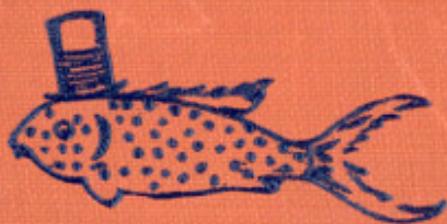


POPPY OTT HITS THE TRAIL



BY LEO EDWARDS

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**JUM GOT A CRACK IN THE REAR END THAT
KNOCKED HIM CLEAN ACROSS THE CREEK. (*Page*
123)**

POPPY OTT HITS THE TRAIL

BY
LEO EDWARDS

AUTHOR OF
THE POPPY OTT BOOKS
THE JERRY TODD BOOKS
THE TRIGGER BERG BOOKS
THE ANDY BLAKE BOOKS
THE TUFFY BEAN BOOKS

ILLUSTRATED BY
BERT SALG

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To
"KAYO" BRADISON

AN EARNEST STUDENT, A DETERMINED ATHLETE, A
TRUSTWORTHY SCOUT AND A SWELL PAL

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LEO EDWARDS' BOOKS

Here is a list of Leo Edwards'
published books:

THE JERRY TODD SERIES

JERRY TODD AND THE WHISPERING MUMMY

JERRY TODD AND THE ROSE-COLORED CAT

JERRY TODD AND THE OAK ISLAND TREASURE

JERRY TODD AND THE WALTZING HEN

JERRY TODD AND THE TALKING FROG

JERRY TODD AND THE PURRING EGG

JERRY TODD IN THE WHISPERING CAVE

JERRY TODD, PIRATE

JERRY TODD AND THE BOB-TAILED ELEPHANT

JERRY TODD, EDITOR-IN-GRIEF

JERRY TODD, CAVEMAN

JERRY TODD AND THE FLYING FLAPDOODLE

JERRY TODD AND THE BUFFALO BILL BATHTUB

JERRY TODD'S UP-THE-LADDER CLUB

THE POPPY OTT SERIES

POPPY OTT AND THE STUTTERING PARROT

POPPY OTT'S SEVEN-LEAGUE STILTS

POPPY OTT AND THE GALLOPING SNAIL

POPPY OTT'S PEDIGREED PICKLES

POPPY OTT AND THE FRECKLED GOLDFISH

POPPY OTT AND THE TITTERING TOTEM

POPPY OTT AND THE PRANCING PANCAKE

POPPY OTT HITS THE TRAIL

POPPY OTT & CO., INFERIOR DECORATORS

POPPY OTT HITS THE TRAIL

CHAPTER I AT THE FOOT OF THE FALLS

As soon as the black-bass season opened up, in June, Poppy Ott got out his steel fishing rod and disappeared into the hills north of town. He was gone a whole day. And when he came back that night he had a face a foot long. He was worried about something. And yet he was peculiarly excited too. I could tell by the look in his eyes.

“Say, Jerry,” says he, when I dropped in on him that evening to get the news, “what do you know about law?”

“What kind of law?” says I, helping myself to a banana.

Poppy and his widowed pa are good feeders. They always have stuff sitting around in dishes. And if a

fellow doesn't fill up when he's there, old Mr. Ott acts offended. Of course, I never offend him myself. Next to my pa I think he's one of the finest men in the whole state. Yet, when he came to town, he was nothing more than a common tramp. As for Poppy himself, I never saw a more ragged kid in all my born days. But he soon proved that he had good stuff in him. Getting a job, he bought himself some decent clothes. That kind of shamed his pa, I guess. Anyway Mr. Ott decided to do a little work himself, and less loafing. Now he and Poppy (who got his odd nickname from peddling popcorn) have a comfortable home on the east side of town. And they both have the respect of everybody who knows them, which proves that rags are no handicap to an ambitious boy.

I took a shine to Poppy the first time I saw him, ragged as he was. Nor have we ever had a moment's trouble since. He has his ideas and I have mine. And if I think mine are the best, I tell him so. But usually I have to admit that his are the best. Take that "Stilt" idea, for instance. Then came the famous "Pedigreed Pickles," and still later the "Freckled Goldfish" and "Tittering Totem." Very recently he had dipped into pancake flour—or maybe I should say "Prancing Pancake" flour. For that's the peppy name he gave it. Boy, oh, boy! We sure had a time solving *that* mystery—for we bumped into a lot of stuff besides flour. *Pirate* stuff, mind you. Little did I dream, though, as I sat in his parlor eating bananas, with the cat in my lap, that an even crazier mystery was getting ready to jump out at us and grab us by the shins.

Poppy had said something about law. So I asked him again what kind of law he meant.

“The kind,” says he, “that puts people into jail.”

I took time out to search his face.

“Poppy,” says I severely, as I treated another banana to a free ride down my gullet, “have you been fishing in somebody’s private pond?”

“No,” says he truthfully.

“Then what are you afraid of?” says I.

“I’m just wondering,” says he, “if the law would put me in jail for helping a runaway boy.”

A runaway boy!

“Evidently,” says I, as I further searched his sober face, “you saw something up the creek besides scenery.”

“I did,” says he earnestly.

“Well,” says I, “don’t keep me in suspenders.”

“I met a strange boy,” says he. “I never saw him before. And I doubt if you did either.”

“I know a lot of farm boys,” says I. “In fact, the most of the boys in my Sunday-school class live in the country.”

“You never saw this boy in a Sunday-school class. Nor in any other kind of a class.”

“Doesn’t he go to school?”

“No. He never saw the inside of a schoolhouse.”

“But how does he get by with it?” says I, amazed. “I thought every boy had to go to school.”

“He’d like to go to school. He told me so. But his aunt won’t let him.”

“And doesn’t he even know that the earth is round?” I followed up.

“Probably not.”

“How old is he?”

“Thirteen.”

I was so amazed I forgot to reach for another banana.

“Well, I’ll be cow-kicked,” says I. “What do you know about that? And right here in Illinois, too.”

“As I understand it,” Poppy proceeded, “he has three aunts. But the only one I saw was an angular old battle-axe with a face like a granite tombstone. *Hard* and *cruel*. You know what I mean. She and her sisters kept him in a closet when he was a baby. But now they let him run wild in the woods.”

“Maybe he’ll turn out to be another Tarzan,” says I, with mounting interest.

“I feel sorry for him, Jerry. And if I can get him out of there, without crossing the law, I’m going to do it.”

“Does he wear pants, like us?” says I, trying to picture him in my mind. “Or does he have hair on him, like a monkey?”

“Please don’t make fun of him, Jerry,” says old sober-sides. “For he’s an object of pity.”

“Where in Sam Hill did you meet him anyway?” I followed up curiously.

“At the foot of Clarks Falls.”

“That’s a good place,” says I, “for a kid to run wild. For the rock piles up there are like young mountains.”

“I never dreamed myself that Illinois had such hills, till I saw them with my own eyes. And the *trees*? Boy, there’s a forest up there that stretches for miles. A regular Amazon jungle.”

“Don’t overlook the bats,” says I, drawing on my memory, “and the rattlesnakes.”

“I didn’t see any bats. It was the wrong time of day. But I did surprise an old rattler. He was taking an afternoon nap on a big flat stone.”

“What happened when you woke him up?”

“Oh,” came the pleasant reply, “he twiddled his tail, sort of chummy-like, and then tried to bite a hunk out of me.”

“You’re lucky,” I shivered, “that his neck wasn’t as long as he thought.”

“Are there many snakes up there, Jerry?”

“I never saw but two or three myself. I dare say though they’re plentiful.”

“I wanted you to go with me this morning. But I noticed that you weren’t particularly keen about it. So I decided not to coax you.”

“Did you follow the creek all the way to the falls?” says I, speaking of the little stream that trickles into the town from the northern hills.

“Practically all the way. Once I climbed a rock pile and picked up the winding trail on the other side.”

“How long did it take you?”

“Four hours each way.”

“I’d hate to go on a hike like that all alone.”

“It *was* kind of lonesome,” he admitted. “But it was fun. For everything that I saw up there was new to me. I caught a lot of fish too.”

“Where?—in the pool at the foot of the falls?”

“That’s where I caught the biggest ones. And I made a queer discovery too, Jerry—something that I’m going to follow up.

But first I've got to rig up a diving suit."

I was staring at him now.

"A diving suit?" I repeated. "What in Sam Hill are you talking about?"

"Jerry," he spoke earnestly, "did you know that the early Indians used to mine lead near Clarks Falls?"

"I've heard," says I, "that they got lead some place near here. But who told you about it?"

"An old settler. According to his story this land at one time all belonged to the native Indians—the hills and hollows and everything else. Then the white men came. And the natives were gradually crowded back. Finally the redskins were taken away altogether and put on a government reservation. One of the last to go was a young brave by the name of Crow Foot. It hadn't taken the new settlers very long to tumble to the fact that the Indians had a lead mine of their own. And so, when only Crow Foot was left, the crafty settlers tried to find out from him where the lead mine was. They needed lead, they said, for bullets. And they offered Crow Foot six ponies if he'd lead them to the secret mine. He might just as well, they said. For he was going away for good. And the hidden mine never would do *him* any good. Crow Foot, I guess, figured that the white men wanted to make more bullets so that they could kill more Indians. And so, true to his people, he started off alone on his pony. The white men, he said, would never find out where the lead mine was from him. But they did—almost. For that

night a trapper found the Indian lying unconscious in the woods. He had fallen from his pony. It took a lot of faithful nursing to save his life. And in gratitude he drew a map for the trapper. If the good white man would go *this* way and *that* way, it was all drawn out on the hard ground with a stick, he'd find a hole in the rocks. And deep in this hole was the secret lead mine. The trapper, of course, thought that he was in luck. It would be easy, he figured, to find the hidden mine. It was his intention to sell the lead and get rich. And he told his wife to keep her mouth shut about their sudden good fortune. But the thought of being rich made her dizzy. And she said things to the neighbors that aroused their suspicions. Earlier the whites had tried to follow the redskins when they went after lead. And now the greedy whites tried to follow the trapper. It was learned that he headed for the hilly section near Clarks Falls. And having lost the trail, the spies decided to wait for him and waylay him. But he never came back."

"That's almost like the story of the Forty Thieves," says I. "Remember, Poppy? Ali Baba's greedy brother was trapped in the treasure cave. He got in all right. But he couldn't get out. And probably that's what happened to the trapper too."

"I'd sooner think, Jerry, that he was killed by a landslide."

"Well, maybe he was. But what's that got to do with the strange kid that you met near the falls?"

"Nothing."

"Then why did you mention it?"

“The point is, Jerry, that I’ve found a new hole near the falls. A hole that *you* never saw; nor anybody else around here. But I can’t explore it till I fix up a diving suit. For it’s under water.”

“But if you haven’t seen it,” says I, amazed, “how do you know it’s there?”

He picked up his fishing rod.

“Jerry, I had over fifty feet of line on that reel. It was a fine, strong line—plenty strong enough, I figured, to hold anything that I’d hook in Clarks Creek. But I got something in the pool under the falls—probably a big bass—that first took every inch of line that I had, and then snapped it like a cobweb. The pool itself isn’t more than twenty feet deep. I sounded it. And yet I had lost over fifty feet of line! That can be explained in only one way. There’s a submerged natural passageway going back under the falls. And when I get a chance to explore it, I have the feeling that I’ll see things that no white man has ever seen before me—not even the trapper himself. For, as I say, he undoubtedly was killed by the landslide that blocked the canyon and raised the water level in the pool.”

For a moment or two I was too amazed for words. But finally I got my voice back again.

“And do you really think,” says I breathlessly, “that you’ve actually found the Long Lost Indian lead mine?”

Never had I seen him look more earnest.

“I do for a fact, Jerry,” he spoke slowly. Then he added, with shining eyes: “And if I’m right, it not only is going to mean a fortune for both of us, but a decent home for that Saucer child.”

CHAPTER II

THE CARRIAGE IN THE DRIVE

Before I go on with my story, I think I better tell you something about myself and the town in which I live. And as my other chums have a prominent part in the story, I'm going to tell you about them too. Nor must I overlook faithful Davey Jones. Gee! He's only a sea turtle. But if the time ever comes when animals are awarded hero medals he ought to get one as big as an elephant's back porch.

For not only did he let us load him down with our camping truck, as the pictures in this book prove; but later on he actually saved our lives. Like Ali Baba's greedy brother we got into the treasure cave all right. But we couldn't get out! And without Davey's help our bones undoubtedly would have been added to the pile under the air shaft. Those grim whitened bones! They told a strange story. And they further put an end to a still stranger mystery.

But I won't say any more about the bones here. That part comes later on.

My name is Jerry Todd. And like my swell dad, who owns a brickyard, I was born and raised in Tutter, Illinois. You can tell by the name of our town that it isn't

very big. For “Tutter” doesn’t sound like Chicago or Boston or San Francisco. When you hear the name spoken, or see it in print, you naturally think of cowpaths and hitching posts. That’s us, all right! But I like it. I wouldn’t trade towns with any boy anywhere. Nor would I trade chums. For I think I’ve got the best home, and the best chums, of any boy in the whole United States.

Take my chum Red Meyers, for instance. With his freckles and brick-colored topknot he isn’t much to look at. In fact, it’s generally conceded, even in his own family, that he’s the homeliest kid in the community. But he’s true-blue to his pals. Every time. And what he lacks in size he makes up for in gab. Dad laughingly calls him the little squirt with the big squawk. And can he squawk! Oh, baby!

Red and I live in the same block. He has a swell big barn, where we often put on wild-west shows; and his father runs a moving-picture theatre. Mrs. Meyers and mother belong to the same church societies, mainly the Stitch and Chatter Club, which meets once a week to make fancy hair-curlers for the heathens. In the same way Mr. Meyers and dad attend the same lodges. Red and I in turn often trade meals. He lets me know when his ma is cooking up something special, like fried chicken or liver and onions. And I do the same with him. In that way we both get a double dose of everything.

He further trades meals with Rory Ringer, another member of our gang, who lives at the other end of the block. Rory recently came to America from England. And you should hear his gab! He can’t say “arm” to save his life—at least he never does. With him an “arm” is a “harm.”

And a “house” is an “’ouse.” He further calls “hawks” “’awks,” and “owls” “’owls.” It sure is funny. One time when he was eating at our house he asked mum to pass him the “kyke.” And then he asked for another “bananah.” It was Red who got him into our gang. I thought myself that the newcomer was kind of small. But I’ve learned since that mere size is unimportant. Grit is the thing that counts. And Rory sure has it in big gobs. In our numerous battles with the tough Stricker gang, he holds his own with the best of us. And can he heave rotten tomatoes! Oh, oh! He hits the bull’s-eye every time.

Older members of our six-cornered gang are big Peg Shaw and Scoop Ellery. As I have written down in my various books, Peg is our best scrapper. But don’t get the idea that he goes around looking for a scrap. Absolutely not! He’s the best-natured kid in town. But he can put aside that big grin of his in a jiffy, let me tell you, if the occasion requires it. And then—oh, boy! He’s a whole battalion in himself. As for Scoop, it’s his swell leadership that has brought us through more than one neighborhood battle with flying colors.

At one time Scoop was our sole leader. But now he shares the leadership of our gang with Poppy Ott. There’s a pair for you! Poppy himself likes to work out clever business schemes. It’s born in him. Scoop in turn is a born detective. In fact, we all have detective badges. We call ourselves the Juvenile Jupiter Detectives of America. And we’ve had the good fortune to bump into some real mysteries too.

First, there was the mystery of the strange “Whispering Mummy.” Then the mysteries of the “Rose-Colored Cat,” the “Oak Island Treasure,” the “Waltzing Hen” and the “Talking Frog.” I’ve put our adventures into a series of books, like this one. And while the titles may sound odd to you, or even childish, don’t get the idea that I write fairy tales. Hardly! Take the “Talking Frog” book for instance. The mechanical frog itself was the clever invention of an odd old man, whose valuable radio device would have been stolen by a crooked toy manufacturer if we hadn’t stepped in. There’s a “ghost” in this exciting story, and a queer “puzzle room.” From beginning to end the book is packed full of fun and mystery. Having put a finish to that adventure, we next solved the crazy mystery of the “Purring Egg,” and after that in turn more mysteries, one of which took us into a strange “Whispering Cave” on Oak Island. While there we played “Pirate” to help a strange boy, who stood in danger of losing his inheritance. Later we found ourselves in charge of a newspaper. I started in as Editor-in-Chief. But I got into so much hot water with my mixed-up editorials (the wonder is that I didn’t get into jail!) that I soon changed my title to “Editor-in-Grief.” Still later we set up a “Caveman” kingdom on Oak Island, a favorite haunt of ours. And now, as I say, we were about to stumble headlong into still another mystery.

Many Illinois towns are surrounded by flat prairies. But Tutter is shut in by big hills, rolled up, thousands of years ago, by the gigantic river that then emptied the Great Lakes into the Gulf of Mexico. There is still a small river in the floor of the valley. But the two streams that give us the most fun in summer are Clarks Creek, as mentioned, and the winding canal into which the creek empties. The land that the

creek drains is too hilly for farming. And deep in these northern hills is a remarkable waterfall. In the spring, or in rainy weather, this waterfall is a sight worth seeing. But few people ever get to it. For it's too wildly located. Some day, I dare say, it will be made into a state park, like Starved Rock, another local point of interest. And then, of course, expensive roads will be built, enabling people to get close to the falls in cars. I suppose that's all right. As long as the natural beauty is there, the people who make up the state have a right to enjoy it. Yet I hate to see the old wildness disappear. For boys love that kind of stuff. And I'd like to see some of the natural wildness left for the boys who will follow me. The best fun in the world is camping. At least that's *my* idea. And there's no camping that equals wild camping. It's real fun when you're in a place where you can roam in all directions without being chased by bulls or confronted by a "keep-off-the-grass" sign. And a camp with electric lights, grocery-store service and running water is no camp at all.

I'm going to tell you about a *real* camp!

The Stricker gang that I mentioned lives in Zulutown, which is the name that the Tutter people have for the tough west-side section beyond my dad's brickyard. The two parts of town are divided by a raised switch-track. This track is the danger line. And if we go beyond it, any time of the day or night, we sensibly arm ourselves with rocks and clubs.

Bid Stricker, the leader, hates the ground we walk on. And nothing pleases him any better than to corner us singly and plaster us with mud. He's jealous too because we have the best ideas. If we put on a show he tries his best to

break it up. And in the same way he followed us to Oak Island one time and stole our scow. That was the time we played “Pirate.” And did we ever fix him in the end! Oh, baby! I’m glad he’s in this book. For I want to show you how we handle him when he gets too fresh.

Other members of the gang that you’ll meet in the following pages are Jimmy Stricker, Bid’s cousin, Jum Prater (whose mouth is so big that he has to put clothespins on it when he yawns to keep from turning inside-out) and the two Milden brothers, Chet and Hib.

Before Rory and Poppy came along, to join forces with us, Bid had us outnumbered. But now the situation is reversed. So, whenever a battle starts, we’re pretty certain how it will end, if we’re all together. And even if we’re shy a warrior or two, we can usually hold our own if Peg himself is on hand.

But let’s get on with my story.

Poppy had just told me about his amazing discovery at Clarks Falls. He had every reason to believe, he said, that he had actually located the entrance to the Long Lost lead mine, as worked, years ago, by the native Indians. I had often hunted for the mine myself. But it never had occurred to me, or to the hundreds of other boys who had similarly searched for it, that the entrance was submerged.

I had heard it said that a landslide in the vicinity of the falls had undoubtedly blocked the hidden cave, which was further believed to contain all kinds of native Indian trinkets. But now it would seem that instead of covering up

the cave direct, as suspected, the landslide instead had caused the water under the falls to back up and do the concealing.

Which in itself was odd. But even odder was the manner in which the cave had just been rediscovered. A captive bass had done the trick!

And now the successful young explorer was walking on air.

“Yes, sir, Jerry,” says he, with dancing eyes, “we’re going to be rich. For the lead in that cave is worth a fortune. And probably we’ll find a lot of valuable Indian pottery too.”

“But how are you going to get at it,” says I, “if it’s covered up with water?”

“First of all I’m going to make a diving suit, to explore the cave. And if it turns out to be the cave I suspect, we’ll buy a pumping outfit and pump the pool dry. Then we can go into the cave just like the Indians did.”

“You’ll need a pretty big pump,” says I, “if it works faster than the falls itself.”

“Shucks! We haven’t had a drop of rain for weeks. And the falls is almost all dried up.”

I did some heavy thinking.

“Poppy,” says I, at length, “had it occurred to you that there might be a curse on that mine?”

“What do you mean?” says he, searching my face.

“Well,” says I, “you say yourself that the trapper was killed by a landslide before he could get into the cave. That looks suspicious. And I’d sure hate to have a similar landslide get chummy with me.”

“I’ll take a chance,” says he daringly.

Then he added:

“By the way, Jerry, didn’t you tell me the other day that Red Meyers had rigged up some kind of a diving outfit to hunt for lost golf balls?”

“Sure thing,” says I. “But I know what’ll happen to you if you start out to explore a submerged cave with that goofy contraption. For poor Red himself almost suffocated the afternoon that he and Rory tried it out in their cistern.”

“Maybe I can perfect it.”

“All it is,” says I, “is a pail turned upside-down, with a rubber hose fastened to it. There are glass eyeholes in the pail, and a rubber neckband to keep the water out. With Rory pumping air into the hose with an auto pump, Red thought sure that he could go any place under water. But the place he came nearest to was the local hospital. And his mother tells the story that he still drips water out of his ears when he sneezes.”

Poppy laughed.

“I’m sorry I missed that.”

“Red and Rory are caddying this summer. And they found out that the big water hazard in the golf course is literally plastered with lost golf balls. That’s what gave them the idea for the submarine outfit. But so far as I know to the contrary, the water-logged golf balls are still there.”

“Nevertheless,” persisted Poppy, “I’d like to see their outfit. For we’ve got to have something like that.”

Here a peculiar scraping sound occurred at the front door.

“What’s that?” says I, startled.

Laughing, Poppy opened the door. And in waddled a huge turtle.

It was old Davey Jones himself!

If you have read my book about the “Prancing Pancake” you’ll need no introduction to old Davey, the educated sea turtle. He was brought to town by one of the book’s main characters, who at one time owned a complete animal circus.

The first time I saw Davey he scared the wits out of me. I stumbled upon him in the weeds in Happy Hollow, just outside of town. His odd master was feeding him bits of raw liver. And it was then that I heard his history.

He came from Boot Island, in the tropics. And it was generally conceded by scientists that he was hundreds of years old. Anyway he was the biggest thing of his kind that *I* ever had set eyes on. So, when he took after me, on those powerful legs of his, with outstretched neck, it isn’t to be

wondered at that I screeched bloody murder. I thought then that he was going to chew a hole in my back porch. But I learned later that this was his way of having fun. When spoken to, by his odd master, he looked up at me as meek as a kitten. And when instructed, he even offered me one of his front flappers. That was his way of “shaking hands.”

He had earlier saved his master’s life. That’s why he was retained when all of the other performing animals in the show were sold.

Called away, on important business, the retired showman had left his unusual pet with old Cap’n Tinkertop in Zulutown. But it was nothing uncommon for the turtle to get out of his pen and wander around town. At first he caused a sensation. But the people soon learned that he was harmless. And now he frequently carried small children on his back.

Some of the kids, of course, thought it was smart to poke sticks at him. But he soon put a stop to that! And did I ever hoot the day he took after Bid Stricker. Gosh! Bid’s eyes stuck out like halved onions. To save himself he climbed a tree. Nor did the turtle let him come down till ten o’clock that night.

“Who are you looking for, Davey?” says Poppy, as the big turtle lumbered from room to room.

“Maybe he misses his master,” says I.

“Let’s take him home,” suggested Poppy.

So we started down the street in the gathering dusk, the intelligent turtle following at our heels. Pretty soon we came to the corner of School and Elm Streets, where old Mrs. Glimme lives in a rambling wooden house.

A very wealthy woman, Mrs. Glimme helps support her extravagant daughter-in-law in Chicago. There's a grandson too. When he comes to Tutter he runs around with Bid Stricker. And once the two of them cornered me in an alley and turned my pants inside-out. Even worse they tied my hands. So I had to go home that way. I never would run down any kid simply because he came from the city. I'd be silly to do that. For there's just as many good boys in the city as in the country. But I've got to confess that I can't bear the sight of Reginald Glimme. He's a snob and a bully. Because he has money he thinks he can run everybody. But he can't run me. That's why he dislikes me.

There was a farm carriage in his grandmother's private drive. And just as Poppy and I turned the corner, thus getting a full view of the big yard, a tall angular woman got out of the shabby looking rig and mounted the steps to the front door.

I never had set eyes on her before. And probably I wouldn't have given her a second glance if Poppy hadn't suddenly clutched my arm.

He was peculiarly excited.

"Wait here, Jerry," says he, in a low voice.

And without another word he darted into the shadowy bushes and silently wormed his way to the waiting carriage. I saw him look inside. And somehow his manner suggested to me that he was disappointed. Then I saw him tiptoe toward the house.

Turning, I observed too that Davey Jones had similarly disappeared into the shadowy yard.

CHAPTER III

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

Mrs. Glimme at one time had a lot of servants. But now she has the big house all to herself. For she likes to be alone. The kindly neighbors often worry about her. For she keeps out of sight for days at a time. They watch her chimneys in the winter and her bedroom light in the summer. If they fail to see smoke on time, or a light, they call her up on the telephone. And if that fails to arouse her, they knock directly on her doors. Once they found her unconscious at the foot of her cellar stairs. She had a fractured hip. But nobody in the neighborhood ever learned what caused her to trip and fall.

The town gossips say she's too close-mouthed. They'd like to have her do more talking about her troubles and her secrets. And because she won't, they run her down, hinting even that she herself helped to put her son out of the way. But I never took any stock in that theory. For I know how my ma loves me. And I don't believe that any mother, unless she was totally crazy, would deliberately harm her only child.

Besides, Bardwell Glimme, at the time of his mysterious disappearance, was a man grown, with a wife and a baby boy.

I've never seen Reggie Glimme's mother. But I've been told that all she cares about is pretty dresses and gay parties. In the winter time she lets the servants take care of her son. And when summer comes she dumps him onto his grandmother. But he never stays in Tutter any longer than he has to. For he takes after his restless mother. And that big house at the corner of School and Elm Streets is too blanded quiet to suit him.

Yet his grandmother always tries to make his visits pleasant. When he was small, she even bought hickory nuts and sprinkled them on the ground for him to find, so that he could go back to Chicago and tell his chums that he went "nutting" while he was in the country. In the same way she once buried Indian arrowheads for him to find. And how he bragged about that arrowhead collection of his! The city boys got the idea from his talk that nuts and arrowheads were as common in the country as mosquitoes. But that isn't true at all.

With the strange history of the big house running through my head, I watched Poppy worm his way through the shadowy bushes to the front door, where the tall angular visitor was still waiting impatiently for admittance. Then the door opened. I could see Mrs. Glimme against the lighted background; she seemed peculiarly small and frail; and I could detect the murmur of voices.

Poppy had told me to wait on the sidewalk. But I couldn't see any sense in that. Besides I was curious to learn what the women were talking about. So I did some pussy-footing myself. And with each guarded step the voices grew plainer.

“But the money isn’t due,” Mrs. Glimme spoke in a troubled trembling voice.

In contrast, the visitor’s harsh voice made me think of spikes going through a corn sheller.

“I want the money to-night,” she said.

“I’ll get it for you to-morrow. But I can’t pay you to-night. It’s impossible. For I haven’t that much money in the house.”

“You heard what I said,” an added sharpness appeared in the visitor’s harsh unrelenting voice. “I want my money to-night. And if you know what’s good for you, Anne Glimme, you’ll get it for me without further argument.”

Mrs. Glimme trembled with agitation.

“Have you no heart at all, Rachel Saucer? Do you propose to hound me to my very grave?”



“HAVE YOU NO HEART AT ALL, RACHEL
SAUCER?”

Rachel Saucer! I saw now why Poppy was so excited. Saucer, I recalled, was the name of the strange boy that he had met that afternoon at Clarks Falls—the kid who never had seen the inside of a schoolhouse. And this tall bony woman evidently was the mentioned “battle-axe.”

