellowstone Park and the wild Yellowstone Park.

"The park is full of grizzlies and rough characters of the wild and fuzzy West, but they don't patronize the sightseeing autos. They're kind of modest and diffident and they stay back in the mountains where you won't see them. You know train robbers as a rule are sort of bashful. You kids are just going to see the park, and you'll have your hands full, too. You'll sit in a nice comfortable automobile and the man will tell you what to look at and you'll see geysers and things and canyons and a lot of odds and ends and you'll have the time of your lives. There's a picture shop between Norris and the Canyon; you drop in there and see if you can get a post card showing Pelican Cone. That'll give you an idea of where I'll be. You can think of me up in the wilderness while you're listening to the concert in the Old Faithful Inn. That's where they have the big geezer in the back yard—spurts once an hour, Johnny on the spot. I suppose," he added with that shrewd, skeptical look which was beginning to tell on the boys, "that if you kids really saw a grizzly you wouldn't stop running till you hit New York. I think you said scouts know how to run."

"We wouldn't stop there," said the Carlyle boy. "We'd be so scared that we'd just take a running jump across the Atlantic Ocean and land in Europe."

"What would you really do now if you met a bandit?" Mr. Wilde asked. "*Shoot him dead*, I suppose, like Deadwood Dick in the dime novels."

"We don't read dime novels," said Westy.

“But just the same,” said Warde, “it might be the worse for that bandit. Didn’t you read——”

Mr. Wilde laughed heartily.

“All right, you can laugh,” said Westy, a trifle annoyed.

Mr. Wilde stuck his feet up between Warde and Westy, who sat in the seat facing him, and put his arm on the farther shoulder of Eddie Carlyle, who sat beside him. Then he worked the unlighted cigar across his mouth and tilted it at an angle which somehow seemed to bespeak a good-natured contempt of Boy Scouts.

“Just between ourselves,” said he, “who takes care of the publicity stuff for the Boy Scouts anyway? I read about one kid who found a German wireless station during the war——”

“That was true,” snapped Warde, stung into some show of real anger by this flippant slander.

“I suppose you don’t know that a scout out west in Illinois——”

“You mean out *east* in Illinois,” laughed Mr. Wilde. “You’re in the wild and woolly West and you don’t even know it. I suppose if you were dropped from the train right now you’d start west for Chicago.”

The three boys laughed, for it did seem funny to think of Illinois being far east of them. They felt a bit chagrined too at the realization that after all their view of the rugged wonders they were approaching was to be enjoyed from the rather prosaic vantage point of a sightseeing auto. What would Buffalo Bill or Kit Carson have said to that?

Mr. Wilde looked out of the window and said, “We’ll hit Emigrant pretty soon if it’s still there. The cyclones out here blow the villages around so half the time the engineer don’t know where to look for them. I remember Barker’s Corners used to be right behind a big tree in Montana and it got blown away and they found it two years afterward in Arizona.”

CHAPTER III
THE KNOCKOUT BLOW

It is said that constant dripping wears away a stone. At first the boys held their own good-humoredly against Mr. Wilde's banter. He seemed to be only poking fun at them and they took his talk in the spirit in which it was meant. He seemed to think they were a pretty nice sort of boys, but he did not take scouting very seriously.

Now Westy was a sensitive boy and these continual allusions to the childish character of boy scouting got on his nerves. Then suddenly came the big shock, and this proved a knockout blow for poor Westy.

It developed in the course of conversation that Mr. Madison C. Wilde was engaged in a most thrilling kind of business. In the most casual sort of way he informed these boys that he was connected with the movies. Not only that, but his business connected itself with nothing less than the interesting work of photographing wild animals in their natural haunts for representation upon the screen. He was none other than the adventurous field manager of educational films, at which these very boys had many times gazed with rapt interest.

Nor was this all. Mr. Wilde (heartless creature that he was) casually brought forth from the depths of a pocket a mammoth wallet containing such a sum of money as is only known in the movies and, affectionately unfolding a certain paper, exhibited it to the spellbound gaze of his three young traveling acquaintances. This document was nothing less than a permit from the Commissioner of National Parks at Washington authorizing Mr. Wilde to visit the remotest sections of the great park, to stalk wild life on a truly grand scale, on a scale unknown to Boy Scouts who track rabbits and chipmunks in Boy Scout camps!

But here was the knockout blow for poor Westy. Mr. Wilde explained that waiting for him at the hotel near the Gardiner entrance of the park was a *real scout* whose services as guide and stalker had been arranged for with some difficulty. This romantic and happy creature was an Indian boy known in the Far West as *Shining Sun*. He was not, as Mr. Wilde explained, a back-yard scout. He was the genuine article. And he was going to lead Mr. Wilde and his associates into the dim, unpeopled wilderness.

And while Shining Sun, the Indian boy, was engaged in this delightfully adventurous task, Westy Martin and his two companions would be riding around on the main traveled roads on a sightseeing auto!

Was it any wonder that Westy was disgusted? Was it any wonder that in

face of these startling revelations he began to see himself as just a nice sort of boy from Bridgeboro, New Jersey? A back-yard scout?

Truly, indeed, there were two Yellowstone Parks! Truly, indeed, thought poor Westy, there were two kinds of scouts.

And he, alas, was the other kind.

CHAPTER IV
THE CHANCE COMES

Then it was that Westy Martin, thoroughly disgusted with fate and thoroughly dissatisfied with himself and boy scouting generally, arose, just as the trainman called out: "*Emigrant! Emigrant is the next stop!*" And Westy Martin, leading the way, went headlong into the adventurous field of "big scouting"—never knowing it.

The three of them sat down disconsolately on one of the steps of the rear platform of the last car while the train paused at Emigrant, a deserted hamlet almost small enough to put in one's pocket. Warde and Ed had followed Westy through the several cars, not fully sharing his mood, but obedient to him as leader. They made a doleful little trio, these fine boys who had been given a trip to the Yellowstone Park by the Rotary Club of America in recognition of a heroic good turn which each had done. Alas, that this glib stranger, Mr. Wilde, and that other unknown hero, Shining Sun, the Indian boy, should have destroyed, as it were with one fell blow, their wholesome enjoyment of scouting and their happy anticipations. Poor Westy.

I must relate for you the conversation of these three as they sat in disgruntled retirement on the rear platform of the last car nursing their envy of Shining Sun.

"I remind myself of Pee-wee Harris tracking a hop-toad," grouched Westy.

"Just the same we've had a lot of fun since we've been in the scouts," said Warde. "If we hadn't been scouts we wouldn't be here."

"We'll be looking at geysers and hot springs and things while *they're* tracking grizzlies," said Westy. "We're boy scouts all right! Gee whiz, I'd like to do something *big*."

"Just because Mr. Wilde says this and that——" Ed Carlyle began.

"Suppose he had gone to Scout headquarters in New York for a scout to help him in the mountains," said Westy. "Would he have found one? When it comes to dead serious business——"

"Look what Roosevelt said about Boy Scouts," cheered Warde. "He said they were a lot of help and that scouting is a peach of a thing, that's just what he said."

"Why didn't you tell Mr. Wilde that?" Ed asked.

"Because I didn't think of it," said Warde.

"Just because I got the tracking badge that doesn't mean I'm a professional scout like Buffalo Bill," said Ed. "We've had plenty of fun and we're going to

see the sights out in Yellowstone."

"While *they're* scouting—doing something big," grouched Westy.

"We should worry about them," said Ed.

Westy only looked straight ahead of him, his abstracted gaze fixed upon the wild, lonesome mountains. A great bird was soaring above them, and he watched it till it became a mere speck. And meanwhile the locomotive steamed at steady intervals like an impatient beast. Then, suddenly, its voice changed, there were strain and effort in its steaming.

"Guess we're going to go," said Warde, winking at Ed in silent comment on Westy's mood. "Now for the little old Yellowstone, hey, Westy, old scout?"

"Scout!" sneered Westy.

"Wake up, come out of that, you old grouch," laughed Ed. "Don't you know a scout is supposed to smile and look pleasant? Who cares about Stove Polish, or Shining Sun, or whatever his name is? I should bother my young life about Mr. Madison C. Wilde."

"If we never did anything *real* and *big* it's because there weren't any of those things for us to do," said Warde.

Westy did not answer, only arose in a rather disgruntled way and stepped off the platform. He strolled forward, as perhaps you who have followed his adventures will remember, till he reached the other end of the car. He was kicking a stone as he went. When he raised his eyes from the stone he saw that the car stood quite alone; it was on a siding, as he noticed now. The train, bearing that loquacious stranger, Mr. Madison C. Wilde, was rushing away among the mountains.

So, after all, Westy Martin had his wish (if that were really desirable) and was certainly face to face with something *real* and *big* and with a predicament rather chilling. He and his two companions, all three of them just nice boy scouts, were quite alone in the Rocky Mountains.

CHAPTER V
THE SHADOW OF MR. WILDE

Westy's first supposition was that the coupling had given way, but an inspection of this by the three boys convinced them that the dropping of this last car had been intentional. They recalled now the significant fact that it had been empty save for themselves. It was a dilapidated old car and it seemed likely that it had been left there perhaps to be used as a temporary station. They had no other surmise.

One sobering reflection dominated their minds and that was that they had been left without baggage or provisions in a wild, apparently uninhabited country, thirty odd miles from the Gardiner entrance of Yellowstone Park.

As they looked about them there was no sign of human life or habitation anywhere, no hint of man's work save the steel rails which disappeared around a bend southward, and a rough road. Even as they looked, they could see in the distance little flickers of smoke floating against a rock-ribbed mountainside.

Warde was the first to speak: "I don't believe this is Emigrant at all," he said. "I think the train just stopped to leave the car here; maybe they're going to make a station here. Anyway this is no village; it isn't even a station."

"Well, whatever it is, we're here," said Ed. "What are we going to do? That's a nice way to do, not lock the door of the car or anything."

"Maybe they'll back up," said Westy.

"They might," said Warde, "if they knew we were here, but who's going to tell the conductor?"

It seemed quite unlikely that the train would return. Even as they indulged this forlorn hope the distant flickers of smoke appeared farther and farther away against the background of the mountain. Then they could not be seen at all.

The three honor boys sat down on the lowest step of the old car platform and considered their predicament. One thing they knew, there was no other train that day. They had not a morsel of food, no camping equipment, no compass. For all that they could see they were in an uninhabited wilderness save for the savage life that lurked in the surrounding fastnesses.

"What are we going to do?" Warde asked, his voice ill concealing the concern he felt.

Ed Carlyle looked about scanning the vast panorama and shook his head.

"What would Shining Sun do?" Westy asked quietly. "All I know is we're going to Yellowstone Park. We know the railroad goes there, so we can't get

lost. Thirty miles isn't so much to hike; we can do it in two days. I wouldn't get on a train now if one came along and stopped."

"Mr. Wilde has got you started," laughed Ed.

"That's what he has," said Westy, "and I'm going to keep going till I get to the park. I'm not going to face that man again and tell him I waited for somebody to come and get me."

"How about food?" Warde asked, not altogether captivated by Westy's proposal.

"What we have to get, we get," said Westy.

"Well, I think we'll get good and tired," said Ed.

"I'm sorry I haven't got a baby carriage to wheel you in," said Westy.

"Thanks," laughed Ed, "a scout is always thoughtful."

"He has to be more than thoughtful," said Westy. "If it comes to that, if we had been thoughtful we wouldn't have come into this car at all. It's all filled up with railroad junk and it wasn't intended for passengers."

"They should have locked the door or put a sign on it," said Warde.

"Well, anyway, here we are," Westy said.

"Absolutely," said Warde, who was always inclined to take a humorous view of Westy's susceptibility. "And I'll do anything you say. I'll tell you something right now that I didn't tell you before. Ed and I agreed that we'd do whatever you wanted to do on this trip; we said we'd follow you and let you be the leader. So now's our chance. We agreed that you did the big stunt and we voted that we'd just sort of let you lead. I don't know what Shining Sun would do, but that's what we agreed to do. So it's up to you, Westy, old boy. You're the boss and we'll even admit that we're not scouts if you say so. How about that, Ed?"

"That's me," said Ed.

"We're just dubs if you say so," Warde concluded.

The three sat in a row on the lowest step of the deserted car, and for a few moments no one spoke. Looking northward they could see the tracks in a bee-line until the two rails seemed to come to a point in the direction whence the train had come. Far back in that direction, thirty miles or more, lay Livingston where they had breakfasted. There had been no stop between this spot and Livingston, though they had whizzed past an apparently deserted little way station named Pray.

Southward the tracks disappeared in their skirting course around a mountain. The road went in that direction too, but they could not follow it far with their eyes. It was a narrow, ill-kept dirt road and was certainly not a highway. The country was very still and lonesome. They had not realized this in the rushing, rattling train. But they realized it now as they sat, a forlorn little group, on the step and looked about them.

To Westy, always thoughtful and impressionable, the derisive spirit of Mr. Wilde made their predicament the more bearable. The spirit of that genial Philistine haunted him and made him grateful for the opportunity to do something "big." To reach the park without assistance would not, he thought, be so very big. It would be nothing in the eyes of Shining Sun. But at least it would be doing something. It would be more than playing hide-and-seek, which Mr. Wilde seemed to think about the wildest adventure in the program of scouting. It would, at the least, be better than coming along a day late on another train, even supposing they could stop a train or reach the stopping place of one.

"It's just whatever you say, Westy, old boy," Warde said musingly, as he twirled his scout knife into the soil again and again in a kind of solitaire mumbly peg. "Just—whatever—you—say. Maybe we're not——"

"You needn't say that again," said Westy; "we—you *are* scouts. You just proved it, so you might as well shut up because—but——"

"All right, we are then," said Warde. "You ought to know; gee whiz, it's blamed seldom I ever knew you to be mistaken. Now what's the big idea? Hey, Ed?"

"After you, my dear Sir Hollister," said Ed.

"Well, the first thing," said Westy, "is not to tell me you're not scouts."

"We'll do that little thing," said Warde.

"New conundrum," said Ed. "What is a scout?"

"You are," said Westy. "I wish I'd never met that Mr. Wilde."

"Forget it," said Warde.

"All right, now we know the first thing," said Ed. "How about the second? Where do we go from here?"

Westy glanced at him quickly and there was just the least suggestion of something glistening in his eyes. "Are you willing to hike it?" he asked.

"You tell 'em I am," said Ed Carlyle.

CHAPTER VI
STRANDED

"Well, we know which direction to start in, and that's something," said Westy.

"And we're not hungry yet, and that's something else," said Warde. "We ought to be able to walk fifteen miles to-day and the rest of the way to-morrow. And if we can't find enough to eat in Montana to keep us from starving——"

"Then we ought to be ashamed to look Mr. Wilde in the face," said Westy.

"I wish I knew something about herbs and roots," said Ed. "The only kind of root that I know anything about is cube root and I don't like that; I'd rather starve. I wonder if they have sassafras roots out this way. I've got my return ticket pinned in my pocket with a safety-pin so we ought to be able to catch some fish."

"How about a line?" Warde asked.

"I can unravel some worsted from my sweater," said Ed. "Oh, I'm a regular Stove Polish. Maybe we can find some mushrooms; I'm not worrying. I know one thing, I'd like to go up on Penelope's Peak with Mr. Wilde and those fellows."

"Pelican Cone," said Westy.

"My social error—Pelican Cone," said Ed.

"He'd about as soon think of taking us as he would our grandmothers," said Westy. "That's what gets me; they take an Indian boy who maybe can't even speak English, because he can do the things *we're* supposed to be able to do. I don't mean just you and I. But wouldn't you think there'd be some fellow in the scout organization—— Gee, I should think out west here there ought to be some who could stalk and things like that. You heard what he said about amateurs and professionals. He's right, that's the worst of it."

"He's right and we're wrong as he usually is," said Ed. "Believe me, I'm not worrying about what *he* thinks. We have plenty of fun scouting. What's worrying me is whether we should follow the tracks or the road. I believe in tracking and I'd say follow the tracks only suppose they go over high bridges and places where we couldn't walk. It's not so easy to track railroad tracks. But the trouble with the road is we don't know where it goes."

"I don't believe it knows itself," said Warde, "by the looks of it."

"We want to go south; we know that," said Westy. "Gardiner is south from here."

“I thought we were on our way out west,” said Warde. “I wish we had a compass, I know that.”

“Do you suppose Shining Sun has a compass?” Westy asked.

“Now listen,” said Ed. “I mean you, Westy. You’ve got the pathfinder’s badge and the stalker’s badge and a lot of others; you’re a star scout. You should worry about Dutch Cleanser or Stove Polish or whatever his name is ——”

“Shining Sun,” said Westy.

“All right, when the shining sun comes up a little higher we’ll find out which is north and south and east and west and up and down and in and out and all the other points of the compass including this and that. How do you know we want to go south from here? Tell me that and I’ll find out where south is.”

“Silver Cleaner, the Indian boy!” shouted Warde. “Grandson of the old Sioux Chief Gold Dust Twins. I’ll tell you why we have to go south. Livingston, where we ate our last meal on earth, is north of here. We turned south at Livingston; this is a branch that goes down to the Gardiner entrance of the Park. If we go south from here we’re sure to strike the Park even if we don’t strike Gardiner. The Park is about fifty miles wide. I don’t know whether there’s a fence around it or not. Anyway, if we go south from here we’re sure to get into the Park.”

“Maybe we’ll land on Pelican’s Dome,” said Ed.

“Come face to face with Mr. Wilde, hey?” said Warde. “We’ll say to Stove Polish, ‘Oh, we don’t know, when it comes to picking trails——’”

“Come on, let’s start,” said Westy.

“Sure,” said Warde, “maybe they’ll be naming canoes after us yet—Hiawatha, Carlylus, Wesiobus, Martinibo——”

“I wonder what Indian they named Indian meal after?” said Ed.

“You’re worse than Roy Blakeley,” said Warde; “they named it after the Indian motorcycle, didn’t they, Westy, old scout?”

“You say you think the road runs south?” Westy asked.

CHAPTER VII
HOPES AND PLANS

"I say let's follow the road," said Westy. "We're pretty sure to come to some kind of a settlement that way. If we follow the tracks we might come to a place where we couldn't go any farther, like a high trestle or something like that. I wish we had a map. The road goes south for quite a distance, you can see that. What do you say?"

"Just whatever you say, Westy," said Ed.

"Same here," said Warde.

"Only I don't want to be blamed afterward," said Westy, looking about him rather puzzled and doubtful.

When he thought of Shining Sun, thirty miles seemed nothing. But when he gazed about at the surrounding mountains, the distance between them and the Park seemed great and filled with difficulties. He was already wishing for things the very existence of which was doubtless unknown to the Indian boy who had become his inspiration.

"Anyway," said Westy, "let's make a resolution. You fellows say you made one and left me out of it. Now let's make another one, all three of us. Let's decide that we'll hike from here to the Gardiner entrance without asking any help of any one. We'll do it just as if we didn't have anything with us at all."

"We haven't," said Warde.

"I mean even our watches and matches and things like that," said Westy. "Just as if we didn't even have any clothes; you know, kind of primitive."

"Don't you think I'd better hang onto my safety-pin?" Ed asked. "Safety first. An Indian might—you know even an Indian might happen to have a safety-pin about him."

Westy could not repress a smile, but for answer he pulled his store of matches out of his pocket and scattered them by the wayside. Warde, with a funny look of dutiful compliance, did the same. Ed, with a fine show of abandon and contempt for civilization, pulled his store of matches out of one pocket and put them in another. "May I keep my watch?" he asked. "It was given to me by my father when I became a back-yard scout."

"Back-yard scout is good," said Westy.

"Thank you muchly," said Ed.

"I mean all of us," Westy hastened to add.

It was funny how poor Westy was continually vacillating between these

two good scouts who were with him and that unknown hero whose prowess had been detailed by the engaging Mr. Wilde. He was ever and again being freshly captivated by Ed's sense of humor and whimsical banter and impressed by Warde's quiet if amused compliance with this new order of things by which it seemed that the primitive was to be restored in all its romantic glory.

It never occurred to Westy to wonder what kind of a friend and companion his unknown hero, Shining Sun, would really be. What he was particularly anxious to do, now that the chance had come, was to show that cigar-smoking Philistine, Mr. Wilde, that boy scouts were really good for something when thrown on their own resources.

Pretty soon the first simple test of their scouting lore was made when they took their bearing by that vast, luminous compass, the sun. It worked its way through the dull, threatening sky bathing the forbidding heights in gold and contributing its good companionship to the trio of pilgrims. It seemed to say, "Come on, I'll help you; it's going to be nice weather in the Yellowstone."

"That's east," said Westy. "We're all right, the road goes south and if it stops going south, we'll know it."

"If it's the kind of a road that does one thing one day and another thing the next day I have no use for it anyway," said Warde.

"When it's twelve o'clock I know a way to tell what time it is," said Ed. "Remind me when it's twelve o'clock and I'll show you."

The sun, which had not shown its face during the whole of the previous day, brightened the journey and raised the hopes of the travelers. To Westy, now that they were started along the road and everything seemed bright, their little enterprise seemed all too easy. He was even afraid that the road went straight to the Gardiner entrance of the park. He wanted to encounter some obstacles. He wanted this thing to have something of the character of an exploit.

Poor Westy, thirty miles over a wild country seemed not very much to him. It would be just about a two-days' hike. But he cherished a little picture in his mind. He hoped that Mr. Madison C. Wilde would be still at the Mammoth Hotel when he and his companions reached there, having traversed—*having traversed*—thirty miles of—having forced Nature to yield up——

"We can catch some trout and eat them, all right," he said aloud.

"Oh, we can eat them, all right," said Ed. "When it comes to eating trout, I'll take a handicap with any Indian youth and beat him to it."

"It's going to be pleasant to-night," said Westy. "We can just sleep under a tree."

"I hope it won't be *too* pleasant," said Ed.

"You make me tired," laughed Westy.

CHAPTER VIII
ON THE WAY

To be sure, a hike of thirty miles is no exploit, not in the field of scouting, certainly. If the road went straight to the park, then the boys could hardly hope to face that doubter, Mr. Wilde, with any consciousness of glory.

On the time-table map which Westy had left in the train, the way from Livingston to Gardiner seemed very simple. A little branch of the Northern Pacific Railroad connected the two places with a straight line. And a road seemed to parallel this.

But maps are very seductive things. You have only to follow a road with your lead pencil to reach your destination. Nature's obstacles are not always set forth upon your map. Lines parallel on a map are often not within sight of each other on the rugged face of Nature. A little, round dot, a village, is seen close to a road. But when you explore the road the village is found to nestle coyly a mile or two back.

So if what the boys had undertaken was not so very *big*, at least it held out the prospect of being not so very little. But big or little, something *big* did happen among those lonely mountains that very day, an exploit of the first order. It was a bizarre adventure not uncommon in the Far West and it had an important bearing on the visit of these three scouts to the Yellowstone Park. And Westy Martin, hiking along that quiet, winding, western road, dissatisfied with himself because of what a chance acquaintance had said to him, was face to face with the biggest opportunity in all his young scout life. He did not know it, but he was walking headlong into it.

He had been proud when he had won the stalking badge. He was soon to know that this badge meant something and that it was no toy or gewgaw.

"I suppose it's pretty wild on Pelican Cone," said Warde, as they hiked along.

They were all cheerful for they were sure of their way for the present and were not disposed to borrow trouble. It was a pleasant summer morning, the sun shone bright on the rock-ribbed mountains, a fresh, invigorating breeze blew in their faces, birds sang in the neighboring trees, all Nature seemed kindly disposed toward their little adventure.

As the railroad line left the roadside and curved away into a mountain pass, they felt a momentary lonesomeness, the trusty rails had guided them so far on the long journey. It was like saying good-by to a friend, a friend who knew the way. For a minute they conferred again on whether they should "count the

ties," but they decided in favor of the road. So they went upon their adventure along the road, just as the great, thundering, invincible train had gone upon its adventure along the shining tracks.

"Yellowstone Park is just about like this," said Westy; "I mean the wild parts. Of course there are things to see there like geysers and all that, but I mean the wild parts; it's wild just like this. I suppose there are trails," he added with a note of wistfulness in his voice. "I suppose they know just where to go if they want to get a look at grizzlies. I'd be willing to give up the other things, you bet, if I could go on a trip like that. I was going to ask Mr. Wilde, only I knew he'd just guy me about it."

"We can see the film when it comes out anyway," said Ed, always cheerful and optimistic. "We can go up on Mount what-do-you-call it, Pelican——"

"Pelican Cone," said Westy. Already that hallowed mountain was familiar to him in imagination and dear to his heart. "Can't you remember *Cone*?"

"I can remember it by ice cream cone," said Ed. "What I was going to say was if that film comes to Bridgeboro we can go up on that cone for thirty cents and the war tax. What more do we want?"

"Sugar-coated adventures," said Warde.

"Sugar-coated is right," said Westy disgustedly.

"Now you've got me thinking about candy," said Ed. "I hope we can buy some in the Park."

"Do you suppose they have merry-go-rounds there?" Warde asked.

"Gee whiz, I hope so," said Ed. "I'm just crazy for a sight of wild animals. Imitation ones would be better than nothing, hey, Westy?"

"Imitation scouts are better than no kind," said Warde. "We're pretty good imitations."

"I wouldn't admit it if I were you," said Westy with the least suggestion of a sneer.

"A scout that gives imitations is an imitation scout," said Ed. "Dutch Cleanser is an imitation scout; he imitates animals, Mr. Wilde West said so. That proves everybody's wrong. What's the use of quarreling? None whatever. Correct the first time. You can be a scout without knowing it, that's what I am."

"Nobody ever told you you were Daniel Boone, did they?" Westy sulked.

"They don't have to tell me, I know it already," said the buoyant Ed.

"Come on, cheer up, Westy, old boy," said Warde. "We came out here to see Yellowstone Park and now you're grouching because a funny little man with a cigar as big as he is that we met on the train says we're just playing a little game, sort of. What's the matter with the little game? We always had plenty of fun at it, didn't we? Are you going to spoil the party because a little movie man wouldn't take us up in the forest with him? Gee whiz, I wouldn't

call that being grateful to the Rotary Club that wished this good time on us. I wouldn't call that so very big; I'd call it kind of small."

Westy gave him a quick, indignant glance. It was a dangerous moment. It was the ever-friendly, exuberant Ed who averted angry words and perhaps prevented a quarrel. "If there's anything big anywhere around and it wants to wait till I get to it, I'll do it. I won't be bullied. I'm not going to run after it, it will have to wait for me. I'm just as big as *it* is—even more so. It will have to wait."

They all laughed.

CHAPTER IX
THE ROCKY HILL

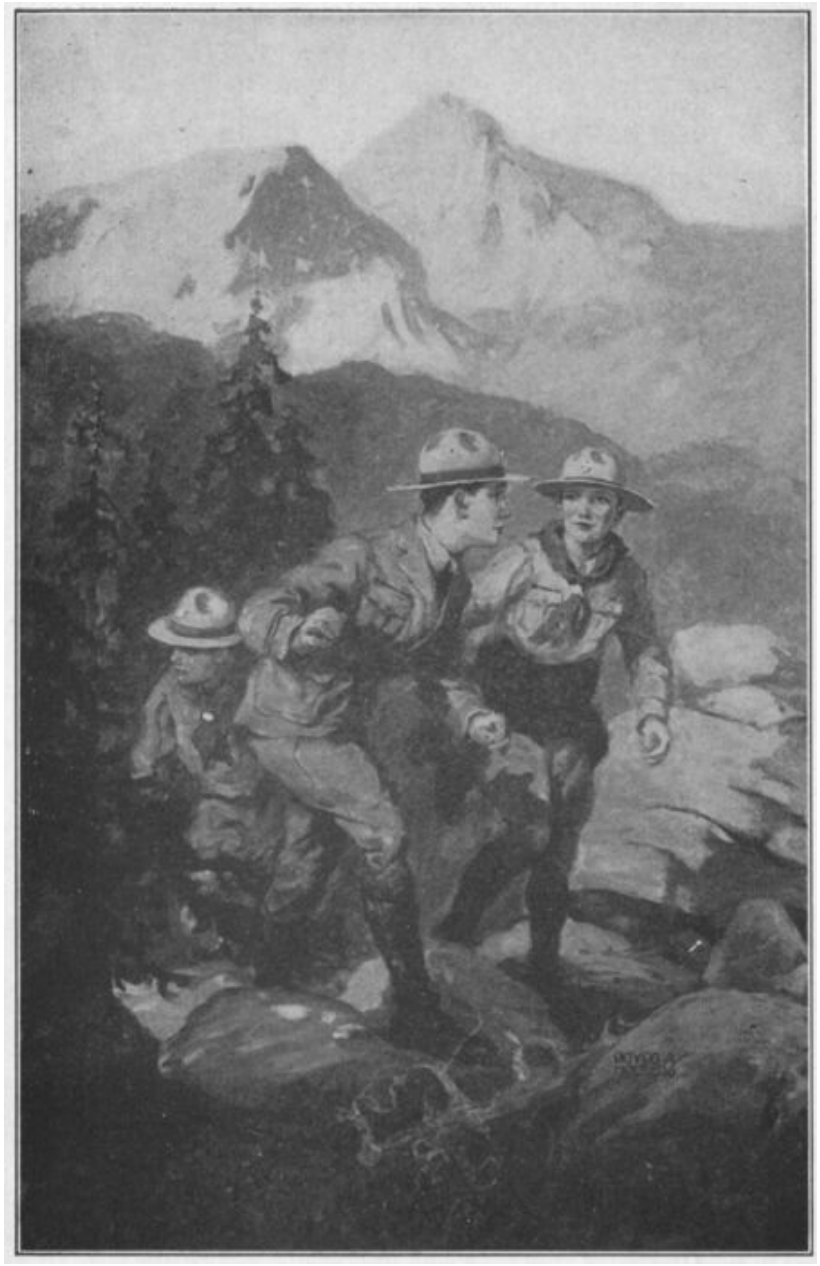
They picked blackberries along the way during the hour or so preceding noon and made bags of their handkerchiefs and stored the berries in them. At noontime they sat down by the wayside and made a royal feast.

The country was rugged and in the distance were always the great hills with here and there some mighty peak piercing the blue sky. There was a wildness in the surroundings that they had never seen before. Perhaps they felt it as much as saw it. For one thing there were no distant habitations, no friendly, little church spires to soften the landscape. The towering heights rolled away till they became misty in the distance, and it seemed to these hapless wayfarers that they might reach to the farthest ends of the earth.

But the immediate neighborhood of the road was not forbidding, the way led through no deep ravines nor skirted any dizzy precipices and it was hard for the boys to realize that they were in the Rocky Mountains. They lolled for an hour or so at noontime and talked as they might have talked along some road in their own familiar Catskills.

One thing they did notice which distinguished this storied region from any they had seen and that was the abundance of great birds that flew high above them. They had never seen birds so large nor flying at so great a height. They appeared and disappeared among the crags and startled the quiet day with their screeching, which the boys could hear, spent and weak by the great distance. They supposed these birds to be eagles. Their presence suggested the wild life to be encountered in those dizzy fastnesses. The boys saw no sign of this, but their imaginations pictured those all but inaccessible retreats filled with grizzlies and other savage denizens of that mighty range. As Westy looked about him he fancied some secret cave here and there among the mountains, the remote haunt of outlaws and of the storied “bad men” of the West.

They hiked all day assured of their direction by the friendly sun. Now and again they passed a house, usually a primitive affair, and were tempted to verify the correctness of their route by comforting verbal information. But Westy thought of Mr. Madison C. Wilde and refrained. They were not often tempted, for houses were few and far between. Once they encountered a lanky stranger lolling on the step of a shabby little house. He seemed to be all hat and suspenders.



THEY HIKED ALL DAY ASSURED OF THEIR DIRECTION BY THE FRIENDLY SUN.

“Shall we ask him if this is the way?” Warde cautiously asked.
“No,” said Westy.

“I’m going to ask him,” said Ed.

“You do——” said Westy threateningly, “and——”

But before he had a chance to complete his threat, the blithesome Ed had carried out his fiendish purpose.

“Hey, mister, is this the way?” he said.

“Vot vay?” the stranger inquired.

“Thanks,” said Ed.

“You make me tired,” Westy said, constrained to laugh as they hiked along. “If that man could have spoken English——”

“All would have been lost,” said Ed, “and we would be sure of going in the right direction; we had a narrow escape. That’s because I was a good scout; I saw that he was a foreigner; I remembered what it said in my school geography. ‘*Montana has been settled largely by Germans who own extensible—extensive farms—in this something or other region. The mountains abound in crystal streams which are filled with trout—that can easily be caught with safety-pins.*’ It’s good there’s one scout in the party. If we had some eggs we’d fry some ham and eggs if we only had some ham; I’m getting hungry.”

“Now that you mentioned it——” said Warde.

“How many miles do you think we’ve hiked?” asked Westy.

“I don’t know how many you’ve hiked,” said Ed, “but I’ve hiked about ninety-seven. I think we’ve passed Yellowstone Park without knowing it, that’s what *I* think. Maybe we went right through it; the plot grows thicker. I hope we won’t walk into the Pacific Ocean.”

It was now late in the afternoon and they had hiked fifteen or eighteen miles. Once in the midafternoon they had heard, faint in the long distance, what they thought might be a locomotive whistle and this encouraged them to think that they were still within a few miles of the railroad line.

Westy would not harbor, much less express, any misgivings as to the reliability of the sun as a guide. Perhaps it would be better to say that he would not admit any inability on his part to use it. Yet as the great orb began to descend upon the mountain peaks far to the right of their route and to tinge those wild heights with a crimson glow, he began to imbibe something of the spirit of loneliness and isolation which that vast, rugged country imparted. After all, amid such a fathomless wilderness of rock and mountain it would have been good to hear some one say, “Yes, just follow this road and take the second turn to your left.”

“That’s West, isn’t it?” Westy asked, as they plodded on.

“You mean where the sun is setting?” asked Warde. “Oh, absolutely.”

“It sets there every night,” said Ed, “including Sundays and holidays.”

“Well then,” said Westy, feeling a little silly, “we’re all right.”

“We’re not all right,” said Warde; “at least *I’m* not, I’m hungry.”

“Well, here’s a brook,” said Westy. “Do you see—look over there in the west—do you see a little shiny spot away up between those two hills? Away up high, only kind of between the two hills? It’s only about half a mile or so. It’s the sun shining on this brook away up there. That shows it comes down between those two hills.”

They all paused and looked. Up among those dark hills in the west was a little glinting spot like gold. It flickered and glistened.

“Maybe it’s a bonfire,” said Warde.

“I think it’s the headlight of a Ford,” said Ed. “A Ford can go anywhere a brook can go.”

“You crazy dub,” said Westy.

“My social error,” said Ed.

“What do you say we go over there?” Westy said. “Do you see—notice on that hill where all the rocks are—do you see a big tree? If one of us climbed up that tree I bet we could see for miles and miles; we could see just where the road goes. It’s only about fifteen or twenty miles to the entrance of the park; maybe we could see something—some building or something. Then we could camp for the night up there and catch some fish. Wouldn’t you rather not reach Gardiner by the road? Maybe we can plan out a short-cut. Anyway, we can see what’s what. What do you say?”

“The fish part sounds good to me,” said Ed.

“How are we going to cook the fish?” Warde asked.

Ed pulled out a handful of matches and exhibited them, winking in his funny way at Warde.

“I thought you threw them away,” said Westy. “Do you think we couldn’t get a fire started without matches?”

“A scout never wastes anything,” said Ed. “The scouts of old never wasted a thing, I learned that out of the Handbook. Again it shows what a fine scout I am. Do you suppose Mr. Madison C. Wild West lights his cigars with sparks from a rock?”

“The Indians——” began Westy.

“The Indians were glad enough to sell Massachusetts or Connecticut or Hoboken or some place or other for a lot of glass beads,” said Ed. “They would have sold the whole western hemisphere for a couple of matches. You make me weary with your Indians! I wish I had a chocolate soda now, that’s what I wish. The Indians invented Indian summer and what good is it? It comes after school opens, deny it if you dare. Hey, Warde? If I’d lived in colonial days I bet I could have got the whole of Cape Cod for this safety-pin of mine.”

“Well, what do you say?” laughed Westy. “Shall we go up there and camp? And that will give us a chance to get a good squint at the country.”

“Decided by an unanimous majority,” said Ed.

“When do we eat?” said Warde.

“Leave it to me,” said Ed slyly. And again he went through that funny performance of appearing to throw his matches away by pulling them nonchalantly from one pocket and depositing them in another. “If there are no trout up there I’ll never believe the school geography again. I may even never go to school again, I’ll be so peeved.”

CHAPTER X
THE CAMPING SITE

They left the road and made their way across country toward the hills whose lofty peaks were now golden with the dying sunlight. They followed the brook which had flowed near the roadside up to where it came through a rocky cleft between two hills.

As they climbed up to the spot, the glinting light which had been their beacon faded away and only the brook was there, rippling cheerily over its stony bed. It seemed as if it had bedecked itself in shimmering gold to guide these weary travelers to this secluded haunt.

To be sure they had not penetrated far from the unfrequented road, but they were able now to think of themselves as being in the Rocky Mountains. The cleft through which the brook flowed was wide enough for a little camping site at its brink and here, with the rushing water singing its soothing and incessant lullaby, they resolved to rest their weary bodies for the night.

One side of this cleft was quite precipitous and impossible of ascent. But the side on which the boys chose their camp site sloped up from the flat area at the brook side and was indeed the side of a lofty hill. It was on this hill that Westy had noticed the tree from the upper branches of which he had thought that he might scan the country southward, which would be in the direction of the park. A very much better view might have been obtained from neighboring mountain peaks, but the ascent of such heights would have been a matter of many hours and fraught with unknown difficulties. From the hill the country seemed comparatively low and open to the south.

“This is some spot all right,” said Warde. “It looks as if Jesse James might have boarded here.”

“Or William S. Hart,” said Ed. “Anyway I think there are some fish getting table board here; it’s a kind of a little table-land. If we can’t get any trout we can kill some killies. I wonder if there’s any bait in the Rocky Mountains? I bet the angle-worms out here are pretty wild.”

“Hark—shh!” said Westy.

“I’m shhhhing. What is it?” asked Ed.

“I thought I heard a kind of a sound,” said Westy.

“I hope it isn’t a grizzly,” said Warde. “Do you suppose they come to places like this? Come on, let’s gather some branches to sleep on; I know how to make a spring mattress. Is it all right to sleep on branches, Westy?”

It was funny to see Ed sitting on a rock calmly unraveling some worsted

from his sweater, all the while with his precious safety-pin stuck ostentatiously in the shoulder of his shirt.

"It's good you happened to have your sweater on," said Warde.

"I hope I don't lose my railroad ticket now," said Ed. "I had it pinned in. I tell you what you do. Big Chief," he added, addressing Westy, and all the while engrossed with his unraveling process; "you climb up that hill and take a squint around and look for a patch of yellow in the distance. That will be Yellowstone Park. Look all around and if you see any places where they sell hot frankfurters let us know. By the time you get back we'll have supper ready, what there is of it, I mean such as it is. I'm going to braid this stuff, it's too weak. Look in the sink and see if there are any sinkers, Wardie."

"All right," said Westy, "because if I wait till after supper it might be too dark."

"If you wait till after supper," said Ed, "maybe the tree won't be there. We may not have supper for years. How do I know that fish are fond of red. I always told my mother I wanted a gray sweater, same color as fish-line, and she goes and gets me a red one. I wonder what Stove Polish catches fish with."

"Maybe with the string that Mr. Wilde West was stringing us with," said Warde.

"I guess I'd better go," laughed Westy.

CHAPTER XI
ALONE

Westy was still laughing as he climbed the hill. He was thinking that these two companions of his were pretty good scouts after all. In his mood of dissatisfaction with himself and modern scouting, it had not occurred to him that being a good scout consists not in getting along with nothing, but in getting along with what you happen to have.

A little way up the hill he looked back and could see Ed sitting on a rock, one foot cocked up in the air with several strands of worsted about it. He seemed to be bent on the task of braiding these and there was something whimsical about the whole appearance of the thing which amused Westy and made him realize his liking for this comrade who was of another troop than his own.

Reaching the summit of the hill he saw that the tree he had seen from below was not as isolated as it had looked to be. It was a great elm and rose out of a kind of jungle of brush and rock and smaller trees. These near surroundings had not been discernible from the distant road. A given point in Nature is so different seen from varying distances and from different points of view.

But the hill was not disappointing in affording an extensive view southward. There was no object in that direction which gave any hint of Yellowstone Park, but probably much of the wild scenery he beheld was within the park boundaries. It was significant of the vastness of the Park and of the smallness of Westy's mental vision that he had expected to behold it as one may behold some local amusement park. He had thought that upon approach he might be able to point to it and say with a thrill, "There it is!" He had not been able to fix it in his mind as a vast, wild region that just happened to have a tame, civilized name—*Park.*

There was something very peculiar about this great tree and Westy wondered if some terrific cyclone of years gone by might have caused it. Evidently it had once been uprooted, but not blown down. At all events a great rock was lodged under its exposed root, causing the tree to stand at an angle. It seemed likely that the same wind-storm which had all but lain the tree prone had caused the rock to roll down from a slight eminence into the cavity and lodge there. Great tentacles of root had embraced the rock which seemed bound by these as by fetters. And under a network of root was a dark little cave created by the position of the rock.

Westy poked his head between the network of roots and peered into this dank little cell. It smelled very damp and earthy. Some tiny creature of the mountains scampered frantically out and the stir it caused seemed multiplied into a tumult by the darkness and the smallness of the place. Westy weakened long enough to wish he had a match so that he might make a momentary exploration of this freakish little hole.

His first impulse was to throw off his jacket before climbing the tree, but he did not do this. He was good at climbing and he shinned up the tree with the agility of a monkey. He rested at the first branch and was surprised to see how even here the view seemed to expand before him. He felt that at last he was doing something free from the contamination of roads and railroad tracks. He was alone in the Rockies. He had once read a boys' book of that title, and now he reflected with a thrill that he, Westy Martin, was, in a sense, alone in the Rockies. Not in the perilous depths, perhaps, but just the same, in the Rockies. He wondered if there might be a grizzly within a mile, or two or three miles of him. *The Rockies!*

He ascended to the next branch, and the next. Slowly he climbed and wriggled upward to a point beyond which he hesitated to trust the weight of his body. And here he sat in a fork of the tree and looked southward and eastward where a vast panorama was open before him.

To the north and west was a near background of towering mountains, making his airy perch seem low indeed. But to the south and east he saw the West in all its glory and majesty. Mountains, mountains, mountains! Magnificent chaos! Distance unlimited! Wildness unparalleled! Such loneliness that a whisper might startle like a shout. It needed only the roar of a grizzly to complete this boy's sense of tragic isolation and to give the scene a voice.

From where he sat, Westy could look down into the cosy little cleft and see Ed Carlyle standing clearly outlined in the first gray of twilight; standing like a statue, hopefully angling with his converted safety-pin and braided worsted. Warde was gathering sticks for their fire. Westy's impulse was to call to them, but then he decided not to. He preferred not to call, nor even see them. For just a little while he wanted to be *alone in the Rockies*.

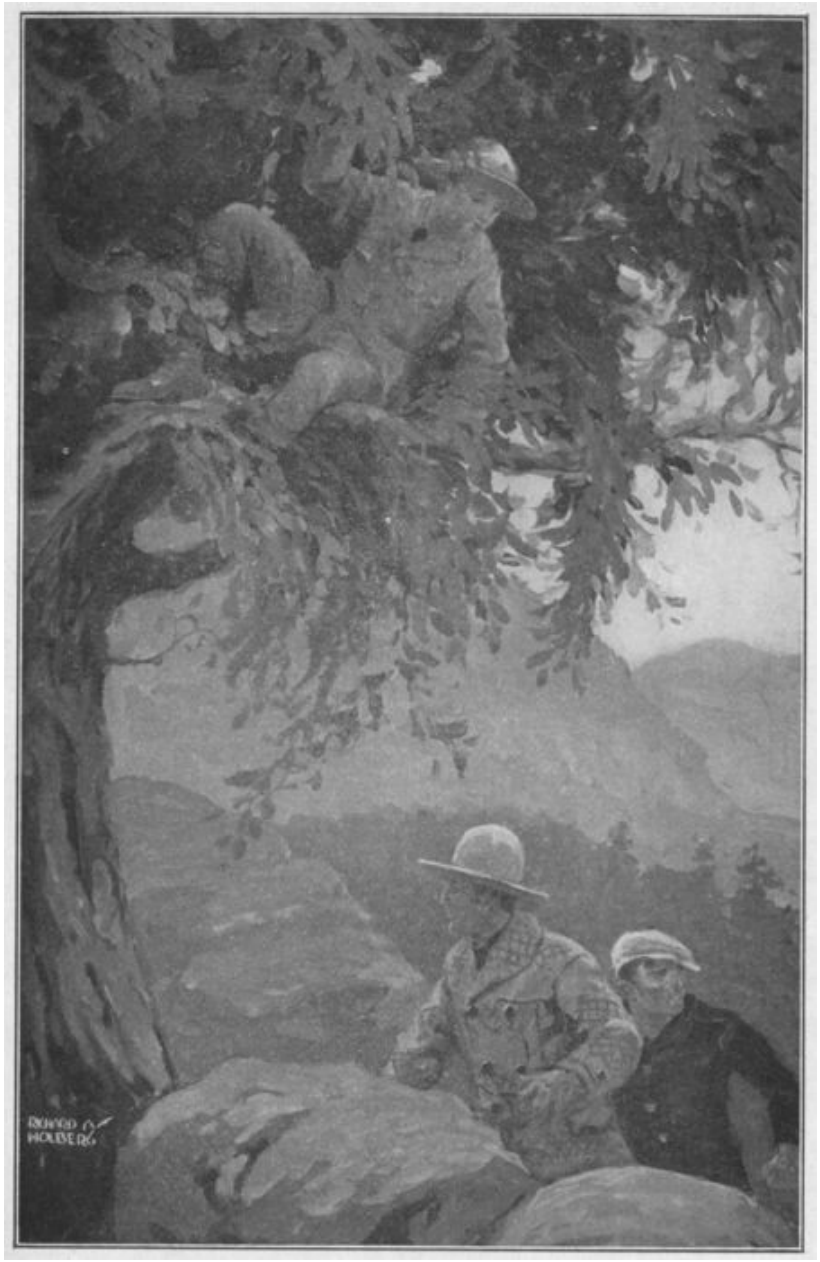
So he did not call. He looked in another direction and as he did so his heart jumped to his throat and he was conscious of a feeling of unspeakable gratitude to the saving impulse which had kept him silent. For approaching up the hill from the direction in which he now looked were the figures of two men. And one glimpse of them was enough to strike horror to Westy Martin's soul.

CHAPTER XII
IN THE TWILIGHT

It required but one look at these two men to cause Westy devoutly to hope that they had not seen him. They were rough characters and of an altogether unpromising appearance.

One preceded the other and the leader was tall and lank and wore a mackinaw jacket and a large brimmed felt hat. But for the mackinaw jacket he might have suggested the adventurous western outlaw. But for the romantic hat with flowing brim he might have suggested an eastern thug. The man who followed him wore a sweater and a peaked cap, that dubious outfit which the movies have taught us to associate with prize fighters and metropolitan thugs.

But a more subtle difference distinguished these strangers from each other. The leader walked with a fine swinging stride, the other with that mean carriage effected by short strides and a certain tough swing of the arms. He had a street-corner demeanor about him and a way of looking behind him as if he were continually apprehending the proximity of “cops.” He had an East-Side, police-court, thirty-days-on-the-island look. His companion seemed far above all that.



WESTY MOVED NOT A MUSCLE, SCARCELY BREATHED.

Westy moved not a muscle, scarcely breathed. The tree was evidently the destination of these strangers for they approached with a kind of weary satisfaction, which in the smaller man bespoke a certain finality of exhaustion.

The leader evidently sensed this without looking behind him, for he referred to it with a suggestion of disgust.

"Yer tired?"

"I ain't used ter chasin' aroun' the world ter duck, pal," said the other.

"Jes' roun' the corner; some cellar or other I reckon?" said the leader.

"Dat's me," replied the other.

By this time Westy was satisfied that they had not seen him before or during his ascent, and it seemed to him a miracle that they had not. Ludicrously enough he was conscious of a sort of disappointment that the taller man had not seen him, and this together with the deepest thankfulness for the fact.