Boy, she sure was a “battle-axe,” all right!

Her voice rasped with hatred. And she seemed to take a cruel delight in taunting the weaker woman in the lighted doorway.

“Heartless am I?” she began. “Well, maybe I am. But I’m exactly what you made me, Anne Glimme. When I was a girl you snubbed me. *You* were rich and *I* was poor. I wasn’t good enough to associate with you then. I wasn’t even good enough for you to wipe your feet on. *Trash!* That’s what you called me. *Trash!* And later, when you learned that your precious son was in love with my younger sister, you did everything in your power to separate them. Finally you succeeded. And what happened then? Shall I tell you, Anne Glimme? Shall I tell you to your face, right here on your own doorstep? Shall I? Or do you want to buy me off as usual? It’s for you to decide. And I don’t propose to wait either. Either I get my money to-night, in gold, or the truth about you and your son will be on everybody’s tongue to-morrow morning.”

“Rachel! Rachel!” came the pitiful begging cry. “Please.”

There was a harsh grating laugh, which more than ever revealed the visitor's cruel unrelenting nature.

“How times have changed!” she spoke tauntingly. “A *Glimme* begging favors from a *Saucer*! Ha, ha, ha!” Then the voice changed. It was full of fury now. “But you'll get no favors from me. I want my money. And I want it now.”

I thought that poor Mrs. Glimme would collapse in the doorway.

“Please come inside,” she begged weakly. “I'll give you what money I have on hand. And I'll send the rest to you tomorrow morning, as soon as the bank opens.”

Poppy had caught sight of me in the bushes. And as the two women disappeared into the house he joined me.

“I thought maybe I'd find the Saucer kid in the buggy,” he told me. “And I was going to coax him to jump out and beat it. But evidently his aunt came to town alone.”

“You certainly hit the mark,” says I, “when you called her an old battle-axe.”

“That's the way she went at the kid this afternoon. As hard as nails. I wondered why he acted so timid. All the time he was talking to me he kept peeking over his shoulder. Sort of fearful-like. And finally he told me the truth. He had an aunt, he said, who knocked him around like a dog. He had been told never to talk to anybody outside of the family. If he saw anybody in the woods he was supposed to run and hide,

like a groundhog. But he disobeyed orders when he saw me. That's why his aunt beat him."

"Someone ought to beat her," I spoke angrily.

"We were sitting on a log beside the pool," Poppy proceeded. "He was just telling me how he'd love to go to school and have boy friends like me. When all of a sudden something grabbed him from behind. And there she stood! Gosh, Jerry! I can't begin to describe the look on her hatchet-like face. Nobody but the devil himself could look that way. And I doubt if even the devil could do it, unless he had a pain in his stomach. Holding the kid with one muscular hand, she switched him with the other till his bare legs were raw. Then she drove him ahead of her in the direction of their home. I later saw the place. It's a log house set into the rocks. I bet it's a hundred years old at the very least. And how anybody gets out of there with a carriage is a mystery to me. But evidently there's a road of some sort."

"If we're going back to help the kid," says I quickly, "we can't follow the course that you took to-day. That's too winding. We need a more direct course. So let's find out where that road is."

"How?"

"By following the woman home, of course."

"By George!" cried Poppy. "That's an idea."

We could tell by the looks of the old farm horse that it wasn't a fast traveler. It probably would walk all of the way home.

Or even if it broke into an occasional trot we felt that we could keep up with it. Nor would it be hard, we agreed, to keep out of the driver's sight.

Our plans thus made, Poppy stood guard near the waiting carriage while I skinned down the street to Wheeler's drug store and called up mother. I had a big job on my hands, I said; and I might not get home till midnight. She didn't like that a little bit. But when I explained to her that a friend of Poppy's was in trouble, and needed my help, she gave in. For she realizes that boy chums owe a duty to one another.

Then who should percolate through the store door but freckled Red Meyers himself.

"Have you seen him, Jerry?" came the quick inquiry.

"Who?" says I shortly, eager to get away.

"The Indian."

"What Indian?"

"The rain-maker."

"Who are you talking about?" says I, puzzled.

"There's a rain-maker in town. A real Indian. He got permission to pitch his wigwam in the public park. And to-morrow he's going into the hills, where his ancestors used to hunt wild game, to make it rain."

I thought of Poppy's plan.

“Who wants it to rain?” I grunted.

“The farmers, of course.”

“I don’t,” says I bluntly.

Red grinned.

“What’s the matter?” says he. “Have you decided to put off your regular midsummer bath till next year?”

I had heard of scientists dynamiting clouds to produce rain. But I couldn’t make myself believe that an Indian could do it with magic charms, as Red now declared. And giving him the horselaugh, I left him in the drug store, with a big gob of ice cream in front of him, and quickly retraced my steps to the corner house.

But in the brief time that I had been away the carriage had vanished. So had Poppy. I was peculiarly disappointed.

Then, to my added surprise, a sleek little roadster drove into the yard. It was the Glimme kid! And beside him sat Bid Stricker.

“Hi, Gram,” greeted the new arrival, when his grandparent met him at the front door.

“Why, Reginald!” came the amazed cry. “What a pleasant surprise. How did you get here?”

“In my new car.”

“In *your* new car? Do you mean to tell me that you have a car of your own?”

“Sure thing. Didn’t mum tell you about it in her last letter?”

“No.”

“It took a lot of coaxing, Gram, but I finally got it.”

“I didn’t think that you were old enough to drive a car.”

The newcomer didn’t like that.

“Humph! To hear you talk, anybody would think that I was an infant.”

“But I’m sure you aren’t sixteen,” the grandparent persisted.

“Well, keep it to yourself, Gram. For as yet they haven’t found out about it down in Springfield, where the auto licenses are made out.”

Bid then called from the car.

“Hey, Glimme! Shall I bring in your bags?”

“Sure thing. But don’t touch that stuff on the runningboard.”

“What is it?”

“A tent and surveying instruments.”

Mrs. Glimme peered in the lighted car.

“Who is the other boy?” she inquired.

“Oh, one of your town kids. I picked him up down the street.”

“But what are you doing with a tent and surveying instruments?”

“I’m going camping.”

“Where?”

“Up in the hills, near Clarks Falls.”

A sudden change came over the woman.

“Oh, no!” she cried imploringly. “Don’t go there. You must not. For if Rachel found out who you were——”

And there she stopped, later retreating into the house, with increased agitation, when Bid stumbled up the porch steps with two huge traveling bags.

“Here you are,” sang out the luggage carrier, relieving himself of the load.

The grandson stood with a puzzled look on his face.

“My grandmother gets queerer every day,” says he.

“Is she sick?”

“Not that I know of.”

“She looked kind of white to me.”

“She got that way when I told her that I was going camping.”

“Boy! I wish I could go with you.”

“Well, why not?”

“Can I?—honest?”

“Sure thing. Get your stuff together to-night. And I’ll pick you up in the morning. But you’ve got to work.”

Bid began to cool off.

“What do you mean?” he grunted.

“I’m going to do some prospecting as well as camping. And I want you to do the digging.”

“Prospecting?” Bid repeated. “What do you expect to find up there? Gold?”

“No,” young Glimme spoke shortly. “Lead.”

CHAPTER IV

A SECRET MESSAGE

Young Gummy, as we called him, had a big opinion of himself. And having inherited a piece of land in the northern hills, near Clarks Falls, it was his intention to survey the tract himself. He was dead sure, he told Bid, as I further hugged the near-by bushes, that the Long Lost lead mine was on his property. For he had found an old map among his father's papers. And he had every reason to believe, he concluded, that it was an exact copy of the map that the Indian had drawn on the ground for the trapper.

I expected next to hear the chesty young prospector say something about a cave under the falls. But he didn't. And was it ever a relief to me when he finally admitted to his chum that the map was incomplete.

"But I'm positive," he wound up, "that the lead mine is somewhere near the falls. For that's where the trail leads to. And that's where the trapper was killed by a landslide."

"Evidently," says Bid, "the trapper must have made two copies of the ground map. For he needed a copy himself, to tell him where to go. And if he was killed by a

landslide, as you say, the paper must have been buried with him.”

“I think his wife copied the ground map too,” young Gummy gave his head a wise wag. “But evidently a shower came up before she finished it. For the map suddenly ends just at the most important part.”

“And do you really believe that you can find the lead mine?” Bid spoke excitedly.

“Why not? I’ve got a better chance than anybody else.”

(So he thought!)

“Gee, you sure are a lucky guy!”

“What have you been doing all winter?” Gummy then inquired sociably.

“Oh, fooling around,” Bid shrugged.

“Is Jerry Todd and his gang still on earth?”

“Sure thing. But I hardly ever see them any more. For they’ve learned that it’s wise to keep out of my way.”

“Yes,” Gummy spoke meanly, matching his words with a dark look, “and if they know what’s good for them they’ll continue to keep out of your way. And mine too. For I don’t care to have them snooping around on my property. And that’s what they’d do, all right, if they got wise to my plans.”

“They’ll never find out anything from me,” Bid promised faithfully.

“Jerry thinks that the woods are free. But when I get my signs up I’ll show him that there’s one part of the woods that isn’t free.”

Bid leaned forward eagerly.

“Can you have him arrested for trespassing?”

“Absolutely.”

“Boy, I hope he does butt in on us. For I’d like to see you put him behind the bars. That would take him down a peg or two.”

“Does he still chum around with that big Shaw boy?”

“Sure thing.”

“How about Scoop Ellery?”

“He’s still in the gang. In fact, they’ve got one more in their gang than I have in mine.”

“But you can still lick ’em, huh?”

“Easy,” Bid lied.

And did I ever want to laugh!

“I know very well what will happen,” Gummy proceeded, “if Jerry finds out that I’m fencing in the falls. And until I can complete the survey, and get my signs up, I have no legal right to order him away. But I don’t want him hanging around at any time. So the thing for us to do, I guess, is to round up your whole gang. Then, if he shows up, we can put him out by force.”

“Hot dog!” cried Bid.

“I have one tent in the car. But we’ll probably need another.”

“How about the eats?”

“I’ll furnish the grub. But you’ve got to bring your own bedding.”

“I’ll have everything ready by six-thirty to-morrow morning,” promised Bid.

“Make it ten-thirty. For I’ll need time to buy the grub.”

“Do you know anything about the country up there?”

“Not much.”

“There’s a log cabin near the falls. And the people who live there drive in and out. They’re friends of my grandmother’s. So I can fix it up with them to take care of the car.”

“Who are they?”

“Three old maids by the name of Saucer.”

“Saucer! Haw, haw, haw! Some name. They ought to marry three brothers by the name of Cup. Then there’d be three Cups and Saucers.”

Bid thought that was awfully funny.

“And what would their children be?” he hee-hawed. “Pie plates?”

“Salt and pepper shakers, of course.”

“How many will your car carry?” Bid then inquired.

“As many as we’ve got to put in it.”

“The fellows will yip their heads off when I tell them about this.”

“Well, tell them not to do their yipping in front of Jerry Todd and his gang. We’re going prepared. But I’d just as soon have the woods to myself for a couple of weeks.”

Mrs. Glimme had gone to the kitchen to prepare a lunch for the newcomer. I could see her moving about in the lighted house. And now she called her grandson inside.

Bid started for the street, but stopped abruptly, and then screeched bloody murder, when a huge ungainly object crossed his path.

It was old Davey!

I later took the turtle home. And then I went back to Poppy's house. Surely, I told myself, he'd be home by midnight. And wondering what he'd do, when he learned of young Glimme's plans, I settled myself on the front porch.

I had time now to think of that odd conversation between the two women. And I found myself wondering what Mrs. Glimme had done that made it necessary for her to buy the other woman's silence. There had been mention of a love match between the Glimme boy and the Saucer woman's younger sister. This match seemingly had been opposed by the wealthy Tutter woman. She finally separated the pair. And then something had happened.

I knew, of course, that the Glimme boy had disappeared. But I still didn't believe that his own mother had secretly put him out of the way—not even to separate him from an undesirable girl. For at the time of his disappearance he was married! It stood to reason that the mentioned separation had occurred long before that. No, I told myself, Bardwell Glimme's disappearance was a puzzle in itself. There might be a crime there. But it wasn't the thing that the mean country woman had referred to. There was something else. And slowly it percolated into my bean that whatever that "something else" was, it led directly to the unhappy boy that Poppy had met at the falls.

The boy's aunts were getting hush money from Mrs. Glimme. I knew that to be a fact. And maybe, the conclusion formed itself in my head, the money was pay for keeping the poor kid out of sight.

It didn't seem possible that Mrs. Glimme would do a thing like that. Yet the facts of the case were against her. And I found an ugly feeling toward her growing up inside of me. I'm a boy myself. I want a square deal. I want other boys to have a square deal. And in this particular case I was ready to fight for the boy who wasn't getting a square deal.

Mrs. Glimme's money wouldn't save her. If she was selfishly ruining the country boy's life, I intended, with Poppy's help, to expose her. And then the law could take care of her.

But granting that my theory was correct, who could the boy be? And what would Mrs. Glimme benefit by keeping him out of sight?

It sure was a puzzle, all right.

I grew sleepy as the lights around me went out one after another. And finally I lit out for home, figuring that when I woke up in the morning, at the regular time, Poppy would be there to tell me his story.

"Is that you, Jerry?" came sleepily from mum's bedroom, when I tiptoed up the stairs.

I stopped to give her a good-night kiss.

"I hope," says she, "that you won't feel compelled to stay up many nights like this to accommodate your new chum."

"I haven't seen him yet," I confessed.

"Who is he?" she spoke curiously.

“His name is Saucer,” says I.

And then I asked her if she knew anything about the three old maids who lived near the falls. She had heard of them, she said. But she acted kind of funny when I told her that they had a boy in the family. He couldn't be a real nephew, she declared, for none of the sisters had a husband. Which gave me something more to think about.

Maybe, I considered, as I got into bed, the boy had been left at their house in a basket. Such things do happen. Or possibly they had gotten him at some orphans' asylum.

But why should they take him out of an asylum and then hide him in the woods? That was the part that stumped me.

My thoughts then jumped to the cave under the falls. And a queer tingle stole over me as I pictured its probable riches. Good old Poppy! It was like him, I told myself, to want to share his good fortune with me. And yet, the troubled thought shoved itself at me, we were liable to lose everything if young Gummy's survey turned out as he anticipated.

His unexpected appearance on the scene didn't help our case a-tall. And I found myself wondering what Poppy would do when he learned of the rich kid's intentions. Would we race the cocky young surveyor to the falls? And would we later drive him off? That would be fun. But if he really owned the land we'd be the losers in the end. For once he had proved his claim to the tract, he could drive us off and keep us off.

Gosh! There was need for prompt action, all right. I could see that. And for a moment or two I was tempted to get quietly out of bed and go back to Poppy's house. But I finally decided to stay where I was, hopeful that my chum would show up early in the morning.

Mum got me out of bed at six-thirty.

"Did you know," says she, as she put out a clean shirt for me, "that Poppy Ott has disappeared?"

"Huh?" says I sleepily, unable at first to comprehend what she was talking about.

Then, as I got my wits together, I gave the bed covers a throw.

"Isn't Poppy home yet?" I inquired excitedly.

"No. And if you have any idea where he is, you better get up and talk with Mr. Ott. For he just telephoned. And he'll be here in a minute or two."

Poppy had a bad woman to deal with. I realized that. And I wondered, with a sinking heart, if he had gotten into trouble. He had set out to do the rescuing act. But it wasn't improbable, I told myself, that he needed rescuing himself.

Mr. Ott came in grumbling.

"Hen scratchin'," he spoke in his odd sputtering way. "Nothin' but hen scratchin'. An' *him* stayin' out all night too. Humph! I ought to use a switch on him."

“Jerry himself was out till midnight,” mum informed.

“Thar you be, Miz Todd!” the old man spoke triumphantly. “Thar you be! They’re two of a kind. One stays out till midnight. An’ the other stays out all night. We ought to switch the both of ’em.”

Mum smiled. For she knew very well that the old man’s savageness was all put on. As a matter of fact he thinks that the sun rises and sets in his son. And I doubt if Poppy ever got a switching in all his life. Instead of switching him, as threatened, Mr. Ott backs him up in everything he does.

Now the glowering old man handed me a paper.

“Hen scratchin’,” says he again. “Nothin’ but hen scratchin’.”

I gave an excited cry.

“It’s a note from Poppy.”

“The farmer I buy milk from found it tied to his back door when he got up this morning at daybreak to milk his cows. It had my name on it. So he got me out of bed to deliver it.”

Mum glanced over my shoulder.

“It does look like hen scratching,” she declared.

“It’s written in code,” I explained, with continued excitement.

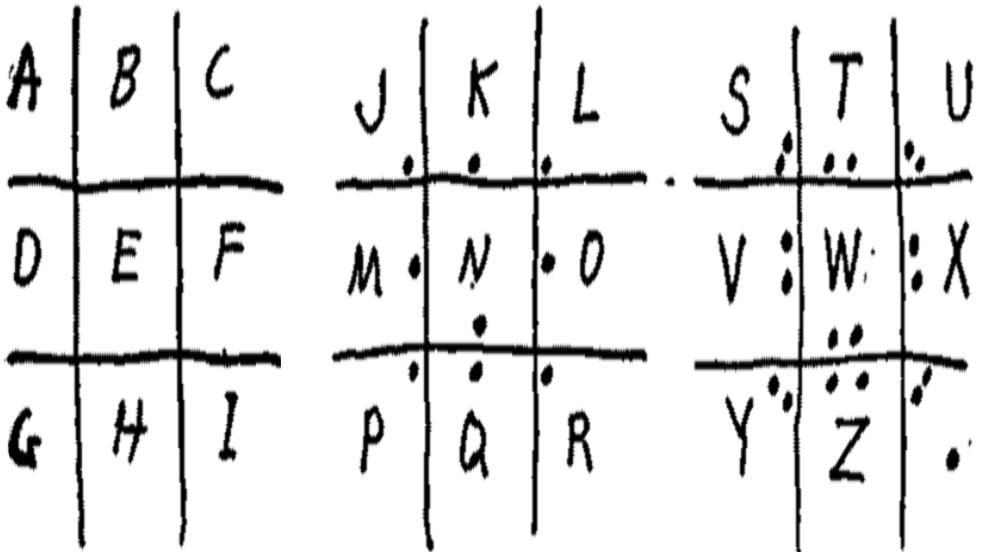
Poppy should have been home hours ago. And the fact that he had written to his father in code (realizing, of course, that the puzzled parent would promptly bring the secret message to me), proved that something unusual *had* happened, as I suspected.

Mr. Ott hung over me nervously as I deciphered the secret message word for word.

“Evidently,” he grunted, “you an’ Poppy must ’a’ made this up between you.”

I nodded, too busy at the time to tell him that my chum had gotten the simple code out of a book.

In order to decipher the message I first made three diagrams like this:



Here is the message as it was brought to me:

And here is what I got out of it:

Meet me at the falls as soon as possible. Bring Red's diving outfit and Davey Jones. Sammy Saucer just told me something that almost knocked my eyes out. I was right about the cave. To save time I will send this note to town with our milkman who lives near here. Tell dad I will be home as soon as possible. Try and get here by noon. Bring Sammy some candy as he never had any. We are hiding from his aunts. If you see them in the woods do not let on to them that you know anything about us. Your excited pal Poppy.

"Whar is he?" Mr. Ott inquired, when the completed note had been read to him.

"At Clarks Falls," I informed.

"Doin' what?"

"Searching for the Long Lost lead mine."

"Fol-de-rol!" the old man sputtered.

"I doubt if I can get there by noon," I spoke thoughtfully.

"But I ought to make it by night."

"If—" mum put in pointedly.

"If what?" says I, searching her face.

“If your father and I decide to let you go.”

But there was nothing in that to yap over. For I could tell by her manner that she had no intention of keeping me at home. Dear old mum! She just said that to remind me that she had a claim on me.

Mr. Ott started off, still sputtering to himself, but came back to take another look at the deciphered note.

“Divin’ outfit,” says he, scowling at the message. “What does he mean by that?”

“Evidently,” I dropped the hint, “he has to use a diving outfit to get into the lead cave.”

“Humph! They hain’t no lead cave. That’s just a tradition.”

“We may surprise you,” says I.

Mum took the note.

“But what in the world is Poppy going to do with Davey Jones?” she inquired.

“Old Davey,” I spoke nonsensically, “is a diving machine in himself. And who knows but what Poppy is going to teach him to swim into the cave and come out with hunks of lead in his mouth?”

That was too much for old Mr. Ott. And he went off shaking his shaggy head. Boys were a queer mess, he said.

Later he sent a whole raft of camping supplies to the house. Which proved in itself that he had a lot of confidence in us, even if he did think we were queer!

I knew, of course, that Poppy never intended to use old Davey to lift the lead in the submerged cave. My clever chum had some other important use for the unusual turtle.

And I wondered myself what was coming.

CHAPTER V

ON THE TRAIL

I lit out for Red's house, having telephoned to Scoop and Peg to meet me there as soon as possible. Something big had popped up, I said. And we had to act quick.

Mrs. Meyers met me at the kitchen door with a pancake turner in her hands.

"Laws-a-me!" she grumbled. "I wish you'd take that young son of mine outside and shake some of the appetite out of him. It used to be that I could fill him up with six pancakes. But now it takes ten."

"Six would be enough," Red spoke for himself, "if you made 'em big enough."

"What do you want me to bake them in?" his mother stiffened. "The family wash tub?"

"That's an idea," laughed Red, as he got up from the breakfast table rubbing his plump stomach.

His mother stopped him at the door to pick at his ears.

“Goodness gracious!” she further complained. “From the looks of your ears anybody would think that soap cost ten dollars an ounce.”

Red grinned.

“I wish it did,” says he. “For then we couldn’t afford to buy it.”

“Stand still,” came the sharp command, as he started to squirm.

“*Ouch!*” he squawked. “Good night nurse! If you want to drill for oil, why don’t you go down to Texas?”

I thought he’d dance a jig when he heard about the proposed camping trip. But instead he eyed me curiously.

“What are you going to do?” he quizzed. “Follow the rain-maker into the hills?”

The rain-maker! Gosh! I had forgotten all about him.

“We’ve got more important work to do,” says I, “than following a fake rain-maker around.”

He didn’t like that.

“You may change your mind about him being a fake rain-maker, if you get your shirt-tail dampened this afternoon.”

I looked up at the cloudless summer sky.

“There’s no sign of a rain storm up there,” I declared.

“Well, there’ll be plenty of rain up there when old Pebble-in-the-brook starts to do his stuff.”

Pebble-in-the-brook!

“Is that his real name?” I inquired curiously.

“Sure thing. And he’s a full-blooded Indian too.”

“The mere fact that he’s a real Indian,” says I, “doesn’t prove that he knows how to make it rain.”

But Red was dead sure that the Indians were master magicians.

“They can do some blamed queer things with their charms,” he declared.

“And what would happen if the rain lasted too long?” says I, hiding a grin. “Could he stop it too?”

“Of course,” came the confident reply. “He has charms to make it rain, and others to make it stop.”

“Bunk,” I snorted, showing him how expertly I could turn up my nose.

“Just the same,” he hung on, “if I go camping with you to-day, I’m going to carry my raincoat.”

“Why not wear your overcoat too?” I spoke genially. “For he may get his charms mixed up and start a snow storm instead.”

Rory then weaved into the yard with a long garden hose trailing behind him.

“’Ot dog!” he expressed himself in good old American slang, as he stopped in front of us. “I finally got hit fixed.”

“What?” says I.

“The ’ose,” says he. “It ’olds hair now.”

“’Olds hair?” says I, squinting at him. “Who’s hair. What are you talking about?”

“The ’ose,” says he.

Red laughed.

“Don’t you catch on, Jerry? He’s been patching my diving hose. And it finally holds air.”

“Oh! . . .” says I, as my face broke into a grin. “It ’olds hair, huh?”

“I put hadhesion tape on hit,” beamed Rory.

“Hadhesion tape,” I repeated, laughing. “Boy, I bet it was an awful blow to the king of Hengland when you moved to America.”

“I don’t think the king knew anything about hit,” Rory spoke soberly.

Which made me laugh harder than ever.

“You’re a great little guy,” I told him, messing up his hair.

“Cut it hout,” he squawked, slapping at me with the hose.

And then it suddenly began to spout water.

Red broke into a triumphant dance.

“I told you that old Pebble-in-the-brook could make it rain,” he yipped.

I then caught sight of Peg, who, in his fun-loving way, had fastened the other end of the trailing hose to a water faucet.

In the spirited water fight that followed, Mrs. Meyers indignantly took the hose away from us and chased us out of the yard. Later we saw her mopping up the back porch.

“She’ll be glad to get rid of you,” I laughingly told Red.

“But where are we going?” he quizzed.

“Wait till Scoop shows up,” says I, “and I’ll tell you all about it.”

“Here he comes now,” sang out Peg.

Mrs. Meyers in the meantime had disappeared into the house. And when we heard her dusting the piano, in the front room, we scooted through the garden to the barn door, and up the haymow stairs. There was no danger of being overheard here by the snoopy Stricker gang. So I dished out the whole story, starting with Poppy's fishing trip and ending with the secret note.

Peg took the deciphered note and read it.

"But if Poppy wanted all of us to come to the falls, why didn't he say so? You're the only one who's mentioned."

"You must remember," says I, "that Poppy left town before young Gummy showed up."

"As yet," I went on, "Poppy doesn't know you're needed. But when he learns the truth of the situation he'll be mighty glad to see you. And if you help us fight for the cave you'll get your share of the treasure too."

Peg laughed.

"If I get a crack at young Glimme," says he, with narrowed eyes, "I'll feel satisfied."

"I owe him several cracks myself," put in Scoop.

"Yes," spoke up Red, "and I have several that I've been saving for Bid Stricker."

I turned to Rory.

“How about you?” I grinned. “Are you in favor of the camping trip?”

“Hit was my hintention,” says he, “to ’unt for golf balls today. That’s why I patched hup the ’ose. But if Red wants to ’unt for lead hinstead, that’s ho-k with me.”

“All right,” says I quickly. “Having settled that matter, the next step, I guess, is to separate and collect our stuff. We’ll need a couple of pup tents. We should have plenty of blankets too.”

“How about the heats?” says Rory.

“Heats?” repeated Peg, mopping his sweaty face. “Suffering cats! This is hot enough to suit me.”

“I didn’t mean that kind of heats,” says Rory.

Peg grinned.

“Oh! . . .” says he. “You mean eats.”

“Sure thing,” says Rory pleasantly.

He used to get sore when we kidded him about his “H’s.” But he takes it good-naturedly now. In fact, he often laughs at himself.

It was our intention, if possible, to beat young Gummy to the falls. Another race, so to speak, between the hare and the tortoise. While he was fooling around in town we’d plug along as fast as we could. Of course, when he once got

started he'd cover the ground fast. But, even so, he had considerable walking to do at the very end of the trail. And if the private road that the Saucer women used was as rocky as I had been led to believe—and any road in that section was bound to be rocky—I had the feeling that he might find himself hung up with a broken axle.

Which sure would be swell!

If by any chance we *did* get to the falls first, it was our further plan to throw up an embankment in regular military style, and hold the others off. To accomplish this we planned to take along several snappy automobile tubes, for giant slingshot rubbers. We got that idea from the “cannon” in the “Pirate” book. Having a bigger gang this time, and more room to work in, we could use several “cannons.” Also we planned to take along several small slingshots.

All enthused now, we separated, it having been agreed that I was to round up old Davey Jones while Red in turn got his diving machine together. It was left to Scoop to get the needed inner tubes. Peg promised to round up the required pup tents. And we all worked together in planning the eats.

When it came time to start out we learned that we had more stuff than we could carry. We talked of using a wheelbarrow. Still, we sensibly agreed, it would be almost impossible to push a loaded wheelbarrow up the rocky gorge that we had to travel in order to reach the falls.

It was then that someone suggested that we hitch old Davey to a cart. He had been taught to pull a cart in the

circus of which he had earlier been an important part. And when we tried out the idea he acted as tickled as a kid with an all-day sucker. Not that he pranced around dog-fashion—or anything like that. Turtles can't prance. But Davey's funny little eyes always showed when he was feeling good. And they sure danced now.