There was something inscrutable about this stranger, a suggestion of efficiency and assured power. If Westy could have believed, without peril to himself, that his presence could not escape this man's eagle vision it would have rounded out the aspect of lawless heroism which the man seemed to have. It was rather jarring to see the fellow fail in a matter in which he should have scored. And this, particularly in view of his subsequent conversation. But Westy's dominant feeling was one of ineffable relief.

"There ain't no trail up here?" the smaller man asked, as he looked doubtfully about him.

"I never hide 'long no trails," the taller man drawled, as he seated himself on the rocky mound which was the roof of the little cave. "I telled yer that, pardner. I ony use trails ter foller others. Long's I can't fly I have ter make prints, but yer seen how I started. Prints is no use till yer find 'em. But ready-made trails 'n sech like I never use—got no use fer 'em. Nobody ever tracked me; same's I never failed ter track any one I set out ter track. When yer see me a-follerin' a reg'lar trail yer'll know I'm pursuin', not pursued, as the feller says. Matter, pardner? Yer sceered?"

"A dog could track us all right," said the other. "He could scent us along the rails, couldn't he? Walkin' the rails for a mile might kid the bulls all right, but not no dog."

"Nobody never catched me, pardner, an' nobody never got away from me," drawled the other man grimly.

"They put dogs on, don't they?" the smaller man asked. He seemed unable to remove this peril from his mind.

"Yere, an' they take 'em off again."

"Well, I guess you know," the smaller man doubtingly conceded.

"I reckon I do," drawled the other.

"I ain't scared o' nobody gettin' up here," said the one who was evidently a pupil and novice at the sort of enterprise they had been engaged in. "But you said about dogs; sheriff's posse has dogs, yer says."

“They sure do,” drawled the other, lighting a pipe, “an’ they knows more’n the sheriffs, them hound dogs.”

“Well, yer didn’ cut the scent, did yer? Yer says ’bout cuttin’ scents, but yer didn’ do it, now did yer?”

For a few moments the master disdained to answer, only smoked his pipe as Westy could just make out through the leaves. The familiar odor of tobacco ascended and reached him, diluted in the evening air. It was only an infrequent faint whiff, but it had an odd effect on Westy; it seemed out of keeping with the surroundings.

“I walked the rail,” said the smoker very slowly and deliberately, “till I come ter whar a wolf crossed the tracks. You must have seed me stoop an’ look at a bush, didn’t yer? Or ain’t yer got no eyes?”

“I got eyes all right.”

“Didn’t yer see me kinder studyin’ sumthin’? That was three four gray hairs. Then I left the rail ’n cut up through this way. It’s that thar wolf’s got ter worry, not me ’n you.”

“Well, we done a pretty neat job, I’ll tell ’em,” said the smaller man, apparently relieved.

“Well, I reckon I knowed what I was sayin’ when I telled yer it was easy; jes’ like doin’ sums, that’s all; as easy as divvyin’ up this here swag. Ten men that’s a-sceered ain’t as strong as one man that ain’t a-sceered. All yer gotter do is git ’em rattled. Ony yer gotter know yer way when it’s over.”

“Yer know yer way all right,” said the other, with a note of tribute in his voice.

“Yer ain’t looked inside yet,” said the master. “Neat little bunk fer a lay-over, I reckon. Ony kinder close. ’Tain’t fer layin’ low I likes it ’cause I like it best outside, ’n we’re as safe here. Ony in case o’ sumthin’ gone wrong we got a hole ter shoot from. With me inside o’ that nobody’d ever git inside of three hundred feet from it. I could turn this here hill inter a graveyard, I sure reckon. Yer hungry?”

“Supposin’ any one was to find this here place?” the other asked. “You said ’bout sumthin’ goin’ wrong maybe.”

“Well, he wouldn’ hev the trouble o’ walkin’ back,” said the tall man grimly.

Just then Westy, who had scarce dared to breathe, took advantage of the stirring of the strangers to glance toward his friends in the cleft. The little camping site looked very cosy and inviting. But even as he looked his blood ran cold and he was struck with panic terror. For standing at the brink of the rivulet was Warde Hollister, his hands curved into a funnel around his mouth, ready to call aloud to him.

Westy held his breath. His heart thumped. Every nerve was tense. Then he

heard the screeching of one of those great birds flying toward the crags in the twilight. He waited, cold with terror. . . .

CHAPTER XIII
WARDE AND ED

"Don't call to him," said Ed. "As long as we haven't got our fire started yet, what's the use calling? He likes to be alone, sometimes; I know Westy all right. Don't call."

It was this consideration on the part of Ed for the mood and nature of his friend that saved Westy at the moment. And incidentally it saved Warde and Ed themselves from discovery. Westy knew his peril, but they did not know theirs.

Ed stood at the brink of the stream fishing, his partly unraveled sweater tied around his waist, giving a Spanish touch to his appearance. It was a funny habit of his to wear clothes the wrong way. He was always springing some ludicrous effect by freakish arrangement of his apparel. Warde was gathering sticks for their fire.

"Here's another killie," said Ed. "Small, but nifty. That makes seven so far, and about 'steen of these other kind, whatever they are. Don't call till you have to. Westy had this little lonely stroll coming to him ever since Mr. Wilde West sprung that stuff on us. He likes to communicate with Nature, or commune or commute or whatever you call it. He's imagining he's hundreds and hundreds of miles off now—I bet he is. He's thinking what a punk scout he is. He likes to kid himself; let him alone, don't call."

"There's one thing I want to say to you," said Warde, "now we're alone. I guess you never quarreled with a fellow, did you?"

"Here's another killie—a little one," said Ed.

"Well, all I wanted to say was," said Warde, "I'd like to let you know that I think you're about as good an all-round scout as any there ever was, Indians, or I don't care what. Understanding everything in nature is all right, but understanding all about people is something, too. Isn't it?"

"I suppose it must be if you say so," said Ed.

"This pin's only good for the little ones——"

"I mean you understand Westy, you know just how to handle him," said Warde. "Scouts have to deal with men, maybe wild men, just the same as they have to deal with nature, I guess. You can read Westy like a—a—like a trail. Gee, in the beginning I was hoping Westy and I could come out here alone. Now I just can't think of the trip without you along. Do you *ever* get mad?"

"I get mad every time this blamed worsted breaks," said Ed.

"I know Westy's kind of—you know—he's kind of sensitive. He's awful

serious about scouting. That Mr. Wilde just got him. Now he'll do something big if it kills him. And what good will it do him? That's what I say. Mr. Wilde will never see him again. You can't make Indians out of civilized white people, can you? Now he thinks none of us are regular scouts. And that's just what I want to tell you now while we're alone. I want to tell you that you're my idea of a scout; he is too, but so are you. What's your idea of a scout, anyway? I was kind of wondering; you're all the time joking and never say anything about it."

"I guess you might as well start the fire now," said Ed. "Thank goodness, he isn't here to see you using matches; he's mad at matches. Get the fire started good and then we'll give him a war-whoop. I'll clean the fish."

CHAPTER XIV
THE MASTER

Westy knew that he was in great peril. He knew that these two men were desperadoes, probably train robbers, and that they would not suffer any one to know of their mountain refuge and go free. He believed that the odds and ends of conversation he had overheard related to one of those bizarre exploits of the Far West, a two-man train robbery; or rather a one-man train robbery, for it seemed likely that one of the men had not been an expert or even a professional.

For the leader of this desperate pair Westy could not repress a certain measure of respect; respect at least for his courage and skill. The other one seemed utterly contemptible. There is always a glamour about the romantic bad man of the West, dead shot and master of every situation, which has an abiding appeal to every lover of adventure.

Here was a man, long, lanky, and of a drawling speech, whose eye, Westy could believe, was piercing and inscrutable like the renowned Two Pistol Bill of the movies. This man had said that no one could trail him and that no trail was so difficult that he could not follow it. Truly a most undesirable pursuer. One of those invincible outlaws whose skill and resource and scouting lore seems almost to redeem his villainy.

Westy knew that he was at the mercy of this man, this lawless pair. He knew that his safety and that of his friends hung on a thread. One forlorn hope he had and that was that darkness would come before the boys started their fire. Then these ruffians might not see the smoke. And perhaps they would fall asleep before Warde or Ed shouted. Then he could take his chance of descending and rejoining them. All this seemed too good to be possible and Westy had one of those rash impulses that seize us all at times, to put an end to his horrible suspense by making his presence known. One shout and—and what?

He did not shout. And he prayed that his friends would not shout. If he could only free himself and let them know! But even then there was the chance of this baffler of dogs trailing him and his companions and shooting them down in these lonely mountains. And who would ever know?

And just then he learned the name of this human terror who was smoking as he lolled in the dusk on the rock below. He was evidently a celebrity.

“That’s why they call me Bloodhound Pete,” drawled the man. “Nobody can corral me up here; thar ain’t no trail ter this place ’n nobody never knowed

it. But I knowed of it. I ain't never come to it from the road, allus through the gulch 'n roun' by Cheyenne Pass, like we done jes' now. *But if you wus here I could trail yer,* even if I never sot eyes on the place afore. I could trail yer if yer dealed me the wrong trick, no matter whar yer wuz."

"I ain't dealin' yer no wrong trick," said the other.

"That's why I ony has one pard in a big job," said Bloodhound Pete grimly. "'Cause in a way of speakin' I ain't fer bloodshed. I'd ruther drop one pardner than two or three. I don't kill 'less thar's need to, 'count o' my own safety."

Westy shuddered.

"Me 'n you ain't goin' ter have no scrap over the swag," said the other man.

"N' ye'll find me fair as summer," said the bloodhound. "Fair and square, not even sayin' how I give the benefit to a pardner on uneven numbers."

"Me 'n you ain't a-goin' ter have no quarrel," said the other. "Yer wuz goner drop that there little gent, though, I'm thinkin'," he added, "when he tried ter hold yer agin' the car door. He wuz game, he wuz."

"That's why I didn' drop 'im," said the bloodhound. "Yer mean him with the cigar? Yere, he was game—him an' the conductor. They was the ony ones. Them an' the woman—she was game. Yer seed her, with the fire ax. I reckon she'd a used it if I didn't take it from 'er. That thar little man had a permit or a license or sumthin' to ketch animals down over ter the Park. Here 'tis in his ole knapsack an' money enough ter buy a couple o' ranches."

"How much?" asked the other.

"I ain't usin' no light," said the bloodhound, "'count er caution. We'll sleep an' divvy up fair an' square in the mornin'."

"Suits me," said the other.

"And jes' bear in mind," drawled Bloodhound Pete, "that I allus sleep with one eye open an' I can track anything 'cept a airplane."

Westy shuddered again. He fancied the lesser of those two desperadoes shuddering. Bloodhound Pete seemed quite master of the situation.

CHAPTER XV
THE HAUNTING SPIRIT OF SHINING SUN

This was the kind of man that Westy had to get away from. For he found it unthinkable that he and his companions should be shot down and left in that wild region, a prey to vultures. He tortured himself with the appalling thought that perhaps the great bird he had just seen and heard was one of those horrible creatures of uncanny instinct waiting patiently among its aerial crags for the bodies of the slain; for him, *Westy Martin*!

He had been able to realize, or rather to believe, that he was alone in the Rockies. He had, in the few moments that he had been there, indulged the thrilling reflection that he was actually in the storied region where grizzlies prowled, and other savage beasts woke the echoes with their calls, where eagles screamed in their dizzy and inaccessible domains. He had thrilled to the thought that he was at least within the limits of that once trackless wonderland of adventure where guides and trappers, famed in his country's romantic lore, had wrought miracles renowned in the annals of scouting.

But Westy had not carried these reflections so far as to include the reality which now confronted him. He had been a trapper for a few sweet moments; he had penetrated the wilds after Indians—in his imagination, which is always a safe place to hunt. And now suddenly here he was, actually *trapped* in the Rocky Mountains; the victim of cold-blooded desperadoes. His life hung by a thread. His killing would be a trifling incident in the aftermath of a typical western train robbery.

It was odd how ready his imagination had been to feast upon the perils of the Wild West and how his blood turned cold at this true Western adventure into which he was drawn. The day before, in his comfortable seat in the speeding train, he would have said that such a thing as this was just impossible. It would have been all right in the books; but as involving him, Westy Martin, why, the very thought of it would have been absurd.

Yet there he was. There he was, the thing was a reality, and he knew that every chance was against him. He wondered what Shining Sun, the red boy, that silent master of the forest, would have done in this predicament. Then his thoughts wandered away from that exploited hero to his own pleasant home in Bridgeboro and he pictured his father sitting by the library table reading his evening paper. He pictured his father telling his sister Doris for goodness' sakes to stop playing the Victrola till he finished reading. Then Doris strolling out onto the porch and ejecting himself and Pee-wee Harris from the swinging

seat and sitting down herself to await the arrival of Charlie Easton. . . .

He looked anxiously in the direction of the cleft, fearful that at any minute smoke would arise out of it or voices be audible there. The two men were talking below, but he could not see them now nor hear what they said. The whole thing seemed so strange, so incredible, that Westy could not appreciate the extraordinary fact that the very property, the wallet of his traveling acquaintance, Mr. Wilde, was in possession of these outlaws.

One slight advantage (it was not even a forlorn hope) seemed to be accruing to him. It was growing dark. This at least might prevent the smoke from the distant fire being seen. As for the blaze, that could not be seen from the foot of the tree because of the precipitous descent at the base of the hill. From his vantage point in the tree Westy would have been able to see the fire. But there was no blaze to be seen and he wondered why, for surely, he thought, they must have been able to catch some sort of fish.

Then in his distraction, he found a measure of relief in thinking of matters not pertinent to his desperate situation. He thought how after all Ed's safety-pin and braided worsted had probably not made good. This aroused again his morbid reflections about boy scouting. Shining Sun, without so much as a safety-pin, would have been able to catch fish, probably with his dexterous hands.

Westy was disgusted with himself and all his claptrap of scouting, when he thought of this primitive little master of the woods and water. Frightened as he was, he was reflective enough to be indignant at Mr. Wilde for that skeptic's irreverent use of the name of Stove Polish. Shining Sun was all but sacred to serious Westy.

CHAPTER XVI
A DESPERATE PREDICAMENT

The peril from visible smoke was gone, but there was small comfort in this. Warde and Ed had probably not succeeded in catching any fish and a fire was therefore useless. Presently one or other of them would shout or come to investigate. And what then? Westy's life and the lives of his comrades seemed to hang on a thread.

He roused himself out of his silent fear and suspense and realized that if he were going to do anything he must act quickly. He was between two frightful perils. If he were to act, *do something* (he knew not exactly what), it must be before his friends called, yet not till the men below had fallen asleep. Haste meant disaster. Delay meant disaster. When should he act? And what should he do? If he had only a little time—a little time to think. What would the Indian boy do?

He listened fearfully, his heart in his throat, but there was no sound. He was thankful that Ed Carlyle was not such a good scout—no, he didn't mean exactly that. He was glad that Ed was not exactly what you would call a *real*—no, he didn't mean that either. He was glad that Ed had not been scout enough—had not been able to catch any fish. There are times when not being such a marvelous super-scout is a very good thing.

Silence. Darkness. And the minutes passed by. He was jeopardizing his life and his companions' lives, and he knew it. If he waited till they shouted all three of them would be—— He could not bear to think of it. *Would be killed! Shot down!* He, Westy Martin, and his two pals.

What would Shining Sun do?

Well, he, Westy Martin, would act at once. He would take a chance, be brave, die game. He would, if need be, be killed in the Rockies, like so many heroes before him. He would not be a parlor scout. He had dreamed of being in peril in the Rockies. Well, he would not falter now. He could not be a Shining Sun, but at least he could be worthy of himself. He would not be wanting in courage, and he would use such resource as he had.

He could not afford to wait for a shout from the cleft. He must descend and trust to the men being asleep. He wished that Bloodhound Pete had not made that remark about sleeping with one eye open. He wished that that grim desperado had not unconsciously informed him that he could track anything but an airplane. Then it occurred to him that he might disclose his presence to these men, promise not to tell of their hiding place, and throw himself on their

mercy. Perhaps they—the tall one at least—would understand that a scout's honor——

Honor! A scout's honor. What is that? Shining Sun was a scout, a *real* scout. What would *he* do? He would escape!

Westy listened but heard no sound from below. He hoped they were in the little cave, but he doubted that; it was too small and stuffy. A place to shoot from and hold pursuers at bay, that was all it was.

Silently, with an arm around an upright branch, he raised one foot and unlaced a shoe, pausing once or twice to listen.

No sound from below or from afar. Only the myriad voices of the night in the Rocky Mountains, an owl hooting in the distance, the sound of branches crackling in the freshening breeze, the complaining call of some unknown creature. . . .

He hung the shoe on a limb, releasing his hold on it easily, then listened. No sound. Then he unlaced the other shoe and hung it on the branch. Strange place for a Bridgeboro, New Jersey, boy to hang his shoes. But Shining Sun wore no shoes, perish the thought! and neither would Westy. He removed his scout jacket with some difficulty and hung it on a limb, then he removed the contents of its pockets.

Westy Martin, scout of the first class, First Bridgeboro Troop, B. S. A., Bridgeboro, New Jersey, had won eleven merit badges. Nine of these were sewed on the sleeve of the khaki jacket in which he had traveled. This had been his preference, since he was a modest boy, and was disinclined to have them constantly displayed on the sleeve of his scout shirt which he usually wore uncovered. But two of the medals had been sewed on the sleeve of his shirt at some time when the jacket was not handy. These were the pathfinder's badge and the stalker's badge. So it happened that he carried these two treasured badges with him, when he left his jacket hanging in the tree and started to descend upon his hazardous adventure.

He had received these two honors with a thrill of pride. But throughout this memorable day they had seemed to him like silly gewgaws, claptrap of the Boy Scouts, signifying nothing. They were obscured by the haunting spirit of Shining Sun.

For another moment he listened, his nerves tense, his heart thumping. Then he began ever so cautiously to let himself down through the darkness. A long, plaintive moan was faintly audible far in the mountain fastnesses. . . .

CHAPTER XVII
SOUNDS!

Half-way down he thought he heard voices, but decided it was only his imagination taunting him. There was no sound below. He was fearful, yet relieved, when he reached the lowest branch; now there would be no branches squeaking, no crackling twigs, sounding like earthquakes in the tense stillness.

He paused a moment, his heart almost choking him. Suppose the men were not asleep. He was within easy pistol shot now, he could readily be discovered, a dark object clinging to the dark, branchless trunk. *A sound. A voice?* No, it was only his own haunting fear that spoke. In a few moments he would know the worst—or rather, perhaps, know nothing. With a kind of reckless abandon he let himself down, carefully, silently, inch by inch. He knew that any second he might hear a startled and aroused figure below him and fall limp, lifeless, to the ground.

He did not make a sound as he descended the trunk. And each uneventful moment gave him fresh courage. He was near enough to the ground now to hear the voices of the outlaws clearly, but he heard nothing. Nor could he see below anything but the dark mound of the rock outlined in the deeper darkness. His besetting fear now was that his companions might shout. It seemed incredible that they did not make some sound.

Westy's good sense became his ally now. His success so far gave him poise. He bethought him that bad men of the West, albeit they do big things, have also the habit of talking big. However it might have been with the taciturn pioneers of old, the bad men of the West (if the movies know anything about it) are incorrigible boasters.

This comforting thought did not mitigate Westy's fear of Bloodhound Pete. But it afforded him the solacing reflection that after all, in plain fact, no man can sleep with one eye open. This robber, and murderer if need be, was either asleep or not asleep. And if he was asleep then Westy knew he had a chance; perhaps a forlorn chance, but a chance. He took a measure of comfort from this application of his common sense.

And as he descended without interruption he began, all in that brief time, hopefully to consider the dubious prospect of escape from these ruffians. Would they sleep long? He could readily believe that Bloodhound Pete was invincible on the trail. Would immediate escape avail the boys anything?

With each measure of success comes a fresh measure of hope and courage. No news is good news. As long as nothing happens all is well. Westy put one

cautious, hesitating foot upon the solid ground. He was face to face with his great adventure.

Thus he paused like the chameleon, one foot poised in air, the other upon the ground, motionless in the freak attitude of first alighting. He seemed fearful of placing his whole weight and both feet on the ground.

Then he stood beside the tree, a small, dark figure, his clothing torn, his legs and bare arms bleeding from scratches. He was hatless and barefooted. The tree, with a fine sense of scout picturesqueness, had caught his shirt and ripped it open in front, pulling off the buttons and exposing his brown, young chest. His trousers were all but in tatters. His hair was disheveled and it did not ill-become him.

He looked suitable to be in the Rockies. No one would have known him for a "parlor scout," playing the little outdoor game. . . .

Again he listened. There was no sound but the wailing far off. He was in the shadow of the tree, the trunk between him and the little cave, and he dreaded to move. Well, there was nothing left to do but take a chance and steal away.

Silence. A silence welcome, but fraught with terror. Surely these blackguards must be sleeping. But the sleeper who guards a treasure and fears pursuit enjoys not a peaceful slumber. Westy moved one leg preparatory to taking a step. How fateful each well-considered step! He felt the ground with his bare foot—pawed it. A twig which his shoe would have broken gave a little under the soft pressure, but caused no sound. He moved his foot from it and explored the ground near by. Then he took a step.

He paused and listened, his heart beating like a trip-hammer. He craned his neck and could just see the low entrance of the cave. It looked to be just an area of black in the surrounding darkness. Should he—yes, he felt the ground with his sensitive foot and took another step.

And now he paused, baffled by a new difficulty. For the moment he knew not which way to go. The darkness had closed in and rendered all directions alike. He could not for the life of him determine in which direction the cleft lay. He glanced about puzzled by this new doubt. Then he *thought* he knew. He made a long stride now so as to cover as much space as possible without touching ground, feeling the earth cautiously as his foot touched it. Then he moved—momentous step. He was a yard farther from the outlaws than he had been. So far so good. He gathered courage.

Then a thought occurred to him. Suppose these ruffians were taking turns at sleeping. Well, then he must be the more careful. He took another long, carefully considered step and listened. Only silence. He was on his way and all was well. Again he stepped—a long cautious stride. His nerves were on edge, but he was buoyant with the sense of triumph, of achievement.

Then suddenly his blood ran cold, and he paused, one foot in air, and almost lost his balance. One of the men had coughed. And there was a sound as of one stirring. . . .

CHAPTER XVIII
WESTY'S JOB

Again Westy paused in frightful suspense. He knew that these men would not give him the advantage by calling, "Who's there?" In another second he might be dead. Would he hear the shot, he wondered. Does a person who is shot hear the shot that lays him low? Would he know if he were shot—in the head?

He paused, unable to move a muscle, haunted by these ghastly thoughts. Some one was evidently awake and listening. Should he risk it and take another step? Suppose a twig should crackle. If he took a long stride he might possibly lose his balance. It seemed to him that his very breathing could be heard, that those ruffians could count his heart-beats.

He put one foot forward, felt softly of the ground with his bare foot, pressed the uncertain earth a little, then took another step and felt that he had removed himself still farther from peril. There was no sound, and he indulged the hope that the cough and the stirring had been in sleep.

He took several strides now and each was like a stimulant to him. He would not relax his caution, each step must be well considered, but he believed that he was moving in safety. He was, perhaps, fifteen feet from the tree, and his hope ran high. He began to think of his escape in the past tense and rejoiced in his achievement. If only his friends would not shout. . . .

Well, that was a narrow escape. He would always, he reflected, have something to tell. It had been like an evil dream; he could not bring himself to believe the reality of it. How his mother would shudder when he told her. But he would laugh and say, "All's well that ends well." He would say, "I'm here anyway." Probably Doris would not be too ready to believe him, and Charlie

———

Then suddenly Westy thought of something. He was far enough from the tree now to think calmly, and in the flush and elation of his achievement, a rather chilling thought came to him. Is there any triumph in escape? Can any one who is running from peril ever think of himself in a heroic light? Skillful such a thing might be. But after all is it a thing to tell about with pride?

Certainly, Westy bethought him, it was not a thing to tell with pride to Mr. Madison C. Wilde, if he should ever meet that Philistine again. To tell Mr. Wilde that he, Westy Martin, Boy Scout of America, had been within a dozen feet of that portly wallet, had even heard it spoken of! No, he could not do that. Of course he would have to tell of this affair, but he devoutly hoped that Mr.

Wilde would be gone from the Mammoth Hotel at Hot Springs before he and his companions arrived.

He pictured to himself the way that Mr. Wilde would cock his head sideways in a manner of critical attention and screw his cigar over to the corner of his mouth as he listened to the heroic narrative in which would figure the whereabouts of his wallet. It seemed that this sagacious little man must be always haunting poor Westy. He had well nigh ruined his carefree young life with his homily on scouting *that isn't.* And now here he was again, a terrible specter with a cigar and a derby hat, stalking behind him and saying, *"What you have to do, you do."*

That was in reference to the scouting and wilderness miracles of Shining Sun. He had done things because he had *had* to do them or starve. Well, thought sober Westy, if disgrace is the alternative, it is just as bad. This sophisticated little stranger, Mr. Wilde, loomed up before him now and took the edge off a very credible achievement in scouting—escaping from train robbers in the Rockies.

Achievement! Westy had read about masterly retreats. They were conducted by military strategists, but not by *heroes*. They were skillful but not brave. To be a scout you must have the stuff that heroes are made of. And to be a hero you must *do something*, you must be *brave*. *What you have to do, you do.* Westy Martin knew in his heart what his job was. There was nothing glorious in running away from his job, however silently and fleetly he ran. If he was going to be a scout he must *do his good turn*. You cannot do a good turn to yourself. A good turn is like a quarrel, in a sense. It requires two people.

He might get away from these robbers, but he could not get away from Mr. Madison C. Wilde.

CHAPTER XIX
THE WAY OF THE SCOUT

Much of Mr. Wilde's bantering comment on the train had related to these same good turns. He had referred to the heroic act of mowing a neighbor's lawn or of pursuing some gentleman's recreant hat in a wind-storm. Well, here was the sort of good turn that would open his eyes. *To return him his wallet.*

Westy did not believe that he could do this. He seemed, by a miracle of good luck, to have attained a point of safety. Flight was possible now, and he had an idea which he thought would baffle pursuit. He had thought cautiously to take three or four long strides then run as fast as he could and rejoin his friends before one or other of them shouted to him.

Now the thought of a higher obligation deterred him, and he paused, gazing wistfully, yet fearfully, through the darkness in the direction where he had thought safety and permanent escape awaited him. Then he glanced fearfully back at the tall black tree trunk, and considered that little distance he had achieved by his skill and deathlike silence.

That little distance represented more effort, certainly more strain, than would have been required to walk half a dozen miles. It seemed like a little bank account, a treasury of hard-earned safety. And now he was to squander this in a foolhardy attempt. He almost wished that a shout from his friends would take the matter out of his hands and give him an excuse for flight. Then he was ashamed of that thought.

With hesitating, reluctant step he drew nearer to the tree, cautiously, silently, pausing with each step to listen. He placed his hand over his heart as if to muffle its beating; it seemed as if the whole country could hear the thumping in his breast. In that little area surrounding the tree, Westy Martin was living a whole life. So intense was his concentration, so taut his nerves, that there seemed nothing, no interests, no world, outside this little sphere of action, where every move was fraught with ghastly peril. He placed each foot upon the ground and waited, as a chess player considers and waits before releasing his hold of the chessman.

Going from the tree each step had meant fresh assurance of safety. Going toward it each move meant greater peril. He could not rid his mind of the curiosity about whether he would *know it* if he were suddenly shot dead. Would he hear a sound first—a click, a stir? Was some one watching and listening even now, with pistol upraised and ready? *He, Westy Martin!* It seemed incredible, unthinkable.

Then he made an important decision. What trifles were such things to seem important, to stand between him and death. *Death!* He lowered himself to his hands and knees.

That would mean four points of contact with the ground instead of two, doubling the danger of sound. But it would lower his height. It was the carriage of the animals, and Westy had read that it is always best to imitate the animals when one's purpose is similar to that of an animal. He remembered that a cat in stealing up on a bird holds its body as close to the ground as possible.

Then, in the tenseness of his fear, an irrelevant thought came to him. It was odd how irrelevant thoughts relating to the outer world came to him in this desperate situation. Perhaps his thought about the cat and the bird suggested it. He remembered reading how the famous Wright Brothers, pioneers in aviation, had learned to make their first airplane by studying the flight of birds. Then he thought how Bloodhound Pete had declared that he could track anything but an airplane. Westy smiled; a ghastly, terror-haunted smile, but he smiled. He was thinking of his scheme for eluding pursuit if he should ever be so fortunate as to be in flight.

He crept around the tree trunk and peered into the dark opening of the tiny cave.

CHAPTER XX
A FATAL MOVE

As Westy peered around the tree he beheld something which at first shocked him, then relieved his nervous tension somewhat. Just outside the entrance of the cave was a face upturned toward the sky. At first he saw nothing but this face framed in darkness; it seemed to have no body connected with it. He could not see it well enough to distinguish the features, but he could make out that it bore a flowing mustache. Nor could he see whether the eyes were open, but he assumed they were not, for the posture of the head was certainly not that of one on guard.

At first Westy thought that the man might be looking up into the tree ready to shoot, not knowing that he, Westy, had descended. He had enough presence of mind to look about for anything that glistened, but could discover no betraying glint of a pistol.

Strangely enough, the sight of this upturned face, grim and ghastly because only hazily revealed in the blackness, reassured him. It was a jarring sight, but better than uncertainty.

Cautiously, testing every move, he crept a few inches closer. The face seemed to move, yet still lay stark, staring like a dead man at the starless heaven. It was only the faint shadow of a fluttering twig crossing that motionless face.

Westy crept a few inches closer. And then, suddenly, he realized that Bloodhound Pete *was on guard*. He was on guard in his sleep. He was not sleeping with one eye open. But he was on guard with both eyes closed. He was sleeping in the little hole which formed the entrance of the cave. His body, as well as Westy could make out, was mostly within the dank little retreat; only his head and shoulders were outside. It would have been impossible to pass by him, in or out.

So small was the opening that dangling tentacles of root hung low above his face like loathsome snakes, and as they swayed in the breeze caused tiny shadows to play upon his motionless countenance, producing a ghostly and startling effect. It seemed evident that his companion was a prisoner within; he could not have escaped except across the prone body of his comrade. Thus Bloodhound Pete guarded, even in his sleep, the accomplice whose services had probably been necessary to him. He seemed to Westy to have an uncanny power.

The boy wondered whether this little cell was a favorite resort of the

outlaw because exit from it could be so conveniently and unsuspectingly embarrassed. Certainly Bloodhound Pete, having reached his chosen lair, had very little fear of danger from without. He had reckoned on the country, but he had not reckoned on the tree.

Westy approached now near enough to touch that motionless face. He was all a-tremble. Yet his proximity had at least this advantage. He could not be shot down unawares—the thing he had dreaded. If the man moved he would know it. A man cannot snatch his senses so quickly from sleep as to be able to shoot instantaneously. He would have at least a few seconds of grace.

He did not dare to move now; he paused and looked about. Oh, if his heart would only stop thumping; it sounded like an engine to him. Cold drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead. His hands were icy cold. He swallowed nervously and it seemed that this would arouse echoes from the surrounding hills. He remembered the odd phenomenon that standing close to a sleeping person often causes the slumberer to open his eyes. The very atmosphere of a human presence may arouse one.

Westy knew that he must not stand there courting such perils. Yet he knew not what to do next. Certainly he could not enter the cave nor rummage in this creature's pockets. He could make one move nearer; it would avail him nothing, but he could do it. Possibly he might discover a way—something——

He lifted his left hand from the ground, moving it forward, and at the same time his right knee was instinctively raised by a sort of nervous correspondence. He was ready to move forward. So far as he was concerned, he had confidence now; he knew he would not make a sound. He could settle hand or knee upon the earth with the silence of death. But the breeze was blowing the foliage and now and then crackling a little twig near by. Westy paused. It seemed as if an electrical current were coursing through his lifted arm.

Far off somewhere in the untrodden fastnesses of the mighty range was that moaning he had heard before. For a second, two, three seconds, he paused, tense, trying to control his panting breaths. Then slowly he advanced his hand and lowered it upon—something soft and warm. . . .

Panic seized him with the realization that he had miscalculated in the darkness and was pressing his hand upon that dark, outstretched form.

CHAPTER XXI
IN THE DARKNESS

But there was no movement of the sleeper.

Westy clutched the warm, dark thing and retreated, or rather shrank back. He paused, watching, listening, and moved backward a few feet. Was it safe to stand? He could do this silently, but would not the radical change of posture arouse the sleeper? Might not it stir the air enough to—No—yes, he would.

He drew himself to his feet, silent, trembling. Then he backed away a few paces more, clutching the thing on which his groping hand had descended. He knew what it was now. It was the mackinaw jacket of Bloodhound Pete which had been folded up for use as a pillow. In his sleep the outlaw's head must have rolled off it and that but a minute or two prior to Westy's approach for, as we know, the spot on which the cautious hand of the scout had descended was still warm.

Now Westy's heart beat frantically, but with a new suspense, with imminent triumph and elation. Hurriedly he put his hands into the pockets of the jacket and presently, wonder of wonders, stood under the black sky, alone in the Rockies, with the big wallet of Mr. Wilde, the Philistine, gripped in his soil-covered hands. And still he heard the distant wailing. It seemed to him that that savage voice in the night ought to change or cease, in view of his triumph; that the Rocky Mountains should take notice of this thing that he had done. He seemed to be in Aladdin's Cave or on the brink of Captain Kidd's treasure hole, or in a dream.

Westy felt of the big wallet, smelled of it; it was real, it was leather. He blinked his eyes and knew he was awake. Silently, oh, with such joyous caution, he stole a few paces farther from the tree. Suppose Warde or Ed should call now. *Warde! Ed!* It seemed as if he had not seen them for years.

Again he clutched the wallet to make sure it was substantial. It was very substantial; Mr. Wilde did not deal in the ethereal. Well, then (Westy gulped with nervous elation as he tried to formulate the fact in orderly fashion in his mind) he, Westy Martin, scout of Bridgeboro, New Jersey, had in the twentieth century when there are autos and electric lights and radios and things—he, Westy Martin, had outwitted a desperado, a wild western train robber in the Rocky Mountains and recovered a quantity of booty—*he, Westy Martin!*

Suppose, just suppose his friends should call to him now! This thought aroused him to the realization that he was not yet out of danger, that every second's delay jeopardized his triumph. He took a few long strides with utmost

caution as before, then paused again, listening. Everything seemed to be quiet and he gave way to a little, silent, incredulous laugh, the whole affair seemed so unreal, so at odds with his simple young life. He had a queer feeling that this was not his own experience. His first relaxation after what he had done was this silent, mirthless laugh. Then he gathered himself together, assured himself of his direction and started running with all his might and main.

A few moments should have brought him to the cleft, but he ran for five minutes as fast as he could, yet did not reach it. He knew he was going down hill and he was sure he was running in the direction in which the lowest branch of the tree pointed. He remembered noticing that branch in the daylight and now in his flight he had made assurance doubly sure by noticing where it pointed.

Yet he did not reach the cleft. He ran a little farther, then paused, bewildered, anxious. Here was a fine state of things! *He was lost.* His friends would shout, would undoubtedly ascend the hill in search of him. They would either be heard or would stumble onto that desperate pair of robbers. What was he to do now? Where was he? Wherever he looked there was only darkness. Standing still he could not even be sure about the slope. He ran a little to make sure of this. Yes, he was running *down*; he could tell by the way each foot struck the ground. He ran a little further, then paused irresolute.

Silence, darkness; darkness impenetrable. Westy tried to believe that he could see the outline of a mountain he had noticed in the daylight. He remembered where this was in relation to the cleft. It seemed like blackness hovering in blackness; there was no real outline, it was all elusive. He became greatly agitated. To be baffled like this in the very fullness of his achievement galled him to distraction.

He was seized with a rash impulse to scream and let happen what would. He was within hearing of four people, yet he could not shout. He wondered what would happen if he did shout, or if his comrades shouted. If one of them shouted *just once,* he might run with all his might and main to them and prevent a second shout. But even one shout would be perilous business. He was panic-stricken.

How easily Shining Sun would have sped to his destination through wilderness and darkness! With what unerring instinct that hero of the wilds would have extricated himself from this predicament. “Shining Sun with a coat full of money and things.” Westy laughed nervously. Shining Sun and money seemed not to go together at all. He was of the race that sold vast tracts of country for glass beads and trinkets.

It was only in a nervous way, caused by his perplexity and panic, that Westy thought then of the Indian boy who had haunted him as much as Mr. Wilde had. Such thoughts jump in and out of the troubled and preoccupied

mind like spirits.

He was now on the verge of utter panic. He ran a few paces, paused, then ran a few paces in another direction. In this way he became the more confused. He had no more idea of his direction than he would have had at midnight on the trackless ocean. He had escaped from the outlaws. But the Rocky Mountains had caught him. The one thing to deliver him out of this penetrable blackness was his voice, and that would only betray him to criminals as black as the night itself. He stood stock still, not knowing what to do, cold with desperation, his morale gone; a pitiful spectacle.

The Rocky Mountains had him by the throat.

CHAPTER XXII
THE FRIENDLY BROOK

Then he heard a voice. It was not the voice of either of his comrades, nor was it the voice of either outlaw. It was a voice soft and low, the voice of the Rocky Mountains calling to him the way to go; the scarce audible murmur of the stream far in the distance.

To Westy the sound was as welcome as a log would be to a man drowning. He heard it, a low, steady ripple, far in the fathomless night. Here was a voice he need not fear, thrice welcome voice that would guide him to his friends and arouse no one.

He ran now in the direction of this distant sound. Now and again he had to pause and listen, so faint was it. Once, when the fitful breeze was wrong, he could not hear it. He paused in the still, lonesome night, caught the faint murmur, and hurried on.

He was not running down hill, that was sure. But the murmur of the brook was louder now; he was approaching it. Soon it had swelled into a merry, little song with an accompaniment of splashing as it hurried over rocks. The cheery preoccupation of the rushing stream was in odd contrast to all about; it seemed so carefree and intent there in the very neighborhood of the most harrowing experience of Westy's life. It was quite happy and at home, alone in the Rockies.

Presently he reached it and knew that he was at a point about half a mile below the cleft. Instead of going straight toward the cleft he had descended the hill southward, converging toward the brook, and reaching it at a point where it had flowed down into comparatively level country. He stood near a large rock which he remembered passing when they had followed the stream up to the cleft.

And now, nerve-racked and fatigued in body, his bare feet sore and bleeding, Westy paused for just a moment to make sure of his direction. He knew where he was, the rock was like an oasis in the trackless desert, and the brook was like a trail. But he was not going to trifle with his good fortune now. He would verify every surmise. He would not make a mistake in his elation. He could see nothing. In which direction, then, was the cleft?

He was almost certain about this; yes, of course he was certain; he laughed at the thought of there being any doubt about it. He found it easy to laugh. Yet if the cleft lay upstream—— Well, first he would determine which way was *upstream*.

And just then Westy Martin showed what kind of a scout he was. He was just about to step into the water to *feel* which way it flowed when something deterred him. In that brief second of inspired thought he was the scout par excellence. Instead of stepping into the brook he laid a twig in the water and watched it hurry away in the rippling current. Of course he was right about the direction of the flowing water, the twig confirmed his assurance of this.

Well then, why could he not, looking upstream, see the light of his companions' fire in the cleft? In the afternoon, from this point, they had seen the very spot where they later camped. He was puzzled and looked in the other direction—downstream. There was no spark anywhere, only dense blackness.

Well, he was sure anyway; he could not be mistaken. He knew which way was upstream and his friends were there, light or no light. They were there *if nothing had happened to them*. What *could* have happened to them?

Well, he was sure and he would play his trump card. He would show Bloodhound Pete that there was at least one thing besides an airplane that he could not trail. He took his next momentous step as thoughtfully as he would have spent his last dollar. He stooped and selected a spot where an area of soft earth bordered the stream. Here his footprints would be clear. Then he walked into the stream, approaching it not squarely, but *converging toward* it at an angle.

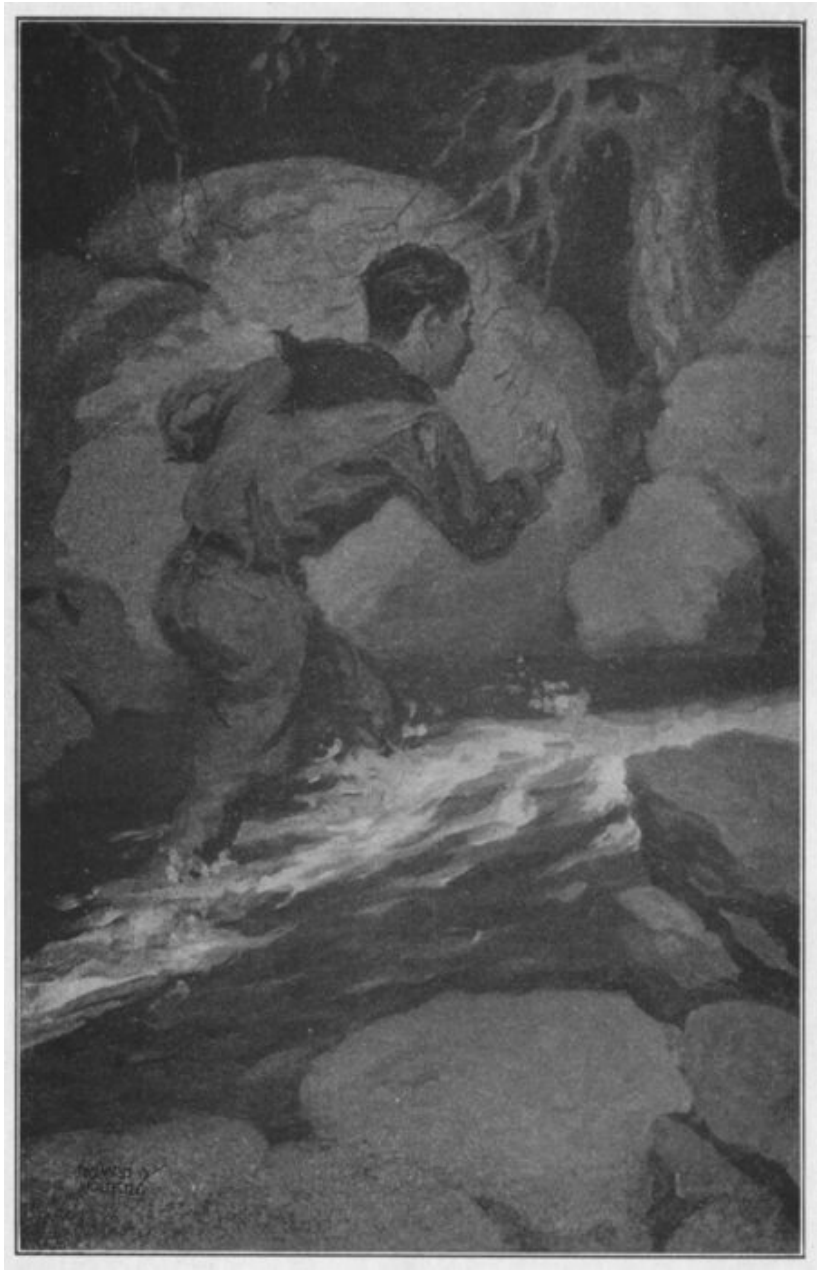
He entered the water facing upstream so as to give the impression that this was his direction, as indeed it was, as far as the cleft. If he turned in the water and retraced his course, no one would see the footprints disclosing this maneuver. The friendly brook had guided him and now he used it as his good ally. Once in the stream he could move in *either direction* and no one would know in which direction he moved. A pursuer would think that he had gone upstream.

CHAPTER XXIII
THE CUT TRAIL

Westy found the water refreshing to his bare, scratched feet. And he was happy now and hopeful. He was puzzled about not seeing a light, but he would not worry about that. He was proud of what he had done; it had a flavor of real scouting about it—if it worked. He had deliberately given a clew to his direction, and for the time being this constituted a peril. But he could retrace his steps without its being known and escape south while his pursuers were proceeding north. Eluding pursuit was just a question of getting away quickly now.

His little subterfuge acted like a tonic to his exhausted nerves and weary body. He was having some fun. His success so far and the need of haste were exhilarating. He hurried along through the cool, murmuring, enveloping water, feeling indeed that this little Rocky Mountain brook was his friend. There were no telltale footprints now for the grim, invincible outlaw to follow; *he had cut his trail*. He liked that expression *cut his trail*. It was every bit as good as the coyote stunt. . . .

Soon the rocks began enclosing him, and the brook flowed swiftly and noisily. He could feel the swish of the oncoming water against his ankles. In a few moments he was bucking a tiny waterfall, and it was hard for him to lift himself up over the mossy, slippery rocks. But he kept in the stream; nothing could have tempted him out of its protection.



IN A FEW MINUTES HE WAS BUCKING A TINY WATERFALL.

He was climbing up where he and his two companions had climbed late that afternoon, except that he was in the water. He knew the spot well enough, even in the dark. It seemed an age since he had seen his friends. His return was

almost like going home to Bridgeboro. If he could only know they were there! Suppose they had gone searching for him on the hill!

At this appalling thought he paused and listened, fearful of hearing a pistol shot in the darkness. But all he could hear was the rippling water merrily covering his tracks. What he did not realize was that he was confusing actual time with the strain he had been under. He had lived a whole lifetime in less than an hour, and he seemed to have been absent from his comrades for days.

Soon the narrow way he had been climbing spread into the cleft, with the slope on one side, the precipitous wall on the other, and the little area of shore on either side of the stream. The place looked different in the darkness, but he knew it.

"Warde—Ed—are you here?" he scarce more than whispered.

There was no answer.

"Where are you, anyway?" Westy asked, emboldened by his fright to speak louder.

There was no answer.

He knew not what to do now; he dared not leave the water to investigate and he could see little in the dense darkness. He peered about trying to penetrate the night with his eyes. Thus he was able to distinguish something, he knew not what, on the shore not far distant. He spoke again in a hoarse whisper and listened. Only the cheery little brook answered him. He thought the something, whatever it was, had not been there before.

Well, if it was a rock he would soon know. He picked a pebble out of the brook and threw it at the uncertain, intangible mass. It made no sound. He picked up a larger one and threw it and was rewarded by an unpretentious and complaining grunt.

Thus, encouraged and greatly relieved, he selected his third missile with a view to immediate and emphatic results.

"Wasmatanyway," he heard in the darkness, accompanied by an unmistakable stirring.

Westy's first impulse was to be angry but he realized at once that the slumber of his friends had probably saved all their lives. He realized too, as he had not realized when he left them, how dog-tired they all had been.

"Who's—wass—there?" stammered Warde, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "I bes a grizzly, wake up, Ed, you ole——"

"Shut up," said Westy. "Wake up and stand up quick and do what I tell you. Stand up and don't move. We're in danger! *Stand up and don't move, do you hear?* Shake Ed and make him stand up—and stand just where you are. Hear?"

Fortunately Warde was in that compliant mood induced by half sleep. He shook Ed and soon both of them were on their feet.

“Now do what I tell you, *quick*,” said Westy. “For goodness’ sake grab hold of Ed so he don’t topple over again. Do you hear me—do you understand? Get awake and do—stand where you are, can’t you—now listen, both of you. Do you want to see Yellowstone Park or do you want to be trailed and shot?”

“What’s matter with you?” Warde asked mildly, in amiable drowsiness.

“J’get any frankfurters?” asked Ed, emerging into consciousness. “I remind myself (yawn) of the (yawn) of the sleeping sickness, I’m so dopey. You back, Westy, old boy? Glasseeyer.”

“I’d be mad at you only maybe you saved my life,” said Westy. “I suppose I have to be grateful.”

“You’re entirely welcome,” yawned Ed. “’N’ many of ’em—*absoloootly*.”

CHAPTER XXIV
DOWNSTREAM

"Now listen," said Westy. "I'll tell you afterward. Are you awake enough to have some sense?"

"You addressing me?" said Ed. "Don't you want some—some kind of fish? I caught about a dozen, didn't I, Warde?"

"Never mind the fish," said Westy; "do what I tell you and be careful. Walk slantingways toward the brook—*upstream*—and walk into the brook that way. Step in as if you were walking *upstream*. All right, that's all right. Now come down toward me—*keep in the water*, whatever you do."

It was a bewildered but obedient pair that waded downstream toward Westy. They had approached the brook against the current and entered it at an angle suggestive of continuing in that direction. Then, dutifully, they had turned and approached Westy.

"Is it all right to bring my safety-pin?" asked Ed.

"Follow me," said Westy.