The harness that we made for him was kind of sloppy. But it did the trick. And having satisfied ourselves that the Strickers were nowhere in sight, we started out. Fortunately we hadn't far to go before we reached the creek. And from then on we wound in and out among the willows and rocks, Scoop picking the way in true pioneer fashion, and the rest of us following in line, with faithful old Davey midway in the odd procession.

The few people that we met stared at us in open wonderment. It was a new thing for them to see a turtle hitched to a loaded cart. Which isn't saying though that we let old Davey haul everything. I guess not! I carried one of the pup tents myself and two blankets. Scoop and Peg had similar packs on their backs. Rory had the long garden hose wrapped around his body. It made him look like a snake charmer. Dressed in his Boy Scout suit, Red had enough kitchenware dangling from his belt to stock up a young hardware store. He further carried a roll of sweaters and towels. And you should have heard the racket when he stumbled. Gosh! It sounded like a tin cyclone.

Davey's load consisted mainly of the stuff that Mr. Ott had bought for us. Nor did we know at the time exactly

what the numerous packages contained. Therefore we had many pleasant surprises later on.

At noon we stopped on the bank of the creek and prepared our first outdoor meal. But first we stripped and took a cooling dip in the clear water. It was nice and shady here. In fact we passed through many places that day that the sun never got at. For on both sides of us were towering sandstone ledges.

Peg got out a fishing line.

“We won’t have time to cook fish,” I told him, as he dropped his baited hook into the water.

“Don’t kid yourself,” says he. “These fish aren’t for you—they’re for old Davey.”

And as though he knew exactly what was going on, the eager-eyed turtle waited expectantly at the fisherman’s elbow. I watched Peg catch eleven big shiners in quick succession, all of which disappeared whole down the turtle’s huge gullet. And then I dressed and made a meal myself on warm baked beans, brown bread, greasy butter, ham sandwiches, pie and cake. We had a few bites of Sammy’s candy too. But we didn’t eat much of it. The poor kid! He certainly hadn’t gotten much out of life so far. But if the lead mine turned out as well as we anticipated, he’d have plenty of everything in the future, candy included.

Davey had crawled into a cool hole to take a nap. But he got up cheerfully enough when we started off,

though, as the afternoon advanced, it was noticeable that he moved slower and slower.

“What’s the matter with him?” laughed Scoop. “Is he running out of gas?”

“You must remember,” says I, “that it’s a blamed sight harder for him to climb over the rocks than it is for us. So you must not make fun of him.”

“He looks to me,” says Peg, “as though he’s all in.”

“He *is* all in,” I declared. “And if we don’t ease up on him he’s liable to turn on us and scare the liver out of us. For I know *him!*”

“Gosh!” growled Scoop. “I don’t want to spend the night here.”

“Why not?” says Peg. “Here’s a dandy spring beside the creek. And here’s a swell place for our tents.”

“But I thought it was agreed that we were to get to the falls as quickly as possible?”

“We probably could make it ourselves,” says I. “But we’ll never get there with old Davey. So take your choice—either do the right thing by him or kiss him good-by.”

“All right,” Scoop gave in unwillingly. “Let’s unpack and get set for the night.”

Peg dropped down beside me on the creek bank.

“How does it look to you, Jerry?” he inquired.

“Kind of wild,” says I.

“Had you noticed how funny your voice sounds down here?”

“Everything seems louder.”

“It’s the high ledges. They act just like a sounding board.”

To prove what he meant, he gave a loud cry, which came back at him with a thousand thundering echoes.

“It’s just like yelling into a rain barrel,” says he.

We had struck a wild spot all right, just as I had said. And I wondered, with a touch of uneasiness, if the coming night would present any dangers. Maybe, I told myself, as I looked around at the rock piles, there were bigger creatures hidden here than rattlesnakes.

CHAPTER VI

A VOICE IN THE NIGHT

A bunch of crows came along and perched in a tree. And when I looked up to see what they were cawing about, there sat Red and Rory on an overhanging sandstone ledge.

“Come on hup,” Rory called down to me from his lofty perch.

“No thanks,” says I. “I’ve done enough climbing for one day.”

Red pulled up a big fern by the roots and tossed it down to me.

“Take it home and plant it under your sweetheart’s bay window,” he yelled.

I had noticed the many ferns that grew in the rocks. And I had wondered too at the trees that had taken root there, mostly pines and cedars. It didn’t seem possible to me that they could get enough moisture to keep them alive. Yet they seemed green and healthy, though some of them, in their determination to cling to the rocks, had grown into some awful shapes. As for the ferns themselves I never had seen

bigger ones. Some of them were fully five feet tall. The rocky crevices were full of wild flowers too.

There was no sign of a dry spell here! And it was hard for me to believe that outside of the damp canyon, with its dripping ledges and countless cool springs, everything was drying up. But such was the case.

Red and Rory thought that it would be a feather in their caps if they could climb to the top of the towering ledge. But finding themselves shut off by a perpendicular wall, they finally came down, hot and sweating, carrying between them a roll of green moss as big as a bedspread. They had lifted it from a wet rock, they said. And later, when we took another swim, they draped the moss around them like petticoats.

Then, as the moss began to break up, they started pitching it at us. But they got the worst of it in the end. For we had them outnumbered. And to save themselves they finally had to run down the stream.

Peg took a handful of the moss and rolled it into a ball.

“If I could find some way of holding this stuff together,” says he, “I’d suggest that we use it on young Gummy. For if we could mess him up, and make him stink, that would hurt him a dozen times worse than just peppering him on the shins with rocks.”

Remembering how we fixed up the rotten-egg cannonballs in the “Pirate” book, I took the moss and rolled it in mud.

“There you are,” says I. “Try that out in your big slingshot.”

Scoop made a suggestion.

“I think it would be better still,” says he, “if we rolled it in clay and sort of baked it in the sun for a few hours. That would make it firm. But when it struck, it would splatter like a rotten tomato.”

“That’s what we want,” laughed Peg.

Golly Ned! I sure hoped that we could make it work, even if we had to rig up portable cannons and chase the enemy into their own camp. For young Gummy is a regular dude. *Him* get dirt on his nice clothes? I should say not. And I could readily imagine how furious he’d be if he suddenly found himself plastered from head to foot with slimy green moss. Boy! It was something to look forward to, all right.

Having noticed a number of scattered strawberry plants in the canyon, Peg set out to see if he could find a worth-while patch. He asked me to go with him. But I had promised Scoop to help him put up the pup tents. This job completed, the leader and I later trailed our big chum up the canyon, where we found him feeding his face in one of the biggest natural strawberry patches that I ever had seen in all my life.

Strawberries of any kind are good. But the wild ones are the sweetest. And these were the swellest tasting berries that I ever ate.

“How about picking some for supper?” says I.

“That’s an idea,” says Peg.

So we got busy and filled our caps.

Red and Rory in the meantime had gathered a small supply of fuel. And when we came back to the camp with our loaded caps we found them cooking supper.

“What are we going to have beside strawberries?” quizzed Peg, as he dumped his berries into a pan.

“Fried heggs,” says Rory, “and peanut-butter sandwiches.”

“How about some soup?” suggested Scoop.

“Ho-k,” says Rory.

No one in the bunch looked any hungrier than old Davey. And was he tickled when I borrowed Peg’s fishing line and started for the creek.

“Come on, Davey,” I called, “it’s time to eat.”

But I needn’t have bothered to call him. For he was already at my heels.

Stopping in a willow patch beside the creek I cut myself a pole, later baiting the hook of the attached line with a grasshopper. I had a cork on the line. And when it bobbed out of sight I gave a quick yank, pulling in a five-inch shiner.

Killing it, I saved a part of its flesh for bait and gave the rest to the waiting turtle. Snap! The fish disappeared in one mouthful. And a dozen more that I caught vanished in the same quick way.

The crows, I guess, felt that I ought to feed them too. For they cawed louder than ever. And when I looked up I could see hundreds of them in the towering trees overhead.

Tiring of the racket, Scoop got out his small slingshot and drove the cawers away.

“If they were blackbirds,” says he, as he stopped beside me on the creek bank, “we’d kill four and twenty of them and make a pie, like the queen in the nursery rhyme.”

“Oof!” says I, turning up my nose. “That doesn’t sound good to me.”

“How about a boiled owl?” he then inquired laughingly.

“You can have it all,” says I.

“I just saw an old owl.”

“Yah,” says I, “and when it starts to get dark you’ll see millions of bats too. For this is the battiest place in the whole United States.”

“Where are they now?” he looked around.

“Hidden in the rocks.”

So far Davey hadn’t given us a moment’s trouble, outside of slowing up our march. Liking us, and having gotten used to us (for we saw a lot of him during the time that we were solving the “Prancing Pancake” mystery), he seemed perfectly willing to follow wherever we led. Now, having

been filled up, he let us pen him in for the night, Peg in the meantime having gone off with the pole to fish for bass.

I found him leaning over the edge of a flat-topped rock. And as I followed his line with my eyes I could see dozens of big bass in the lower pool.

But oddly they wouldn't bite until he jiggled his bait on the surface of the water. And the only thing they'd strike at then was grasshoppers. I watched him pull in three one-pounders. Then, taking the line myself, I pulled in a two-pounder.

"I bet a cookie," says I, on our way back to camp, "that we could find enough food up here to keep us going the rest of our lives. For we've already found strawberries. And the thorny bushes around here prove that there'll be plenty of raspberries later on. As for the creek itself, it's fairly alive with fish. And if there's anything that tastes better than fried fish, I'd like to have you name it."

"Fried fish are all right," waggled Peg. "But I dare say we'd get tired of them if we had to eat them three times a day."

"Don't overlook the fact," says I, "that there's plenty of rabbits here too. I've seen dozens of them to-day. And almost every tree has a squirrel in it."

"You can't eat rabbits and squirrels in the summer time," says he.

"True enough," says I. "But if this was going to be our regular home, we'd make good use of the rabbits and squirrels when winter came."

Peg looked around with dancing eyes.

“Boy! It sure would be great to spend a winter here. And if we had traps and guns I bet we could make a lot of money too. For there’s hundreds of furry things hidden away in these rocks. I’m dead sure of that.”

“Weazels, huh?”

“Yes, and foxes too.”

“This would be a swell place to raise beavers,” I looked at the creek.

“If the land was ours,” says Peg, “we could raise a lot of things, even buckwheat for our own pancakes. In fact, I can think of nothing I’d like any better than to be left in a place like this and told to take care of myself.”

“You’d never lack for pants,” says I, “as long as there were any wild animals left. And like Robinson Crusoe you could make yourself a goat-skin umbrella too.”

“To start with, I’d want an axe and a saw—for I’d have to cut down the trees and make myself a hut. I’d want a couple of dogs too. Also some chickens and pigeons, a bag or two of grain for seed, and a gun. With that much, I could stay here forever.”

“Oh, boy!” I spoke longingly. “If only we could do it.”

And then, as I caught sight of a sliding tail in the rocks, I jumped seven feet.

“A snake!” I yelled.

“Poof!” says Peg, with an indifferent gesture. “Real pioneers aren’t afraid of snakes.”

Scoop came running.

“Fish!” he yipped, when he saw what we were carrying. “We’re going to have fried fish. Um-yum-yum!”

“Not to-night,” says Peg, as he stopped beside the fire. “I’m going to put them in the spring and cook them to-morrow morning.”

“Well,” says Scoop, “if you expect to keep them alive you better get them into the water right away.”

“And hurry back,” put in Red, as Peg started off. “For supper’s all ready.”

And what a supper it was! Of course, the “heggs” had a slightly burned taste. And when I dipped into the butter, which had been hardened in the spring, I uncovered a grasshopper. But that was nothing to worry about.

We started with soup, in regular banquet style. Then came the “heggs” and peanut-butter sandwiches. We saved the strawberries for dessert. We had cocoa too. And cookies.

In all, it was a feast fit for a king. And somehow I felt like a king, as I sat on a log, with the egg dish on one side of me and the strawberries on the other. We were all kings. This was our kingdom. Here we could do as we pleased. The old

life, with its clamoring schoolbells, was gone forever. No more examinations. No more Saturday-night baths. Nothing now but freedom.

That's the way a fellow usually feels the first day he goes camping. But it wears off in time. And though I had talked to Peg about staying here forever, I knew from experience that after a couple of weeks I'd be just as glad to get back home as I was to leave.

Every fellow was his own dish-washer. So, when the pleasant meal was over, we all went down to the creek and scraped our tinware in the sand.

“And what now?” says Red, when we came back to the camp, where everything had been put in order.

The sun had already disappeared from sight. For you must remember that we were in the bottom of a deep chasm. But according to our watches we still had two hours of daylight. And satisfied that we were within a mile of the falls, Scoop now suggested that we send out a couple of spies to check up on things there.

“I'll go,” Red and Rory volunteered together.

“Me too,” Peg and I similarly spoke up.

Scoop grinned.

“I'd like to make the trip myself,” says he. “But we can't all go. So, to be fair, I guess we'll draw cuts.”

Peg and Red got the deciding straws. And happily shaking hands with each other they lined up for instructions.

“If the Strickers are there,” says Scoop, “you’ll probably hear them long before you get there. For they’ll be running around and yapping their heads off. But even if everything is quiet at the foot of the falls I’d advise you to go easy. For young Gummy is full of tricks. If he suspected for one minute that we were on our way up the canyon he’d set a trap for us. And traps are something we’ve got to avoid.”

“What if we bump into Poppy?” inquired Peg. “Shall we bring him back with us?”

“That’s up to him,” says Scoop.

“He said in his note,” I put in, “that he and the Saucer kid were hiding from the boy’s aunts. But he expects to meet us at the foot of the falls. So you ought to see something of him up there.”

“O-k,” says Peg, starting off.

I had seen enough of the canyon to know that it would be as black as pitch when night came. Like the inside of a well. So I suggested to the leader that we supply ourselves with plenty of fuel. It would give us light and protection, I said. So we set to work to add to the pile that the cooks had earlier started.

This job completed, we got out a pocketknife, to see who was the best mumbly-peg player. Scoop won. The bats were

flying around now. And as soon as Rory and I had “pulled the peg” with our teeth, we got up and started the fire.

We thought that this would drive the bats away. But they got thicker and thicker. And fearful that they’d take a mean notion to swoop down and grab me by the hair, I got as close to the flame as I could. Scoop laughed at me. He never had heard of anybody being bit by a bat, he said, except in the tropics, where explorers sometimes encountered “vampire” bats.

Along with the countless bats came owls of all sizes. Alighting in the trees beside the fire, they hooted at us mournfully. Gosh! It gave me the creeps.

Pretty soon we heard a distant cry. It was Red! He was running toward us through the trees. Then we caught sight of Peg.

It was their report, when they joined us beside the roaring fire, that everything at the foot of the falls was as quiet as a tomb. They had seen no sign of young Gummy, they said. Nor had they seen anything of Poppy.

“The waterfall,” Peg wound up, “is even closer to our camp than we thought. So, if we get up early to-morrow morning, there is no reason why we can’t get there before the enemy.”

At nine o’clock we built up the fire and went to bed. Having only two tents for the five of us, we again drew straws. Rory and I got the two longest, so we took the tent nearest to the

fire, while the others made themselves as comfortable as possible in the remaining tent.

“Ow about the snakes?” Rory spoke anxiously, as we lay in our tent watching the fire. “Are they liable to crawl in on us?”

“Not with that fire in front of us,” says I.

But to make sure that we wouldn't be bothered from behind, I got up and weighted down the edge of the tent with rocks.

There was a lot of grumbling in the other tent. For Red, it seems, was determined to put his feet in Peg's face. But presently a deep silence settled over the camp.

Everybody now was asleep but me. And wondering at my own wakefulness, I got up and replenished the fire. Nor did I feel a bit sleepier when I went back to my bed.

It was then, as I lay there peering into the darkness of the surrounding forest, out of which I occasionally caught sight of shifting green eyes, that I heard a voice.

I thought at first that it was the night wind. And yet, I told myself, as my heart started thumping, the wind seldom sounded like that. It often shrieked and howled as it whipped around the corners of a house. But this was a sort of sobbing moaning sound.

Coming out of the night that way, it was the spookiest thing I ever heard in all my life. And I don't mind telling you that for a moment or two I was scared stiff.

CHAPTER VII

AT THE END OF THE TRAIL

Having awakened Rory, I next went over and aroused Peg.

“What’s the matter?” says he, blinking at me sleepily.

“Get up quick,” says I, with mounting excitement. “There’s something in the woods. And it’s moaning and groaning to beat the cars.”

Red was awake now.

“Go lay an egg,” says he.

He thought I was fooling. But when he heard the eerie voice himself he turned green.

“Suffering cats!” he squawked. “It sounds like my Aunt Pansy, the time she ate the green-apple pie.”

We were all up now. And putting on our shoes we started single-file into the woods, each gripping a stout club.

“I bet hits a j-j-jugger,” Rory spoke with chattering teeth, as we guardedly wound in and out among the trees and rocks.

Peg was up in front with a flashlight.

“A jugger?” he repeated, turning. “What do you mean?”

“I never was close to one,” Rory further chattered. “But I’ve been told that when they’re in the woods they sound hexactly like a weeping woman.”

“You mean a jaguar,” Peg grunted.

“Well,” Rory shivered, “that’s close enough for me.”

“I think myself,” spoke up Scoop, as he peered ahead, “that it’s some kind of an animal.”

But what we saw, when we came to a clearing, was a woman sitting on a stump. At sight of us she sprang to her feet with a wild scream. And away she ran into the rocks.

I thought that Peg’s eyes would pop out of his head.

“Well, I’ll be cow-kicked,” says he, stopping in his tracks. “I certainly never expected to find a woman here at this time of night.”

“It must be one of the old maids that Poppy told me about,” I spoke with similar wonderment. “For they live near the falls. And that’s only a short distance from here.”

“Is it the woman that you saw in town?” Scoop inquired quickly.

I shook my head.

“She was a bony old thing,” I informed, “with an arm on her like a horse. But this woman was sort of frail.”

“If she’s in trouble,” says Peg, seemingly unable to take his eyes from the spot where she had disappeared, “she should have told us about it, so that we could help her.”

“Maybe,” considered Scoop, “she’s the one that the Glimme boy was in love with years ago. And she’s still weeping for him.”

“If that’s the case,” grunted Peg, “she ought to get an endurance medal. For he’s been gone for thirteen years. And that’s a heck of a long time for a sweetheart to weep.”

I thought of Poppy’s note.

“Do you suppose,” I spoke slowly, “that she’s worried about her nephew?”

Scoop turned and gave me a puzzled scowl.

“But I thought you told us that she hated the kid?”

“I didn’t say that all of his aunts hated him. In fact the only one I know anything about is the big one. Evidently *she* hates him, or else she wouldn’t bang him around that way. But it may be that his other aunts like him. And if that’s the case they naturally would worry about him, if he disappeared.”

There was a queer look on Scoop’s face.

“And did you suspect, Jerry, when you started out this morning, that you were going to bump into anything like this?”

“No,” I spoke frankly.

“People don’t hide babies in closets without a reason,” the leader resumed, in his slow probing way. “And women—even heart-broken sweethearts—don’t get out of bed in the middle of the night, and take to the woods, without a reason.”

“If you were to ask me,” Peg spoke in turn, “I think this is the champion mystery of them all. Take that boy for instance. He’s thirteen. And it was just thirteen years ago that Bardwell Glimme himself disappeared so mysteriously. Remember too that the vanished one’s mother is paying money to these farm people. Either it’s hush money, or pay for keeping the kid out of sight. Now, if that isn’t a riddle for you, I never heard one.”

Eager for daylight to come, so that we could meet the mysterious farm kid, and quizz him, we hurried back to our tents and took up our old positions. The excitement had stirred up everybody’s nerves. So there was considerable tumbling and tossing before we all got to sleep.

My own last waking thoughts were of the Glimme man, whose sudden disappearance, years ago, had so startled the countryside. It was generally supposed by the detectives who had worked on the case that the vanished man had been secretly put out of the way by some unknown enemy. And as

I lay there, with my eyes on the dancing flames, I found myself wondering if the suspected enemy was a tall raw-boned farm woman.

I dropped off then. Nor did I open my eyes again till daybreak.

There was a fearful racket outside of my tent. And when I looked up, there stood Peg pounding on a frying pan.

“Everybody up,” he sang out lustily.

“What time is it?” I yawned, as I crawled sleepily from my warm nest.

“Four-thirty.”

The ledges were bathed in new sunshine. And there was a warm summery tint in the sky directly over our heads. But down below, where we were, the earth was wrapped in a damp penetrating mist.

“Br-r-r-r!” I shivered, as I poked around in the dead fire.

Red wanted to lay in bed until breakfast was ready. And when he started giving us orders, telling us to butter his pancakes on both sides and cut them up for him, we heartlessly pulled him out of his tent and threw him into the creek. Gosh! You never heard such yelling and splashing in all your life.

“How did you say you wanted your pancakes?” purred Peg, as he stood, arms akimbo, on the bank of the creek.

“Any old w-w-way you want to d-d-dish ’em up,” chattered the victim, as he dragged himself blue-lipped from the icy water.

“Maybe you’d like to wait on the table this morning,” Peg further purred.

“I’d love to. P-p-please let me.”

“And maybe you’d like to wash the dishes.”

“Oh! . . . That would b-b-be simply grand.”

Peg started off with his chest stuck out.

“The master!” says he, patting himself pompously.

But he pulled down his chest in a jiffy, let me tell you, and screeched bloody murder, when he suddenly got a big crawfish down the back of his neck.

And having thus turned the tables on his chief tormenter, Red did some strutting himself.

“The master!” he mimicked, patting himself on his bare chest. “Haw, haw, haw!”

“I’ll ‘haw-haw-haw’ you,” roared Peg, as he clawed furiously at the back of his neck, “if I catch you.”

Red gave him the “raspberry.”

“Blaa-a-a-a! You’ll learn, big boy, that it doesn’t pay to get fresh with your Uncle Dudley.”

He went off then to pick up his scattered clothing. For we had undressed him on the way to the creek. And when Peg finally separated himself from the persistent crawfish I took it over to the pen to feed to old Davey.

But the turtle wasn’t there!

“Where’s old Davey?” I cried, running back to camp.

“I thought you penned him up,” says Scoop.

“I did. But he’s gone.”

We learned too, when we went to the spring, that our fish were gone. Breaking out of his pen during the night, old Davey apparently had gorged himself on our intended breakfast and now was halfway home.

“If I thought that I could overtake him,” says I, looking anxiously down the creek, “I’d follow him. For Poppy is going to be blamed disappointed when we show up without him.”

Peg stood beside me.

“I doubt if you could stop him, Jerry, even if you did overtake him. For he’s got a will of his own. And he can be blamed ugly when he wants to.”

I was well aware of that!

“Of course,” Peg added earnestly, “if Poppy simply can’t get along without him we’ll have to follow him to town and bring him back. But I can’t make myself believe that he’s as important as that. And until we’ve talked with Poppy, and know exactly what his plans are, I think we better put in our time digging trenches. Isn’t that your idea, Scoop?”

“Absolutely,” wagged the leader.

Stooping, to get our butter from the spring, I caught sight of a footprint in the soggy earth. And it was a man’s footprint too!

Scoop was bubbling with excitement now.

“If I’m any judge of footprints,” says he, studying the mark, “that one isn’t more than two hours old. Which means that someone was here just before we got up.”

Thus far we had seen no one in the woods except the weeping woman. And it kind of startled us to learn that an unknown man had his eyes on us.

Or had the fish been stolen by a woman wearing men’s shoes?

In either case it was hard to explain the corresponding disappearance of old Davey, unless, as we suspected, he actually had skinned out for home. Certainly he never would have gone off with a stranger. Nor could a stranger have carried him off. For he weighed several hundred pounds.

I was hopeful that the turtle would show up while we were eating breakfast. But he didn't. And disappointed, as well as puzzled, I helped the fellows pack up and start for the falls.

Red had put away so many pancakes that he couldn't stoop over. So we had to load him up. And how he groaned when we further asked him to help us pull the cart. He ought to be pulled himself, he said. But he did his part nevertheless, loyal little runt that he is. And after a tiresome march of more than two hours we finally came to the end of the trail.

There ahead of us was the falls, under which we expected to find the Long Lost lead mine. And as I stood looking up at the natural wonder, with a sack of pancake flour in one hand and a hatchet in the other, a queer reverent feeling stole over me. I realized more than ever before what marvelous things God could do. But why, I wondered, had He put the falls in such an out-of-the-way place? Did He want it to be a sort of hidden shrine in the woods? And would He mind it if we put up our tents at its rocky base?

The waterfall, of course, had been here for ages. And the constant wash of the water, in season, had undermined the canyon walls, which, caving in, had been carried away in sandy fragments. Then more blocks of stone had tumbled down, until finally the canyon took on the appearance of a huge irregular bowl with overhanging wooded edges.

When the waterfall was at its height the echoes in the canyon were deafening. And even now the faint wisp of water that

trickled over the rocky ledge filled the place with ghostly murmurs.

Dropping his pack beside the pool, Peg climbed up on the circular shelf-like ledge under which the hooked bass had disappeared. And how we laughed when old hefty's feet suddenly went out from under him. For the top of the mossy shelf was as slippery as glass. And unable to save himself, poor Peg went over the edge feet-first.

“Gosh!” says he, as he dragged himself from the pool.
“I never expected that to happen.”

“Why didn't you dive under the ledge,” joked Scoop, “and take a look at the treasure cave?”

“I'll do that next time,” Peg grimaced, as he shook first one dripping leg and then the other.

It was then, as we stood in a group beside the big pool, that we first heard the weird whispering voice which was to cause us so much wonderment and anxiety later on. It came out of the rocks. But exactly where it came from we couldn't figure out.

“Oo-o-o-o! Oo-o-o-o! Oo-o-o-o!”

It wasn't an owl. We were dead sure of that. And we were equally certain that it wasn't the wind. For the trees that grew out over the canyon's edge, far above our heads, scarcely moved.

Rory looked scared.

“Maybe,” says he, “hit’s the hold man of the ’ills.”

“Hold man of the ’ills?” repeated Peg. “Who are you talking about anyway?”

“Why, the hold man of the ’ills, of course.”

“He means the old man of the hills,” laughed Scoop.

“I never heard of him,” grunted Peg.

“He ’ides under ’ills,” says Rory. “And every time ’e turns over, in ’is bed, there’s a hearthquake.”

I thought of the landslide that killed the trapper. And for a moment or two, as the eerie whispering sound continued, I wondered crazily if there was indeed a spirit imprisoned under the falls—a spirit possibly that the Indians, in leaving, had put there to guard their secret mine.

CHAPTER VIII

OUR FORTRESS IN THE ROCKS

Scoop is our best leader when we have a mystery to solve. He's good at that kind of stuff. For he has a sort of probing analytical mind. But when we have a battle on our hands, as now, we invariably turn everything over to Peg.

Good old Peg! To look at his big arms and broad shoulders you'd think he was two years older than the rest of us. But he isn't. He just grew up faster. And does that bulk of his ever tell in a battle! Oh, baby! Some day, I dare say, he'll be a general in a real army. For that's the kind of stuff he's cut out for, though he often talks of working with his father in the paper-hanging business.

"If we build a fort up here," he told us, taking us to an elevated spot in the rocks, "we can hold it for ages. For the canyon wall will protect us from behind. And if young Gummy and his tribe try to rush us from in front, we'll lay them out before they get halfway up the hill."

"But we'll never be able to dig a trench up here," says Scoop, kicking at the rocky soil.

"I've changed my mind about digging a trench," says Peg. "I'm going to build a rock barricade instead."

Scoop's eyes danced.

“With loopholes for cannons, huh?”

Peg nodded.

“And having mentioned the cannons,” says he, “maybe you better take the hatchet and bring in a few big crotches, while the rest of us work on the rock pile. For the sooner we get our stuff together, the better.”

“O-k,” says Scoop, starting off in the direction of a hickory thicket.

“And don't forget,” says Peg, “that we need clay for our cannonballs.”

“If there's any around here,” promised Scoop, “I'll spot it.”

“I think you'll find plenty down there by the creek.”

“How about our supplies?” I then inquired. “Shall we bring them up here now and build the stone wall around them?”

“That's a good suggestion,” praised Peg.

So we first lugged all of our stuff up the hill—the tents, cart, food and everything else, expecting every minute that we'd hear new voices in the canyon. For if young Gummy had started for the falls the preceding day, as planned, he couldn't be very far away. In fact it surprised us that he had camped overnight on the trail.

Red stopped halfway up the rocky hill and took note of the overhanging ledge, high above our heads.

“I wouldn’t put it past Gummy,” says he, “to try and roll a boulder down on top of us. For he’s blamed mean. But we can fool him if we build our barricade close to the canyon wall.”

“I thought of that,” nodded Peg, who already had leveled off a place for the tents.

“And let’s hope,” I spoke anxiously, “that the old guy under the falls doesn’t take a notion to turn over in his bed, as Rory said. For it would be just too bad for us if the ledge loosened up and dropped down on top of us.”

“Poof!” Peg gave a reckless gesture. “I dare say it has hung there for ages. And no doubt it will still be hanging there when our great-great-grandchildren start raising whiskers.”

There was a dandy spring at the foot of the hill. The water was like ice. And as we stopped there to get a drink we talked over various plans of getting the needed water up the hill. We even tried sucking the water through Red’s hose. But that didn’t work for two cents. So we built a reservoir in the rocks, later plastering it with clay to keep the supplied drinking water from seeping into the ground.

Scoop in the meantime had brought in six big hickory crotches.

“They’re too long,” I told him.

“They won’t be,” says he, “when we get them buried in the ground.”

“Let’s fix one up,” Peg spoke eagerly, “and see how it works.”

We hadn’t anything to dig with except our hands. But that’s all we needed here. For the soil was mostly rocks. And having made a hole of the right depth for the trial cannon, we next stamped the ground around it and then further strengthened it with rocks.

“Now,” says Peg, as he drained the sweat from his face, “hand me a couple of those big inner tubes and we’ll try it out.”

Red came running with a hatful of cannonballs.

“They’re kind of soggy,” says he. “But I think they’ll hold together.”

Everything was in readiness now.

“What are we going to shoot at?” inquired Scoop.

“Someone put a cap on a stick beside the spring,” instructed Peg, “and we’ll pretend it’s Bid Stricker.”

“Ho-k,” cried Rory, scooting down the hill.

“Tell me when to fire,” Peg spoke like a real gunner, as he stood behind his loaded weapon.

“Let ’er go,” Scoop sang out.

Bang! I thrilled all over as the big cannon discharged its load. And then I joined in the triumphant shout, as the cap was struck by the cannonball and carried across the creek.

Of course there wasn’t any real “bang.” The only sound that the cannon made, outside of its singing missile, was a sharp snapping of its powerful rubbers. But it seemed like a “bang” to me. And I told myself gleefully that Gummy and his outfit would stand no chance at all if the rest of us could handle our guns half as skillfully as our big leader.

Six cannons all in a row, looking down on the enemy from our rocky fortress! Boy! We sure could rake them with our gunfire if they got up sufficient courage to charge us.

We had all the stones we needed at the top of the hill. And as soon as the other five big crotches had been anchored in the ground, we got busy on our intended barricade. Some of the rocks that we handled were pretty big. And as we tugged at them the sweat streamed down our dirty faces. We were hungry too. But rather than run the chance of being surprised by the enemy, we staunchly decided to build the barricade first and eat afterwards.

“There!” panted Peg, as he rolled the last rock into place. “With that wall in front of us, and these cannons to protect us, we could fight a whole army.”

I never was so tuckered out in all my life. But other important things had to be done. So, like the others, I kept

steadily at work till three o'clock in the afternoon.

Even the water reservoir was ready now. And beside each completed cannon was a pile of ammunition, consisting mainly of clay-covered moss-balls. We had scraped up a lot of pebbles too, for use in our small slingshots.

From now on, Peg said, we'd have to conduct ourselves like a regular army. So, before we stripped ourselves for a much-needed swim in the big pool at the foot of the falls, we stationed a guard farther down the canyon, with instructions to "hoo-hoo" three times if the expected gang came into sight. Later I took the guard's place, so that he too could wash his sweaty body. And having refreshed ourselves in this natural way, we went into our fortress to eat.



Bert Salg's

**HAVING REFRESHED OURSELVES, WE WENT INTO
OUR FORTRESS TO EAT.**

“Who wants sandwiches?” Scoop sang out.

“Me,” four vigorous voices spoke together.

“What kind?” grinned Scoop.

Rory wanted “hegg” sandwiches. Red asked for peanut butter. And I specified ham.

“Any old thing is good enough for me,” Peg spoke wearily, “if I can chew it.”

“A little help, Jerry,” Scoop called to me.

So I got out the bread and sliced it, while he supplied the filling.

“There,” says he, as he completed a stack of sandwiches a foot high. “That ought to be enough to satisfy even Red.”

“I’m hollow myself,” I spoke weakly, “from my neck to my knees.”

“Well,” grinned Scoop, “that’s better than being hollow from your neck up.”

In addition to sandwiches of various kinds we had more baked beans, cold corned beef, boloney, pickles and pie. We ate the last of the strawberries too.

“Boy,” Peg spoke longingly. “I wish we could move that big strawberry patch up here.”

“If young Gummy finds it,” says Scoop, “he’ll eat till he busts.”

Peg looked down the picturesque canyon.

“I wonder,” says he, with a puzzled look on his face, “why the Chicago kid doesn’t show up.”

“Maybe he’s lost,” says I.

“Do you suppose,” old hefty then drew on his imagination, “that he was stopped at the log farmhouse?”

“But Bid said that the old maids were his friends,” I reminded.

“Just the same,” waggled Peg, “that old battle-axe that you told us about may have turned the kids back when she learned that they were headed for the falls.”

“Yes,” put in Scoop, as his own imagination jumped into high gear, “and she may have locked them up too. And Poppy with them.”

Gosh! I didn’t like the sound of that for two cents.

“Let’s send out a searching party,” I suggested to the leader.

“I think myself,” considered Peg, “that we ought to get a line on that farmhouse. For if the woman that we saw

last night is being misused, like the kid himself, we ought to do something to help her. And, as Scoop says, it isn't improbable that there's a bunch of kids imprisoned there."

"Let's draw cuts right away," says I.

But Peg shook his head.

"We'll do that to-night," says he.

To further fix up things in our swell fortress we built a stone table, with surrounding stone seats. We also made a stone cupboard for our food, putting the butter and lard down below, close to the cool ground. We made a fireplace too, with a short chimney that conducted the smoke up the side of the natural wall. In all, it was one of the spiffiest layouts that I ever had seen. And the knowledge that I had helped to build it filled me with just pride.

To make our sleeping tents as comfortable as possible we padded the floors with leaves and other soft stuff. We collected a big pile of firewood too and hid thorny branches among the rocks on the side of the hill. We knew exactly where to step to avoid the thorns. But if the uninformed enemy tried to rush us they sure would get an awful pricking. In the same way we piled more thorny branches on the top of our circular barricade, making it almost impossible for anybody to climb over. We built a special thorny gate too, which we could raise and lower like a drawbridge, thus protecting ourselves completely. Not that we felt the need of all these things. In fact we couldn't conceive that the enemy would ever get to the top of the hill,

let alone corner us in our own fortress. But as long as we were doing the job we wanted to be thorough, thus getting out of it all the fun that we could.

Throughout the day Rory's old man had tooted at us at frequent intervals. And we wondered more than ever where the weird voice came from. Now, as evening advanced, the continued call seemed peculiarly plaintive, as though the unseen caller was beginning to doubt that he'd succeed in making us comprehend what he wanted.

Having had such a late dinner we decided to put off supper till seven o'clock. And unable to forget the luscious strawberries, we finally decided to take a chance and go back to the patch, where we further hoped to find old Davey.

Don't get the idea though that we left our new fortress completely unguarded. I guess not! Scoop and Red took charge of things there while the rest of us hurried down the canyon, where we found plenty of berries but no turtle.

Had young Gummy appeared on the scene during our absence, I dare say we could have sneaked around him, particularly if our fortress had escaped his attention. But when we returned guardedly to the falls, Scoop and Red still had that section of the canyon to themselves.

Carrying out our plans, we had supper at seven o'clock. And then, as the canyon began to fill with weird creeping shadows, Peg and I grimly set out in search of our missing chum, it having been our good fortune to get the deciding straws.

“Unless you actually need it,” Peg spoke in parting to our long-faced companions, “I’d advise you not to start a fire. For I’m satisfied now that there’s some peculiar prowler abroad in the woods. And it’s just as well not to let him know where you are.”

He meant the fish thief.

“How long are you going to be gone?” Scoop spoke anxiously.

“Till we find out the truth about that log house.”

Red pinched my hand.

“Watch your step, Jerry,” says he.

It’s nice to have pals like that, who really care for you and worry about you when you start on a dangerous mission. And to show my appreciation I gave his warty hand a corresponding squeeze.

“If Poppy’s there,” I declared, “we’ll bring him back with us.”

The old man of the falls joined with our chums in sending us off. And as the weird plaintive cry followed us down the fortified hill, and up the other side of the canyon, where we had earlier detected a path among the rocks, I found it hard at times to keep the shivers out of my legs.

Not that I'm a calf. I don't mean that. But it seemed to me that some unexplainable supernatural force was aiding the wicked farm woman. And stuff like that is bad for a boy to bump into.

CHAPTER IX

AN UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH

I had seen enough of the Saucer women to know that they were blamed queer. And I further had the feeling that their parents and grandparents before them had been queer. For no one but queer-minded people, I told myself, as Peg and I labored up the winding trail, would have settled for life in a place like this.

It was a swell place for boys to fool around. But it was no place for a practical farmer. For the land was all hills and rocks. And yet one of the early Saucers had selected the worthless land in preference to flat prairie soil a few miles away.

“What makes you so quiet, Jerry?” the leader finally inquired, turning on the hillside to take a look at me.

“I was just wondering to myself,” says I, “what we were liable to bump into at the end of the trail.”

“Yes,” Peg spoke thoughtfully, “and I’ve been wondering who made this trail in the first place. If it was the Saucer kid, he certainly must have put in a lot of time at the falls.”

“It’s the kind of a place that any boy would like to hang around,” says I.

“But can you imagine yourself, Jerry, fooling around here all day long, with no one to talk to except the squirrels? Gosh! A little of that stuff would go a long ways with me.”

“If you had been brought up that way,” says I, “you wouldn’t know any different.”

“Just the same,” Peg waggled, “I bet it was a big treat to the Saucer kid to meet another boy like Poppy.”

“Yes,” says I, with determination, “and the meeting is going to mean a lot to the kid too. For we’re going to get him out of there and put him in friendly hands.”

“If—” says Peg.

“If what?”

“If we can find him.”

“I guess we know where he is, all right,” I spoke confidently. “And Poppy too, for that matter.”

“I think myself,” says Peg, “that they’re being held at the farmhouse. Anyway that’s the place we’re headed for. And if we fail to find them there we’ll have to search elsewhere.”

Coming finally to the top of the trail, we threw ourselves on the ground to rest. For the long climb, coming on top of our other hard work, had just about tuckered us out.

Peg turned his flashlight into the canyon, which, in the darkness, looked like a bottomless black pit.

“It will be easier going down,” says he.

“I hope so,” says I. “And I hope too that when we start down, the bats will be busy some place else. For I get blamed sick of having them zip around my ears.”

“What’s the matter, Jerry? Are you afraid they’ll carry you off and make a meal of you?”

“They could do it easily enough if they worked together,” I declared. “For there’s enough of them here to juggle elephants.”

“Well, forget about the bats and pick up your feet. For we’ve got work to do. And the sooner we do it the better.”

We had lost the sound of the falls and its accompanying “old man” on our way up the hill. And now, to my great relief, we further lost the most of our winged followers. They left us to go back to their more familiar haunts in the dark canyon.

Presently we caught the sound of a creaking gate. Then we heard a sharp feminine voice in the path ahead of us.

“Sally! Sally! Where are you?”

Gripping Peg’s hand, I pulled him into the rocks.

“It’s the old battle-axe,” I whispered excitedly.

“Boy! I hope we got our flashlights out in time.”

“Sh-h-h! Here she comes.”

Stopping within a few feet of us the woman again raised her voice commandingly.

“Sally! Where are you? Tell me, before I hunt you out with a stick.”

That brought another shrinking figure into sight.

“I guess we know her, all right,” says Peg.

“Sure thing,” says I. “It’s the one we saw last night.”

“Please don’t be cross with me, Rachel,” the newcomer begged, in a timid trembling voice.

“Cross with you?” came the furious outburst. “I should use a stick on you. For I told you to stay in your bed to-night. But as soon as my back was turned you climbed out of the window as usual. What I ought to do, as I’ve threatened before, is to turn you over to the county poormaster and let him lock you up in a cell. For that’s where you belong.”

“No, no, Rachel,” pleaded the younger one. “Please don’t do that.”

“Your mind is gone, Sally Saucer.”

“No, Rachel,” came the added plea. “Don’t say that. *Please.*”

“Your mind is gone,” the words were repeated cruelly.

“Rachel! No, no! I beg of you.”

But the older sister was as unrelenting as the rocks on which she stood.

“You heard what I said, Sally Saucer. *Your mind is gone.*”

The younger woman fell to the ground in a flood of weeping.

“Yes, yes,” she sobbed, in a forlorn hopeless way. “My mind is gone. You’re right, Rachel. My mind is gone.”

Peg’s fingers dug into my arm.

“For two cents,” he gritted, in his daring way, “I’d get up and bean that old rip with a rock.”

“She deserves it,” I whispered. “But until we’ve rescued Poppy it will be best to give her a wide berth.”

“I never dreamed, Jerry, that a woman could be so blamed mean.”

“Don’t talk so loud. She’ll hear you.”

“Get up,” the older woman ordered curtly.

“Yes, Rachel,” the other promptly obeyed.

And as they started off in the darkness, one still scolding and the other sobbing, Peg and I guardedly followed them, coming finally to the log cabin in which it was suspected that our chum was imprisoned.

The third sister had locked herself in. But she opened the door when she heard the others cross the yard.

“Did you find her, Rachel?” came the anxious inquiry.

“Yes. Here she is, Laura. Take her inside and put her to bed.”

“The poor child!”

“I found her mooning in the woods as usual.”

“Still looking for her lover, I suppose.”

“Yes. I’ve told her a thousand times that he’s dead. But she won’t believe me.”

“You’re too harsh with her, Rachel. I’ve told you that all along. I know we’ve been wronged. But that doesn’t justify you in taking out your spite on her and the boy.”

“The ungrateful little whelp!”

“You’ve always had your own way, Rachel. I’ve never crossed you in anything. But I don’t approve of what you’re doing. I never did and I never will. I predict too that some day you’re going to be sorry for your wickedness.”

“You’re almost as spineless as Sally herself.”

“The poor child! I sometimes think she actually will lose her mind.”

“She lost it years ago.”

“Oh, no, Rachel! Her heart was broken. We know that only too well. But there was nothing the matter with her mind till you began telling her that it was gone. And now, having heard it so often, she’s beginning to believe it.”

“Well,” the older sister spoke defiantly, “I don’t see any sense in arguing that now. Go inside and see what she’s doing. I have work to do in the barn.”

The aged farmhouse looked to us in the darkness as though it was warped all out of shape. Nor did we see anything of importance when we peeked through the small-paned windows. Certainly, we concluded, there was no room here for a bunch of prisoners.

The farm woman in the meantime had disappeared into the near-by log barn with an old-fashioned kerosene lantern. And when we got there we found her bedding down a horse.

This job completed, she latched the barn door and returned to the house. Nor was it many minutes after that before all of the lights went out.

Now was our chance to secretly search the barn and other outbuildings. So we set out with our flashlights, taking the nearest building, which turned out to be a poultry house. All we found here was chickens. So we ran to a rickety corn crib. Meeting with no better success there, we finally tackled the

most likely place of all—the big log barn. But still we found not the slightest trace of our missing chum.

Latching the barn door behind us we started for the house, to investigate the cellar, but jumped for cover instead when a pair of automobile headlights came into sight and swept the farmyard with their penetrating beam.

The approaching car—probably the first that ever had dared to venture onto the rocky farm—had awakened the three sisters. And now, as the car drove noisily into the yard, followed by a string of boys, all three women gathered in one of the kitchen windows.

The newcomers, of course, were young Gummy and his gang. For some unknown reason they had delayed a whole day in starting for the falls. And now they were fighting among themselves over certain injuries that the car had suffered on its way through the rocky hills.

“It’s a wonder we ever got here at all,” complained the angry young driver, as he jumped out of the car and started looking it over with a flashlight.

“Well,” retorted Bid Stricker, “we didn’t force you to drive down that hill. You did it of your own accord. Didn’t he, Jimmy?”

“Sure thing. I tried to tell him that his old bus couldn’t straddle the rocks like a buggy. But he wouldn’t listen to me.”

“And did we ever get a bump!” shrilly chimed in Jum Prater. “Oh, baby! I thought my head would go clean through the top.”

“Well,” grunted Gummy, “it would take more than that to make an impression on your head.”

“Oh, yah?” bridled Jum. “Well, I’ll make an impression on the front of yours with my fist, if you shove any more of your wise-cracks at me.”

“Shut up,” commanded Bid, in his bossy way.

“Well,” Jum’s wrath subsided to a surly growl, “he needn’t tell me that I’ve callouses on my cocoanut.”

Bid then sought to bring about harmony.

“You’ve got plenty of jack,” he told the rich Chicago kid. “So why worry about a bent axle?”

“But how are we going to get out of here?”

“Well, if necessary we can pull your old bus up the hill with a block and tackle.”

Gummy didn’t like that.

“Quit calling my car an old bus,” he growled. “It’s brand new.”

“Now that we’re here,” Bid went on sensibly, “the thing for us to do is to unload our stuff and get to the falls as quickly

as possible. For I heard this afternoon that Jerry Todd is headed for there with his whole gang.”

That gave Gummy something more to complain about.

“But why didn’t you tell me about it right away, instead of waiting till five o’clock?”

“I couldn’t find you.”

“Blame it! I wish now that we had left town yesterday morning, as I planned at the start.”

“What time is it?”

Gummy looked at his wrist watch.

“Nine-thirty,” he growled.

“Gosh! We were hung up on that hill for more than three hours.”

“Do you think you can find your way to the falls in the dark?” Gummy then inquired.

“Sure thing,” assured Bid. “It’s only a few rods from here.”

“Well then, let’s unload our stuff and start out, gang.”

“O-k,” says Bid, heading for the log house. “You get the stuff unloaded. And I’ll arrange with the old maids who live here to take care of the car while we’re gone.”

But he stopped in his tracks when he caught sight of a tall grim figure standing a few feet away.

“Oh! . . . I didn’t know that you were here, Miss Saucer.”

“Who are you?” came the sharp unfriendly inquiry. “And what are you doing here?”

“I’m one of the Stricker boys.”

“Well?” the speaker refused to unbend.

“I’m on my way to the falls to help a friend of mine do some surveying. And if it’s o-k with you, we’d like to leave our car here till we come back.”

“I don’t want cars here. And I don’t want strange boys in the neighborhood. So clear out. Besides, the falls is my property. So why should any one else care to survey it?”

That brought young Gummy into the conversation. And never will I forget the queer chortling laugh that came from the woman’s set lips when she learned who he was.

“So you are Reginald Glimme,” she spoke slowly.

“The heir to the Glimme fortune! How interesting.

Very well,” her manner underwent a quick change. “You can survey the falls if you want to. And it will be perfectly all right if you leave your car here.”

After which, with another cold mirthless laugh, she disappeared into the house.

Gummy was all puffed up.

“She soon changed her tune,” says he, strutting around, “when she found out who I was.”

“Oh, you’re a wonderful guy, all right,” says Bid. “But instead of using up all of your strength patting yourself on the back, suppose you give us a lift with some of this heavy junk of yours.”

And wondering at the unexpected change in the farm woman’s manner, Peg and I lit out for the falls to warn our chums of the enemy’s approach.

CHAPTER X

READY FOR BATTLE

Was Poppy really a prisoner somewhere? Or was he hiding-out of his own accord? Peg and I wondered as we hurried down the darkened trail in the direction of the big canyon.

“I thought sure,” says Peg, “that we’d find him cooped up on the Saucer farm.”

“You and me both,” says I. “And I’m not so sure yet that he isn’t hidden in the cellar.”

“But *is* there a cellar? I took a good look at the house just before we left. And I couldn’t see any sign of a cellar.”

“It would be a funny farmhouse,” says I, “if it didn’t have some kind of a hole under it.”

“We started out with the idea,” says Peg, “that the big Saucer woman was a regular ogre. Not satisfied with cooping up Poppy and her nephew, she had also cooped up the whole Stricker gang. But now we know that the Strickers are safe. So very probably our chum is safe too.”

“But if he intended to disappear,” says I, “why didn’t he say something about it in his note? Why did he tell

me to hurry to the falls and then give me the slip?”

“No doubt he intended to meet you at the falls, when he wrote the note. But later something came up. And to carry out his plans he had to disappear.”

“Just the same,” says I, “I can’t shake off the feeling that the big Saucer woman has something to do with his disappearance. But I’m not going to worry about him any more. For he’s big enough to take care of himself. And I have a hunch that when the proper time comes he’ll show up safe and sound.”

“Say, Jerry, what was it he said in his note about the Saucer kid?”

“He said Sammy told him something about the cave under the falls that almost knocked his eyes out—whatever he meant by that.”

“Then the Saucer kid must know that the cave is there,” Peg reasoned.

“Evidently,” I agreed.

“Gosh! I wonder if his aunts know about it too, Jerry.”

“I can’t imagine,” says I sensibly, “that they’d tell *him* any family secrets. And I can’t imagine either that he’d confide in them. I know I wouldn’t if I got banged around like him. So the chances are it’s his own secret.”

“Can you remember the exact wording of the note, Jerry?”
Peg further puzzled.

“I don’t have to remember it,” says I. “For I’ve got the note in my pocket.”

Given the deciphered copy, Peg then studied it carefully as I waited impatiently at the brink of the canyon.

““Meet me at the falls as soon as possible,”” the leader read aloud, with the aid of his flashlight. ““Bring Red’s diving suit and Davey Jones. Sammy Saucer just told me something that almost knocked my eyes out. I was right about the cave.””

“Is that all you’re going to read?” says I, when he stopped.

“Yes. For that’s the only part that interests me.”

“Then hand it over,” says I, “and I’ll get rid of it. For I don’t want the Strickers to get their hands on it.”

Tearing the note into fragments I dropped them into the canyon.

“Let’s move on,” I spoke uneasily.

“Just a minute, Jerry,” Peg further held back. “I want to figure this thing out if I can. For it’s important. Suppose for instance that the Saucer kid told Poppy that there *was* a cave under the falls. Poppy already knew that. So the story wouldn’t ‘knock his eyes out,’ as he put it. But proof of his theory would. Still, how would the Saucer kid know that the watery cave actually led to the Long Lost lead mine, if he

hadn't been in the cave himself? There's a riddle for you, Jerry."

"Well," I spoke with added uneasiness, as I caught the sound of voices behind us, "let's not try to work it out here. For the gang is coming. And if we fool around here much longer we may find ourselves completely cut off from our chums. Then we will be in a pickle."

"You're right," says Peg, starting briskly down the steep trail.

By the time the enemy reached the brink of the canyon we were well out of sight. And how they ever got down the unfamiliar trail that night, with their tents and other heavy stuff, is a mystery to me. But they made a go of it, as you'll learn later on.

Arriving at the bottom of the trail ourselves, after a lot of perilous slipping and sliding, Peg and I quickly crossed the creek and started up the fortified hill.

"Who comes there?" Scoop sang out, in true sentry style.

"General Shaw and Captain Todd," I reported in fun.

That brought three heads into sight.

"Enter General Shaw and Captain Todd," gravely commanded the capable sentry, pulling up the thorny gate.

Red and Rory were waiting at the sentry's elbow.

“But where’s Poppy?” came the quick inquiry, as Peg and I entered the fort.

“We couldn’t find him,” I admitted.

“Ow about the log ’ouse?” Rory inquired. “Couldn’t you find that either?”

“We found the house all right,” I followed up. “But there was no sign of Poppy.”

“And you’re dead sure,” says Scoop, with a worried look, “that the old maids didn’t have him tucked away in a closet?”

“The youngest one,” Peg then spoke in detail, “is kind of simple-minded. Having been gypped in a love affair, or something like that, she wanders around the woods looking for her lost lover. That was her that we saw last night. The second one is kindness itself. She wouldn’t harm a flea unless it bit her twice in the same place. So it’s foolish of us to think that she has anything to do with Poppy’s disappearance. The oldest one—that’s the old battle-axe that banged the kid around—is capable of doing anything. Boy, *is* she hard! And if she had the log house to herself we would have searched every crack. As it was we gave the place a good looking over. We searched the barn too. But there was no trace anywhere of our chum. Nor did the sisters say a word about him that we could hear.”

Scoop looked over the barricade into the inky canyon.

“Do you suppose,” he spoke in a worried voice, “that there’s any connection between Poppy’s disappearance

and our stolen fish?”

“I’m pretty sure myself,” Peg spoke gravely, “that there’s some goofy mystery hanging over the canyon. And that may be the thing that Poppy had reference to in his note. But like Jerry I have a lively hunch that our chum can take care of himself. And the chances are that he’ll soon show up of his own accord.”

I was struck by the deep silence in the canyon.

“What became of your ‘old man’?” I jokingly inquired of Rory. “Did you put a gag on him?”

“E’s gone to bed.”

“Where?”

“Hunder the falls.”

And afterwards I recalled that innocent remark!

Peg had saved the most important part of our story till the last.

“I’ve been expecting you to ask me something about the Strickers,” he laughed.

“Did you see them?” Scoop inquired quickly.

“I should hope to snicker.”

“Where are they?”

“Coming down the trail.”

“In the dark?”

“There’s their light,” Peg pointed up the hill.

“I’ve been watching that light,” says Scoop. “But I thought it was a firefly.”

“They left town at five bells,” Peg informed. “But something happened to their car on one of the rocky hills. And was young Gummy ever sore when he drove into the farmyard in the dark! Oh, boy! I thought for a moment or two that he and Jum Prater would have a knock-down-and-drag-out right then and there. But they finally cooled off. And having got permission to leave their car there, they’re now hoofing it down the trail with their junk.”

Red let out a yip.

“Oh, boy! Now we can start the battle.”

“They know that we left town yesterday morning,” Peg further informed. “And probably they suspect that we’re in the neighborhood. But they haven’t the slightest idea that we’ve built a fort.”

“And what a fort!” Scoop spoke proudly.

“They couldn’t lick us ten to one,” bragged Peg. “But I’ll be glad when Poppy shows up. For the more the merrier. And I wouldn’t want him to miss the fun.”

It was now well along toward midnight. And with another big day ahead of us, Peg told us to lie down and get all the rest that we could. He'd stand guard himself, he said, till one o'clock, after which we'd finish out the night in watches of an hour apiece.

I came on duty at two o'clock. And at three o'clock I called Red. The enemy, I said, had turned in unsuspectingly at the foot of the hill. And I pointed to the glowing embers of their camp fire.

"When did they get here?" Red inquired.

"Shortly after I came on duty."

"Have they got a sentry?"

"I don't think so. For I can't see anybody moving around down there."

"Boy, it would be fun to capture them in their sleep. But if we did that we wouldn't have anyone to shoot at."

"Evidently," says I, "they haven't the slightest idea that we're almost on top of them. But they know we're here some place. And as soon as it gets light they intend to get up and look for us. I heard them talking about it. So if they start moving around call Peg. Or if they're still sleeping at four o'clock call Rory. For he's got the next watch."

I went to bed then in one of the pup tents. Scoop was my bed partner. And when I accidentally put my elbow in his face he threatened to throw me out of the canyon. But I soon made

peace with him. And having dropped off I slept undisturbed till six-thirty, at which time Peg quietly got us up to eat breakfast.

“I decided not to build a fire,” says he, as we gathered around the stone table. “For I want to keep the enemy in the dark about our position as long as possible. So you’ll have to fill up on cold stuff.”

Red didn’t like that.