"I demand an explanation," said Ed. "I fished and caught some fish with my safety-pin, then we waited for you before starting a fire——"

"Yes, thank goodness for that," said Westy.

"We fell asleep, waiting," said Warde; "we were good and tired."

"We tried to keep awake telling Ford stories," said Ed. "Did you ever hear that one about—what's the matter anyway, are we pinched?"

"Listen," said Westy, "and stop your fooling. I'll tell you now, though every minute counts, I can tell you that. There are two robbers camped under that big tree, they're asleep-"

"I don't blame them," said Ed. "I was asleep myself."

"*Listen*," said Westy, impatiently. "They came under the tree—*listen*—they came under the tree after I was up in it, and I heard their talk. Maybe you think I didn't have some narrow escape! They had robbed the train we were on—listen! I can't tell you the whole business now, but anyway I've got Mr. Wilde's wallet and his permit and everything. I had a jacket or something or other—I guess it was—it belonged to one of them—*listen*—I had—I pulled it from near one of them—Bloodhound Pete—that's his name—I don't know where it is now—don't ask me—back up there I guess—I was so excited—but I've got the wallet—you needn't believe it if you don't want to. One of those—one of those men—Blood—Bill—Pete—I mean Bloodhound—Bloodhound Pete—can track anything—I heard him say so.

"Now you fellows follow me and don't either one of you set a foot on dry land. We're going down, not up. When we get past the place where I left my footprints on the shore, we'll be all right, that's what I think. If they think we followed the stream they'll follow it up. See? Now come on and hurry."

Thus the trio that had arrived in the cozy, little cleft, which had seemed to be made for a camping spot, left it in fear and haste, having eaten not one morsel there. In single file they hurried along through the protecting water, Warde and Ed thoroughly aroused by the peril which beset them.

They were not hungry, despite their rather long fast. Nor were they inclined to talk until they had passed the rock near which Westy had entered the water. Even Ed's cheery mood seemed clouded by the seriousness of their situation. Not even Westy's exploit of recovering the wallet, nor the thrilling details of his adventure, were matter for talk. They moved along, a silent little procession, clinging, trusting to this one hope of safety, the water. So they trod on, silent, apprehensive.

The brook was not only their concealment, but their guide, and they followed its winding course through the darkness with but the one dominating thought, to place themselves beyond the peril of capture. After a little while they reached the point of the brook's intersection with the road and paused to consider whether now it might be safe for them to forsake the stream's uncertain pathway and resume their former line of travel.

They decided to stick to the brook for wherever it led, even through the somber and bewildering intricacies of the forest, it at least would not betray them into the hands of murderers. At last, after three hours of wading, their uneventful progress had cheered them enough for Ed to remark:

"We don't know where we're going, but we're on our way."

"I guess everything's all right," said Warde.

"Don't be too sure," said Westy.

"Well, anyway, I'm feeling encouraged enough to be hungry," said Ed, "I just happened to think of it. I've got my little string of fish with me—if I ever have a chance to cook them."

"How many miles do you suppose we've walked in this brook?" Warde asked.

"I don't know how far *you've* walked in it," said Ed, "but *I've* walked in it ninety-two and eleven-tenth miles. I think it runs into the Gulf of Mexico."

"Nix," said Westy.

"No? Then it runs into the kitchen sink."

"It runs into a lake and we're coming to it," said Westy. "We've been walking over three hours. Shall we take a chance and camp there?"

"Either that or we walk right into the lake, don't we?" asked Ed. "If I'm going to do that, I'd like to know it beforehand if it's all the same to you."

"What do *you* say, Warde?" Westy asked.

"I'm too tired to say anything," said Warde. "If those friends of yours were to come and shoot me, I couldn't be any more dead than I am now."

"Correct the first time," said Ed.

Soon the brook began to broaden out and presently the fugitives for the first time found themselves in water too deep for wading. They were almost at the edge of a sheet of water, black as ink, where it lay surrounded by precipitous hills. A more desolate spot one could hardly imagine. It was easy to believe that they were the first human beings to lay eyes on it.

"Well," said Westy doubtfully, "I guess it's all right; anyway, I guess we can't go any farther, I'm all in."

"If we don't get out of this water, we'll be all in," said Ed. "I'm up to my knees already. So far I'm not so stuck on Yellowstone Park. Maybe it'll seem better when I see it."

"I'd like to know where we are," said Warde. "I bet we've walked ten miles anyway."

"Well," said Westy, "let's camp on shore and have some eats. They may be asleep yet and anyway, they couldn't find us here."

It was amusing how distance and utter weariness seemed to diminish the terrible power of Bloodhound Pete. He and his imprisoned accomplice seemed very far away, and effectually baffled, should they undertake pursuit. And as Westy and his two companions settled down to make a second camp and prepare their belated meal, the peril they had feared grew less and less and, in proportion as it ceased to dominate their minds, Westy's exploit loomed large. And his two friends, sitting about their little camp-fire, reflected upside down in the still lake, examined the wallet of Mr. Madison C. Wilde, the Philistine, as if it were some relic from Aladdin's Cave.

CHAPTER XXV
LITTLE DABS OF GRAY

So at last they cooked the fish. Warde cleaned them with his jack-knife on a flat stone while Westy and Ed gathered enough wood for a little fire. Westy was now so affluent in heroism, and had so far regained his poise in consequence, that he could stand calmly by and witness the civilized proceeding of lighting a fire with a match. Or perhaps he was too weary and hungry to experiment with any of those primitive devices for striking a spark with Nature's raw materials.

And it might be observed that if you should happen to have escaped from train robbers in the Rocky Mountains and have walked a dozen miles more or less in the night, a mess of fish cooked loose upon a wood fire is not half bad. You will find them charred and tasting of smoke (which is well) and elusive when subjected to the rules of table etiquette. They crumble and fall apart and have to be sought for in the glowing fastnesses of consuming wood and extracted like the kernels of hickory nuts. They have to be caught all over again. But they are delicious—if you have lately escaped from train robbers in the Rocky Mountains.

In such a country as they were in one is much less likely to suffer from cold and exposure at night, notwithstanding the biting air, than in some tamer woodland where the ruggedness of Nature offers no natural shelters and wind-breaking rocks.

The boys, refreshed by their meal, but staggering from fatigue, walked around the little lake in search of a shelter along the precipitous shore. They found a place which seemed to have been made for three weary scouts, a place which, as Ed remarked, any boarding-house keeper in the East could get ten dollars a week for. It was not high enough to sit up in, but none of them felt like sitting up. Only a few pine branches were necessary to transform this little recess into a dormitory. And here the three award boys slept with a profundity which there is no word in any language capable of describing.

It was midmorning when Westy awoke, finding his companions still sleeping soundly. His joints were stiff and he found it soothing to his knees to hold his legs out straight. But he was not exactly tired. It was the aftermath of fatigue.

The sun was well up over the little mountain lake, glinting the water as it made its slow progress across the blue sky. How cheering it was! It seemed to radiate hope. How companionable—like a friend from home. The same genial

sun that rose over the hills at Temple Camp and flecked the lake there with its glinting light. And here it was in the Rocky Mountains! What a change it wrought in the country and in the award boy's spirit. Oh, he could do anything now, and all was well!

He stretched one leg out stiff and held it that way and lingered upon the ineffable relief that this afforded his knee.

Westy did not know how far they had walked in the brook during the night, nor in what direction, but the great mountains seemed still to be far away. He tried to identify the landscape with that he had last been able to see, which was from his vantage point in the big elm, but there was nothing recognizable now, only the brook.

He had thought that perhaps daylight would find them amid the wild fastnesses they had seen from a distance. But as he looked about he saw that the immediate neighborhood was not forbidding though it was wild and unpeopled. Could it be that he was in the heart of the Rockies? In such a place as Lewis and Clark, for example, had camped in their adventurous journey of exploration? The Rockies that he had dreamed of were always in the distance, holding themselves aloof as it seemed, from these hapless pilgrims. It was strange. Was he, in fact, *in the Rockies*?

He was, indeed, only the Rockies were too big for him. He had expected to find them under his feet. He had thought of them as something quite limited and distinct. Of course, there were dizzy heights and remote passes, terrible in their primeval wildness, and these it was not vouchsafed him to visit. But he was in the vast, enchanted region, just the same. Had he not escaped from train robbers in these very wilds? He, Westy Martin?

He felt in his pocket and made sure of the precious wallet of which he was the proud custodian. It was there, smooth and bulging; the whole thing was real. He had slept and awakened and the whole thing was real. If he had shot a grizzly, as *Dan Darewell in the Rockies* by Captain Dauntless had done, he could hardly be more incredulous of his own achievement. He began to reflect how it had all happened.

He was glad that the others were not yet awake. Their sprawling attitudes bespoke rest rather than grace. There seemed no danger of their rousing. He did not know whether they were farther from the Yellowstone Park than they had been the day before or nearer to it. If their journey of the night had tended in a fairly straight course toward it then they might be now within four or five miles of it, perhaps even less.

There was no particular direction which attracted Westy's gaze; he just gazed about. Mountains, mountains, mountains! They appalled him. He could see the mountains, but not the way through them. And they seemed impenetrable. One thing did attract his attention; this was a great tree far off,

one of those big, lonely trees which serve as landmarks. From the position of the sun he thought this was south. But this fact afforded him no enlightenment. East, west, north, south, were all the same; there was no telling where Yellowstone Park was.

Then suddenly, he noticed something else which did arouse his interest. Beyond the tree was a little dab of gray in the clear sky. He thought it a tiny cloud, but it dissolved even as he watched it. Immediately another appeared a short distance from where it had been and likewise dissolved. Then another.

"Those aren't clouds," said Westy. "They're—— I bet it's a train."

He listened, but could hear nothing. But a little farther along, in line where the little dabs of white had appeared and disappeared, there straggled up a faint, half-tangible area of flaky whiteness which was gone instantly it was discernible.

"It's a train all right," Westy said, delighted. "I bet—I know it is."

Beyond the point where he had been looking, the rugged landscape rolled away, magnificent, majestic, endless. Here and there among the crowded mountains some mighty peak pierced the sky. No touch of human contamination was there, no gray streak imaginable as a road, no steeple, no green area of farm-land, with thin lines scarce discernible as fences. So it might have been a hundred thousand years ago. If man were there with all his claptrap he was swallowed up in the distance and vastness and all unseen by the scratched and tattered boy who stood barefooted in his wild refuge and gazed and gazed.

It was only scenery that he saw, and it would have been about the same had he glanced in another direction. Only the little, gray, dissolving specks had drawn his gaze there, and he looked long and wonderingly on the stupendous glory that was spread before him. He knew not what it was, in particular, that he was looking at.

Thus, Westy Martin, award boy, saw the Yellowstone National Park for the first time. Saw it as a scout should see it, divested by the kindly distance of every vestige of human handiwork or presence that it has. Saw it in all its awesome grandeur, and saw not its boundaries or its artificial comforts, only its primeval magnificence extending mile upon mile and not distinguishable from the vast, mountainous country in which it lies.

Westy did not know that the area he was gazing at was within the boundaries of Yellowstone Park. His interest was centered in the little flickers of smoke that he had seen. If these indicated the railroad it would not be difficult to reach it, and from there on the way would be easy and perhaps short. For the hundredth time since he had become its custodian, he felt in his pocket to make sure the wallet was safe.

Then for a few moments he thought, standing there alone. He had always

liked, at times, to be alone; he was that kind of a boy. But now he could not bring himself to end this romantic, musing loneliness. Well, fate had been kind to him (he gave all the credit to fate) and he had done something, something worth while. To be sure, there was nothing so very primitive about it, he mused. Shining Sun doubtless could have made Nature yield him up a hundred various delectables out of which to make a feast. Poor Westy knew nothing about herbs and edible roots nor other commissary stores which the forest holds for those who know her secrets.

Again, he felt his pocket to make sure the wallet was safe. "I—I bet Shining Sun never even saw a wallet," he said. "I bet he doesn't even know how valuable money is." Poor Westy, he could not hope to be a scout, free of all the prosaic contaminations of civilization, like Shining Sun. But at least no one could say now that he and his friends were just parlor scouts playing games in a back-yard. . . .

He lingered just a moment more, gazing upon the vast, rugged panorama as if it were *his*, something he had won. Then he looked, not ruefully but with a thrill of pride, on his scratches and tattered raiment. Well, at least he could look Shining Sun in the face, and Mr. Madison C. Wilde, too, if he should ever encounter that jarring personage again.

Then he went over and aroused his friends. If the money in the wallet had been his, he would have given it for a cup of hot coffee. "Come on, get up," he said; "we'll have to catch some more fish if we can, but anyway, I think we'll get there this morning; I think I know where the railroad tracks are. Have—I hope—have you got any matches left, Ed?"

"Absolooootly," said Ed, sitting up refreshed and cheery as always. "And my trusty safety-pin is always at your service, Scout Martin. Where do we go from here?"

CHAPTER XXVI
MOVIE STUFF

The spacious lobby of the Mammoth Hotel near the Gardiner entrance of Yellowstone Park was the scene of an amusing spectacle. Tourists, resting in comfortable chairs in the big, sunny, white-trimmed room, found a kind of restful diversion in the demeanor of a little man who strode back and forth like a lion in its cage, occasionally pausing before the clerk's counter to relieve himself of some pithy and vigorous comment. Away he would stride again in his strenuous roaming, now and again tacking so as to come within speaking range of a portly, elderly man, who sat with an air of grim resignation in a large rocking-chair. Here he would deliver himself of confidential observations relating to their joint interests and perplexities.

The little man had a bristly mustache which contributed to his pugnacious aspect, and his derby hat was cocked on the back of his head in a way which seemed to indicate trouble and preoccupation. His unlighted cigar, too, contributed to this effect; it seemed more a weapon than a solace sticking upward at a rakish angle out of the corner of his mouth like a miniature cannon. He seemed altogether out of place among the scattering of carefree sightseers, who rocked at ease or read magazines or addressed postcards by the thousand.

"I don't suppose they'd pay any attention to a wire," he observed in sudden inspiration as he paused, in his ruminating course at the clerk's counter.

"Did you speak to the park superintendent?" one of the clerks casually asked.

"I spoke to forty-'leven superintendents," the little man shot back as he moved away on his circling orbit. Then, as a sort of gesture of belligerence, he looked at his watch. "I've talked to everybody except the wild animals themselves," he added, addressing nobody in particular. Then, reaching his grimly silent colleague, he planted himself before him, legs outstretched, a very picture of nonchalant annoyance and impatience.

"Well, there's nothing to do but wait for a duplicate permit, I suppose," he said. "If the grizzlies and all the other savage junk up on Mount what-d'you-call-it are as slow and clumsy as the government, we ought to be able to pose them for photos. Can you beat it? Allen says they can't countersign an affidavit here, so there you are. You wiring for coin?"

"Oh, yes, that's not what's worrying me," said the elderly man.

"What do you think about Glittering Mud? Can you beat that kid? That

manager of his, Black Hawk, ought to be in Wall Street! He'd have Morgan and Rockefeller and that bunch racing for the poorhouse. Well," he added, subsiding somewhat and seating himself beside his colleague, "we'll just have to sit and look at Old Faithful for a couple of weeks, I suppose."

"You saw the superintendent of the whole shebang?"

"He's away."

"Huh. Well, we don't want to get into any trouble with the government. Best thing is just to wait for a new permit, I suppose."

"'Tisn't the best thing, it's the only thing," said the little man.

"I wish you'd had Billy along," said the elder man; "he could have shot the hold-up; it would have been good stuff."

"Yes, it *would* have been good stuff," agreed the little man; "good Wild West stuff. That Bulldog—what did the conductor call him?"

"Bloodhound Pete," said the elder man.

"He was a regular feller," said the little man, lifting one knee over the other and smiling in a way of pleasant reminiscence; "yes, he was the real thing; he had eyes like Bill Hart's. The conductor told me afterwards that every blamed detective Uncle Sam has has been after that gent for three years—never even got a squint at him. Nobody ever saw him except passengers and express messengers and mail car clerks. He's an artist. Conductor told me he doesn't make any tracks—*nothing*—just disappears. Once a pal squealed on him and then they thought they had him. But the pal was found shot—no tracks as usual. The man's an artist, one of the good old Jesse James school. Regular Robin Hood! Fairbanks ought to do that guy——"

"Well, he's set us back a couple of weeks I suppose," said the elder man, "and a thousand dollars."

"It's the couple of weeks I'm thinking of," said the other. "I'd give another thousand to get down to business."

His mood of impatience and annoyance seemed to return, and he allowed himself to slide down in his chair so far that the chair-back pushed against the brim of his hat and tilted it forward at an angle which somehow suggested the last extremity of disgust and perplexity.

CHAPTER XXVII
THE ADVANCE GUARD

It is not necessary to tell you that this greatly harassed little man was none other than our traveling acquaintance, Mr. Madison C. Wilde, who had cast such a gloomy shadow in the young life of Westy Martin. He had emerged from one of the most harrowing experiences a traveler may have, without discredit to his pluck, but with a very heavy strain upon his temper.

His cigar, which was a sort of barometer of his mood, stood in an almost vertical position as he sat upon his back in the chair, his face (what could be seen of it under his tilted hat) lost in a brown study. His companion was Mr. Alexander Creston, owner of EDUCATIONAL FILMS. WILD LIFE AS IT IS, UPON THE SCREEN.

Mr. Wilde attracted a good deal of attention for two reasons, and several boys among the resting tourists hovered as near as they dared and gazed at him. For one thing, he was connected with the movies. Also he was the victim of a daring hold-up, had been face to face with a desperate character, a man crowned with a halo of mystery, a famed outlaw whom no awestruck boy had ever seen. These boys could not see this fabled terror, so they stood about gazing at the man who had been one of his victims. Mr. Wilde shone by the reflected light of Bloodhound Pete.

The other victims of the hold-up had gone upon their sightseeing tours very much shaken by their experience of the previous morning. Of all that hapless company only Mr. Wilde remained, stranded in the Mammoth Hotel at Mammoth Hot Springs, with nothing to do but wait for the machinery at Washington to grind him out another permit. Mr. Creston, who likewise waited, had wired for money to replace the very considerable sum which the bandits had taken. Billy, the camera man, who with Mr. Creston had awaited the arrival of Mr. Wilde, also rested at the Mammoth Hotel in enforced idleness.

To have encountered Bloodhound Pete, the mysterious, unseen terror of Wyoming, conferred a certain prestige even upon his victim. And so the boys who happened to be about gazed in awe at the figure of Mr. Wilde whose posture, eloquent of preoccupation and annoyance, discouraged them from questioning him.

But one likely looking boy in natty scout attire, whose mother was conducting a masterly post card assault against her distant friends, ventured to address the harassed and forbidding personage who had been vouchsafed the

glory of seeing the modern Robin Hood.

"If there's anything I can do for you, I'll be glad to do it," the boy said. It required some temerity to say even that much. "If you want me to go to the superintendent's office or something?"

This altogether scoutish proffer of service caught Mr. Wilde in a mood not calculated to receive it kindly. No doubt his vexation was natural. At first he did not answer at all, then, looking at the Boy Scout in a way of surly half-interest, he said in a tone quite unworthy of his usual bantering cordiality.

"No, sir, *absolutely nothing*. There's nothing that any of you kids can do for me. So you might as well all chase out of here and see the park instead of standing around gaping. Come on, beat it now!"

The group scattered.

"Kids around here are a blamed nuisance," Mr. Wilde observed to his companion.

"I wish we could find a nice, likely youngster to take up yonder," said Mr. Creston.

"Huh—yes—I should think," muttered Mr. Wilde. "And who'd go along as nurse girl?"

"I'd go along as nurse girl," said a cheery voice. Mr. Wilde looked up and beheld the funny, smiling countenance of Ed Carlyle.

CHAPTER XXVIII
THE GARB OF THE SCOUT

Mr. Wilde stared. The loitering boys stared. Everybody stared. And well they might, for the figure they gazed upon was bizarre to the last degree. Around Ed's waist was drawn a sweater like a romantic Spanish sash, while sticking ostentatiously in the shoulder of his shirt was a safety-pin, disqualified for its conventional use by much twisting and bending.

But the onlookers had not long to stare. The sound of loud talking outside caused a general rush of the younger element to the great veranda, while their less curious elders looked from doors and windows and wondered.

Approaching along one of the walks that bisect the spacious lawn in front of the big hotel was a strange sight. A boy in tattered khaki was approaching, hatless and barefooted, surrounded and followed by a questioning, gaping, shouting, clamorous throng. With him was another khaki-clad boy who was laughing at the excitement they were causing and answering the queries of their astonished escort.

It was no wonder that the boys gazed spellbound at the ragged apparition, nor that the park employees and tourists paused to stare. His trousers were all but in shreds, and not a button remained upon his mud-bespattered and torn shirt which lay open exposing his scratched chest. His hair was disheveled, one rebellious lock depending over his forehead. With one hand he kept continually pushing this back and sometimes effected the same result with a fine toss of his head, which somehow rounded out his picturesque, vagabond aspect. His other hand was firmly buried in his trousers pocket, which bulged with the pressure of something large and flat. It was noticeable that he kept his hand there.

But it was not the name of Westy Martin that brought every last person out of the hotel, watching eagerly the excited little group. Rather was it the awful name of Bloodhound Pete shouted by an exuberant follower of the award boys.

"He got it from Bloodhound Pete! He got it from Bloodhound Pete!"

"Let's see it!"

"Yes, you did—not!"

"Give us a look!"

"Seeing is believing!"

"Where did he?"

"When?"

"How?"

“Who says he did?”

“*This* feller did—*alone*? *Yaaah!*”

“What do you take us for?” one breathless skeptic demanded of Warde.

And so, shouting, clamoring, denying, scoffing, questioning and crowding about him and talking all at the same time, the crowd constituted itself a vociferous escort to Westy as he passed along the walk and up the big veranda and into the spacious, airy lobby of the Mammoth Hotel.

He had expected to keep his promise to his poor, fond mother and “wash his hands and face and brush his clothes before leaving the train,” and a few minutes later descend, bag and baggage, from an auto before the portal of his first stopping place in the park. “When you enter a hotel,” she had said, adjusting his collar, “you want to have your hair brushed and look like a gentleman.”

“Is Mr. Madison C. Wilde here?” Warde asked.

“The movie man?”

“Sure he is, he’s in the smoking room.”

“No, he isn’t, he’s in the lobby—he’s mad.”

“Come on, I’ll show you where he is, he chased us.”

Before Mr. Wilde had recovered from the sight of Ed Carlyle, Westy stood before him, conspicuous in the clustering, vociferous throng, a fine picture of rags and tatters. Warde, standing close to him, had forcibly loosened his comrade’s rolled-up sleeve so that on the loose hanging khaki the stalker’s badge and the pathfinder’s badge were exposed. Westy’s other arm, with a long scratch on it where he had let it slide against the bark of the big elm, was at his side, hand in pocket, clutching the treasure that was there.

Not so much as one vestige remained about Westy of the trim boy scout whom Mr. Wilde had “jollied” on the train; only his two badges exposed by his patrol mate and rendered clearer to view by Ed Carlyle as he smoothed down his companion’s wrinkled sleeve.

“Mr. Wilde,” said Westy, pulling his scarred arm out of his pocket, “here’s your wallet; it’s got your money and your permit all safe. I took it away from Bloodhound Pete and—and——”

“The pleasure is entirely ours,” Ed Carlyle concluded for him.

CHAPTER XXIX
THE POLISH OF SHINING SUN

Westy told his story simply, modestly, while a swelling crowd clustered about. It seemed that he and his comrades had not been missed from the train during the short run after they had been left behind. Doubtless the excitement caused by the train robbery had sufficiently extinguished any curiosity among their chance acquaintance en route. Indeed, Mr. Wilde very frankly observed, "You kids were the least of my troubles; I was thinking of my wallet. I was trying to write out some descriptive stuff about wild animals and hoping you wouldn't come back again when the train stopped and a woman screamed and the next thing I knew I was handing my writing tablet to Bill Hart and telling another woman to shut up. Never gave you kids another thought."

Westy and his comrades were greatly relieved to learn that no word of their non-appearance had been wired to Bridgeboro. It is true that they had only just escaped with their little adventure and saved themselves from prosaic complications, for the gentleman who was to have received them at Gardiner had been in communication with Livingston and had engineered the dispatch of an auto over the road to pick them up. But fate was kind to them and somehow they had not encountered the rescue car, which (to make matters worse) was a Ford sedan.