“What?” says he, sweeping the table with his greedy eyes. “No pancakes? Oh, gee! I can’t fill up without pancakes.”

“All right then,” says old hefty, slapping a cold pancake in the yapper’s face. “Nibble on that one.”

“You big bum!”

“Sandwiches and strawberries are good enough for anybody,” declared the leader. “So lay to it and shut up.”

Bid and his gang had talked of getting up at daybreak to search the canyon. But their trip down the winding trail had completely tuckered them out. So it was well after seven o’clock before they finally crawled out of their blankets and rekindled their fire.

“Oh-hum,” stretched Bid, as we peeked down at him from our fortress. “I ache all over.”

“You and me both,” Jimmy Stricker stretched in turn.

Pretty soon Bid came over and looked up the hill.

“That’s funny,” says he, as Gummy stopped beside him.

“What’s funny?” grunted the sleepy newcomer.

“That rock pile up there,” says Bid.

“I don’t see anything funny about a rock pile,” Gummy further exercised his yawning apparatus.

“It looks like a fort to me,” says Bid.

Gummy was wide awake now.

“By George!” says he, screwing his eyes in our direction.

“That does look like a rock wall.”

“Let’s go up and investigate,” says Bid.

“O-k.”

Peg told us then, in a low voice, to man our guns.

“I have a hunch,” says he, “that their hill climbing will come to a quick finish when they get into our thorns. But it’s just as well to be prepared.”

Jum and Jimmy had gone off for a swim.

“Come on,” they yipped, from the pool under the falls.

But swimming didn't interest Bid just then. Instead he started chestily up the hill, but stopped in his tracks, and screeched seven kinds of bloody murder, when a thorny branch that he had stepped on flopped up and slapped him in the seat of the pants.

"Holy cow!" he bellowed. "The whole hill's covered with thorns."

"Gosh!" Gummy suffered in turn. "I've got one of the blamed things in my ankle."

Bid saw now that the scattered branches were all green, proof in itself that the thorns had been put there for a purpose. And with a further dark look in our direction he backed off, taking his warriors with him.

Jimmy and Jum came dripping from the pool.

"What happened to you over there?" Jimmy inquired of his scowling cousin.

"Oh," came the angry reply, "I walked into a trap of Jerry Todd's."

"What?" Jimmy showed surprise. "Is Jerry that close to us?"

"He and his gang have fortified themselves on the top of that hill," Bid pointed. "And they've covered the slope with thorns."

That started young Gummy to blustering.

“If they really are up there,” says he, in his big way, “I’m going to put them out of here in a jiffy. For this is my land. And I don’t propose to have it run over by trash like them.”

“I bet a cookie,” says Bid, shooting another dark look up the hill, “that they’re laying up there listening to every word we say.”

“They better listen,” Gummy raised his bossy voice, “if they know what’s good for them. And they better take the hint and get out of here too, while the getting’s good.”

“They’ll never leave here without a fight,” declared Bid.

“Well then,” Gummy stiffened, with fire in his eyes, “let’s fight.”

“Boy,” grated Bid, “I *would* like to drive them out of here. For no one in this gang hates Jerry Todd any more than me.”

“How about building a fort of our own?” Gummy then suggested.

“Where?”

“Over there by the spring.”

“Say, that’s a peachy idea. For they can’t stay up there forever without water. And when they try to get it, we’ll pick them off with our slingshots just like the trapped Indians were picked off on Starved Rock.”

Having thus decided on our fate, they first cooked breakfast beside the pool and then set to work on their intended fort. Painting their faces with colored clay they pretended that they were real Indians. They even gave themselves Indian names. Bid was Eagle Feather. Jimmy was Wolf Fang. The Milden brothers were White Fawn and Gray Fawn. Jum was Big Crow (with that big mouth of his he sure was well named). And in pattern of the forgotten rain-maker young Gummy called himself Chief Pebble-on-the-beach.

CHAPTER XI

A STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE

The Indians worked all morning on their fort. They made a good one too. It completely surrounded the spring. And on the side facing us it was fully five feet high.

Gummy tried at first to take it easy. Being rich, he thought that he could stand around and boss the job while the others did all the hard work. But Bid soon put a stop to that. And did we ever snicker as the big-acting Chicago kid rolled stone after stone into place. The sweat streamed down his painted face like a young creek. But he plugged along, showing that he could work when driven to it.

We could see every move the others made, both inside and outside of their fort. But they couldn't see us. And when they climbed into the rocks, to check up on us, we hid in our tents. That made Bid sore. And just as we expected, he tried to roll a bunch of rocks down on top of us. But the overhanging ledge gave us complete protection.

I was glad though when they gave up their rock-rolling attack and went back to their fort. For the rumble of the rolling rocks over my head gave me a queer uncomfortable feeling. I knew, of course, that the loosened

rocks themselves couldn't harm me. But I wasn't so sure about the ledge.

The Indians next gathered in a circle at the foot of the hill. We could hear them powwowing back and forth. And then, to our surprise, Big Crow came forward with a flag of truce.

Peg guardedly raised his head.

“What do you want?” he demanded.

“Heap big Chief Pebble-on-the-beach him gladly make powwow with paleface. Him maybe no scalp paleface if paleface do as him say.”

“Oh, yah?” sneered Peg. “Well, you go back and tell your heap big chief to take a heap big jump in the creek. And if he jumps hard enough to crack his cranium, that's o-k with me.”

“Heap big chief him say he own heap much land. Paleface him no have right to build fort on big chief's land. Big chief him get heap much cross. Maybe him cut paleface's heart out and put on watch fob.”

“Yah,” retorted Peg, “and maybe heap big chief him get a heap big punch in the jaw too.”

“Then you no make powwow with heap big chief?”

“I'll powwow him on the head with a club,” growled Peg, “if he tries to get fresh with me.”

“Heap big chief him get much hot under the collar when he hear what paleface say.”

“Fine!” says Peg. “I want him to get hot under the collar. The hotter the better. For it wouldn’t be any fun to lick him if he didn’t put up a real fight.”

Here the “old man of the hills” came to life, filling the deep canyon with a faint plaintive wail. And so startled were the Indians that they forgot to play their parts.

“Oo-o-o-o! Oo-o-o-o! Oo-o-o-o!” the weird sound continued.

“What was that?” Gummy inquired, staring at his companions.

“I’ll be blamed if I know,” says Bid.

“Listen! There it is again.”

“Oo-o-o-o! Oo-o-o-o! Oo-o-o-o!”

“Maybe it’s an owl,” suggested Gummy, as he stretched his neck in various directions.

“Owls don’t hoot in the daytime,” Bid spoke practically.

“Besides I never heard an owl that sounded like that.”

“Well then, maybe it’s a fox.”

“A *fox*! Say, you’re good. Why don’t you call it an elephant and quit?”

“A fox barks like a dog,” put in Jimmy.

“Sure thing,” says Bid. “Anybody with any sense at all knows that.”

“Oh, yah?” bridled Gummy. “Well, if anybody happens to ask you, wise guy, I started in learning things about where you left off.”

“A fox!” Bid further ridiculed. “Haw, haw, haw! A fox!”

“Well, it may not be a fox,” Gummy gave in. “But I bet it’s some kind of an animal.”

“Oo-o-o-o! Oo-o-o-o! Oo-o-o-o!” the plaintive cry was repeated for the fourth time.

“I hope,” says Jum, as he screwed up his big mouth, “that I never hear anything like that in a dark cemetery.”

“It does sound kind of ghost-like,” says Gummy.

“I bet a cookie,” says Bid, shooting a dark look up the hill, “that it’s some trick of Jerry Todd’s.”

“But how could he make a sound like that?”

“Maybe he’s blowing through a cow’s horn.”

“What do you mean?” quizzed Gummy. “A real cow’s horn?”

“Sure thing. Cows’ horns are hollow. And they sound funny when you blow through them.”

We could hear every word they said. For they weren’t more than two hundred feet from us. And as I stood watching them through one of the loopholes I found myself wondering if the eerie sound did actually come from a cow’s horn.

But, if so, who was blowing the horn? Poppy? Or was it the Indian rain-maker?

Here I began to jump with excitement.

“Hey, Peg,” I signalled. “Come over here for a minute. I want to tell you something.”

“What do you want?” says he, stopping beside me.

“Have you figured out yet where our fish went to?”

“No.”

“Well, I can tell you,” I spoke quickly. “And I can tell you who’s making that crazy sound too.”

“The Indians think it’s you, Jerry. They think you’ve got a cow’s horn.”

“It’s old Pebble-in-the-brook,” I declared.

A queer look flashed across Peg’s face.

“Gosh!” says he. “I had forgotten all about old Pebble-in-the-brook.”

“I don’t think myself,” says I, “that he can make it rain. For I don’t think an Indian, or anybody else, can make it rain by simply doing something with charms. But no doubt he’s trying. And if we could look in on him right now we’d probably find him sitting in some out-of-the-way cave with a cow’s horn in his hands.”

Red was listening.

“By George, Jerry,” says he, “I believe you’re right. For he *did* have a cow’s horn. I saw it. He kept it in a plush box with one of his grandmother’s left ribs. It was one of his charms.”

“He must be crazy,” says Peg, “if he’s sitting in a cave tooting on a cow’s horn.”

Red looked up at the cloudless summer sky.

“I wonder when it will start raining,” says he.

“Did you bring your raincoat?” I grinned.

“No,” he shook his head. “I forgot it. But I won’t need it as long as I’m under this ledge.”

“And do you really believe,” I followed up, “that old Puddle-in-the-bush can stir up a cloudburst?”

“Of course. For he told me so.”

“But if he’s such an expert rain-maker,” says I, “why doesn’t he get busy and do something? What’s he waiting for?”

“You must remember, Jerry, that rain-making takes time, even when it’s done by an expert.”

“He probably needs a few more *fish*,” says I, sort of sarcastic-like, “to give him strength.”

Red was bristling now.

“You can’t make me believe for one minute,” says he hotly, “that old Pebble ever stole those fish. For he’s fair and square all the way through. And you’ll find out too, before you get out of here, that he’s one of the best rain-makers in the country.”

“Maybe we better build an ark,” laughed Peg, “like the fellow in the Bible.”

“That’s an idea,” Red spoke cheerfully.

I was completely disgusted with him.

“Honest-to-goodness,” says I. “You don’t know as much as a last year’s bird nest.”

“Anyway,” says he, “I wouldn’t have to know much to outclass you.”

“Why don’t you hang your cap on something else,” I suggested, “and carry your brains around in a peanut shell?”

“A *peanut* shell?” he retorted. “Boy, if your brains ever found themselves in a peanut shell they’d think they were lost in the Mammoth Cave.”

“Haw, haw, haw!” laughed Peg. “You guys are funny.”

Gummy then came to the foot of the hill in his real character.

“What do you feed it on?” says he, in his smart way.

“What?” says Peg innocently.

“The laughing hyena that you’ve got up there.”

Gosh! That was a hot one, all right. But Peg acted just as sweet as you please.

“I heard something about you the other day,” says he.

“Oh yah?”

“I heard you had a family tree,” Peg proceeded pleasantly.

“Well,” Gummy spoke chestily, “maybe we have.”

“And what part are you?” purred Peg. “The sap?”

Even Bid laughed at that. And mad enough to chew nails, Gummy started shaking his fists at us.

“You guys had your nerve,” says he, “to build a fort on my land. And for two cents I’d keep you up there till you starve to death.”

Peg winked at me on the sly.

“What do you want?” I spoke quickly.

“Load up one of the cannons,” says he, in a low voice, “and aim at his bare stomach.”

Which I did. And for once in my life my aim was perfect.

There was a furious howl from Gummy when the sizzling cannonball struck him squarely in the bread basket. And when I peeked down the hill all I could see was flying arms and legs, the juicy missile having knocked him completely off his pins.

The others were furious. And with Bid urging them on they started up the hill, determined, I guess, to corner us in our own fort and club the daylights out of us.

But they soon found out that their clubs were no match for our cannons. And did they ever howl as we picked them off one after another. Spat! Spat! Spat! Jum got a crack in the rear end that knocked him clean across the creek. That finished *him*. Next we put Hib out of business. Then we crippled his brother. Bid saw now that he hadn't a chance in the world of licking us. So he called off the remnants of his moss-splattered army and retreated to the safety of his own fort.

He knew, all right, that he was licked. But he didn't intend to stay licked. That wasn't his nature a-tall. And as we watched him in the fort we could tell by his actions that he was cooking up some kind of a scheme to turn

the tables on us. But that didn't scare us. For we had the best fort. And we couldn't conceive that he and his gang would ever succeed in getting it away from us.

When evening came we built a fire and cooked our supper, still hilarious over our victory. The few strawberries that we had left were spoiled. So we threw them out, making a hearty meal of canned soup, baked potatoes, peanut-butter sandwiches and pie.

"How's our stuff holding out?" Scoop inquired, as we gathered merrily around the stone table.

"That's our last pie," says Peg. "But thanks to Mr. Ott we've got oodles of canned stuff in the cupboard."

"I could live on pancakes alone," gurgled Red, as he mowed his way through a huge sandwich.

"You and your pancakes!" snorted Peg. "You give me a pain."

"That sack of pancake flour looked blamed big to me when we started out," added Red. "But I'm glad now that we brought it along."

"If necessary," says Peg. "We can hold the fort for three weeks. But we'll have to go on short rations toward the last. And we'll have to depend on showers for drinking water."

"What's the matter?" I spoke quickly. "Is our reservoir leaking?"

“Not that I know of. But we can’t expect that water to last forever.”

I took a drink.

“It tastes kind of stale already,” says I.

“I noticed that,” put in Rory.

“Maybe Red stepped in it,” grinned Peg.

“Oof!” says Scoop, turning up his nose. “I think I’ll lick the dew off the rocks after this when I’m thirsty.”

The defeated Indians in turn had cooked a huge kettleful of stew. We could see them dishing it up. Later they rigged up a tom-tom with one of their frying pans and put on a regular war dance. Finally though they quieted down for the night. And then, as silence settled into the canyon, which earlier had echoed with the war-dancers’ blood-thirsty yells, we went to bed under guard.

Still smarting over their defeat, and determined to turn the tables on us, the Indians quietly got out of bed at midnight and started carrying off our thorns. Our guard heard them. And when we got up we could see them moving back and forth in the darkness.

Peg told us grimly to man our guns for another attack. And then, at his crisp orders, we fired together.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

“Once again,” the leader sang out.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The Indians were in full flight now. And it was easy to tell by their pained yelps that more than one of our “juicy” cannonballs had again found its mark. Even worse for the scheming redskins they ran over a lot of the thorns that they had piled up. So, having gained the safety of their fort, they were only too glad to stay there till daybreak, at which time I crawled out of my nest to help Peg get breakfast.

With the exception of a guard, the Indians were still sound asleep.

“Look!” I told Peg. “There’s old Eagle Feather himself.”

The guard turned and gave us a sour look.

“Ugh! Ugh!” says he.

“I’d do that too,” says Peg, “if my feet were as full of thorns as yours.”

“Heap big brave,” says Bid, patting himself on the chest.

“Heap big hunk of cheese,” says I.

And taking careful aim I pecked him one with my small slingshot.

“You’ll suffer for that,” he screeched, shaking his fists at me. “You and your crummy gang have won out so far. But you

won't always win out. And when our turn comes you'll get it and get it plenty."

The smoke from our fire settled heavily in the dank canyon. It made me cough. And when I turned to give the fire a poke, Peg came up to me with a look on his face I'll never forget as long as I live.

One of the tents, he said, was empty. Rory had disappeared overnight.

CHAPTER XII

A CRY FOR HELP

There was no sign of Rory in the lower camp. Nor did the Indians act as though they had a prisoner of war. But to make sure that they hadn't quietly pulled our little chum over the barricade I signaled to Bid, who was still sleepily pacing back and forth at the foot of the hill.

"How much are you charging for prisoners to-day?" says I.

He was still kind of sore at me, as his manner showed.

"What do you mean?" says he, stopping abruptly.

"Well," says I, "if you got a prisoner from our side, how much would we have to pay you to get him back?"

"We'll talk about that," says he, continuing his march, "when we get one."

Red hates like the deuce to get up in the morning. And when Peg awakened him he started running off at the mouth as usual. But everything was quiet behind me now. And when I turned, all three of my chums were hovering anxiously at my elbow.

“Have they got him, Jerry?” came the eager inquiry.

“No,” I slowly shook my head.

“But where is he?”

“I hate to think it of him,” says I, “but I honestly believe he skinned out on us last night.”

And all the time I was wondering, in the back of my head, if the little fellow had been carried off by something that our guard couldn't see.

“Did he disappear while he was on duty?” Scoop further inquired.

“No,” says Peg. “He took Jerry's place at one o'clock. And he was still here when I relieved him at two o'clock.”

“Did he act funny?”

“No.”

“I was just wondering,” studied Scoop, “if he walked out of here in his sleep.”

“I would have heard him if he did,” says Peg. “Besides, no sleep walker could get out of here without being thorn punctured. And that would have awakened him in a flash.”

“Then you really think,” says Red, “that he sneaked off of his own accord?”

“He must have,” Scoop volunteered to reply. “For he’s gone. And as Peg says, he never could have gotten out of here in his sleep. Besides, if he had walked off in his sleep the Indians would have grabbed him just as sure as shootin’.”

Red looked sick.

“Gosh! I never thought that Rory would go back on us that way.”

“Nor me either,” says Scoop.

“But how did he get out of the fort without us seeing him?”

“That wouldn’t be hard, if he got down on his hands and knees.”

“Just the same,” says Red, “I’d hate to try it myself, with all those thorns in front of me.”

Peg later drew me aside.

“Jerry,” says he, with a long face, “I’m beginning to believe that we’re in the clutches of an evil spirit.”

“An evil spirit?” I repeated, staring at him. “What do you mean?”

“There’s something uncanny about this canyon. I’ve felt it from the first. It’s just like a tomb. And you know what hangs around tombs!”

“I’ve been wondering myself,” says I, as a queer shivery feeling chased itself up and down my spine, “if Rory wasn’t picked up by a ghost.”

“Then you’re satisfied that the kid never left here of his own accord?”

“Honest, Peg,” I spoke helplessly, “I don’t know what to think. I’m completely up a tree.”

“Rory’s a gritty little kid. You know that as well as I do. So it’s foolish of us to think, for one minute, that he got cold feet and beat it. To the contrary, I don’t know of any one in this gang that got a bigger kick out of the fight last night than him. And even if he did get a little scared spell, he wouldn’t beat it that way. For he’s too blamed loyal. So it stands to reason that he either was carried off, as you say, or was drawn away by some force he couldn’t resist.”

“What do you mean?” says I. “Magnetism?”

“Well, we know that living men can hypnotize boys, for we’ve seen it done on the stage. So why can’t ghosts do the same thing?”

Hypnotized by a ghost! It was such an amazing theory that for a moment or two all I could do was to stand there and stare.

“It may be the ghost of the trapper who was killed here,” Peg proceeded. “But I’d sooner think it was the ghost of some early Indian. For everybody knows that the Indians put a curse on their secret lead mine before they closed it. And that

curse has touched everybody who tried to open it. The trapper himself was buried alive. And goodness only knows what has happened to Poppy.”

“Oh, Peg!” I cried, as a new bunch of shivers attacked me. “Don’t talk that way. You’ll scare me to death.”

“I never thought myself, Jerry, that I’d be talking this way about a ghost. I always said there wasn’t any such thing. Hooey! And when a kid came to me with a ‘ghost’ story, I laughed at him. But I don’t feel like laughing now. In fact, to tell you the truth, I feel blamed shaky.”

“Maybe we better go home,” says I, glancing anxiously down the canyon.

“And leave Poppy and Rory to their fate? Oh, no! We can’t do that, Jerry. It would be cowardly.”

“But you have no proof,” says I, in a desperate attempt to beat down his theory, “that Poppy has disappeared too.”

“How can you doubt it, Jerry, after what happened here last night?”

“I guess you’re right,” says I weakly.

And then, as the “old man of the hills” came to life, I listened with bated breath.

“Oo-o-o-o! Oo-o-o-o! Oo-o-o-o!”

Was he jeering at us? Or did I just imagine that the usually plaintive voice had a peculiar mocking sound?

Anyway, I knew now that it wasn't the old rain-maker, as we had let ourselves believe. It was the evil spirit that Peg had mentioned—the guardian of the cave. And somehow, as the eerie sound continued, I had the feeling that things were getting worse for us every minute.

Patterning after us, the Indians in the lower fort rigged up three big slingshots that morning, getting the necessary inner tubes from the trunk of Gummy's car. And throughout the balance of the day the air was thick with flying cannonballs. But no one on either side got hit to any great extent. Once I got a glancing smack on the head, as I raised up to take a peek. It made me stagger. But I was all right again in a minute or two. And then, laying for Bid, I gave him a similar crack, hoping, when he went down, that he'd stay there forever. But like me he soon regained his feet. Jum in turn got a dandy swat in the seat of the pants as he bent over the spring to get a pail of water. And did we ever hoot when he went into the cold spring headfirst! It was fun. But it wasn't as much fun as when we had Rory with us. And the longer we fought without him the more worried we got.

That night we huddled together in one tent. We were afraid to go to sleep. But finally we fell over, unable to longer keep our eyes open. And when daybreak came only three of us were left.

Scoop had disappeared in the same mysterious manner.

Getting wise to the fact that we had lost two of our warriors, the Indians fought harder than ever. The canyon rang with their triumphant blood-thirsty cries. And when we tried to call a truce, so that we could go for help, they hooted at us, calling us cowards. We weren't cowards. But we *were* the scariest bunch of kids that ever huddled in a fort.

We thought that the Indians would ease up on us when night came. But instead, they started to close in on us, satisfied, I guess, that they had us licked. Their huge fires at the foot of the hill kept us from getting away unseen, as we had planned to do. So we had to stay and fight.

And now comes the most amazing part of my story.

I fought till I was dizzy. Bang! Bang! Bang! Again and again I drove the enemy back with my gunfire. But finally, in spite of all that I could do to prevent it, I fell over in a heap. It was night then. But when I again opened my eyes it was morning. I was lying where I fell. And all about me was the litter of battle.

The quietness that surrounded me was so intense that I thought at first that my ears were dead. Then, as I slowly raised myself, and looked around, I caught the slight trickle of the near-by waterfall.

A faint, whispering, ghostly trickle!

“Peg!” I cried, jumping to my feet. “*Peg!*”

The grim canyon walls sent my frantic voice back to me in a hundred eerie echoes. But I got no reply from Peg himself.

Nor could I find him, nor Red either, when I searched the tents.

It was then that I remembered about the Indians at the foot of the hill. And looking down, I expected to find my two chums tied to a tree. It was odd, I thought, that the victorious redskins hadn't made a prisoner of me too. But to my added amazement the Indians were nowhere in sight. Their tents were there. And I could see all kinds of scattered stuff, including the Chicago boy's case of surveying instruments. But the redskins themselves had vanished as completely as my chums.

Except for the birds and animals that long had made their home here, I seemed to be the only living creature in the whole canyon.

The experience was so overwhelming that I had to sit down on a rock to collect my wits. Was it a dream? It seemed like a dream. And yet I knew that I was wide awake. I proved this by pinching myself. No! It wasn't a dream. There was nothing imaginary about the joint disappearance of my chums and our enemies. It was all as real as real could be.

I was sweating now. But it wasn't a hot sweat. The water that came out of my skin seemed like beads of ice.

Did I imagine it, or was something that I couldn't see trying to pull me over the rocky barricade? Come! Come! I didn't actually *hear* anything. And yet I felt that something was calling me, sort of soft and enticing-like.

“No! No!” I screamed. “I won’t go! I won’t!”

And I clung to the rocks with all the strength that I possessed.

Was I crazy? I must be, I told myself, as I finally quieted down. For there was nothing in sight. Nor could my ears pick up a single real sound except the eerie ghostly trickle of the falls.

The thing to do, I figured, was to set my will against the invisible power that was trying to draw me over the barricade. And when I tried it I found, to my great joy, that it worked. This gave me confidence.

A falling rock on the other side of the canyon drew my attention. Someone was coming down the steep trail. Then I heard a voice.

“Sammy! Sammy! Where are you?”

It was the old battle-axe.

I was glad even to hear her in the canyon. Yet I had sense enough to keep out of her sight. And as I watched her from my hole in the rocks I found that practically all of my shivers had disappeared.

That’s the way I am. When I’m scared I shake all over. But after a bit I get a grip on myself. And then I feel brave.

“Sammy! Sammy!” came the repeated cry. “Why don’t you answer me?”

Then another figure appeared at the foot of the trail.

“Is that you, Laura?” came the sharp inquiry.

“Yes, Rachel.”

“Are you looking for Sammy too?”

“Yes.”

“I can’t, for the life of me, figure out where he went to. I don’t think he’d run away. But he isn’t in the woods. And he isn’t here.”

“Why don’t you give Sammy a chance, Rachel?” the younger sister begged. “Why don’t you tell the truth about him?”

“I will,” the words were spoken with a peculiar grim satisfaction, “when it comes time to divide the Glimme fortune.”

“You’ve been drawing on Anne Glimme’s purse for years, Rachel. And as I’ve told you before, the law will take you to account for that.”

“I haven’t spent a penny of the money on myself.”

“But where is it? What have you done with it?”

“Well,” came the reluctant reply, “I’ve put it away for the boy. I’ve hidden it.”

“In our cabin?”

“No. I’ve dropped it dollar by dollar into the devil’s chimney.”

“But what if somebody finds it?” came the anxious inquiry.

The older sister gave a queer harsh laugh.

“Has anybody found the pile of whitened bones at the foot of the chimney? No! The bones have lain there undisturbed for thirteen long years. The rain has beat in on them. The snow has drifted down on them. And all the time I’ve made Anne Glimme think that he’s still alive! I’ve taken thousands of dollars of her money. That was my revenge. Gold! Gold! I wanted nothing but gold. That’s what I told her. And when I got it I put it away with the bones. Ha, ha, ha, ha! Bones and gold, all piled together at the foot of the devil’s chimney.”

I saw now that the woman was crazy. And the younger sister saw it too.

“Come, Rachel! Let us go home.”

“But I want to find Sammy.”

“He’ll come home all right. You needn’t worry about him.”

“I thought I’d find him here. And I’m not so sure yet that he hasn’t gone into that cave under the falls. For I heard a peculiar cry when I was coming down the hill. It was the same kind of a cry that *he* gave, after his fall. That’s how I knew he was there. But when I got to him he was dead.”

“And are you sure, Rachel, that the cave under the falls connects with the other passageway?”

“Yes. Our great-grandfather learned the secret from a native Indian. And once, when the pool at the foot of the falls completely dried up, I went into the cave myself. That was years and years ago.”

“But how could Sammy get into the cave now?”

“Any boy could do it, if he had a good pair of diving lungs. In fact, I could do it myself, old as I am. Shall I prove it to you, Laura?”

“No, no!” came the hasty cry. “Not now, Rachel. Let’s go home instead.”

It took them some time to get up the hill. For the older sister had trouble with her heart. I could hear them talking about it. But finally their voices died away. And with the canyon to myself I walked down to the pool without the slightest fear, and pulled off my shoes. I took off my shirt too, and my pants. But I left my underwear on. Then I walked into the water.

Confident now that Poppy and his new companion were trapped under the falls, it was my intention to dive into the submerged cave and rescue them. The mystery of the plaintive voice was solved. It wasn’t what Rory had said. Nor was it the Indian rain-maker, nor a spirit. It was old Poppy himself, calling for help.

It never occurred to me just then to wonder about the similar disappearance of my other chums. All I could think of was to get Poppy out of that hole. But when I tried it I couldn't do it. I got into the cave a few feet. But I couldn't go on. I simply didn't have the nerve.

It was then that I thought about the rubber hose. If only I had some way of getting it into the cave Poppy and I could talk through it! Being on the inside, he could tell me what was there. So I'd know exactly what to do.

I tried pushing the hose into the cave. But that didn't work for two cents. Nor could I float it with a wooden block. I was just about to give up, and go for help, when I heard a peculiar scraping sound behind me. And when I turned, with my heart in my throat, there stood old Davey Jones!

Gee-miny-crickets-gosh! I never was so tickled in all my life. And the wonder is that I didn't actually bend down and give him a kiss.

He thought, I guess, that he had played a good joke on me. For there was a funny little twinkle in his eyes. At least it looked like a twinkle to me. I didn't try to find out where he had been for the past two days. He couldn't have told me anyway. What I did instead was to tie the rubber hose to his tail and motion him into the submerged cave.

He knew exactly what I wanted. And disappearing into the cave he pulled the hose with him. I saw it unwind foot by foot. Pretty soon a quarter of it was gone. Then a half. Then

three quarters. Would he take it all? I began to wonder, sort of anxious-like.

And then, with only a foot or two left, he stopped.

I blew into the hose as hard as I could, realizing that I couldn't hear through it till I got the water out of it. I put it to my ear.

All I heard at first was a peculiar rumble. Like the inside of a sea shell. Then, ever so faintly, I heard a voice.

“Help! Help! Come quick!”

It was Poppy!

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE DEVIL'S CHIMNEY

It was then that I remembered about my other vanished chums.

“Poppy!” I cried into the hose. “Can you hear me?”

“Yes, Jerry,” came the faint reply. “I can hear you.”

“How long have you been there?” I followed up breathlessly.

“Long enough to get awfully hungry.”

“Is that why you sound so weak?”

“Yes. So try and bring me something to eat, Jerry.”

“But if you feel as weak as that,” says I, “why don’t you let Peg do the talking?”

“Peg?” the name was repeated faintly. “Did you say something about Peg?”

“Isn’t he with you?” says I, amazed.

“No. I’m all alone.”

“But the Saucer kid is there, isn’t he?”

“No. I lost him.”

“What kind of a place are you in, Poppy?” I spoke quickly.

“Is it all water?”

“No. It’s dry where I am. But there’s water here in a pool.”

“I’d like to see it. But instead of going in I think I better pull you out with the hose.”

“You can’t do that, Jerry. For I’ve got a rock on my foot. I can’t budge.”

“Gosh! What can we do, Poppy?”

“I’d pull you in if I could turn over. But I couldn’t pull a cat this way.”

“Maybe I can dive in,” I suggested.

“Try it, Jerry. There isn’t more than ten feet of rock between us. And you’ll be all right if you follow the hose.”

“Is Davey still there?”

“I think so. But I can’t hear him. And it’s too blamed dark to see him.”

“Well,” I spoke anxiously, “don’t let him start back and block the cave.”

“I’m lying beside a big pool, Jerry. So, after you dive ten or twelve feet, come up. I’ll be listening for you. And as soon as I hear you I’ll yell to let you know where I am.”

“What shall I bring you?” says I. “Some canned beans?”

“Anything that I can eat. Bring me some good drinking water too. And try and bring a light. If you don’t you won’t be able to see a thing. For it’s darker than pitch in here.”

“I’ll see what I can find,” I spoke quickly. “It won’t take me more than a minute or two. And when I get back I’ll shake the hose.”

“O-k, Jerry.”

Having learned that my first vanished chum was trapped under the falls, I had jumped to the conclusion that the others were there too. I couldn’t figure out how they got there, unless old Puddle-in-the-bush had crazily lugged them off. But it seemed to be the only place that they could disappear to. Therefore it was a big disappointment to me when Poppy told me, through the hose, that he was all alone.

I didn’t ask him if he had seen a ghost. For somehow that “ghost” theory didn’t look quite so hot to me now. And yet I had let myself believe that the same “ghosts” that supposedly had made off with my helpless chums had similarly tried to draw me over our rock pile with its invisible hypnotic eyes! Gosh! Talk about a *simpleton*! But a fellow gets that way when he’s scared. His imagination runs wild. And mine, I guess, broke all bounds.

I still didn't know where Peg and his fellow warriors were. But I had proved that there was nothing "ghostly" about Poppy's disappearance. And I felt that I could solve the mystery of my other chums' joint disappearance in the same practical way.

But my first job was to rescue Poppy.

Chasing up the hill I grabbed a tin of beans and a can opener. I got a bottle too, which I later filled with spring water. While pawing around among the stuff in the stone cupboard I uncovered a bottle of medicine. It was stuff to put on cuts and bruises. I found a roll of adhesive tape too—all supplied by thoughtful old Mr. Ott. Filling a coffee can with buttered bread I taped the cover to keep it from leaking. In the same way I taped the joints of my flashlight. And then I grabbed a bunch of matches.

Having made the matches water tight, I looked around for a candle. But Mr. Ott, I guess, had run out of money before he got to the counter where the candles were. For there was none in sight.

Making a belt of my stuff, and tying it around my waist, I started for the pool, but turned into the Indians' deserted fort instead, when it suddenly occurred to me that they might have a candle. Sure enough, I found a whole boxful, which shows how thoroughly young Gummy had prepared himself for underground work. Sticking six of the candles into my belt, I then ran on to the pool, noticing, as I waded into the water, that the sun had disappeared behind a huge black cloud. I could hear the rumble of thunder too. And then, as I

stopped momentarily to watch the rolling clouds, a huge drop of rain collided with my nose.

I thought of old Pebble-in-the-brook. Very probably, I told myself, he was patting himself on the back. But *I* knew that his charms had nothing to do with the coming rain. It was a natural rain. And as I further watched the rolling clouds I had the feeling that it was going to be an old gee-whacker of a rain too. For the sky got blacker every minute. And as fast as one bunch of thunder quit growling at me another bunch took its place. But there's nothing bad about thunder. Nor did I feel, as I waded deeper into the pool, that I had anything to fear from the coming downpour. I never thought, for instance, that there would be another disastrous landslide, or that a piece of the falls itself would loosen up and tumble into the pool. But that's what happened, as you'll learn later on. And if you want to take the view that it was all a part of the early Indians' curse, that's all right with me. I sometimes think it was myself.

The stuff around my waist seemed awfully bulky. And I wondered if it would drag me to the bottom. It might be well, I figured, to take a few trial dives. Which I did. Then, finding everything all right, I jiggled the hose.

"Here I come," says I, in a businesslike voice.

"I'm waiting for you, Jerry," came the prompt reply.

"I may pull kind of hard on the hose," says I. "For instead of swimming under water I'm going to draw

myself into the cave. So for the love of mud don't let the hose slip out of your hands.”

“I won't,” came the faithful promise.

I went under then. And following the hose I soon found myself in the submerged cave. Everything was dark now. And I had the feeling, as I went on, that the stone walls were getting closer and closer to me. Gee! Suppose I got caught here and drowned? I'd never see my ma and my pa again. The thought of losing them filled me with terror. And for a wild moment or two I was tempted to go back. Still, I knew that my pa wouldn't want me to be a coward. And that's what I would be, all right, if I turned my back on my trapped chum.

So I went on, hand over hand. My head was spinning now. And it seemed to me that I couldn't hold my breath an instant longer. I thought my lungs would burst. Finally I simply had to come up.

Boy, if I bumped into the tunnel top now I was done for! But what my head struck, instead of solid rock, was air.

I had the crazy feeling that I was swimming around in a pool of black ink. For I couldn't see a thing. And it was kind of hard for me to tell where the water really ended and the air began.

So to play safe I got my head up just as far as I could. And all the time I was puffing and snorting like an old hippopotamus. In fact I made so much noise with my

flappers and my air-pumping apparatus that Poppy had to yell at me three times before I heard him. And even then I couldn't tell where he was.

Every sound in the cave was picked up by the stone walls and slammed back and forth with a hundred booming echoes. That's why I couldn't locate Poppy's voice. First he yelled at me from one side. And then his voice jumped to the other side. But I finally got him spotted. And having dragged myself out of the water onto a rocky beach, I felt around until I found him.

"How are you, Jerry?" he spoke softly. And maybe I imagined it, but I think he took my hand and put it up to his cheek. Which shows you how much he thinks of me.

"I'm all right," I told him.

"Did you miss me?"

"Gee, Poppy! That was a silly question. You know blamed well that I missed you. But I never dreamed that you were in a fix like this."

"I kept yelling to you as long as I could. For I knew that you weren't far away. But I completely gave out a short time ago."

"What became of the Saucer boy, Poppy? And how did you get here in the first place?"

"We came down a rope in another part of the cave. He called it the devil's chimney."

The devil's chimney!

“And did you find a lot of money at the bottom of the chimney?” I spoke excitedly.

“Yes. But how did *you* know about it?”

“Never mind that now,” says I briskly. “I’ve got a lot of things to tell you and I can see that you’ve got a lot of things to tell me. But we’ll let that go till you’re stronger. Here,” I offered him the flashlight. “Hold this while I unpack.”

He laughed when he saw the candles.

“I suppose I could eat them,” says he, “in a pinch.”

“Forget about the candles,” says I, “and dig into these beans. And here’s some bread.”

He ate like a pig. And afraid that he’d make himself sick I finally took the stuff away from my half-starved chum.

“What day of the week is it, Jerry?” he then inquired.

“Either Saturday or Sunday,” I spoke uncertainly.

“Then this is the first meal I’ve had since last Monday night.”

“It’s a good thing,” says I, with a shiver, “that you had plenty of water. Or you would have passed out.”

“At first,” says he, “I thought that my stomach would cave in. Boy, was I hungry! But after the second day or two I didn’t mind it so much. It’s a queer feeling, Jerry. I can’t describe it.”

“Well,” says I, “why talk about it? For you’re safe now. And even if you can’t swim out of here I can easily pull you out with the hose.”

“Don’t forget,” says he, “that you’ve got to free me first.”

Gosh! I had completely forgotten that he was pinned down with a rock.

He had stepped into a hole, he said. And while squirming to free himself he had loosened a rock that trapped him completely. It wasn’t a particularly big rock. But he couldn’t budge it with his pinioned foot. Nor could he reach it with his hands. So he had to lay there till help came.

Having freed him I further took the leg in my lap and doctored it up. Nor was there much the matter with it except a few bruises. Still he winced when he tried to stand on it.

I saw then that he never could get out of the cave on his own hook. So I told him that I’d go on ahead and pull him out with the hose.

“That’s all right for me,” says he. “But how about Sammy? How is he going to get out?”

“You haven’t told me yet,” says I, “where he is.”

“I think he’s lost.”

“Where?”

“Why, down here, of course.”

“Gosh! Is the cave that big?”

“I honestly believe, Jerry, that it runs back into the hills for miles. And there’s all kinds of side rooms too. In fact this place is just a branch of the real cave.”

“I’d like to see it,” says I.

“Sammy discovered it one evening when he was roaming around in the rocks. The bats were leaving it then. And he thought it was smoke. Later he got a rope and explored it.”

“His aunts know all about it,” says I.

“So he found out later on. And he learned too that there was a connecting tunnel under the falls. But the bones in here scared the wits out of him. So he never had the nerve to come back after that first trip.”

In our added talk I learned that Poppy and the Saucer kid had come down a rope, which later loosened at the top and tumbled on their heads. Thus trapped in the cave they set out to find the lower entrance. Turning into a side passage, Poppy found that he was all alone. And that is when he got caught.

“I had a flashlight,” he continued. “But it soon burned out. And there I was in the dark! I knew though that I was in the right place. And as soon as Sammy showed up, to free me, it was my plan to dive out the way you dove in. But he didn’t come back! Nor did he answer when I shouted to him. That scared me. So I started yelling to you instead. I could hear the falls. So I figured that you’d hear some kind of a sound coming from in here if I yelled loud enough.”

“We heard you all right,” says I. “But we couldn’t tell where the sound came from. It was just like an echo in a rain barrel.”

“And you never dreamed it was me, huh?”

“No, Poppy.”

“When did you get here, Jerry?”

“Wednesday morning.”

“I knew you’d come,” he spoke feelingly.

I told him then about the Glimme kid coming to town.

“You remember him, don’t you?” says I.

“Sure thing.”

“He showed up last Monday night, shortly after you got away from me. He had a map. I heard him telling Bid Stricker about it. And he asked Bid to come up here with him—he thinks he owns everything up here—and help him hunt

for the old Indian lead mine. You had already told me about the cave under the falls. So when Bid got his gang together for the trip I rounded up my own gang, determined to drive the others out of here so that you could explore the cave as you said. We brought the diving outfit too, and old Davey.”

“He saved my life, Jerry. And was it ever smart of him to swim right up to me that way and pull the hose over my arm. I was scared at first. But when I felt the hose I knew what was going on. You were trying to communicate with me.”

“And you haven’t heard a single thing from Sammy since you separated from him?”

“No.”

“I bet a cookie,” says I sensibly, “that he’s been trapped by old Puddle-in-the-bush. And as soon as I get you out of here I’m going to come back and hunt for him. For I have a hunch that Peg is here too, and all the rest of my gang.”

Poppy didn’t get the drift of that.

“But what made you think,” says he, “that Peg and I were together?”

“There’s an old devil up here in the hills, Poppy. A real Indian. That’s who I meant by old Puddle-in-the-bush, though his name really is Pebble-in-the-brook. The first night we were here he stole our fish. Next he took Rory. We had a fort then. And how the old buzzard got into the fort without us seeing him is a mystery to me. But he did it.”

“And where was Gummy all this time?”

“In another fort at the foot of the hill.”

“Is he still out there?”

“No. As I told you, the old Indian sneaked off with Rory. And last night he came back and took the whole caboodle—Gummy and the Strickers and Peg and everybody else but me.”

“Did you see him?” came the amazed query.

“No, but I know he did it, though earlier Peg thought that a cockeyed ghost was working on us.”

Poppy was feeling pretty good now. His leg was better too. And getting my whole story, he took me back, through a winding rocky passage, to the devil’s chimney and showed me the bone pile and the money. There was light here. It came through a small circular opening high above our heads. And as I looked up I got a drop of water in my face.

“It’s raining,” says Poppy.

I couldn’t resist the temptation to stoop and pick up some of the weathered gold pieces that lay on the stone floor. But I gave the accompanying bones a wide berth. Poppy told me then that the big cave was full of bones. It was an old Indian burial place, he said.

“And did you know,” says I, pointing to the bone pile at our feet, “that those are the bones of a white man?”

He silently studied my face.

“Was it Bardwell Glimme?” he finally inquired.

“Yes,” I spoke shortly.

CHAPTER XIV

TRAPPED!

Poppy told me then what had happened to him after we separated in Mrs. Glimme's darkened yard.

"You went off to telephone to your ma," says he, as we further stood beside the bone pile at the foot of the devil's chimney. "And no sooner had you gotten out of sight than the big farm woman climbed into her rig and drove off. Nor did she suspect, as she flipped the lines around, that I was perched on the rear end."

"On the rear end?" I repeated. "What do you mean?—on the rear end of the buggy itself?"

"Sure thing," says he. "But the woman couldn't see me. For there was a leather curtain between us."

"It's a lucky thing for you," says I, "that you didn't sneeze."

"We left town on the Happy Hollow road. Later the woman turned to the right into one of the roughest lanes that I ever traveled over. Then we passed through a sagging gate and down a rocky hill. Bumpety-bumpety-bump! It was all I could do to hang on."

“That must have been the hill,” says I, “on which Gummy wrecked his car.”

“I can’t imagine,” says Poppy, “how anybody could get up or down that hill in a car. It was bad enough for a horse and buggy. But I hung on, as I say. I jumped down though, and hid in the weeds, when we got to the log house. And as I sort of skirted the house I began to wonder how I was going to connect up with Sammy. But that was easy. For he came out to put his aunt’s horse away. She went into the house. And as soon as the door closed behind her I showed myself. Sammy was surprised. He never dreamed, he said, that I’d come back so soon. He was tickled too. If he’d come home with me, I said, I’d hide him until I could get somebody to take good care of him. He seemed kind of doubtful about that. He was afraid, I guess, that his mean aunt would find him and half kill him. But I kept on urging him. I talked with him about the lead mine too. For I thought he might know something about it. And it was then that he told me about the devil’s chimney. He called it that, he said, because at night the bats came out of it like smoke. It was a big hole in the rocks. And down below there was a big cave. He was sure, he said, that it connected with the cave under the falls. That got me all excited. I was more certain than ever that I had found the old Indian lead mine—though I’ll have to admit, Jerry, that I haven’t seen any lead yet.”

“Anyway,” says I, looking around, “you’ve found a peachy cave. And if we can open it up to the public it will be just as good as a lead mine.”

“That’s true too,” says Poppy. “But I didn’t give it any thought at the time. And eager to explore the cave as soon as possible I then suggested to Sammy that we hide out in the hills. To which he agreed. So I wrote you a note, telling you to meet me here. And I asked you to bring old Davey so that I’d have a bodyguard in case I did have to go into the submerged cave. That’s why I wanted the diving suit also.”

“And what happened to you after you wrote the note?” I quizzed, eager to get the balance of his story.

“We got a rope—that’s the one that went flooey on us—and headed for the big cave. It was full of bones, Sammy said. I didn’t know what he meant at the time. But I found out later on.”

“And does he know,” says I, looking down at the cluttered floor, “that these are the bones of a white man?”

“I don’t think so. For he acted kind of dumb when I quizzed him about them. Nor could he tell me where the money came from.”

“I can tell you that,” says I quickly.

“Some of the money’s old,” says Poppy, looking it over, “and some of it’s new. So it couldn’t have been brought here by Bardwell Glimme himself.”

“It’s Mrs. Glimme’s hush money,” says I.

And then, in as few words as possible, I told him what I had overheard in the canyon. Every time the big farm woman got

a new bunch of hush money, I said, she brought it here and gave it a fling. She had been doing it for years.

“But why should she feel so bitter toward the dead man?” Poppy puzzled.

“I guess she’s sore because he went back on her sister and married someone else.”

“But that was his mother’s doings.”

“Well,” I argued, “if your sister had a beau, and his mother separated them, wouldn’t it make you sore at the whole family?”

“I suppose so,” Poppy spoke doubtfully. “But never having had a sister I can’t say.”

“From what I’ve seen around here,” I proceeded, “I think that the big farm woman hates the whole Glimme outfit, the Chicago boy included. For she let out a blamed queer cackle that night in the farmyard, when she found out who he was. Just like an old hen getting ready to pounce on a helpless worm.”

“But Sammy isn’t a Glimme? So why should she pick on him?”

“How do you know he isn’t a Glimme?” says I wisely.

“He told me himself that his name is Sammy Saucer.”

“Just the same,” says I, “I think he’s a Glimme. For I heard his two aunts talking about him in the canyon. The middle one said, sort of begging-like, why don’t you give Sammy a chance?—why don’t you tell the truth about him? And the other one said, in that flinty way of hers, I will when it comes time to divide the Glimme fortune.”

“But how could he be a Glimme?” Poppy further puzzled. “There was only one child in the family. That was Bardwell. And he married a Chicago girl.”

“Maybe he married the Saucer girl first,” I spoke practically.

Poppy looked dizzy.

“But isn’t it against the law,” says he slowly, “for a man to have two wives?”

“Brigham Young had fifteen or twenty,” says I. “But I never heard that he had to kiss them good-night through a cell door.”

“Just the same,” Poppy waggled, “I think it’s against the law for a man to have two wives in this state. Anyway, I don’t know of anybody in Tutter with more than one. Do you, Jerry?”

“That’s all my pa has,” says I.

“Yes, and my pa hasn’t any at all.”

I put my wits to work.

“Listen,” says I. “If Bardwell Glimme did have two wives, and his mother found out about it, do you think she’d pay out hush money to keep it a secret?”

Poppy was all excited now.

“By George!” he cried, with dancing eyes. “You said something that time, Jerry. That’s exactly what she *is* trying to do. And that explains why the double husband came up here in the hills and got lost. His conscience hurt him. He knew it wasn’t right for him to turn his back on one wife and marry another, not even to please his mother. Then he took a tumble. And here he is! Never having been told the truth about him, his mother thinks he skipped out to escape arrest. And ever since his disappearance she has been paying hush money to his first wife’s sister.”

That kind of stuff was pretty deep for me.

“But which one of the grandsons is the real heir to the Glimme fortune?” I inquired.

“Sammy, of course.”

“And isn’t the Chicago kid entitled to anything at all?”

“No, Jerry.”

I had heard the old battle-axe tell Bid Stricker that she owned the falls. And I saw now what she meant. Evidently she knew that it belonged in the Glimme family. And she further knew that some day it would be Sammy’s property.

She hated the kid. Her treatment of him proved that. And yet she seemed bound and determined to see that he got his rights in the end, though now she was taking money to keep him out of sight.

“Poppy,” says I, “I honestly feel sorry for Gummy. He’s been blamed mean, I know. But it isn’t right to jeer at a kid when he’s down.”

“I can imagine,” says Poppy, “how it will gall him to see another kid step into his shoes. But he’ll have to make the best of it.”

“But if Sammy is the real heir,” I followed up, “why should his grandmother turn her back on him and give everything to the Chicago kid?”

“Evidently she likes the Chicago kid the best.”

“I still can’t understand,” says I slowly, “how a woman with any heart at all could chuck one grandson out of sight and favor another, just to satisfy her own pride. And when the law finds out about it I bet that the old lady gets her pay too.”

“I think myself,” Poppy spoke feelingly, “that she deserves a good stiff jail sentence. For think of all the things that Sammy has missed! The poor kid! It’s bad enough to go without stuff. But on top of that his big aunt has banged him around like a worthless hound.”

“If it comes to a lawsuit,” says I, “are you going to testify against Mrs. Glimme?”

“Absolutely.”

“The Tutter people have been talking about her for years,” says I. “And when this story gets out they’re going to talk about her more than ever.”

“Well,” growled Poppy, “she won’t get any sympathy from me. Nor Gummy either. The little prig! The last time I saw him he called me a poorhouse brat. But I guess *he* won’t have so much when we get through with him.”

Our attention was then drawn to a queer whining sound in the depths of the cave. I thought at first that it was the wind. And I wondered, with a rush of fear, if some kind of an underground cyclone was sweeping down on us.

“Let’s get out of here,” says I, starting off with the flashlight.

Poppy clutched my arm.

“It’s the falls,” he shrieked, as the sound increased to a terrific roar.

I had seen the falls when it was full to the brim. So I knew what it looked like now. And I knew too that all immediate escape was cut off in that direction.

Still, I didn’t feel particularly scared. We could get out of the cave, I figured, when the rain let up. For the falls would quiet down then.

“What did you do with our stuff?” Poppy further shrieked in my ear, as we hurried down the stone corridor.

“I put it on a big rock,” I shrieked back.

“Where?”

“In that room under the falls.”

“Gosh! We may lose it.”

And then, as we turned to the right into the pool chamber, we both gave a startled cry. The pool was twice as big as when I came in. And as more water poured into it, through the submerged tunnel, it boiled and churned like a steaming kettle.

I never saw so much flood water and heard so much roaring in all my life. So it isn't surprising that I stopped dead still in my tracks. Gosh! That rocky chamber looked awfully dangerous to me.

Poppy ran by me. I saw him grab something out of the water. Then he pulled me back into the main corridor.

“We've got to find a high spot, Jerry,” he shrieked. “For the whole cave is going to be flooded in another minute or two.”

Mixed with the roar of the water was the sound of falling rocks. And convinced now that the whole cavern was getting ready to tumble down on top of us, I ran screaming up the rumbling corridor.

CHAPTER XV

AN EXCITING RESCUE

Poppy forgot all about his bruised leg.

“Hurry, Jerry,” he shrieked at my elbow, as we streaked it up the rocky corridor.

“Where are we?” I shrieked back.

“I don’t know. But for Pete’s sake don’t stop here. For there’s a wall of water behind us. And if it ever catches up with us we’re done for.”

A wall of water!

“What happened?” I further shrieked. “Did the falls cave in?”

“I think so. For the water is backing up in here something fierce.”

If we had turned to the left, into the devil’s chimney, I dare say we would have been trapped and drowned. For it was low there. But we were all right here. For we kept getting higher and higher every minute.

Poppy was still yapping at me to limber up my legs. So I didn't get much of a chance to look around. For a fellow can't very well run at break-neck speed through an unfamiliar place like this and rubber too. But as the beam of my flashlight further danced ahead of us on the ascending stone floor, I could see that there was something odd about the paralleling stone walls. Instead of being smooth, like the walls of other caves that I had seen, they were all cut up into odd little niches.

I was scared to death that the walls would come together and shut us off. And in places we did have to squeeze to get through. Boy! I sure was glad then that I didn't have a bay-window on me like some men that I had seen. But for the most part the walls were several yards apart. There were wide places too. Just like rooms. And at times the roof was so high above our heads that we couldn't see it.

The water and roar were far behind us now. And satisfied that we were safe for the present, we dropped panting to the stone floor.

"How far did we run?" says I.

"I don't know, Jerry. But it seemed like miles to me. I guess though that it wasn't more than a block or two."

"Do you think the water will reach us here?" I spoke anxiously.

"If it does," I was told, "we'll keep on climbing up."

I let the beam of my flashlight chase up and down the rocky corridor.

“I never dreamed,” says I, sort of awed-like, “that there was a hole like this under the falls.”

“It was made by the creek, Jerry.”

“How do you know?”

“Because I can see water marks on the walls. And notice how smooth the floor is. Only running water could have done that.”

“But the creek couldn’t get in,” says I practically, “if there wasn’t a hole here in the first place.”

“You must remember, Jerry,” the leader then went into detail, “that it takes millions of years to make a cave like this. First the water gets into a crack in the rocks. And gradually the crack gets bigger and bigger. Rocks like these have a lot of soft spots in them. And it’s the soft spots that wear away first. See that knob over there?” he pointed. “It’s harder than the rest of the rock. That’s why the water washed all around it and left it sticking out.”

“But why should the creek work for millions of years on a tunnel,” says I, “and then change over to a new channel?”

“It probably got headed off by a landslide.”

“And is it your idea,” says I, “that we can get out at the upper end, where the creek used to run in?”

“I doubt it, Jerry. For I have a hunch that the old entrance is blocked up. But if the rain-maker is here, as you say, we ought to find him somewhere between here and the end of the cave. And certainly if *he* can get out, we can.”

I got up then to take a look at one of the odd wall niches. And when I saw what was in it I almost squawked my head off.

“It’s full of bones!” I yapped.



“IT’S FULL OF BONES!” I YAPPED.

But it took more than a few old Indian bones to upset Poppy.

“Oh, boy!” says he, holding up a hideous leering skull. “Isn’t that a darb?”

“Put it down,” I squealed. But instead of doing as I said he bounced the blamed thing on my feet.

Gosh! I don’t mind cuddling up to a ham-bone or a soup-bone. But I’ll be blamed if I want to get chummy with human bones.

“Let’s get out of here,” I cried, pulling back.

But I lost some of my fear when Poppy drew my attention to a flint spearhead. And then, as we peeked gingerly into other near-by niches, we saw all kinds of valuable stuff.

The early Indians had buried hundreds of their tribesmen here. And beside each dead warrior lay his spears and arrows. The wooden shafts had rotted away. But the spearheads and arrowheads themselves were still as perfect as the day when they were formed.

It sure was a great find, all right. And the more I saw the more excited I got.

Some of the spearheads were made of metal. It looked like hammered copper. We found axes too, and all kinds of dishes, which probably had been filled with food to feed the dead Indian until he got safely to the Happy Hunting Ground.

In one of the niches we found the skeleton of what appeared to be a little girl. And we wondered if she wasn't a princess. For the dishes here seemed to be much better than the others. Some of them were made of lead, thus leading us to believe that we might find lead in the cave after all. And hanging to the bony neck was a beautiful necklace. I wanted to take it. For it looked to me as though it was made of diamonds and pearls. But I couldn't remove it without lifting the skull. And somehow I didn't have the nerve to do that. Oof! So I left the necklace, together with all kinds of other rich stuff.

Even if we failed to find lead, Poppy said, as we continued our exciting search, we had enough stuff here to make us rich for life. For collectors pay big prices for old Indian pieces. And tickled pink over our good fortune we planned how we'd come back later on and secretly lug the treasure away load by load, just like Ali Baba did in the fairy story. Nor did it occur to us at the moment that we were robbing the dead. But we thought about it afterwards!

We now had a big pile of stuff. And picking out the best of it we put it into a couple of lead bowls and went on up the corridor, hopeful that we'd soon strike daylight. But what we bumped into instead was a solid stone wall.

“That's what I was afraid of,” says Poppy.

I went all over the wall to see if there wasn't some kind of a hole that we could crawl through. And finding none we turned back until we came to a side passage leading off to the left.