So it befell that the three award boys, in despite of all modern claptrap, crossed the boundary of Yellowstone National Park as some scout or trapper of old might have crossed it, having safely eluded two western desperadoes and a Ford sedan. But it was a narrow escape.

"Could we see Shining Sun? Is he here?" Westy asked almost in a reverend whisper.

"All is over between Stove Polish and myself," said Mr. Wilde. "Never mention his name again. That canny, little red-face wanted five hundred dollars down before leaving this hotel, and his manager, Pink Vulture or Black Hawk or whatever he calls himself, insists on the kid being featured in all the exploitation stuff. *N-o-t-h-i-n-g* doing, I told him! That ain't the way we put over Educational Films. *Lo, the poor Indian*—bunk. Why, Stove Polish is starting his own outfit in Hollywood next year. What d'yer know about that? Don't talk to me about that Cheyenne! It's good he wasn't around when the Yankees bought Cape Cod for a couple of spark plugs or something or other."

Westy gasped.

"As a pathfinder that kid is O.K.," said Mr. Wilde. "He can track a dollar to

its silent lair. *N-o-t-h-i-n-g* doing, I told him! If you want to meet him, there he is in the next room or somewheres or other. Keep your hands on your watches."

Dumbfounded at this hearty tirade, the three boys, followed by an admiring throng of other boys, explored the public places of the big hotel. They penetrated the dining room and glanced about curiously. They peered into the remotest fastnesses opening from corridors and stole into all the carpeted nooks and crannies where they thought a Cheyenne Indian might lurk. Mr. Wilde had declined to hit the trail with them.

"I'll show him to you," said an accommodating youngster who clung to Westy; "I know him; I'll find him for you. Mr. Creston was bawling him out; oh, boy, you ought to have heard him."

So it was that Westy's cup of joy was full and he found himself hunting Indians like the gallant Custer or like Buffalo Billy. And, at last, they brought poor Westy's hero to bay in one of the parlors. He sat in a rocker, talking with his manager, Mr. Hawk, Black Hawk of the Rockies—and Hollywood.

Poor Westy, he could only gaze speechless. More atrocious than all the atrocities committed by the movies was Shining Sun, the Indian boy. He was ravishing in his sartorial splendor, wearing a red-ribboned straw hat and spats! *And he carried a cane*—young boy though he was. Oh, shades of Pontiac and Sitting Bull! He carried a cane! Wesley Barryized, Jackie Cooganized, movieized, he sat there talking to Mr. Hawk about the disagreement they had had with *Educational Films*. And if old Massasoit did not turn in his grave it must have been because he was too shocked or grieved to stir!

Westy gazed at this sophisticated youngster in chilled disillusionment. Shining Sun had indeed been shining while he, the parlor woodsman, the back-yard scout, had been getting away from the most notorious bandit west of the Mississippi. If Westy had beheld Bloodhound Pete in a dress suit and stove-pipe hat he could hardly have received a greater shock. That the Indian boy had real skill and woods lore did not save him in the eyes of this sturdy little hero of the Silver Fox Patrol, who had found money the only false note in his memorable adventure.

"Come on away," Warde whispered, "he's talking business. Shh! Don't you know he's the Cheyenne Valentino?"

"He ought to be stabbed to the heart with my safety-pin," said Ed. "If I ever meet him in a lonely spot on Broadway some dark night, I'll lasso him with worsted from my sweater. Come on, let's get away from here. I'm sorry for you, West, you old tramp; I'm for the Boy Scouts of America. I'd rather live on fish and wear honest rags."

"*You tell 'em*," said Warde, earnestly.

He put his arm over his patrol mate's shoulder as if to claim a kinship of

which even Ed could not boast. But it made no difference to Ed, for a scout is a brother to every other scout throughout the whole length and breadth of the land. Westy seemed conscious of this as he rapped Ed on the shoulder while the three strolled away together. “Well, are you cured?” Warde asked.

“Yes, I’m cured,” said Westy.

“You admit you’re a scout?” queried Ed.

“I admit *you’re* one,” Westy said.

“Thanks for those kind words.”

“You always smile and look pleasant and that’s the main thing,” said Westy.

“Wrong the first time,” said Ed. “The main thing is not to accept anything for a service; law five, also law nine; handbook page thirty-four.”

“You said it,” enthused Warde. “The trouble with——”

“Tarnished Sun,” interrupted Ed.

“The trouble with him,” said Warde, “he’s been commercialized.”

“Repeat that word,” said Ed.

“Commercialized,” said Warde.

“Go to the head of the class and take a slap on the wrist,” said Ed.

“It means kind of spoiled by money and being famous and all that,” said Warde.

“I’ll take your word for it,” said Ed. “It’s a mighty nice word, I’ll say that.”

“There are people trying to commercialize boy scouts, too,” said Warde.

“Not if we see ’em first,” said Westy.

“If we get killed, we’ll get killed for love,” said Ed. “We won’t take any money for it—not even a tip.”

“Let’s all make a solemn vow that we won’t carry canes,” said Warde.

“I’m with you,” said Ed. “Or wear spats.”

“Right,” said Warde.

“I’ve got to get some clothes somewhere,” said Westy.

“I think there’s a clothing store at the bottom of the canyon,” Warde observed.

“First I’d like to go to the Devil’s Kitchen and get something to eat,” said Ed.

“Don’t you want to see the petrified forest?” Westy asked.

“Not unless I can eat it,” said Ed. “Just at present I don’t want to see anything I can’t eat—except fish. If anybody mentions fish to me, I’ll stab him with my safety-pin. I wouldn’t even listen to a fish story.”

“I bet Mr. Creston and Mr. Wilde had an awful scrap with Tarnished Sun,” said Warde.

“I bet Shining Sun hit him with his cane,” said Ed. “If he did, I hope Mr. Wilde just puffed cigar smoke in his face; it would serve him right.”

“Do you smell roast beef?” said Warde.
“*Boy*, that smells good,” said Westy.
“I think we’re on the right trail,” said Ed.

CHAPTER XXX
VISITORS

As Westy went about the hotel in his tattered attire and thought of Shining Sun, the Indian boy, unnoticed and occupied with his business quarrel, it seemed to him that the world was upside down.

Wherever the award boy went, people looked at him, and as for boys, of whom there were many about the place, they followed him around, besetting him again and again for details of his adventure. Some of the more shy ones contemplated him with a kind of awe as if he had come from Mars, asking questions about Bloodhound Pete which, of course, Westy could not answer.

He found himself a real hero, with no essential of that thrilling role lacking. Gentlemen patted him on the shoulder, telling him that he was "*some* boy," and one girl begged that before he changed a *single stitch* of his *perfectly adorable* attire, he let her take him with her kodak. In the dining room all faces were directed to the table where the three award boys ate. And indeed it was worth while watching them eat, for, as Ed observed, "nobody ever ate like this before."

"The tables are turned, that's sure," said Warde.

"Maybe we can continue at another table," said Ed.

"I mean Westy's the real scout after all," said Warde.

"My error, I was thinking of dining tables," said Ed. "I can't seem to think of anything else. That girl over at the third table, Wes, the one that's eating a cruller; she's the one that took your picture, isn't she? I want to collect a dollar and a half from her as your manager."

"She ought to take *your* picture in that crazy sweater," Westy said.

"That will cost her fifty cents and the war tax," said Ed. "That sweater saved your life, young Scratch-on-the-arm, full-blooded New Jersey Boy Scout. That's a good name, hey, Warde?"

"Yes, and you ought to be called Red Sweater or Bent Safety-pin," laughed Warde.

"And *you* ought to be called Warde's Cake," said Ed. "You seem to have the plate all to yourself."

"I can't stop eating while people are watching me," said Warde.

"Let them look," said Ed, "it's no disgrace to eat. Pass the pickles will you, Scratch-on-the-arm? When are we going to start seeing the Park, anyway?"

"To-morrow morning," said Westy.

"We're going to see Cleopatra's Terrace," said Warde.

“I don’t want to go where she is,” said Ed. “I had her in the fourth grade; she and I don’t speak.”

“There are a lot of terraces,” said Westy.

“If they want to bring them in, I’ll look at them,” said Warde. “The rest of to-day I’m going to rest.”

“And I’ve got to get hold of my baggage,” said Westy.

“Maybe you could borrow a cutaway suit from Tarnished Sun,” said Ed. “I’d like to see the Devil’s Kitchen to-day anyway; I never knew he could cook.”

“I’ve tasted some things I think he must have cooked,” said Warde.

“We have to see Orange Spring, too, while we’re here,” said Westy.

“I heard that was a lemon,” said Ed.

“There’s one spring I would like to visit,” said Warde.

“The bed spring,” said Ed. “Right the first time. Let’s all visit the wonderful bed springs and drop in on Satan for breakfast.”

“Already you’re thinking about breakfast,” said Westy.

“Sure, I am,” said Ed. “In about an hour I’ll be asleep and I can’t think of it then, can I? I’m good and tired if anybody should ask you.”

“They don’t have to ask, they can see it,” said Warde.

But it befell that the three boys had something else to think about when they adjourned to the spacious, spotless room that had been reserved for them. For scarcely had they entered it when in came Mr. Willison, the gentleman connected with one of the camps who had assumed the responsibility of receiving the trio and “having an eye to them,” as he had said, during their sojourn in the Park. He was active in scouting and an enthusiastic Rotarian.

A fine, genial man he was, who caught the boys’ mood of raillery toward the natural wonders they were to see and was not at all inclined to line up the customary “sights” before them like a school lesson. With him was Mr. Wilde, hat on back of head, hands thrust down in trousers pockets, whimsical, efficient, sophisticated. He seemed buried in a kind of worldly, practical rumination.

“Well, how are the back-yard scouts?” he asked, with a kind of surly cordiality, as he seated himself on the edge of one of the beds. “You went and did it, didn’t you?” he added, turning to Westy. “You satisfied?”

“Are *you* satisfied?” Westy asked.

Mr. Wilde scrutinized him shrewdly. “Uh huh,” he finally said.

“Then *I’m* satisfied,” said Westy.

Mr. Wilde glanced sideways with a skeptical, knowing look at Mr. Willison. That gentleman exhibited an air of silent confidence. An acute observer might have surmised that he and the thoroughly worldly Mr. Wilde had some sort of bet pending. It was not in Mr. Wilde’s nature to deal in

compliments, but no one could have failed to interpret his sagacious, approving, amused look at the boy who stood, ill at ease, leaning against the dresser.

"So you're satisfied, huh? I suppose you think you're a regular feller now —regular scout!"

"I think I'm pretty tired," said Westy.

"You going to send an account of it to the Boy Scout Magazine?"

"No, I'm not."

"No?"

There followed a pause. Then Mr. Wilde very deliberately pulled out the memorable wallet, placed it flat on his lap and laid it open.

"Was everything all right—all there?" Warde asked.

No answer. Westy leaned against the dresser, kicking one foot nervously. Somewhere within easy hearing an orchestra was playing the *Three O'Clock in the Morning Waltz*. It seemed odd to be hearing this in the wilds of the Rocky Mountains. Westy could hear the sound of dancing. He felt tenderly of the long scratch on his bare leg. He dropped the towel which lay over his shoulder. Ed Carlyle sat up on top of the high dresser, his legs dangling. Warde, sitting on the edge of another bed, kept time with the plaintive music, drumming with his fingers.

Oddly enough, Westy felt almost as nervous and apprehensive as when he had let himself silently down out of the big elm. No one spoke. Every one seemed to be waiting.

And Mr. Wilde was distressingly slow and deliberate.

CHAPTER XXXI
NO ESCAPE

At length Mr. Wilde spoke. “Mr. Creston thinks that you kids should be suitably rewarded. Do you want to fix a price or do you want to leave it to me? You did a big thing—he thinks we ought to consider the three of you as one.”

“That suits me all right,” said Ed, swinging his legs; “then any one of us can answer for the whole three. What is it? I’ll answer.”

“Righto,” said Warde.

“I was thinking,” said Mr. Wilde, “that two hundred and fifty dollars——”

Then Westy spoke up, kicking his foot nervously and gulping, while tears appeared in his sober, clear eyes.

“If—if you’re going to talk about money,” he said, “I’d—I wish you’d let me go out of the room first. The Rotary Club, they didn’t give us money; they sent us out here. Any—any fun that we have out here it’s on them—it is—it’s on those men that sent us. Now—now you’ll—you’re trying to spoil it all for us—that’s what you’re doing. Just when we’re going to turn in because we’re good and tired, you come up here and try to spoil everything for us—you do! Just when everything’s going all right—now you—you have to—if you’re going to talk about money, I want to go out of the room—why can’t you let us—just be scouts—even if we’re not really—if you’re going to start about rewards I don’t want to stay here! Just because I’m an award fellow you needn’t think that means the same as *reward*, because it doesn’t!”

Mr. Madison C. Wilde methodically folded his wallet, placed it in his pocket, and was on his feet quick enough to get between Westy and the door. There he held him fixed, a hand on either of the boy’s sore shoulders. “You didn’t get away that time, did you?” he said. “You’re not stealing a march on Bloodhound Pete now, you’re dealing with M. C. Wilde, *Educational Films, Savage Life for Each and All*. You said something about good turns on the train. I don’t know whether you meant it, you talked a heap of nonsense. But if you did, now’s the time to prove it. Will you help us out up in the woods or not—you and your side partners? You talked about good turns and not taking rewards, now, by golly, I’ll call your bluff! Will you hit the trail for Pelican Cone after grizzlies and things—or no? There’s not a cent in it! What do you say?”

“Mr. Willison——” began Westy, utterly flabbergasted.

“You leave Mr. Willison to me,” said Mr. Wilde. “I’ll take care of him all right! Didn’t I take care of Stove Polish, all right? He went way back and sat

down when *I* got through with him. Now how long is it going to take these kids to see the spouting forests and the petrified geysers and things?"

"About four days," laughed Mr. Willison.

"All right," said Mr. Wilde, "get busy and make it snappy. Billy and I want to hit the trail in four or five days. Go on to bed now, you kids; Mr. Willison and I will plan things out for you. Don't be scared if you hear the bears roaring in the night."

"Who's Billy?" Warde asked.

"He's camera man," said Mr. Wilde.

As the men opened the door to depart, the strains of dance music could be heard louder in the big hall below. Weary as he was, Westy lay awake after his companions (a hopeless pair in the matter of slumber) were dead to the world. And when he did fall asleep he dreamed that he was doing a toe dance on the very apex of Pelican Cone, when suddenly a grizzly bear approached and asked him to dance the *Three O'Clock in the Morning Waltz*. He accepted the invitation and fell off the mountain into the Devil's Kitchen, where they were serving sandwiches and chicken salad in the intervals of the dancing.

CHAPTER XXXII
OFF TO PELICAN CONE

So it happened that Westy Martin, who had called himself and his companions back-yard scouts, was now afforded the opportunity to do something really big in the line of scouting. Little he dreamed how very big that something would be.

We need not pause to accompany our three heroes on these tours of the Park. They saw the sights in true tourist fashion. They saw Old Faithful geyser, they went down into the Devil's Kitchen, they gazed at the petrified forests—and thought of Pelican Cone. Where was Pelican Cone? Somewhere away off the main traveled roads, no doubt. They asked fellow tourists about it, but none had ever heard of it. And the more remote and inaccessible and unknown it seemed to be, the more they longed to penetrate its distant and intricate fastnesses.

At last, at the appointed time, Westy waited in the big office of the Mammoth Hotel near the Gardiner entrance of the Park. A little group of envious boys, belonging to tourist parties, stood about curiously and enviously.

"Aren't the other two fellows going?" one asked.

"Sure, they're getting ready," said Westy.

"Gee whiz, I'd like to be going up there," said another. "I bet it's wild, hey?"

"I guess it is. I've never been up there," said Westy.

The envious little audience stood about gazing at Westy while he waited for his two companions and for Mr. Wilde and Billy the camera man. Westy, bag and baggage, had appeared in the office a half hour before the appointed time; he was not going to take any chances of missing his new friends! He had awakened at daylight and lay counting the minutes. At six o'clock he had arisen, eaten breakfast alone, then wandered about, waiting.

When finally he took his stand in the big office of the hotel he found himself quite as much a celebrity as that fallen hero Shining Sun had ever been.

At last his four comrades on the big adventure appeared together, having partaken of a hasty breakfast.

Mr. Wilde had rooted out the two sleepers whose rest had not been disturbed by thoughts of the big trip.

"A hopeless pair," said Mr. Wilde cheerily. "Are you all ready?"

"Where's your scout suit?" Westy asked Ed Carlyle.

“He was too sleepy to see what he was putting on,” said Mr. Wilde in his brisk way. “It’s not the clothes that make the scout—how ’bout that, Ed? Westy, my boy, you’re all for show.”

“No, but I don’t see why he didn’t wear his khaki suit as long as he’s got one,” said Westy. “*You’ve* got a khaki suit on, I see.”

“Meet Billy, the camera man,” said Mr. Wilde. “Billy, now you see the whole outfit, Westy, Ed, and Warde. They’ve got last names, but we’re not going to bother carrying them when mountain hiking. You don’t want any more weight and paraphernalia than necessary. Ed is such a fine scout he doesn’t require any significant equipment—like you. You fellows with all your scout trappings belong in the Shining Sun class. That right, Ed?”

It was impossible to debate such a matter with Mr. Wilde. There was a certain finality to everything he said. And his buoyant air of banter quite silenced poor Westy. But the boy did wonder, he could not help wondering, why Ed Carlyle, in this great scout adventure of their young lives, should have failed to don his regular scouting apparel.

“Trouble with you,” said Mr. Wilde, patting Westy on the shoulder, “you’re all for fuss and feathers. You want to tell the world you’re a scout instead of proving it. You and Warde are all dolled up like Christmas trees—parlor scouts. Am I right, Billy? Now, are you all ready or do you want to go upstairs and brush your hair? All right then, let’s go. We seem to be creating quite a disturbance here. If we don’t beat it we’ll have Old Faithful Geyser, the Petrified Forests, and the Devil’s Kitchenette tearing their hair with jealousy.”

An automobile was waiting outside the hotel to take the party as far as Yellowstone Falls beyond which point there was no regular road to their remote and lonely destination. It was a ride of about twenty-five miles down around Norris Geyser Basin and eastward to the vicinity of the Grand Canyon. The award boys had seen this in all its colorful glory only two days before, and had descended into its depths. Eastward from this point was a tract of wild Rocky Mountain country where no tourists ever went and rising out of this rugged region some twelve or fifteen miles distant was Pelican Cone rearing its head nine thousand five hundred feet above the surrounding country.

There was a trail to the mountain, a trail which could have told many thrilling tales if it could have spoken to the passerby. Along its winding way famous scouts of old had passed in their quest of grizzlies, and the solemn depths of the neighboring forests had once resounded with the appalling war-cry of the Indians.

It was with a thrill of high anticipation that Westy Martin, taking a last look at the frontier of tourist travel (wild enough indeed), turned his gaze toward the forbidding and unpeopled region which they were about to enter. As he did so the familiar honk of the automobiles which had brought them to

the stepping-off place could be heard as the car sped northward along the road toward Tower Falls.

CHAPTER XXXIII
HERMITAGE REST

For three hours they tramped along this obscure trail which ran through such wildness as our scouts had never seen before. Then suddenly and to their great surprise they came upon quite a sizable permanent camp. It was on the lower reaches of the mountain and was called Hermitage Rest, a very good name for it, considering its remoteness and isolation. It was conducted by an old Rocky Mountain guide named Buck Whitley, and was the refuge of a dozen or more tired business men who found relaxation in the soothing companionship and hospitality of their host, who boasted that he had never seen a locomotive!

Buck Whitley was a true Rocky Mountain character, a holdover from the good old school of Kit Carson with whom he had many times been on the trail. The camp consisted of some twenty rough cabins, and the pastime of the guests was mostly fishing. The only jarring note in this primitive outfit was a telephone carried from the main line at the Hotel on Yellowstone Lake. This was the only suggestion of civilization. It was Buck Whitley's only concession to his tired business men and he professed not only ignorance but scorn of the talk which went over the wire.

Our travelers paused at this romantic and sequestered spot for lunch and ate such trout as there is no word in the English language to describe. It was from old Buck Whitley that Mr. Wilde derived some information about the neighboring mountain which, evidently, he had not been able to derive at Mammoth Hot Springs. The boys listened intently and with mounting expectancy to the talk between the old scout and Mr. Wilde and Billy, the camera man. This talk involved a series of considerations from which our young heroes seemed to be excluded. It was Mr. Wilde's way to amuse himself with the three scouts, to jolly them, but he had not made them cognizant of his plans in detail.

Their first real knowledge of the business in hand was now gleaned in this indirect fashion, and they were appalled at the hazardous nature of the work to be undertaken.

"Yer got ter go over ter east cliff fer vultures," said Old Buck in answer to Mr. Wilde's question. "Jes' foller the trail up around ter the north, then around ag'in ter the sout'east, 'en that'll fetch yer right along the edge of it—Vulture's Cliff, they calls it."

"Nests out along there, I suppose?" Mr. Wilde queried.

“Sech as they is,” said the old scout. “Yer’ll see a clump o’ sticks, looks somethin’ like a bush, them’s the way they looks. Yer got ter look sharp if yer go near ’em.”

“Sweep you right off the ledge, huh?” said Mr. Wilde. Evidently he knew something about these matters.

It seemed to Westy that he had been investigating the habit of vultures. Westy’s thoughts had dwelt mostly on the subject of grizzlies. It was now becoming momentarily evident that Mr. Wilde had a particular enterprise in hand, that for some reason or other he wished to cast one or more of these horrible birds in a startling role. He screwed his cigar over to the opposite corner of his mouth and listened attentively while Old Buck Whitley narrated a ghastly episode which he had once beheld with his own eyes. The three scouts listened spellbound. The reminiscence involved the fate of a man who many years before had ventured out on Vulture Cliff and had actually been driven out to the very edge of the dizzy precipice, outmaneuvered by one of those great birds which he had vainly tried to dodge, and pushed over the edge by a sudden skillful swoop of that monster of the air.

“Jimmie couldn’t even get his hands on him,” said the old guide, “and he couldn’ dodge ’im neither—no, sir. The bird kept in back of him, keepin’ Jimmie between him and the edge, swoopen against him and drivin’ him nearer and nearer till he took a big swoop and came sweepin’ down against him and over he went into the country down yonder. Yer can pick out odds and ends of bones, bleached white, down there now with a spyglass. The bird he went down and finished him like they do.”

“I was wondering if they really do that,” said Mr. Wilde, in a way of business interest. “I was reading about it, but you know these natural history books are cluttered up with all sorts of junk.”

“’Tain’t no junk,” said Buck Whitley. “You folks take my advice and keep away from the edge. Don’t get so far out you can’t ketch hold on a tree or somethin’. They’ll back yer right off jes’ like if they was dancin’ with yer.”

“Pretty neat, huh,” said Mr. Wilde. “That’s the kind of stuff we want. I’m going to get a shot at a scene like that if I can fix it. Novelty, huh?”

Westy, who had listened with rapt attention to this appalling narrative, thought that there might be two opinions about the meaning of the word *neat*. One thing seemed evident. Mr. Wilde had a rather more adventurous purpose in view than merely the photographing of wild life. He was after thrills. It seemed as if he had dug up somewhere references to the habit and diabolical skill of vultures in procuring the death of their victims.

Westy had read of mortal combats on the edge of precipitous heights. He had seen one man push another from a precipice in the movies. Also he had the usual indifferent knowledge about vultures. He knew that they were of great

size and strength but were far from being heroic. He knew that they followed armies, and had an uncanny intuition in the matter of where the dead were to be found.

Now, from what he had heard, it appeared that in the lonesome and craggy neighborhood of their nests these horrible creatures were wont to play more heroic roles. That by skill and persistence they could make the dizzy precipice their confederate and compass the death of their baffled and outmaneuvered victims by precipitating them upon jagged rocks far below the scene of encounter.

“Then they wait a reasonable time,” Mr. Wilde had said, “before descending to the feast.”

To be involved in an affair of this kind seemed quite a different sort of matter than stalking grizzlies and mountain leopards. In such a predicament a man might be permitted to violate the good and stringent rule of the Park and shoot his fearful assailant. But surely he would have no right deliberately to place himself in a position where such means of defense would be necessary. Yet it was evidently Mr. Wilde’s purpose to avail himself of this uncanny habit of the dreadful vulture to stage a scene which would furnish a real thrill to movie fans throughout the land.