“What’s the matter with your flashlight?” says Poppy, when we were halfway down the second passage.

“It’s got the blinks,” says I.

“Shake it,” says he.

Which I did. But instead of getting better, it went out altogether!

I was scared stiff now.

“We’re lost!” I cried.

“Not yet,” says Poppy, striking a match.

I saw then that he had a couple of candles.

“Where did you get them?” says I.

“Oh, I grabbed them out of the water.”

“And the matches too?” I spoke wonderingly.

“No,” says he, as he handed me one of the lighted candles, “I had the matches in my pocket.”

“Well,” says I, “for heaven’s sake don’t waste them.”

We had to go easy now. For there was a draft in the cave. And if we had tried to run our candles would have gone out in a flash. Besides we had our arms full. And a fellow can’t run when he’s loaded down like that.

The passage that we were in now was much smaller than the other one. It was rougher too, showing that the water, instead of running through it years ago, had just backed up into it. So I wasn't greatly surprised when we suddenly came to a deep pit, beyond which we could see nothing but solid rock.

Would our candles hold out till we struck daylight? I began to wonder, with mounting fear, as we tried passage after passage with no satisfactory result. In every case we were either shut off by a yawning hole or the rock wall itself.

Poppy was worried now, as I could see.

"I still think," says he, "that we can find our way out. But it's going to be blamed hard if we have to do it in the dark."

"How about using one candle at a time?"

"That's a good idea, Jerry," says he.

And blowing out his own candle he put it safely into his pocket.

After that we had to move slower than ever. For one flickering candle didn't provide much light. I told myself though, as we stumbled along, always hopeful that the next passageway would be the right one, that one candle was far better than none at all.

I was dead tired now. So I was glad when Poppy suggested that we sit down and rest.

“Shall I blow out the light?” says I wearily.

“I think you’d better,” says he. “For I’ve got plenty of matches. And there’s no use wasting our candles.”

“This one won’t last more than an hour,” I predicted.

“We can do a lot in an hour,” he spoke hopefully.

“We haven’t done much yet,” I reminded.

“I have a hunch, Jerry, that we’re working too high up. So next time I’m going farther down the corridor.”

“Where the water is?” says I, surprised.

“Sure thing.”

“But what if we step into a pit?” I shivered.

“I’ll go ahead. And if I disappear you can pull me out.”

I was covered with cold sweat now.

“Poppy,” says I, as I clung to him in the dark, “this is awful.”

“I know it, Jerry,” he spoke in his kindly way. “But it won’t do us any good to whimper. We’ve simply got to make the best of it. That’s what I did, when I got caught in the rocks.”

I saw then that he was a whole lot grittier than me. But I made up my mind to be just as gritty as possible. And when we started out again, with the one lighted candle, I followed

him without complaint into one of the watery side passageways, where, to my great amazement, we stumbled over old Davey.

He was as tickled to see us as we were to see him. And he seemed to know just where to go too. For he started off at full speed.

“Come on!” cried Poppy, plowing through the water.

“You must remember,” says I, as I tried to keep up with him, “that you aren’t a turtle.”

“Look at him, Jerry! He’s swimming for dear life.”

“Yah,” says I, “and if we keep on in this direction we’ll all be swimming for dear life—though how I’m going to manage it with a potful of arrowheads in one hand and a candle in the other is more than I can figure out.”

“Stick the candle on the end of your nose,” says he.

The water was up to my armpits now.

“Let’s go back,” I begged, unwilling to take further chances.

But Poppy kept right on.

“We’ll be all right, Jerry,” says he, “when we get to that bend.”

Davey was out of sight. He had disappeared around the bend. But we soon caught up with him. The water was only knee

deep here. And soon, to my great joy, we left it altogether.

Poppy was jubilant.

“Didn’t I tell you,” says he, as we further followed the clever turtle up the winding passage, “that this was the way out?”

“We aren’t out yet,” I returned.

And all the time we were climbing higher and higher.

“I bet a cookie,” says Poppy, “that we’re coming out near your fort. And that explains how the Indian got his prisoners into the cave. He probably had an entrance near you that you knew nothing about.”

My candle was so short that it burned my fingers. So Poppy took it and stuck it to the end of his.

Shortly after that we caught the distant beat of a tom-tom.

“There’s your Indian now,” says the excited leader.

“What shall we do?” says I, as I shifted the heavy bowl of arrowheads from one arm to the other. “Shall we creep up on him and sock him on the bean?”

“We can do that if necessary,” Poppy spoke grimly. “But first let us find out what he’s doing.”

“It sounds to me,” says I, “as though he’s putting on a war dance.”

Convinced now that the Indian was crazy, and fearful that he'd start exercising his scalping knife on our imprisoned chums, we hurried down the winding passageway, coming finally to a big vaulted chamber.

The light here was so bright that at first I couldn't see a thing. But after a bit I caught sight of a moving figure. It was the Indian! Except for a few colored head feathers and a dangling breechcloth he was stark naked. And as he pranced back and forth across the big chamber, to light which he had provided himself with a modern gasoline lantern, I want to tell you that he was a sight worth seeing.

And how!

Finishing his crazy dance he then got down on his knees in the middle of the floor. He had tiny piles of sand all around him. And every time he took a pinch of sand from one pile and put it on another he said something to himself in a deep guttural voice.

“What's he doing?” Poppy spoke curiously.

“Making more rain, I guess.”

“The big goof!”

Here our attention was drawn to another part of the chamber by a slight cough. And there lay old Peg! I could tell by his cramped position that he was bound. And then, as he caught sight of us, I thought that his eyes would pop out of his head.

I was so busy now peeking around for my other chums that I forgot all about old Davey. And left to himself he sneaked up behind the bent-over Indian and gave him a sharp nip. Right on the bare skin. Gosh! I thought that the punctured rain-maker would yell his head off. And when he saw what was behind him, he threw up his hands and ran screaming from the cave with old Davey in hot pursuit.

CHAPTER XVI

INTO THE DAYLIGHT

I never dreamed, nor Poppy either, that old Davey would pitch into the Indian that way and drive him off. But it was a big help to us. I dare say it saved us from getting a mess of black eyes too. For the redskin was big and fat. Like a stuffed prize fighter. And if we *had* waded into him, as planned, he probably would have banged the tar out of us.

As it was, all we had to do now was to cut our chums' bonds and make a rush for the open.

I got a big surprise though when I made the rounds with Poppy's jackknife. I could see Peg and Scoop. Pretty soon I saw Red and Rory too. But there was no sign of the Strickers.

"The last I saw of them," says Peg, as he stretched first one cramped leg and then the other, "they were streaking it up the trail on the opposite side of the canyon."

"What happened?" says I, amazed.

"I don't know, Jerry. They were almost on top of us once. And if they had kept on they would have had us

licked to a frazzle. But suddenly they turned and ran away like a lot of scared sheep.”

“I thought they were here with you,” says I.

“No,” he slowly shook his head. “They aren’t here. I’m dead sure of that.”

Red was blabbing around about his empty stomach. He hadn’t had a bite to eat for six months, he said. But he finally subdued his suffering long enough to tell us what he knew about the enemy’s strange flight.

“I remember when they skinned out,” says he. “I was just getting ready to grab my last cannonball. But before I could sock it at them they were gone. As Peg said, they got scared and ran away. That kind of scared me too. But I didn’t let it keep me from going to sleep.”

“Did I go to sleep too?” I spoke wonderingly.

“You were asleep already.”

“I guess I gave out,” I spoke weakly.

“We were all pretty groggy,” says Peg. “And the wonder is to me that we held out as long as we did. For toward the last they had us outnumbered almost two to one.”

“And did *you* go to sleep too?” I further questioned.

“Sure thing.”

“The Indian already had Rory and me cooped up in here,” Scoop then picked up the story. “And as soon as things quieted down in the fort he went outside and got Red. Then he got Peg. And here we’ve been ever since, hoping that you’d find us and rescue us.”

“But what was his idea in cooping you up?” says I.

“He was sore, I guess, because we built our fort around his secret entrance.”

“*What?*” I squawked, more amazed than ever. “Did he actually come up inside of our barricade?”

“Sure thing. That’s why it was so easy for him to pick us off one at a time.”

“E got me first,” Rory then told his particular part of the story. “And was I hever scared when ’e put that big ’and of ’is over my mouth and started dragging me hout of the tent. I thought at first that you guys were playing a trick on me. Still I knew you wouldn’t use me that way. For I couldn’t get any hair. I almost suffocated.”

“We thought you had skinned out on us,” I confessed.

“I wouldn’t do that,” says he sturdily.

“How long have you been tied up?” I then asked him.

“Ever since the Hindian caught me.”

“But how could you eat with your hands tied behind your back?”

“That’s what I’ve been trying to tell you,” yapped Red. “We haven’t had anything to eat.”

“I ’ad some kyke,” says Rory, “the first day I was ’ere.”

Peg winked at me in his jolly way.

“Kyke?” says he. “What’s that? Some kind of an Indian dish?”

“Hit comes in layers,” says Rory, “with frosting on the top of hit.”

“Oh! . . .” says Peg. “You mean cake—good old American cake.”

“That’s what I said—kyke. So go wash hout your hears.”

“I give up,” squawked Peg, with a comical gesture. “I give up.”

“I know what you thought when Rory disappeared,” says Scoop, as our eyes met. “For I was there when it happened. But what did you and the rest of the gang think when I disappeared too?”

“We laid it to a ghost.”

Peg gave a queer laugh.

“I was the one who suggested that,” he admitted.

“Yes,” says I, with a shiver, “and when I woke up this morning, and found that you had disappeared too, I was more certain than ever that an invisible ghost was at work in the canyon. I even let myself imagine that it was trying to pull me over the barricade. Gee! It sounds silly to me now. But at the time I was scared stiff.”

Poppy had gone outside to see if the coast was clear. And when he came back he told me more about the Indian’s secret entrance.

“I’m not surprised,” says he, “that you overlooked it when you were building your fort. For it was covered up with a huge rock. Evidently you figured that the rock was much too big for you to move. But if you *had* tried to move it you would have found out that it was balanced. It was put there years ago, I think, by the early Indians. And it was through them that the rain-maker found out about it.”

“In which case,” says Scoop, “it may be that the Indian had a double purpose in coming here.”

“Double purpose your granny,” says I. “All he wanted was the hidden treasure. His rain-making rigmarole was just a blind.”

“Just the same,” put in Red, “it rained like sixty. We could hear the thunder. And when the creek got high enough we could hear the falls too. Boy! It roared like an old bull with a burr under his tail.”

“I don’t believe that anybody except God himself can make it rain,” says I. “And as far as old Puddle-in-the-bush is concerned, I still think he’s a great big fake. *Him* make it rain? A little pile of sand here and a little pile of sand there! What is there about that to make it rain?”

But Red hates to give up.

“The sand is medicine—Indian medicine. You know what I mean, Jerry—magic stuff.”

“Medicine!” I snorted. “Well, if you’re so dead sure of it you better take a dose the next time you have the collywabbles. It’ll make you feel gritty anyway.”

“And if the worst comes to the worst,” Peg spoke solemnly, “we’ll see that you get a nice big bunch of calla lilies.”

Poppy and I had dropped our arrowheads outside of the big chamber. But we got them now. And when we spread them out on the stone floor the other fellows went crazy.

“Do you mean to tell me,” cried Peg, as he pawed the stuff around, “that there’s more where these came from?”

“You can pick them up by the wagon load,” says I. “And *bones*? Say, there’s enough old skeletons in this cave to stock up a two-story museum.”

“Gee-miny crickets!” old hefty further exploded. “I believe you’re right about the Indian, Jerry. Having heard from his grandfather, or somebody, that there was a whole caveful of

this stuff, he came here to steal it. And to cover up his real purpose he let on that he was a rain-maker.”

“But how do you get to the stuff?” Scoop spoke eagerly.

“You have to go down that winding passageway,” I pointed, “and up a hill to the main corridor. There’s a big pool at the bottom. And I wouldn’t want to wade through it again. But it will dry up when the creek goes down. Then we can get to the big corridor, where the bones are, as easy as pie.”

“And did you find the old lead mine too?” Scoop further questioned.

“No,” I shook my head. “We didn’t see anything of the lead mine itself. But we found a lot of lead dishes like these. So there must be lead here some place.”

“Boy!” cried Scoop, looking around. “This cave sure is a wonderful discovery.”

“Yes,” Poppy spoke anxiously, “and if we expect to cash in on it we better get out of here while the getting’s good. Otherwise the Indian is liable to come back and wall us in.”

“Maybe,” Peg spoke daringly, “we better capture him and put him away in some safe place till we get the stuff out of here.”

“That’s an idea,” says I.

Red laughed.

“How about it, Jerry?” says he. “Did old Davey actually bite a hunk out of the Indian?”

“Sure thing,” I laughed in return.

“Boy! I never saw a scarer-looking man in all my life. And did he squeal! It made me think of the time my ma stepped on a rat.”

“He’ll squeal worse than that,” I predicted, “if old Davey overtakes him.”

“And did you tell Davey to go for him?” quizzed Scoop.

“No. He just did it of his own accord.”

“I saw his nose go up,” says Peg. “He took a long smell. And then he went for the Indian lickety-cut.”

“I know!” cried Scoop, in his bright way. “It was the Indian that stole our fish, just as we suspected. Smelling him, the turtle took after him that night, determined to catch him. But the thief got away. He hid in the rocks, I guess. Or maybe he hid here. Anyway old Davey recognized him by his smell. And that’s why the turtle lit into him.”

“I bet you’re right,” I nodded.

Gathering up my arrowheads I then started for the open.

“How about the gasoline lamp?” says I. “Shall we put it out?”

“Let it burn out,” Peg spoke indifferently.

The Indian had a lot of truck in the cave—blankets and a mattress and other stuff like that. But we really had no right to touch it. So we left it there. And with Poppy leading the way we soon struck daylight.

“Oh, boy!” I cried, as I filled my lungs with the clean outside air. “I never knew before what bully good stuff daylight was.”

I thought at first that I had been in the cave all night. It was so dark down there that I thought it was also dark outside. But the sun was just going down. And I had sense enough to realize that it hadn’t made a whole trip around the world since I last saw it. It had been covered up for a few hours by the tumbling storm clouds. But otherwise it was the same sun that had peeked down at me that morning.

I had been in the cave about ten hours.

And what terrific changes had taken place in the canyon during that time! Huge rocks had been washed loose. The ground was littered with fallen branches. And in some places whole trees had been uprooted. Our own fort was a wreck. There wasn’t a particle of food left. Tents, blankets and everything else that we owned had been washed away. And down below, where the enemy had pitched their tents, the water was several feet deep.

I still didn’t know why they had skinned out for home. But it was a lucky thing for them, I told myself, as I further

surveyed the wreckage, that they had gotten out when they did. Otherwise they might have been carried off by the raging torrent.

“Where’s your pants?” Poppy then inquired of me, as he gave the balanced rock a push, thus closing the cave behind us.

“I left them down there by the creek,” I pointed.

“They’re probably halfway to Tutter by this time,” laughed Scoop.

And then they all started kidding me. I’d look funny, they said, marching down Main Street in my “shorts.” To tell the truth I did feel kind of bare. But I decided to make the best of it. Anyway it would soon be dark. And that would help a lot.

Red was still yapping about his empty stomach. So it was our plan now to get to town as fast as we could and fill him up. At the same time we’d all do more or less eating. And then, with new flashlights and a fresh supply of baked beans and other truck, we’d hurry back to the cave to make our fortune.

Of course, we’d have to be kind of careful how we opened up the cave upon our return. For we didn’t want to walk into a trap. We had the feeling though that when it came to setting traps we could do just a little better than old Poodle-on-the-perch himself. For instance it would be a simple trick to drop a noose over his head when he came guardedly out of the cave. Or, if he failed to show up of his own accord, we’d

drive him out with the turtle. Boy! He *would* boil out of the cave in a jiffy, we agreed, if old Davey took after him. And having noosed him we'd keep him there till we had him completely tied up. After which our underground work would go on without further interruption.

Just before I started down the hill I stopped to take a look at the still roaring falls. Nor could I see anything wrong with it at first. But when I spoke to Poppy about it he pointed out a fresh crack in the rocks. A huge chunk, he said, had dropped into the pool. And it was through this new crack that a large part of the flood water had poured into the lower cavern.

A queer shivery feeling stole over me.

"I'm glad," says I, "that the rock didn't fall down when I was going in through the tunnel."

"I can't imagine," says Poppy, "that we'd ever want to go in that way again. For we've got a lots better entrance. But even if we tried it I bet we'd find it stopped up."

I took a peek at the overhanging ledge.

"Gosh!" says I, as a new bunch of shivers started fooling around with my backbone. "Do you suppose this ledge is liable to fall down too?"

"Every overhanging ledge that you see here," Poppy spoke generally, "will fall down in time."

"I guess I'll move," says I, starting off.

But I stopped dead still in my tracks, and my heart took a complete flop, when a slight grinding sound behind me drew my attention to the balanced rock.

It was moving!

I was too scared to yell. And for a second or two Poppy couldn't figure out what was wrong with me. He thought, I guess, that I was having a spasm.

Then, as his eyes followed mine, he gave a glad cry. For in the uncovered opening a tousled boyish head had appeared.

“It's Sammy, Jerry! It's Sammy Saucer!”

Sammy Saucer! Gosh! I had forgotten all about *him*.

CHAPTER XVII

A STRANGE CONFESSION

I had already told Peg and the others how I got into the cave. But I had said nothing about the pile of bones at the foot of the devil's chimney. Nor had Poppy himself told in turn how *he* got into the cave. So, when the tousle-headed Saucer kid suddenly appeared behind us, it was a big surprise to everybody.

“Sammy!” Poppy cried again, as he started forward with outstretched hands. “Where in the world have you been all this time?”

“Down there,” the kid pointed.

“I’ve been looking all over for you.”

“I hid down there.”

“But why did you hide?” Poppy pressed. “And why didn’t you come when I called you?”

“Oh, I just hid down there.”

He didn’t talk like much. And he didn’t look like much. But I didn’t hold that against him. The poor kid! Any boy *would* be

green, I told myself, who had been raised in the backwoods like him.

All he had on was a pair of scrubby knee pants and a home-made blue shirt, both of which hung on him like a bag. If I must tell you the truth he looked kind of dirty too. And that head of hair! It hadn't been clipped for months. Even then, I guess, his aunts had trimmed him up with a pair of sheep shears.

And this was the real heir to the Glimme fortune!

His rich grandmother, I then told myself, with revived anger, would never be able to live down the shame of having let him grow up like this. The old gyp! She had spoiled the Chicago boy with her rich gifts. She liked *him*. But hating the Saucer family, she actually had paid out money to have the other kid banged around.

He showed the effects of it too. There was a wild scary look in his eyes. But I figured that he'd come out all right. For he had a big healthy body. And between his scared looks there was a natural brightness to his eyes that no amount of tousled hair could cover up.

He had been hiding near the Indian's big chamber—we finally pried that much out of him. But it took him a long time to get there. The old-fashioned kerosene lantern that he still carried had burned out on him. And for hours he had wandered around in the dark. At times he heard a distant cry. And he felt that his companion was in trouble. But he couldn't find his way back. Then, when he was ready to drop

in his tracks for want of food, he found a pile of stuff in a wall pocket. It was the Indian's food. Later he saw the rain-maker himself. And he further saw several boys lying on the stone floor. They were tied up. But he was scared to go near them. Then he got a further scare when Poppy and I showed up with the huge turtle. That's why he had kept behind when we all left the cave.

I could see that he had a lot of faith in Poppy. So, when we started down the washed hill, I let them walk together. He was talking about his aunts now. His Aunt Laura, he said, was good to him. So was his Aunt Sally. But his Aunt Rachel "smacked" him. That's the way he said it.

Crossing the swollen creek on a fallen tree, we started up the winding hillside trail, but stopped, with sharpened ears, when we heard a voice in the gathering darkness.

"Sammy! Sammy!" came the faint cry. "Where are you?"

We could tell by the sound of the woman's voice that she was all worked up about something. So we hurried up the hill as fast as we could.

"It's Aunt Laura," says the kid, when we finally caught sight of a stout figure at the top of the trail.

"Oh, Sammy!" came the glad cry. "Is that you at last?"

"What you yappin' for, Aunt Laura?" the kid asked in turn, in his simple way. "Is it *her*?"

"Yes, Sammy. She wants you to come home."

“*She* said so, huh?”

“Yes, Sammy.”

“Well, I won’t,” came the defiant cry. “I won’t ever. For I’ve got boy friends now. And if she chases me I’ll smack *her*, I will.”

“She’s dying, Sammy,” the woman spoke with increased agitation.

“*Her?* Right in bed, Aunt Laura? *Her?*”

“It’s her heart. It gave out on her to-day.”

“Then it hain’t a smack? Not even *there?*” the boy held up his palms.

“No, Sammy. But let us hurry back to the house. The Tutter doctor is there. He says she can’t last long. And she wants to see you.”

I had to drop back on account of my bare legs. And to help me out Poppy gave me his shirt. But instead of putting it on over my head I stuck my legs through the armholes and bagged in the rest of it around my waist.

“How do I look?” I then inquired.

“Like a clown,” says Poppy.

“Just the same,” says I, “I’m going in the house this way if I get a chance. For I’d like to be there when the big farm

woman tells the kid who he really is.”

“Do you think she’ll tell him that, Jerry?” Poppy spoke excitedly.

“Yes,” says I, “and probably a lot more too. For she won’t dare to die till she makes a clean breast of everything.”

“How about it, Sammy?” Poppy then called ahead to his new chum, as we all hurried down the winding path in the direction of the log cabin. “Can Jerry and I go in the house with you when we get there?”

“I want you to,” the kid spoke simply. “Then Aunt Rachel won’t dast smack me. *She* would if her arms got me. *I* know.”

I could see the dim yellow lights of the cabin now. And then, as we crossed the farmyard, I caught sight of Doc Leland. He was mixing up some kind of dope in the kitchen sink.

“Um . . .” he grunted, in his deep stomachy way, when I filed into the dingy cabin. “Since when did it get to be the fashion ’round here for boys like you to wear their clothes upside-down?”

I told him then, in a whisper, that I had lost my pants.

“But what was your idea in coming here anyway?” he further quizzed.

“Sammy Saucer and I are chums,” says I.

“Is that him over there?”

“Yes,” I nodded.

“Wa-al, he didn’t get here a mite too quick. For she’s sinking fast.”

“Has she told you anything, Doc?” I asked eagerly.

“Nothing that I care to repeat to you,” he grunted.

Poppy signaled to me from an inner doorway.

“Come on, Jerry,” he whispered.

But Doc wouldn’t let me get away from him.

“I knew that woman,” says he, with a sort of far-away look in his eyes, “when she was a girl. Good-looker too. Later I worked with her when she took up nursing. But I lost track of her when she went to Chicago. Nor do I know to this day why she suddenly gave up her practice and came back to Tutter.”

Things were jumping around in the back part of my head.

“Say, Doc,” says I excitedly. “Did you know that the Glimme boy married two women?”

“What Glimme boy?” says he, staring at me through his big nose glasses. “Who are you talking about?”

“Bardwell Glimme—the fellow who disappeared so mysteriously when I was a baby.”

“I knew he was married once. But I never heard about a second marriage.”

“He married the Saucer girl first,” I ran on. “But that made his mother sore. And to please her he got married again.”

There was a queer sharp look in the Doc’s eyes now.

“Jerry,” says he shortly, “do you know this to be a fact?”

I told him then, in as few words as possible, about the pile of whitened bones at the foot of the devil’s chimney. I told him too about the hush money and about Sammy. *He* was the rightful heir, I said. But instead of claiming him, and doing the right thing by him, as she should, his evil-minded grandmother instead had chucked him out of sight.

And now, I concluded, with a final burst of excitement, it was my intention to tell on her just as soon as I could, and thus bring her to justice.

Doc looked at me as though I had seven kinds of mumps sticking out of each eye. And then, without another word, he waddled past me, in that businesslike way of his, and disappeared into the sick room.

I could hear the youngest Saucer woman. She was weeping, as usual. I could hear the sick woman too. And then, as I tiptoed to the open doorway, I got a look at her.

Gee! I could tell, all right, that she was dying. For it showed all over her pinched ghastly face. And sort of overcome by the sight, I stepped back so that the staring glassy eyes would drop out of my sight. I wanted to listen to her. But I didn't want to look at her.

And as she went on with her strange confession, with Doc bending over her on one side, as she lay propped up in her old-fashioned bed, and Sammy hanging to her on the other side, a feeling of complete bewilderment crept over me. For Sammy, I learned, wasn't a Saucer at all! There had been no secret marriage, as I suspected. And Gummy himself was a foundling.

"I—I know I did wrong," the dying woman went on, in a faint rattling voice. "But at the time I let hatred master me. So, when the baby was born, in the private hospital where I worked, I took the child away; and I secretly put another baby—a foundling—in his place. Then I brought the hidden child here. I told the neighbors he was my nephew. And I made my sisters tell the same story. But he isn't my nephew; he's Anne Glimme's real grandson. The boy she now calls her grandson is no relation of hers at all. The father of the child suspected the truth. For he knew I hated him, not only for deserting my younger sister, but for turning me down first. Yes, *I* loved him too. But that love changed to hate—cold bitter hate—when he ignored me. When I disappeared from the hospital he followed me here. I saw him wandering around in the rocks. It was dusk. Then he dropped out of sight. He had fallen into a cave. And when I got to him he was dead. But I let Anne Glimme think that he was still alive. My sister, I told her, was his lawful wife. He was a

bigamist. It wasn't true. But I wanted to make her remaining years as wretched as possible, to pay her back for turning her son against us. He would have married my sister if his mother hadn't set her foot against it. But she said no. A Glimme marry a Saucer! No, no! The Glimmes, she said, were too good for the Saucers. But I've made her pay! I've made her pay in money and misery. And I too have paid for my wrongdoing. My mind wanders. I've even abused my own baby sister. He loved *her*. But he had ignored me. And for that I tried to drive her crazy. As for Anne Glimme, I never intended to tell her the truth about her grandson. I wanted to take away his rights. And I tried to be as bitter toward him as possible. But I'm sorry now. And having told you my shameful story, I—I want you to repeat it to Anne Glimme, and—and tell her that—that Sammy—a good boy—Sammy——”

In the deep silence that followed I sat down on a kitchen chair and mopped my icy face. Then, as Poppy came soberly from the death chamber, I took his hand and went outside, into the cool night air, telling myself that never, to the end of my days, would I let hatred for anything or anybody lead me into a mess like that.

I want to live for a great many years. And when I die I want to die right.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE NEW HEIR

Doc left then, promising the two weeping sisters that he'd send a neighbor over to help them.

"I'm sorry," says he, as he stopped long-faced in the kitchen doorway, "that I couldn't do more. But God's plan is His own. He gives and He takes away."

"Poor Rachel!" sobbed the grief-stricken middle sister. "I never knew till to-night that she too loved the Glimme boy. Nor did I know the truth about his death till I heard it from her own lips."

"But you *did* know that the boy you call your nephew was really Bardwell Glimme's son?"

"Yes," the woman spoke slowly. "I found that out a short time ago. And I begged Rachel then to go to his relatives and tell them the truth about him. But she wouldn't listen to me."

"I fancy," Doc waggled, "that you will be called to the witness stand to tell your story. And I hope that you and your younger sister can prove that you had no hand in the lad's mistreatment. Otherwise it may go hard with you."

Sammy was listening.

“Aunt Laura never smacked me,” he spoke hotly. “Only Aunt Rachel smacked me.”

“Fine!” says Doc. “I’m glad to hear it.”

The boy looked back into the death chamber.

“What you goin’ to do with her, Aunt Laura?” he inquired.

“The neighbors will help us take care of her, Sammy. And later we’ll bury her in town.”

“Can I see, Aunt Laura?” came the eager request.

“Yes, Sammy. You can see them bury her. And then probably your real relatives will claim you at last.”

“No,” the word was spoken stubbornly.

Doc took the woman aside.

“You’ll have to make your sister’s dying confession more clear to the boy, Miss Saucer. I can see that. And in the meantime I’ll repeat the confession, as best I can, to Mrs. Glimme. She’ll be shocked to learn of her son’s fate. Having been led to believe that he’s a bigamist, she probably thinks that he’s still hiding out, to escape the law.”