How was he going to do this? And to what peril might he intend to subject these boys whom he had jollied and called parlor scouts?

CHAPTER XXXIV
VULTURE CLIFF

Perhaps it was because these three good scouts were after all just boys that they began to be conscious of certain real or imagined perils in their big adventure. They talked over among themselves what they were likely to be expected to do and they began to be a little concerned about the secrecy which characterized the expedition. Westy had talked of doing something *big*, of being a scout in the large and adventurous sense. And he had felt quite ashamed of scouting as he knew it, when he allowed himself to view it through the sophisticated gaze of Mr. Wilde. He began to wonder now whether all his big talk, or rather the expression of his big hopes, was not going to plunge him and his companions into perils which he had not anticipated. Poor Westy, he was not afraid; he was only young and unseasoned. Mr. Wilde, on the other hand, was thoroughly seasoned—oh, very. So thoroughly seasoned that he did not take these youngsters into his confidence. And thereby ensued something very like tragedy.

The trail up the mountain was through such a wilderness as the boys had never seen before. It was late in the evening when they came out into the open and beheld a panorama far below them and reaching eastward as far as the eye could see. Mountains, mountains, mountains, rolling one upon another in stately and magnificent profusion. So they might have been for thousands, millions, of years without so much as one contaminating sign of man and all his claptrap works.

How small, how insignificant, would even a city seem in that endless region of rock and hill. The vast scene was gray in the twilight, for even the sun was sinking to rest in the more hospitable direction whence they had come. They were facing the sunless chill of a Rocky Mountain evening, looking eastward toward the only compass point that was open to their view. They were almost at the edge of a mighty precipice, a stupendous gallery of nature. It was as if a mountain had been rent asunder and half of it taken away to afford a dizzy view of the amphitheater below.

As the party paused to make their camp within the shelter of the forest a few hundred feet from the brow of the precipice, Mr. Wilde, his unlighted cigar tilted like a flag-pole out of his mouth sauntered over toward the edge with Billy, the camera man, with the practical manner of a man who might intend to buy real estate in that forsaken region or who was picking out a suitable spot for a tennis court. The boys, useful at last, and competent in their

task, began pitching their tent and making ready their little camp. They saw Mr. Wilde and the camera man approach a little clump of something dark within a very few feet of the precipice. It was bare and bleak out there, without background or vegetation, and the two khaki-clad figures seemed bereft of their individuality; they were just two dark objects examining another object on the naked, cheerless rock. High in the air above a black speck moved through the dusk and disappeared among the distant mountains.

"I don't see how they can get a picture of a thing like that," said Warde; "a vulture doing a thing like that, I mean. They wouldn't get a picture of me having a scrap with a vulture, not while I'm conscious."

"You wouldn't be conscious long," said Warde.

"The first thing they'll be able to get a picture of up here," said Ed Carlyle, "is me eating some fried bacon, only they'll have to be quick. Come on, let's get the fire started. Where's the can-opener, anyway? Chuck that egg powder over here, will you? I'm going to stage a scene with an omelet."

"I know one thing," said Warde, "we've been talking about something *big*. Whatever they want me to do I'm going to do it. I'm not going to flunk."

"Believe me, I'm going to do something big," said Ed. "Watch me! I'm going to do a bacon sandwich—*a big one*. Where's the thing to fry this on anyway? Let's have a big supper; big is my middle name. You fellows must be crazy! You don't suppose Mr. Wilde wants us to risk our young lives, do you? If I saw a vulture now I'd eat him before he had a chance to eat me, I'm so hungry. I wish there was some place around here where we could get an ice cream soda; I'm thirsty too."

"A raspberry sundae would go good," said Warde, as he gathered sticks for their fire. "I remind myself of Pee-Wee Harris. They say vultures live to be a hundred years old."

"I bet there's plenty of them up here all right," said Westy. "We came to the right place."

"I don't see any now," said Ed. "I guess they all went to the movies, hey?"

"It would be mighty risky," said Westy, "staging a scene like that—a vulture trying to edge somebody off a cliff. I don't see how they could do it."

"Leave it to Mr. Wilde," said Warde.

"I'll be very glad to," said Ed in his funny way. "You'd think we were all dead ones talking about vultures. Come on, let's get ready to eat. If I had some eggs I'd cook some ham and eggs if I only had some ham. I wonder how cocoa would go in an omelet?"

"It'll all go," said Warde.

"Right the first time as you usually ain't," said Ed. "To-morrow we'll catch some trout, hey?" Then raising his voice this exuberant member of the party called aloud, "Hey, Mr. Wilde and Billy, the camera man, come on home to

supper! You've just got time to wash your face and hands!"

His voice sounded strange and singularly clear in the stillness and gathering dusk. The last word or two reechoed and sounded ghastly in the solemn and lonely twilight.

"Somebody hiding around here," said Ed, clapping his hand to his ear in a funny manner of affectation. "He's not going to get anything to eat anyway, that's one sure thing."

CHAPTER XXXV
DISAPPOINTMENT

After a hearty camp supper, devoured with appetites whetted by the keen mountain air, the boys found themselves only too glad to roll in for a good night's sleep. "Have the bell-boy call me in the morning," called Ed airily from his blanket, but before either the drowsy Warde or tired Westy could come back at him with a reply, sleep overpowered all three. They only waked next morning when the brisk stirring about of Mr. Wilde and Billy disturbed them.

"Come on now, you fellows," jeered Mr. Wilde. "Scouts ought to be up and dressed ahead of an old business man like me."

Warde and Westy took this remark to heart and scrambled shamefacedly for their clothes, but Ed's unfailing good humor left him untouched. He lolled back, gazing up and up into the depths of foliage above him and retorted, "Have that bellhop get my pants from the tailor."

"Aren't you going to wear your scout suit at all?" queried Westy in disapproval.

"Aw, gee, Mr. Wilde joshed me so about wearing 'rompers' I'm going to stick to my corduroys," said Ed, springing up, his mind eagerly on breakfast.

"Are you going up to Vulture Cliff this morning, Mr. Wilde?" asked Warde, impatient to know the program of the outing.

"That's just where I'm going, Mister," replied Mr. Wilde, busy already with preparations for this hike. "And," he added, "I hope you young hopefuls put in a lucky day catching plenty of fish for a good meal this evening, because when Billy and I get back here we'll be hungry enough to eat a hard-boiled rhinoceros."

"Can't we go with you?" asked Westy, his face the picture of disappointment.

"Go with us, your grandmother," grinned Billy heartlessly. "That cliff is no place for little children."

"I should say not," added Mr. Wilde. "I can't be responsible to your mammas if their darling boys fall down and have the buzzards pick their bones. Why, don't you know a vulture would rather eat a Boy Scout than a dish of ice cream? No, you kids stick around here out of our way where you're safe and show us what kind of a meal a star scout can cook."

It was a cruel disappointment to the boys to find that their part in this unique expedition was to be limited to the mere routine of camp duty. This was truly a blow to their expectations and pride, but each was too good a scout to

argue or whine. They took this disappointment characteristically: Westy, the sensitive, was hurt. He felt that he had proved himself in the encounter with Bloodhound Pete and was entitled to be trusted in "big" things. He was too proud to say this, however, and only flushed and kept silent. Warde was plainly indignant. Ed, however, although quite as disappointed as the others, accepted it with his usual "I should worry" air.

"Go ahead," he said jauntily. "You can't make me mad. I'm just crazy to be kitchen police. If I had a popgun I'd shoot a couple of elephants for a nice little fricassee for your supper. But listen, if you two fall off that cliff, don't expect me to come running and pick you up."

As Mr. Wilde and Billy set off, Warde sulked. Westy said, "I don't think it's fair, and it's just our luck to be kept out of big things."

But Ed said, "Poot! What do you care! I'd just as lieves have a good day's fishing as monkey around up there on the top of the world trying to get movies of the angels. That ole cliff is too high for this baby! It's worse than the Woolworth Tower and *that* always makes me seasick. Come on, let's go fishing. Maybe we'll meet a grizzly."

At this prospect Westy brightened and helped gather up their tackle which Ed opined was "some improvement on that historic safety pin." Warde, however, refused to go along.

"I'm not going," he said. "I turned my ankle on a loose rock last night anyway and it hurts. You catch the fish and I'll cook them—that's fair. I'm going to write a letter home. I don't know when I'll mail it, but I'll get it written anyway."

"'Tain't your ankle, it's your feelings that hurt," said Ed, astutely. "But do as you like, here's where Kit Carson and Dan'l Boone leave you. S'long," and Westy and Ed disappeared through the woods toward the sound of a boisterous mountain stream, leaving Warde behind. How little they knew what was to happen before they were all together again!

CHAPTER XXXVI
OFF THE CLIFF

It was late in the afternoon when Ed and Westy who had been working their way upstream all day awarded with a goodly string of gleaming trout, found themselves on a high and rocky point from which Vulture Cliff was plainly visible. In the clear mountain air it seemed as if they might almost touch it.

Tired from their scrambles and satisfied with their catch, the boys stretched out on the rocks and gazed up at the cliff. They were separated from it by a narrow gulch of such dizzy depths that Ed said it made him seasick to look down.

"Don't look down, then, look up," said Westy. "You can see the vultures from here."

"Gee, so you can. Don't they look like airplanes? I wonder how big they are?"

"Well," said Westy, "that guide at the Hermitage said he killed one once that measured over eight feet from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other, spread out. Of course he didn't kill that one on this reservation, but I bet these are just as big."

"I bet they are, and my goodness look what a lot of them there are. They must scent something dead over there," cried Ed in excitement.

"Dead nothing!" Westy disagreed. "Something's scaring them! Look! There's a man! Why, it must be Mr. Wilde; you can see him as plain as plain. I don't see Billy anywhere. Now Mr. Wilde's gone back in the bushes. Let's climb up higher and watch."

They scrambled higher to a point that afforded a very clear view of the precipice opposite. Neither man was now to be seen, but several vultures were circling the cliff and others joined them, perching clumsily on the rock shrugging their ugly humped shoulders in disgust at being disturbed. Out from the wooded height there jutted a long narrow shelf of bare rock that overhung the deep ravine below. This was the vultures' roost and outlook. In crevices along here the monstrous birds had their great awkward nests and here "on top of the world," as Ed said, their little ones were hatched. On the edge of this shelf there grew a solitary crooked pine, deformed in its efforts to keep a difficult foothold in the barren rock against many a mountain tempest. At the foot of this tree an object caught the boys' eyes. "What's that?" they both cried at once, and squinting against the afternoon sun they shaded their eyes in true

Indian fashion and peered intently. It couldn't be! It was! There was no mistaking a *scout uniform* even at this distance. Yet neither boy would believe his eyes. The thing they saw seemed too impossible to be true! Both together they said the same thing at once.

"*That can't he Warde!*" They looked at one another and then back again.

"As sure as you're born, that's Warde Hollister sitting under that tree on the very tip edge of the cliff!"

Westy was so breathless that he could only gasp.

"Why, my gosh!" said Ed irritably, "he's as crazy as a June bug to sit up there on top of the Woolworth and let his silly legs hang over the edge. Hasn't he got any *sense*?"

"Haven't you heard," said Westy, "of people who lose their senses when they get up on something high and want to jump off? What if——"

"What if——" echoed Ed and both felt too horrified to say more. Instinctively they crouched low as if the very sight of Warde so near the dizzy edge made them cling closer to solid rock themselves, not only for their own peace of mind but as if their act might hold Warde back, too.

But now another horror threatened. It was plain that the vultures resented this stranger in their midst. Sweeping forth with wide wings several vultures, apparently startled from their fastnesses on the rocks, swooped out and circled the lone pine.

Mindful of the ghastly story Buck Whitley had told of vultures, both boys shuddered.

"There come some more," Westy whispered—in his fright he could not control his voice to speak aloud. Two more great birds winged out over the gulch and turned in air around the pine. They glided smoothly out on the wind with wings motionless, like monoplanes, but flapping hideously as they returned to their haven in the rocks. It became evident that something out of sight in the woods behind was frightening the birds.

"It's Mr. Wilde!" Westy choked. "He's driving the vultures at Warde on purpose!" As this idea dawned on Ed he felt himself as he afterwards described it "turning green around the gills." Then his good sense returned.

"Oh, you're crazy!" Ed snapped, and his positive tones cheered Westy greatly. "They don't know he's there! They're just scaring the birds up to photograph them. Can't you see through it? Warde was peeved at being left behind, so he sneaked off on us and beat them to it and now he thinks he's the real smart Alec to get ahead of them out there after Mr. Wilde told us to stay behind. I did think he had more sense than that!"

Two birds were now circling lower and definitely toward the scout-clad figure under the tree. This figure remained so motionless that Westy shuddered and said, "Maybe he's dead already, vultures act that way over dead things."

“Dead, my eye,” contradicted Ed, sturdily. “He’s not dead. Maybe he’s scared to move, or fainted or maybe he’s just asleep. Let’s climb up higher yet and yell at him.” They climbed and shouted, but the distance was too great for their voices to carry and the giant mountains only threw back mocking echoes of their puny lungs at them.

“Those birds must have a nest near that tree,” Ed argued, as the huge pair beat their ragged wings against the scout. The two boys, watching, powerless to help, could only scramble higher hoping to reach a point higher up where they might be seen and signal, but they gained this vantage point just in time to see the khaki figure topple under the vulture wings and tumble down the sheer cliff into the rocks and trees below.

Neither Westy nor Ed dared rise from his place for several minutes, so sickened were they by this fearful sight. Then crawling to the edge, they both ventured to look down. Far, far below they could just make out the khaki figure lying with limbs distorted.

“He’s dead,” gulped Westy. “Every bone he has must be smashed.” He began to cry.

“No, look! He’s moving!” True enough, the scout, lying on a sharp decline, turned and slid farther down the ravine.

In another moment the boys above succeeded in getting their shocked minds clear enough to act like scouts.

“We’ve got to go down and get him,” said Westy, asserting himself. “You can’t see either Mr. Wilde or Billy and you can’t make them hear us. There’s no time to waste hunting them up first to help us. I’m going right down now on a chance I might get to him in time.”

“One of us ought to get a doctor,” Ed suggested.

“How?” put in Westy.

“Well, don’t you remember they had a telephone at the Hermitage? We could phone into Yellowstone for a doctor from there.”

“Good idea. You thought of it, so you go there and I’ll climb down after Warde. There’s no time to waste, so hurry.”

“Oh, I’ll hurry. Here, keep these matches and make a signal fire to guide us to you if you can’t get out of there by night.”

So saying, the boys separated, Westy preparing to descend the dangerous slope, and Ed daring the obscure trail to circle the mountain to Hermitage Rest.

The sun, still bright on the mountain tops, had already left the valleys in a sinister twilight as the boys parted.

CHAPTER XXXVII
ED CARLYLE, SCOUT

Ed lost no time in making most of the daylight still remaining to get a good start around the mountain toward Hermitage Rest. For a time this was easy, as the setting sun gave an easy guide to the points of the compass, but before he had gone far down the slope the sun had dropped out of sight behind a mountain top, and as there was only the vaguest trail in these wild parts, Ed soon realized it would take all his scout knowledge to find his way at all. He crashed along through the undergrowth often scaring up wild rabbits and other small animals which on another occasion he would have delighted to stalk, but now his heart was so heavy he hardly noticed them as he hastened on.

Ed had been tramping the woods since morning, with only a light snack at noon, as both he and Westy had looked forward to a good dinner with plenty of fish that night, but now their fish lay abandoned on the rocks, no doubt making a meal for the vultures, and Ed had no time, even if he had brought along his tackle, to stop and catch fish for his own supper. He could not help wondering what Mr. Wilde and the camera man would think when they returned to camp and found not only no supper but no scouts. A broken piece of sweet chocolate, which he remembered he had in his hip pocket, was the only supper Ed had, and he was hungry enough to feel uncomfortable, but anxiety for Warde and Westy made him forget himself and hurry along.

He took the precaution to fill his canteen with water, then hastened on with no other refreshment. By this time he had retraced the steps over which he and Westy had lingered fishing all day and struck the trail leading down toward the Hermitage.

As he got farther and farther down, the sky grew overcast obscuring all chance of a moon, the trees became denser and Ed found himself in such darkness as to make him feel perilously confused along this unfamiliar trail. Before this he had encountered landmarks which he remembered passing on their way up—a lightning-blasted pine; the big loose rock where Warde had complained of turning his ankle, an abandoned squirrel nest, a fallen tree and such marks as a trained scout would observe and remember for future guidance. These had made him confident that he had been going the right way, but now it was so dark that Ed could see little before him, and he began to fear that he had lost the trail. For a moment the mountains seemed so vast, the woods so dense, that poor hungry Ed felt like a very small atom alone in the wilderness, and indeed he is not the only boy who would have quailed a little

at the task ahead of him! Miles of introdden nightfall, and that grim need for haste, might well dismay a man as well as a boy! However, Ed was stout-hearted and even when alone kept up that humorous spirit of his which so often saved the day.

"Alone in the great city," he muttered, as he stumbled over a log, "I better ask my way of the next policeman." Cheering up a little at this, he plunged on, but was brought to a standstill by a thicket through which he could not pass, and this made him realize he was off the trail.

Knowing that every minute's delay might mean life or death to Warde, Ed found himself choking up with fear lest he get lost in the woods and fail to get a doctor in time. Just as he had often restored the other boy's spirits in moments of trial by his unquenchable humor, Ed now bolstered up his own waning courage by comic comments to himself. "Gosh, these street lights are bum," he complained, and blundered around, beating at twigs until he pushed through to a clearer stretch beyond.

He began to be thankful that he had not worn his scout uniform after all, for the thicket had torn his shirt, scraped off his cap and scratched his face, and the corduroy knickers he wore protected his legs and knees far more comfortably than his loose khaki shorts would have done. Ed had been forcing his way along, now running against logs, now falling over rocks—into gullies until he felt that he must surely have progressed miles, when something soft slapped him in the face. He ducked down, startled, and saw that he had run into a bush on which what was hanging but his own cap! It was this cap lost in the thicket that had struck him in the face! Now, indeed, Ed was discouraged. After supposing he had made a long advance toward Hermitage Rest he only found that he had done the usual tenderfoot trick of traveling in a circle!

"Spats, cane and all, I ought to have old Stove Polish leading me by the hand," was his disgusted thought.

But now, however, Ed's eyes were becoming accustomed to the dark and he was able to make out his way more distinctly.

Fortunately at this time the moon came out through clouds that had obscured it. As good luck would have it, the moon was nearly full and promised to shed a helpful light if more clouds did not gather. Ed remembered that the moon, when large and red as it was then, rose in the east, for he could remember often making a wish on a little new moon, seen first in the western sky at sunset. Assuring himself once more of the points of the compass by the moon and the direction of the hillside, Ed gritted his teeth and pushed on, determined to make no further tenderfoot blunders that night. His chagrin was almost as deep as Westy's would have been at the thought of how Mr. Wilde would have jeered at him for being a parlor scout who got lost in the woods! His progress was now more successful, but he had every reason to fear that he

might lose himself again, and therefore proceeded with far less confidence than he had set out. As if with the coming of the moon the little people of the woods were stirred to the business of their night life, the trees seemed noisy now with insects and night birds. The grewsome hoot of an owl sent the gooseflesh crawling up to Ed's scalp, but he made fun of himself and pushed on, whistling to keep up his spirits. He had really advanced a long way when he was brought to a standstill by a sound that made his blood run cold. It was a moaning that had such a human quality that for a moment Ed thought some one must be lying hurt near by. Then he remembered having read that the voice of the mountain lion sounds like a woman crying. The moaning recommenced and Ed stood paralyzed in his tracks. Of all creatures, the mountain lion, he knew, was the most ferocious wild beast in all the wild Rockies. Even a seasoned old hunter like Buck Whitley did not scorn to run away from one of these creatures. Ed besides was of course unarmed save for a broken-bladed scout knife and his trusty safety-pin.

The moaning continued and Ed located it as coming from a clump of bushes near the trail right by which he must pass. It must be admitted that Ed was thoroughly frightened, but he took some comfort in recalling the story of an officer who had been chided because on the eve of battle his knees shook and this officer had replied, "They would shake more if they knew where I was going to take them." Ed took his shaking knees back up the path, determined to detour and make a run for it. Just then, however, the moaning broke into a call. "Hey, there! Help!" cried a man's voice.

CHAPTER XXXVIII
THE WOUNDED STRANGER

Ed was so relieved to hear a human voice that, as he said afterwards, “If it had been Bloodhound Pete himself I’d have welcomed him with open arms.” He hurried to the bushes looking down and saw there upon the ground the figure of a man. Stooping down, Ed made out a short disreputable man wearing an old sweater and peaked cap.

“What’s the matter?” Ed cried, stretching out his hand to help him up. “I’m shot,” groaned the stranger, and Ed drew back his hand quickly, to find his fingers wet and sticky. With a shudder Ed realized that this was blood.

When this sorry figure saw that his rescuer was a mere boy in knickers an ugly scowl twisted his unpleasant features and he swore. “Who you with? Where’s your pa?” he snarled.

“I’m alone,” Ed replied. “What’s the matter? Can I help?”

“Well, half a loaf’s better than no bread, I s’pose,” the stranger retorted ungraciously. “See here, I was huntin’ and got shot to pieces accidentally, see? Get somebody to tie me up and carry me outa dis hold.”

“You’re not supposed to hunt on this reservation,” put in Ed.

“Dat’s none o’ your business,” snapped the wounded man, angry to see he had made a slip.

“I can tie you up some,” Ed offered, although he hesitated to stop for this “good turn” when Warde was in danger. However, though torn between two duties, he felt that he could do nothing else but render first aid to this man as quickly as he could.

The water in his canteen came in handy now, and he bathed the gunshot wound in the man’s head and shoulder as best he could. The man, disappointed that the canteen contained not whiskey, but good water, cursed fretfully.

Ed found that doing practicing bandaging on an obliging fellow scout was a very different thing from binding up the hot, wet wounds of this man, who groaned in agony when touched. Privately Ed suspected the man as having been shot for a poacher or wounded in some bootleg scuffle perhaps as he carried no rifle or hunting outfit, and Ed entertained no very good opinion of him. His opinion, however, did not effect the thoroughness with which he tried to do the job. He tore up what remained of his ragged shirt, bandaged the man’s head, and made an emergency sling to ease his arm. The man could not bear to be moved, so Ed simply made him as comfortable as he could with a soft pile of leaves and promised to bring a doctor. The man’s gruffness had

melted and he said, “You’se is a good little kid, and I won’t forget it. Beat it along now and hurry back.”

Ed then redoubled his speed down the mountainside in vain endeavor to make up for lost time. Trudging on and on, refusing to stop for sleep or rest, Ed walked all night long.

Dawn was just tinging the eastern mountain rims when Buck Whitley, an early bird, beheld a weird sight approaching the main cabin at Hermitage Rest. A small boy in undershirt and torn trousers stumbled wearily up the steps and collapsed.

CHAPTER XXXIX
WESTY'S DESCENT

Westy Martin lost no time in starting down the face of the ravine toward his friend. The cliff he descended was so precipitous that the problem of reaching the bottom alive absorbed all his attention and he had no time to worry much over what condition he might find Warde in. Occasionally, as he hung by his fingers from one rock and ventured to drop to a shelf below, he wondered how anything could be left of Warde at all. Sometimes the loose stones and dirt gave way under his feet and sent him tumbling until he could clutch a bush and hold on, only to find his hands and knees skinned raw. Pausing to pant and gain his balance, Westy would try not to wonder whether the vultures would leave anything of Warde for him to find. It was lucky for Westy that the sunlight, reflected against these steep rocks which directly faced the sunset, lit up the ravine long after Ed, on the opposite side of the mountain, was left in darkness. For Westy, in darkness, would have been in peril indeed, since the task he was attempting seemed to him very like those movie scenes of a Human Fly crawling down the face of a skyscraper! Had this ravine been an Alpine pass traversed by mountain-climbing tourists, each tourist would have been roped to another and guides would have controlled these safety lines. Such a descent Westy was daring all alone. He came at last to a narrow and abrupt slide between two long walls of rock. Here there were few bushes to hold back by and the only thing to do, Westy decided, was to sit down and slide. To climb back and hunt another way down was impossible. So down he sat and slid cautiously, but try as he might to brake his pace with his feet, he shot faster and faster until he had every fear that he would shoot clean off the mountainside and land below, food for vultures too. Vainly he spread his feet and clutched at the rocks with his hands until his fingers bled. He could not stop himself, but, gathering momentum, he shot down the mountain slide faster than before. Ahead of him the rocks narrowed so that while at first he had a gleam of hope that they would stop his fall, on tumbling nearer he felt sure that to dash against them at his present speed would only dash out his brains and at best break all his ribs. With never a thought that he might shoot over an edge into eternity, Westy quickly lay flat on his back and in a spatter of pebbles and cloud of dust shot safely between the narrow walls of rock just skinning both shoulders. He found himself riding on a miniature landslide coasting quickly toward the edge of overhanging rock and his heart leapt to his throat as he realized he might as well fall off a twelve-story fire-escape to pavements

below, as hope to survive the dashing to pieces which he now faced. In the flash of time that it took for the falling dirt to shoot him out on this ledge, he had one sickening moment when he wished he had never heard of scouting, and it must be confessed he offered up a quick prayer for help. Then the miracle happened, as if in answer to this prayer. He stopped as suddenly as he had started. The seat of his breeches had caught on the branches of a small scrub pine that thrust out from between rocks in the path of his descent, and this had checked his fall. For a moment Westy hardly dared draw breath for fear brush or breeches give way. Then, securing a grip on the friendly little pine and assuring himself that it was rooted sturdily, Westy cautiously freed himself and lay down to study the way ahead. It was less steep below, and, lowering himself down inch by inch, Westy was soon on a safe way to the bottom. His shirt was scraped off from neck to belt, including considerable skin, the seat of his trousers could never be the same again, but save for such battle scars, Westy, to his surprise and thankfulness, was not so much the worse for all the hard wear and tear he had undergone "skidding down the face of the Woolworth Tower," as Ed would have said. Westy now faced the task of finding Warde. This was made only too easy by the sight of vultures ahead. Furious at these loathsome scavengers Westy ran headlong, yelling to frighten them away. The sight ahead made him pause and feel too faint to move.

Two giant birds were tearing at the scout figure with their hideous curved beaks. Westy was near enough to see their powerful crooked claws with which they helped in tearing his friend's khaki suit. The bird's ugly naked necks twisted to and fro in their bloody task. A great smear of red discolored the tunic. At Westy's approach the huge birds flapped roughly away on ragged wings that made a great creaking and rustling and left behind the smell of carrion.

Westy could never tell how he summoned courage to approach that lump of blood and khaki. But when he finally found himself standing by it he could not believe his eyes. This was not Warde he was gazing at, but a mere dummy stuffed with sticks and leaves and baited with some meat and old dead fish! It was only a scarecrow that had fallen over the cliff!

Bewildered by this unbelievable hoax Westy stood spellbound. At this moment a great scrambling and shouting followed by hearty laughter broke upon him and Mr. Wilde, followed by Billy, the camera man, came out of the woods opposite, convulsed with loud guffaws.

"Well, young one, if I ever called you a little Lord Fauntleroy I take it all back now," roared Mr. Wilde. "You're the original Douglas Fairbanks and a true screen star. You've made this film a howling success." Whereupon he doubled up with laughter which cramped him so violently that for a time he could not speak.

“Oh, laugh! laugh!” urged Billy, ironically, rubbing at his neck. “It’s awful funny! Oh, yes! A mere incident like breaking my only neck in the cause is nothing! Oh, no! Laugh! Laugh by all means!”

“Well, what *is* he laughing at?” demanded Westy crossly. Here was Westy, his clothes and skin peeled off in too many places for comfort and after risking life and limb and undergoing the nervous shock of hours of horror. He was now simply laughed at. Small wonder if Westy felt sore in spirit as well as in body. Billy explained as Mr. Wilde could do nothing but snicker.

“Why, he wanted to film the birds in the act of knocking some one off a cliff, and I don’t doubt he’d have used me for that part if he didn’t need me to crank the camera. Anyway, he spared me and rigged up a dummy. He didn’t want you kids getting into danger up there so he said nothing to you. You remember Ed didn’t wear his scout suit. Well, we took that along to stuff for a dummy. We had to bait the scarecrow with stuff to attract the old buzzards, and for that we’d brought along some meat anyway, and we just stuffed it inside the suit. I’m afraid Ed’s suit is ruined; we didn’t expect that. We’ll get him another. It was well worth the price, for it all worked out fine after we’d worked all day up there, scaring up those birds and trying to hide from them and focus on the dummy and all. Just as the sunlight began to go back on us the birds condescended to star for something elegant. They knocked the boy scout over the cliff and I filmed it for a thriller. Well, then something happened that we hadn’t bargained for and it was too good to miss. We saw you start down the cliff on the other side. Mr. Wilde was afraid you’d fall, but I said, no, you could make it all right, you weren’t a scout for nothing and when you didn’t hear him when he yelled to you to go back I said, ‘let him go ahead and I’ll snap him too and we can add it to the picture as the “Daredevil Rescue.”’ Well, it was too good to miss. We followed along down after you on the other side and I hope to say the movie fan’s hair will stick up on end when they see you shoot the shoots and hang over the Leap of Death by the seat of your pants. It was wonderful! Doug Fairbanks isn’t in it. I’m sorry to say it got too dark for me to get you when you discover the body and you’ll have to act that over for me in broad daylight. Of course the fact that I had to run along holding on by my eyelashes in steep spots just to film you, is a mere detail. Wilde just kept laughing and hollering at me, ‘Shoot! shoot! There’s a good one, shoot!’ and I said, ‘I’ll break my neck at this,’ and he said, ‘Well, don’t break the camera.’ Oh, a camera man has a sweet life. I twisted every joint out of socket on the way down, but, oh, boy, wait till you see yourself in that picture!”

This pleasing prospect cheered Westy enough to remove the sting of ridicule that pricked him when he saw he had been made the goat, and be it said to his credit that he joined Mr. Wilde in laughing at himself.

“Yes, but what about Ed?” he asked.

CHAPTER XL
WARDE MEETS A GRIZZLY

In the meanwhile, what had Warde been doing?

After he was left alone in camp, he dutifully tidied up the place, bathed his aching ankle and wrote home as he planned. The writing took a long time as he was slow and had so much to tell. Warde did not enjoy writing letters and when he had finished he felt as cramped and tired as if he had chopped a cord of firewood. The sharp mountain air helped make him sleepy and when he stretched out on the grass to rest for "just a minute," sleep overcame him and he took a nap like a baby. When he waked he did not need the short shadows of the noon sun directly overhead to tell him it was lunch time. Disappointed that his pals had not returned he rummaged about for a snack of bread and bacon for himself. He began to long for companionship, but did not dare to wander off far from camp for fear the boys would return and he would miss them and any fun on foot. So Warde stayed in camp until he fidgeted alone and decided to use his time to good advantage by collecting firewood. This he did so industriously that soon he had a fine pile. On coming back to it with another armful of sticks Warde saw something moving by one tent. Mr. Wilde and Billy shared one tent, the boys another, while the camera and camp supplies were stored in a third. Something was moving near the tent where the provisions were kept.

Overjoyed, after his long solitude at seeing what he supposed of course was Ed or Westy, Warde shouted. At the sound of his voice the intruder started and reared up. It was an enormous grizzly bear!

You may imagine that Warde stopped stock-still, unable to move hand or foot. He seemed turned to stone and did not even drop his sticks.

The grizzly stood on his hind legs, solemnly regarding him and he did not move either. It would have been worth Billy's while to have been behind a bush then with his camera, for the picture of boy and bear each standing staring at one another would have been another thriller to his credit.

The grizzly was taller than a tall man as he stood there, his forepaws bent as if contemplating one vast and soft embrace.

Warde's instinct to heave one of his sticks at the animal he checked as foolhardy, for such an attack would be sure to enrage the brute. Warde softly stepped backward. The bear stepped forward. Warde ventured another backstep, the bear dropped to all fours with a windy "snoof" and advanced toward him.

At this point Warde thought wildly of climbing a tree. But he could not remember whether grizzly bears climb trees or not. At any rate, the idea of scrambling up a tree trunk with the bear clawing at his back did not appeal at this time to our hero. He wished more than ever that his fellow scouts would appear. Then the remembrance of Westy's accusation that they were only "parlor scouts" stung him and he resolved to act in a manner worthy a real scout. Just what this would be was the puzzle. Warde had seen grizzlies in the zoo, of course, but he missed the trusty iron bars from the landscape now. Thought of the zoo recalled the fact that at feeding time the keepers threw loaves of bread to them. If he could only circle about and reach the provisions perhaps the bear would eat bread or something instead of boy. Do grizzlies eat boys or do they not? The answer to this was as vague in Warde's mind as the answer to, Do they climb trees? At any rate he remembered that they hugged their victims to death, crushing them in that fur and iron embrace. Nothing appealed less to Warde at this moment than any such show of affection! He tried to ease around behind the woodpile and the bear began to follow him. "At any rate," thought Warde, "while the old boy keeps down on all fours he can't hug me." He moved cautiously and the bear advanced threateningly. Warde felt the natural impulse to turn and run, but the idea of the bear galloping behind halted this. To keep running, pursued by a bear, was too much like a bad dream in which the bear comes even closer and you can't move your feet. Warde decided it was less harrowing to stand his ground and face the brute. At any rate the bear had not emitted any blood-curdling "feeding-time-at-the-zoo" growls. He only gave a few "snoofs" not unlike a pet dog. Warde maneuvered about keeping tent or woodpile cautiously between himself and his visitor and the bear lumbered after him. In this way Warde finally reached the provisions and finding a pan of Billy's biscuits still on hand, he tossed one at the bear. It snapped this up eagerly and lunged forward. Stepping backward inhospitably, Warde threw another biscuit and threw it good and far. The bear turned and trotted after it. By throwing the biscuits one at a time with all the snap of a Big League pitcher, Warde succeeded in keeping the great animal at a comfortable distance. It reminded him of those stories of Russia when the sleigh is pursued by wolves and one by one the riders jump overboard as sacrifice to delay the pack so that the sole surviving heroine may escape. Warde hated to think what he would do when all the biscuits were gone.

He felt sure he could not continue to throw every piece of food they had to the bear. Finally the last remaining biscuit went, and, impatient for more, the bear came forward at a brisk and clumsy trot. Warde felt it was just as well to side step. The big creature thrust himself into the tent and tumbled everything about, now stopping to snap up a tidbit, now investigating and upsetting boxes with his nose. At last he came to Billy's camera supplies. Here in tin boxes

were spare films and if anything destroyed these, the expedition was spoiled. At this point Warde asserted himself. To tell the truth he had rather envied the glory Westy acquired in his encounter with Bloodhound Pete. The bear did not seem too ferocious and Warde felt that here was a chance for him to outwit the animal and win for himself perhaps a modicum of fame. He tried to think what he had ever heard about bears, and to save his life could only recall the adventure of the absurd Goldilocks and the repeated, "Who has been sleeping in my bed?" said the middle-sized bear in his middle-sized voice. You will admit that Goldilocks was not a great help to a scout facing a Rocky Mountain grizzly! Why is it the most foolish thoughts occur to you in moments of stress? Warde felt very annoyed that people filled up children's minds on that silly stuff instead of teaching them useful things like how to drive away live bears that are licking your biscuit pan. Warde couldn't seem to think up anything to stop the bear's dishwashing, and like a good many other people when baffled he blamed it on his education. "Gosh," he thought indignantly, "when *I* have a boy I won't waste his time on nursery rimes; I'll bring him up to things that amount to something in a pinch!"

It was when the bear nosed at the camera boxes again that Warde was spurred to action. He felt that the day would be lost if he did not protect those precious films for which they were undertaking this whole trip. Pressed with need to act, Warde suddenly was blessed with an idea. He remembered the adage that no animal can look you in the eye. He ventured therefore to advance and glare unblinkingly straight into the bear's eyes. The bear snarled and shook his head. Instead of backing away, however, to Warde's dismay he came straight at him with a "snoofy" challenge. Through Warde's mind had been running a hodgepodge of all the wild animal stories he had ever read and now there flashed to his mind one from an old volume of St. Nicholas. In this tale an East Indian boy saves a white baby from a tiger by blowing tunes on a piccolo. It seemed animals do not like music any better than your cat does. Now it just happened that Billy was one of those chaps who always blew tunes on a harmonica. He had driven them crazy with this all the way up, and his harmonica was at that moment in his coat pocket and the coat hung on a tree where he had left it for a strenuous day in shirtsleeves. Warde felt a thrill of pride at the ingenious idea. He succeeded in reaching the coat pocket, extracted the mouth organ and began to play. There was only one tune he knew how to play and that was "Home, Sweet Home." As the seedy notes of this familiar song piped up on the forest air, the bear acted very strangely. Perhaps you think he, like the tiger, fled obligingly. Oh, no! Perhaps a grizzly likes a mouth harp as much as a tiger dislikes a piccolo. Perhaps the tiger would have liked the mouth harp and perchance the bear would have fled before a piccolo. There is no telling. But the truth of the matter is that the grizzly actually enjoyed

"Home, Sweet Home." Instead of turning tail—what little tail he had! and leaving—he simply rose to his full height on his great haunches and swayed in waltz time. He even seemed to grin.

A suspicion now dawned on Warde that this chummy bear was no wild beast, but one of the amiable tame bears of Yellowstone Park, straying through the wilderness in which he knew well enough, no doubt, he was protected by benign game laws.

A vast relief loosened the nervous tightness in his chest. Immediately after this relief, however, Warde felt a sort of disappointment that he was done out of an opportunity to play the hero. "At any rate," he comforted himself, "I'm glad I found it out myself before any of the others got the laugh on me." At this moment, however, an opportunity to assert himself did arise, for the bear, still hungry, insisted on nosing in among the supplies again and threatened to upset and ruin the films. It was at this point that Warde got his first really useful inspiration. He suddenly remembered that it was *fire* that frightened animals away. He lost no time in kindling a dry pine branch which flared up fiercely. This he waved at the bear and the bear backed away. A little thrill of triumph tingled up Warde's spine. He was not altogether made a clown of now, and in protecting those films as well as the grub even from a *friendly* bear he was proving himself a valuable camp guard. He waved his torch and the bear with a snort of disgust, wheeled away. It must not be supposed that he disappeared altogether, not he. He sat down at a distance and licked out his pink tongue. He was not longing to crunch Warde's bones, he only pined, pathetically, for biscuits. From time to time he ventured nearer. Between the bear and the films Warde stood guard with his torch and he realized that danger from any carelessness with the fire might prove more disastrous to the inflammable celluloids than the bear's mischief.

Evening was now approaching and surely, Warde thought, some of the campers would return! Where were those fish Mr. Wilde had demanded? Warde began to fear some accident had happened. He decided, as it grew later, that the best thing he could do was to get the camp ready in case something had happened to one of his friends. Always thoroughly practical, he made up all the bunks comfortably for the night, pausing to wave a firebrand at his friend the bear from time to time as a warning to keep his distance. He built a roaring fire to keep off other animals, to keep up his own spirits and to act as a signal to his friends if they were lost. He heated plenty of hot water to have on hand in case of an emergency, and finally he prepared flapjacks for supper. No one came to help eat them and finally he began to cook some for himself. This appetizing smell lured the bear back into the circle of firelight, and so tantalized was he and so curious that he half lost his fear of flames and stood not far off wrinkling up his nose. This was a little too much for Warde. It had

become really dark now, and with no sign or sound of his comrades he began to be alarmed lest some serious accident prevented their return. He had been alone all day long and this loneliness at night in the woods began to tell on him. He welcomed even the presence of this bear now. Recalling the fact that bears have such a sweet tooth that they risk getting stung while clawing for honey in a bee tree, he threw a flapjack dripping with syrup at his old friend. The bear delightedly gulped it down. This amused Warde and diverted him from his worries. He tossed another. The bear was charmed. Each had lost all fear of the other now. Bear and boy had supper together. This strangely comforted the lonely, worried Warde. It was as if when in trouble your pet Airedale nosed up with sympathy. Well fed, the bear waddled out of range of the fire, stretched out and napped. Warde, stoking his fire from time to time, determined to sit up all night if need be, and stick to his post to be ready when needed. But any boy who deliberately says, "Now I am going to sit up all night," soon finds his eyelids weighted. Warde fought off sleep valiantly. But as though a chloroform sponge were pressed on his nose, he succumbed and slumbered. Opposite him, a little away from the fire, the big grizzly lay snoozing too. From time to time he snored.

It was late moonshine when Warde was startled to wakefulness by the sound of voices and footsteps. Mr. Wilde, Billy and Westy had returned, having waited until the moon made possible an exit from the ravine by a longer, but safer, route than the cliff. Their battered aspect showed how welcome the hot sponge off from Warde's kettle of water would prove.

"Good boy to keep up the fire," approved Mr. Wilde. "We never would have found this joint at night without that light. Jumping Jehoshaphat—*what is that*?"

That was the grizzly bear, disturbed and disgruntled by so many noisy newcomers. He lumbered away into the woods and never was seen again. Needless to say, Warde from that day to this has always been nicknamed "Old Grizzly."

"What's that?" echoed Warde airily, "why, that's just my chum, Old Featherbed. Ain't we cozy?"

"What's the idea?" asked the startled Billy. When Warde explained that, though amiable, the bear's curiosity made him too nosy among the films, Bill stuck out his hand.

"Put it there, pard!" he cried. "You saved the whole party. Without my films this trip is nothing. Mr. Wilde, you got to hand it to these boys. While one stars in a screen triumph of Daredevil Dick the other rescues the spare celluloids from all the wild animals in the ark. You better take them into the firm."

"I guess I'll have to," agreed Mr. Wilde. "By the way, where's that other

member of the firm—Ed?”

CHAPTER XLI
A SCOUT MASCOT

As we already know, Ed did not return that night. Alarmed that some danger had befallen him, the campers took council as to what had best be done. To search that vast range at night on the mere chance that Ed was lost was worse than the proverbial needle-in-the-hay-stack hunt. Besides, Mr. Wilde said he was satisfied now that these scouts could ably take care of themselves in emergencies. This admission from him filled Westy and Warde with deep pride. They had indeed made good in his eyes. It was agreed that they wait until daylight and then hit the trail to Hermitage Rest to inquire if Ed had reached there safely, and if not to organize a search party. Mr. Wilde confessed to a twinge of conscience that the scouts had undergone such dangers. Until daylight could clear matters up it was thought best to get what rest they could in all that remained of the night in order to be fit for whatever emergency might tax them the next day. Westy, for one, was fatigued beyond any further endurance, and indeed the cliff climbing exertion had so worn out even Billy and Mr. Wilde that they were more than grateful for Warde's thoughtfulness in having the bunks all ready to fall into. So fatigued were all three of the vulture hunters that they lay as if drugged and no wonder overslept themselves in the morning. They woke to find that the practical Warde had breakfast all prepared so that no time might be lost in starting out to find Ed.

Their late breakfast, however, had scarcely been finished when voices were heard coming up the trail and Ed himself appeared, leading a party of men. Although exhausted from his night's hike, Ed insisted on guiding the relief party back as soon as he had been refreshed with black coffee and an ample breakfast. The party consisted of Buck himself, together with several men from Hermitage Rest, one of whom fortunately happened to be a doctor so that no time was needed to phone to Yellowstone for a surgeon after all. The doctor, kit in hand, hastened forward with Ed, expecting a nasty job with a mangled boy. Imagine his astonishment and Ed's embarrassment when the unexpected outcome was explained.

"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall," jeered Warde, who ever since the bear episode had his mind pestered with nursery rimes. "Sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a big fall, all the Hermitage doctors and all Ed's men couldn't put Humpty together again."

It was a long time before Warde, who had *not* been dashed to pieces ever the cliff, would quit calling Westy and Ed "Humpty" and "Dumpty."

The doctor expressed himself as only too glad to find that in spite of his trip, his services were not needed in camp. To Mr. Wilde's apologies he said, "I have all I can do with a patient farther down the trail and since I am not needed here, I propose that we return to him and try to move him to Hermitage Rest where good care may possibly save his life. He is so far gone from loss of blood from his gunshot wounds that I may have to do a blood transfusion to save him, if I can get any one to volunteer to give him some of theirs."

"I will!" Ed offered promptly, for he felt that this was his own particular patient and he felt glad that his efforts to get a doctor in a hurry were really useful after all.

All hands started down the trail at once to see Ed's stranger, who had been left where he lay in charge of a man who volunteered as nurse. By daylight and with Buck, who knew the mountains as you know your own back-yard, it took far less time to reach the stranger than it had taken Ed by night.

The wounded man lay on the ground, looking weaker than when Ed found him. At sight of his face, cap and sweater, Westy could not repress an exclamation, "Why, I've seen him before!" he gasped. "So have I," added Mr. Wilde grimly—"he's Bloodhound Pete's partner." At this identification, the man groaned.

"Where's Pete?" demanded Mr. Wilde.

"He's gone, but before he left he got me good," muttered the man.

"Somebody crooked a wallet from Pete one night and he claimed I done it," said the man, and then went on to tell this story. "So he beat me up next day and at de point of his gat he drove me miles out here where he said he could leave me dead and nobody would ever find it out but de buzzards. Den he shot at me and I run and he come after and I hid behind trees and shot at him, but he had two guns and he's dead-eye with both. Pete'll kill any pal he has if he thinks he turns on him. I ain't the first he's tried to do for. He wouldn't believe me when I said I hadn't crooked the swag off him. He said I was de only one in miles of him dat night. Well, he must of lost it hisself. I know I didn't take it. Anyways, it was gone, and he shot me and left me for dead where de buzzards would of picked me bones in a couple more hours if it hadn't a been for dis young kid."

"This kid here," said Mr. Wilde, pushing Westy forward, "is the one who outwitted Pete."

"Well, he done for me, I guess," snarled the man. "I ain't never squealed on a pal before, but Pete done me dirt, and I'll give him away now so de police can square wid him."

It was this information which made it possible later for the mounted state police to pursue the notorious Bloodhound through the forests and eventually see that he was safely behind bars. Ed felt that in spite of Humpty Dumpty, his

night's work had not been in vain.

In the meanwhile, however, it was necessary to move Pete's partner to Hermitage Rest for surgical care if the man was to stand any chance of life at all.

"Your young friend, Ed, here, has offered to supply you with some of his blood if necessary," said the doctor. The sick man's eyes, small and evil though they were, filled with tears.

"Listen," he said, "I know I ain't gointer live and I don't care. I ain't got one thing in dis world to live for nohow, but I want to say before I go dat only two people in dis world ever treated me white. One was my old mother, dead and gone now, peace to her soul, and de other is dis kid. Kid, I hear you got de same name as mine and I'd like to give you something to remember me by, and every time you look at it you remember to steer clear of de line I got into. Here's me watch me mother give me when I was twenty-one. You keep it and remember me. Look inside de lid and see wat it says there and then think wat a mess I made of all she wished for me."

Ed reverently opened the lid. Carved on the inside of the old-fashioned silver case were these words:

"TO EDDIE
FROM MOTHER
Hoping He Will Always Be a Good Man!"

There was considerable clearing of manly throats as Ed Carlyle, reading this, touched the hearts of all those grouped about the sad figure on the ground.

"Come, come," broke in the doctor cheerfully. "You aren't ready for your funeral yet by any means, my man. I can patch you up as well as ever and unless I miss my guess you have many years ahead in which you can make up for lost time in leading a useful life with this young scout as your mascot, eh, Eddie?"

"Sure you will," said Buck. "You can stay at my place until you're well and then I'll give you a job. You ain't the first tough character I've seen come to his senses and make good. Let's get a move on now, and mosey on down to a good bed and good grub."

It was agreed that Ed should accompany them back, as he too was in great need of a good bed and long sleep. Westy, however, had to remain with Billy to act out again for the camera man a scene depicting the rescue and first aid, which he had failed to complete the day before. The practical Warde was to return and help break up camp, and the scouts would join one another at Hermitage Rest the next day.

As they parted, Mr. Wilde shook hands with Ed and said, "I have to take back all that jollying I gave you scouts and I want to say now that next summer I am planning a trip to take motion pictures of wild animals and I would like

very much indeed if the three of you could come along and help make that trip a success."

"Wow! You *bet* we will!" shouted all three joyfully, hilarious at the prospect that their adventures should continue together through another vacation.

THE END

[The end of *Westy Martin in the Yellowstone* by Percy Keese Fitzhugh]