“I—I love Sammy,” the kindly woman faltered. “I’ll miss him when he’s gone. But I want him to go back to his own people. For then he can grow up like other boys.”

“Mrs. Glimme is an odd woman,” says Doc. “And she’s much too proud for her own good. But she’s fair. And when she learns that her real grandson was brought up here in the backwoods, she’ll be only too glad to take him into her home and do the right thing by him. As for the other boy— Wa-al, he’s just out of luck, that’s all.”

“Then Sammy’s real name is Reginald Glimme?” the woman spoke wonderingly.

“Yes.”

“And will the other boy have to take another name?”

“His supposed relatives will decide that.”

I had let myself believe that Mrs. Glimme was an old gyp. And I had talked big about putting her into jail. But I felt sorry for her now. Gee! As Doc said, it would be an awful shock to her when she learned the truth about her son’s disappearance. He never had run away at all. Instead, throughout the years that she had been paying out money to keep his supposed disgrace a secret, he had been lying dead at the foot of the devil’s chimney.

And now that I’m on the final lap of my story I might say here that the wealthy Tutter woman did take on terribly when Doc got her out of bed that night and repeated to her the big Saucer woman’s dying confession. I wasn’t there at the time. I was home in bed. But I was told afterwards that the old lady fainted dead away. Doc called a nurse. And between them they worked over the patient until she came back to

life. Later she had her son's remains taken from the big cavern and buried in the family cemetery. I never saw a bigger funeral. For the crushed parent, who gave the recovered gold to charity, had the sympathy of the whole community.

Doc took me home that night in his car. And when he let me out in front of our darkened house, I scooted for the front door as fast as I could. Mum and dad were in bed. But they got up in a jiffy when they heard my voice.

"It's Jerry!" cried mum, as she flew down the stairs in her nightgown to let me in.

And when she saw me she almost had a fit.

"Why, Jerry Todd!" she stared. "What in the world——"

She stopped there and called dad.

"Come down here quick," says she.

"What's the matter?" says he, peeking over the upper railing.

"I want you to take a look at your young son," says she. "If you think he's such a credit to the family, come and take a look at him now. The very idea! And see the dirt in those ears!"

After which, of course, the family nest egg was hustled up to the bathroom.

But mum's all right. Every time. And was I ever tickled to see her! Oh, boy! I hugged her so tight that she had to wear a plaster on her neck for two days.

Having used up seven cakes of soap on me, and three scrubbing brushes (more or less!), she later set out a big supper for me. And did I eat! Oh, baby! The food disappeared like magic. And having put it away inside of me I told my story.

When I came to the part about the sunken tunnel, mum stopped up her ears.

"I don't want to hear it," she cried. "It's too awful to listen to. And don't ever *ever* ask me to go back to that awful place. For I'll never consent."

"But I've got to go back," I told her. "For the cave is full of dead Indians. And I can get enough arrowheads there to make me rich for life."

His attention thus drawn to the arrowheads that I had brought home, dad looked them over carefully.

"They're swell," says he. "And I can imagine that they're worth a lot of money. But I question your right to them."

"What do you mean?" says I quickly.

"It's all right to pick up scattered arrowheads," says he. "But it's an entirely different matter when you rob an old Indian burial ground."

Gee! I hadn't looked at it in that light. But, in a way, I *had* robbed the dead. And suddenly my interest in the arrowheads cooled off.

I still have them. For the scientists who later came up from Springfield, to explore the cavern, told me that I could keep them. I was entitled to some kind of a reward, they said. But all the rest of the stuff in the cave, except the skeletons themselves, was taken down to the state capital and put in a museum. Then the cave was sealed up. For it was a tomb. And tombs should be sealed up.

It was expected that the visiting scientists would find a vein of lead too. But they didn't. The very early Indians, they said, had carried a lot of lead dishes into the tomb. Then when the white men came, and the natives got guns of their own, they started removing the lead dishes for bullet material. Which gave rise to the story that there was a hidden lead mine in the neighborhood. Nor do the scientists know to this day where the lead came from in the first place.

As for the rain-maker, it turned out that he was a nut from a reservation in northern Wisconsin. He really thought that he could make rain. That's what he was doing the day we saw him in the cave. He learned about the big cave through some of his old people. And I dare say he intended to help himself to the arrowheads. But the state historical society soon put a stop to that. So he went back up north where he belonged. And if I never see him again it will be seven years too soon.

The state newspapers made a big thing of our find. They published a lot of stuff about the Glimme family

too. Mrs. Glimme didn't like that. So she took Sammy (as I'll continue to call him) and went away. I understand that he's in school now. His aunts (as he thought them to be) still live in their old log cabin. A lot of people think that they own the falls. And other people think that the Glimmes own it. But in any event it will be Sammy's some day.

It was thought for a time that old Davey had died in the hills. But he finally showed up safe and sound. The newspaper men who were hanging around town at the time made a big fuss over him. And happening along one day when they were taking pictures of him, I had the chance to pose on his back. Red still has a copy of the newspaper in which the picture appeared. And in showing it to people he says, in his smart way, that I'm the one with the cap on.

I don't think that's so very funny.

He'll always growl, I guess, because his wonderful diving outfit was washed away. To hear him tell it he had a million-dollar idea. But never having made a drawing of it, the great invention is lost forever.

Gummy, of course, was all cut up when he learned that he was just a foundling and not the real heir to the Glimme fortune, as he thought. I saw him wandering around town with a long face. He was even too worried over his own affairs to call me mean names. But his supposed grandmother is going to do the right thing by him. She's going to leave him half of everything she has. And Sammy will get the other half.

Which, I think, is fair.

Oh, yes! I almost forgot to tell you about Bid Stricker. While fighting us that night he stepped on a snake, which turned and bit him. And thinking that it was a rattler (which it wasn't), he lit out for home as fast as he could go.

Which clears up that point.

And now a word or two about that old wall-paper store that Poppy later took over. Gee! When he told me that he was going to put the wall-paper up for sale, and also start an "interior decorating" business, I told him he was goofy. Boys, I said, couldn't do interior decorating. And I further said there was no market for fifty-year-old wall-paper. But he went ahead. And just as I predicted, his work was a flop. Some wag even painted "Inferior Decorators" on his store window, which explains how the coming book got its title—*Poppy Ott & Co., Inferior Decorators*.

THE END

OUR CHATTER-BOX

With this book (this is Leo Edwards speaking) I figure that my life's work is half done. I plan to write sixty books for boys and girls; and this is my thirtieth book.

Grosset & Dunlap brought out my first book in 1924. That was *Jerry Todd and the Whispering Mummy*. To-day that one title has sold almost 200,000 copies. And I venture to say that the story has been read by at least 2,000,000 boys and girls.

So it isn't surprising that I receive many thousands of letters yearly from my enthusiastic young followers. And how I enjoy these fine friendly letters! There are times when I feel blue. There are times when things don't go right here. I feel out-of-sorts. Then along comes a peachy peppy letter from some swell boy pal—and what a difference it makes! Even the cackling of an old hen sounds like music then. And when I peek up at the sky, instead of dark clouds all I see is sunshine.

So keep on writing to me, fellows. I need your letters. And all of the outstanding letters that I receive will be put aside for use in future "Chatter-Boxes."

That's how "Our Chatter-Box" got started. I had a lot of bully good letters on hand. It would be fun, I thought, to print them in a book. Which I did. And since then "Our Chatter-Box" has been a regular feature of all of my books. If *you*

want to be represented in this department (and “Our Chatter-Box” means a lot of gab from everybody, boys and girls alike), get busy and write me an interesting letter. If you write a poem, and we publish it, you’ll get a free autographed copy of the book in which your poem appears.

But let’s get that straight: If you write a successful poem—one that we print—you don’t get a free copy of any old book that you might name. A lot of boys seem to have that idea. They’ll send in a poem, and say: “Send me such-and-such book.” Read this again: If you send in a poem, and the poem is published, you get a free autographed copy of the book in which your poem appears. The copy that you have earned will be sent to you, nicely autographed, just as soon as the book comes off the press.

Also it would seem that some boys have the idea that the writer of every published letter gets a free book. Nothing of the sort. A boy should feel honored to have his letter in print. That’s all the award he gets.

Now, is that clear to everybody?

If so, let’s start on this pile of letters, the first of which was written by Henry Baumann, 145-70 223rd St., Springfield, N. Y. Says Hank:

“I just finished reading *Trigger Berg and the Sacred Pig*. Gosh! But I like that little tyke! Although his books are for younger boys, the little fellow’s breezy style sort of captivates me. It seems that wherever something exciting takes place in Crocketville, Trigger isn’t far away. He

certainly spends his time getting in and out of scrapes. I have a bone to pick with Bert Salg. One of his illustrations in *Jerry Todd and the Talking Frog*, page 157, shows Felix Gennor, Jr., as a big fat man with a mustache, while you describe him as a boy of Jerry's age. Which is correct?"

Well, Hank, I never cared for that illustration myself. Young Gennor thought that he was big. And maybe that's the way he wanted to look—sort of grown-up. In writing about him, I had the feeling that he was a bit older than Jerry. Evidently Mr. Salg placed him as being much older. Hence the mustache. If you want to write to Mr. Salg about it, you can get in touch with him at Congers, N. Y.

The next letter is from a girl—Josephine Heinz, 2445 Byron St., Chicago, Ill. She writes:

"I have read every one of your books and if you ever hit a heart (of a girl) you hit mine when you wrote the 'Tuffy Bean' stories. I love dogs. And Tuffy Bean seems like a real, honest-to-goodness dog. A week ago we were at Lake Ripley, where you live. I saw your rock garden. But I actually was afraid to stop and say 'hello' to you."

Well, what do you know about that! I never dreamed that any boy or girl would be afraid to stop and gab with *me*. For the thing I love most is children. Gosh! If any of you young readers ever happen by here, don't go off without stopping to see me, as this girl did.

And now a word or two about Tuffy Bean. Hundreds of boys have asked me to give Jerry a dog. Every real boy, I've been

told over and over again, should have a dog. And it's a fact that we've had a dog in our own family (or should I say dogs?) for many years. However, I haven't seen a time yet when Jerry needed a dog to solve the particular mystery that he was working on. But— Wanting to please my young followers, I finally started a series of dog books. Tuffy Bean is the hero. He tells the story himself. His pals are dogs; and the fun they have! There are boys and girls in the stories too, and many interesting elders.

George E. Morrow, Jr., 2700 Marion Ave., Bronx, N. Y., N. Y., writes:

“What became of Al Moore after Mrs. Dexter adopted him?”

Al was a leading character in *Jerry Todd, Pirate*. As stated in the book, he was adopted by a wealthy Tutter woman, who later sent him away to school. Some day maybe Al will appear in a later story.

The next letter is from Bill Hadley, 305 Hunt St., Central Falls, R. I. This fine friend sent me a calf-skin pouch that he made himself. I have it among my treasures—and I wish you could see the collection I have! Boys send me some of the oddest things imaginable. One lad recently sent me a bathroom tile! I have a whole set of lead soldiers! And not so long ago I got a safety razor. Bill writes: “Whenever you wear the belt pouch, remember you've got a ‘heap big’ pal in Central Falls, R.I.”

Thanks, Bill! You're a great guy.

The next letter was written (and illustrated) by a young artist, Richard Johnston, 143 Bodine St., West New Brighton, N. Y. Here I see four cartoons labeled “Miracles.” The first miracle shows Red Meyers fighting a ghost. Ha-ha! That *is* a miracle. In the next cartoon a boy, standing beside an ice-cream freezer, says: “Have some ice cream and candy, Red.” And Red says: “No!”—just like that. Thanks, Dick. And here’s hoping that you have a lot of luck with your drawings when you grow up.

Carl Baker, 9530 Exchange Ave., Chicago, Ill., wants to know why Poppy Ott doesn’t appear in the Jerry Todd books. Well, Carl, here’s the dope on that: Both Poppy and Scoop are natural leaders; and as Poppy is the leader in his books, I thought I ought to keep him out of the Todd books, and let Scoop do all the leading. It’s true that Scoop appears in some of the Ott books; but only in a minor way. Yet it isn’t improbable that we’ll have Poppy in some of the contemplated Todd books.

Carl writes:

“In my opinion *Poppy Ott and Tittering Totem* is one of the best books that you have ever written. You see, I’m particularly interested in totem poles. I’ve found a new way to make miniature totem poles. Instead of wood for material, I use a large stick of common chalk. And do they look swell! They take paint like nobody’s business. I’ve got a whole row of them on our fireplace next to my ship model.”

There’s an idea, fellows. Get some chalk and see what you can do.

Hey! What's this? A whole story! Well, well! The young author is Jack C. Anderson, Box 296, Roseville, Calif. I'd like to publish the story, just as Jack wrote it. But I haven't the space. Good work, Jack! But don't start writing "kid" stories, and run me out of business.

I notice too that our next letter is from a young author—Franklin A. Standish, R. F. D. 3, Box 69, Brooks, Maine. Frank writes:

“There's a boy in this neighborhood whose father is rich and he goes around like Grant did when he entered Richmond. He just moved here from the city and thinks that country boys are mere snakes in the grass. Last winter I wrote a story—'Jimmy Douglas, Shipwrecked.' I thought it all up—I'm telling you the honest truth—and I sent it to a Boston publishing place and they sent back saying it was all right and for me to send them \$600 to buy the book plates. Good night! I wrote back saying that I hadn't \$600. But please remember I never copied a word of it.

Shipwrecks, storms, castaways, suffering and hardships make up the main part of the story. And the story leaves off right where Murdock, the worst pirate of the seven seas, was pursuing them. The original is written on 12 sheets of paper. Gee whizz! I wish you could get Grosset & Dunlap to publish my book. I'd show that rich boy that he isn't the only smart one in this world. My mother wants a Victrola and a Morris chair. Maybe if I wrote enough books I might be able to buy her both, huh?”

I like your letter, Frank. And I dare say your story was interesting. But— Twelve pages don't make a book. I have

that much, or more, in one of my chapters. Moreover, reliable publishing houses don't ask boys to advance \$600 for the publication of submitted material. The concern tried to work you, just as a music publishing firm tried to work me, when I was a boy. I wrote a song. And they offered to publish it *if* I would pay for the plates and printing. There are all kinds of shysters in business—even in the publishing business. Had you sent your “book” to Grosset & Dunlap, they would have returned it, with a few words of praise, making it clear to you that there was no commercial value to your story.

Then from Vincent Brockschmidt, 1039 Wells St., P. H., Cincinnati, Ohio, comes this letter:

“I just finished reading *Trigger Berg and His 700 Mouse Traps*. I think it is the funniest book I ever read. Good old Trigger! He's a real guy, all right. And comical little Tail Light! I don't blame Slats and Trigger for getting sore at him sometimes. I think the Trigger Berg books are funnier than Amos 'n' Andy and the Interwoven Pair put together.”

And now let's see what we have in the way of poetry.

POEMS

Our first poem was written by Ben Klein, 367 East 45th St., Brooklyn, N. Y. And, of course, Ben got the usual award—a free autographed copy of this book.

The Prancing Pancake

Jerry Todd and Poppy Ott,
Who are the best of pals,
Made pancakes that were good and hot,
To serve to boys and gals.

They used good Fancy Mixture flour
That came from Peter Gimp's mill.
They served a million (?) pancakes an hour,
And the crowd raved for more still.

But what was the outcome of a great mystery?
I didn't tell you that, you see.
For I want you to read this peppy story
About pancakes, the gang, Jerry and Poppy.

The next poem isn't very long, but it has a clever turn that
appealed to me. It was written by Ives Harvey, Altoona, Pa.
Here it is:

With Jerry Todd
And Poppy Ott,
I would like
To cast my lot.

I would like to fight
The Stricker gang,
And knock them down

With a bang.

And in the end,
By hook or crook,
I hope you send me
An autographed book.

All right, Ives! Here's your book.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to publish the next poem, as it was written by a boy who has worked hard to get his name into this column. I've had many fine interesting letters from him, and his name is Stan J. Becka, 2309 Roanoke Ave., Cleveland, Ohio. Attached to Stan's poem is a picture, in which he appears all lit up in his Sunday suit. Quite a swell guy, if you were to ask me. I take it that the other two boys in the picture are his older and younger brothers. Well, here's the poem:

Prancing Pancakes

In this book there was a certain Silly Gimp.
Boy! He surely was an awful simp.
His grandfather was a two-legged skunk,
But he didn't show any spunk
When Mr. Potts came to Tutter with the intention
Of arresting him for infringing on an invention.

There also was introduced a new fad

That made the ice-cream men sad.
Yes; you guessed it—Prancing Pancakes hot,
Named so by Poppy Ott—
Pancakes mellow and pancakes sweet,
Pancakes tidy and pancakes neat.

A Texas boy is the author of the next poem. His name is John Reid Compton, and he lives at 1021 W. Sears St., Denison, Texas. I think his poem is a dandy. Here it is:

Did you ever come home from school
With nothing at all to do,
And you're all tired out by the day's work,
And you feel sorta lazy too?

You sit around and twiddle your thumbs
And try to study—but that won't work.
When all of a sudden an idea strikes you,
And your head comes up with a jerk.

You'd almost forgotten how yesterday,
When Dad came home from town,
He brought you a "Jerry Todd" book,
Which you only laid down.

So although you think it can't help much
You decide you'll have a look
And find out just what it is like,
And see if it's much of a book.

But then when you are started
It seems you just can't stop.

You say: “This book’s a corker—
It’s sure enough tip-top.”

And then what matter if a friend may call,
And the phone jingle and the door-bell ring?
You’re dead to the world till you’ve finished the book
And then you jump up and sing.

“I’m going to get all the rest,
And the Poppy Ott books too.
No matter how long I may have to save,
That’s just what I’m going to do.”

Robert D. Lytte, P. O. Box 151, Quantico, Va., is the author
of the next poem. Here it is:

Poppy Ott’s Pedigreed Pickles

Jerry Todd and Poppy Ott
Chum together quite a lot.
They always have a lot of fun,
Trying to make something run.

One time it was a pickle factory.
They had to buck a canning factory.
They almost got beat,
But Poppy wouldn’t admit defeat.

They ran into a mystery.

Boy! It sure was twisty.
They heard of a hidden treasure
And they found it to their pleasure.

Of the pickles, they made a mess.
But they finally made a success.
You can bet they had a lot of fun
Making the pickle factory run.

Wough! The next poem (if you want to call it a poem) is hid in one of the longest and most interesting letters I ever received. I wish you could see this letter! It's crammed full of peachy suggestions; and the young writer has illustrated it with clever pen-and-ink drawings. Here is the poem:

There once was a guy named Al Moore
Who uncovered a treasure of yore.
When challenged, "'Twas his?"
He said, "None of your biz."
And turned pirate with our famous four.

Frederic D. Stuthman, 1467 Warren Ave., Long Beach, Calif., is the lad who gets a free book for that one.

The next poem is one of several, sent in at different times by Edward Marcus, 565 Crown St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Yesterday was very cold,
The ground was full of snow.
The grey clouds were in the sky,
And how the wind did blow!

I waddled through the snow
To learn the Golden Rule,
And after an hour of walking
I saw the darn old school.

Harold Haugan, 549 53rd St., Brooklyn, N. Y., is the author of the next one. Here it is:

Tutter Tenants

He runs around with Jerry, Peg and Scoop.
And for the Strickers he doesn't care a whoop
He's small and freckled and has a thick head.
Yep! You guessed it—his name is Red.

She's big and fat and cross as heck,
And likes to wrap a pole around Red's neck.
Whenever she runs she's sure to pant.
Yep! You guessed it—she's Red's aunt.

He's big and burly and hard as nails,
He sure knows a lot about jails.
But mysteries he's sure to mess up badly.
Yep! You guessed it—he's Bill Hadley.

The author of the next one is only ten years old. His name is Sydney Luril, and he lives at 212 Bidwell Pkwy., Buffalo, N. Y.

Gosh! Gee! What do I see
Up on the book shelf looking at me?
A pretty red book all filled with fun,
Telling of Jerry and the things he has done.

Here's a longer poem, by Cullen Irish, Jr., R. F. D. 4, Box
428, Akron, Ohio.

Adventures with Jerry Todd and His Friends

There are many books that I like a lot,
Books I've borrowed, begged and bought.
But those I like of the whole dinged lot
Are "Jerry Todd" series and "Poppy Ott."

If I could do as I like
From day to day and night to night.
I'll tell you what I'd do, in brief:
I'd be an "Editor-in-Grief."

Or else I'd go with Andy Blake
And adventurous trips I'd take.
I'd ride in Poppy's "Galloping Snail,"
Or with "Trigger Berg" on his "Treasure Trail."

And make a trip to the "Whispering Cave,"
And hear the "Stricker gang" rant and rave.
Or maybe look for a "Rose-Colored Cat,"
And a "Talking Frog," you can bet your hat.

I'd try to find a "Waltzing Hen,"
Or maybe a "Caveman" bold, and then
Have a "Stuttering Parrot" for a pet,
And even get "Mummy itch," I'll bet.

And then I'd come home and think a lot
Of Jerry Todd and Poppy Ott
And Trigger Berg and Andy Blake,
And other adventures I'd like to take.

Charles Sumner Brearley, 2706 West Fortieth St.,
Minneapolis, Minn., is the author of the next poem. Here it
is:

The Prancing Pancake

Gimp's Fancy Mixture Flour
Was a favorite 'round the town.
But after Peter got the mill
It nearly rotted down.

For Peter was an inventor
Who turned his hand to hinging.
But a Chicago firm declared that
It was on their rights infringing.

But Sylvester Gimp, who claimed the hinge,
Had money of every sort.
And as the Chicago firm was small,

The case never got to court.

But the Chicago place was taken in
By a firm from coast to coast,
J. Mortimer Potts said he'd get the hinge—
At least, that was his boast.

The Prancing Pancake was made
From Gimp's Fancy Mixture Flour,
For Poppy and Jerry were using the mill,
With Sylvester's water power.

Sir Hinkle Funnyduster was a game,
But also a man.
But when Davey snapped at Jerry's legs,
You bet that Jerry ran.

A snapping turtle was Davey Jones,
Who came from the Isle of Boot,
And when Davey jumps at someone's legs,
Bu-lieve me, boy, they scoot!

Silly Gimp, the "smarty" guy
And the enemy in this book,
Received this treatment once and
Omigosh!—the steps he took.

I have more poems here. But I guess I'll have to carry them over and use them in a later "Chatter-Box." I'll need some new ones too. So get busy, all of you young Longfellows—and also you short fellows.

BROADCASTING

Things happen fast in the broadcasting world. And it may be that Jerry Todd and His Gang will be on the air in a reasonably big way by the time this book goes to press. Already Jerry has been tried out in Kansas City, Mo., over WHB.

The “gang” consists of Jerry himself, Poppy Ott, Red Meyers and Tail Light. This last character was “borrowed” from the Trigger Berg books. Thirty-four playlets were produced, taken from *Poppy Ott and the Freckled Goldfish*. Jerry appeared in 29 of these, Poppy in 25, Red in 20 and Tail Light in 14. The broadcast was a huge success. The parts were all taken by Kansas City schoolboys. How would *you* like to play the part of Jerry or Poppy on the air? Your school or your local broadcasting station can get the plays that we used. Here are some letters from the members of the cast:

“A few months ago,” writes Sewell Starcke, Route 6, 1812 Crescent St., Independence, Mo., “you wrote the book *Poppy Ott and the Freckled Goldfish* in radio form, dividing it off into episodes. Through my Expression teacher at Northern Junior High School, who took charge of the broadcasts, I received the chance of being ‘Jerry’ on the air. I was very glad and readily accepted the chance. I have enjoyed the experience very much. It not only was fun, but I gained much useful knowledge about broadcasting. I owe all of my fun and enjoyment to you and am writing this letter in appreciation.”

The next letter is from the boy who played the part of Poppy Ott.

“I want to tell you I have genuinely enjoyed taking part in your programs,” writes James Bradfield, 2630 Bellefontaine, Kansas City, Mo. “I have played Poppy since the fourteenth episode and have had a great time portraying the character. I think your continuities are extremely clever and I know everyone who listens in finds the program a bright spot on their dials.”

Leonard Rowland, 1403 Madison, Kansas City, played the part of Red. He writes:

“I have been playing the part of Red Meyers for the past two months. It has been a pleasant and exciting experience. Jerry Todd and His Gang episode, over WHB, is very interesting; consequently I have enjoyed very much playing the part of Red.”

The part of Tail Light was played by David Wisdom, 3615 Askew, Kansas City. He writes:

“I’ve been Tail Light for a long time, ever since April 18, 1932. I’ve read all the Poppy Ott and Jerry Todd series and have one Andy Blake book. And I think they’re fine too. Say, Mr. Edwards, you ought to see our new studio atop the Scarett building.”

The part of Jerry was first taken by Delforrest Harbough, 2634 Chestnut, Kansas City. Illness made it necessary for him to turn the part over to Sewell Starcke. Delforrest writes:

“When the play first began I was the boy announcer. Then I played the part of Jerry until I was taken ill and could not. Now I listen in over the radio every day to it.”

Leonard Belove, 2739 Park Ave., Kansas City, took the part of Chester Ringbow. He writes:

“Taking parts in the radio program, Jerry Todd and His Gang, which was taken from your book, *Poppy Ott and the Freckled Goldfish*, has been one of the most enjoyable undertakings it has ever been my privilege to partake of. While my actual performances were small (my regular part was Chester Ringbow, but once I was the dying macaw), I took a great interest in it, and listened to it every time I was able.”

Also Murell Hollopeter took the part of Chester Ringbow. Murell’s address isn’t given, but he writes:

“I am taking time off to-day to write and tell you that it is a pleasure to write to a man like you. I take the part of Chester Ringbow when broadcasting over WHB and wish to thank you for writing these series for this event.”

And here’s two letters from listeners:

“Dear Jerry: Me and my gang listen to you and your gang and sure get a big thrill out of it. The only thing is, I wish you were on every day instead of just three days a week. Why aren’t you? We miss you the days you aren’t on. Gee, we are waiting to see what happened to Mrs. Warmley’s boy and can hardly wait, we are so anxious to know. What one of

the series are you going to broadcast when you get through with this one? Ever your good friends, Hal Bradshaw, Clarence O'Hara, Arthur McLaughlin, Barbara Bradshaw, Marjorie Grace Brookman and Catherine Elson."

This is the second letter:

"Dear Jerry: My! But I enjoy listening to you. It's so scary it thrills me. I'm mighty anxious to hear all about how it comes out. Is Mrs. Warmley an old lady? She sounds like one. I wish you were on the air every day. You and your gang will be on the air all summer, won't you, with different episodes? I sure hope so. I get such a thrill out of it, and some of my friends here listen in now every time you are on and they like you fine too. I can hardly wait till next week to hear some more from you. Gene Fields."

A small boy interested the president of WHB in putting Jerry Todd on the air. And there's no reason why you can't do the same thing with the head of the broadcasting studio in your section. In Kansas City the Board of Education and the broadcasting company worked together. It's education. Anyway, talk with your teachers, and, if possible, with your local broadcaster. WHB will be glad to supply detailed information.

PICTURES

Gee-miny crickets gosh! I've got enough pictures here to fill a picture gallery. Pictures of small boys, big boys, long-legged boys, and all kinds of boys. I doubt if I can mention them all in this "Chatter-Box," but I'll do the best I can.

First on the list is the picture of a boy in overalls. This is Rufe Gardner, Mayfield, Ky., with a little black cap on the side of his head and a grin that spreads from ear to ear. Some guy! He's twelve years old, he says. Accompanying Rufe's swell letter is a poem, but it didn't seem quite as good to me as many I have. Here's hopin' I meet you some time, Rufe.

I can't tell you much about the next picture. It shows two bright-eyed boys, about 12 years of age. The accompanying letter was mailed in Portland, Oregon; and the letter is signed "Frank." And let that be a lesson to you other boys. When you write to me, for Pete's sake print your complete name and address. Do it in every letter, for you can't expect me to remember addresses. And certainly I haven't the time to look up names and addresses. I receive a lot of letters that I can't answer, simply because the writer forgot to supply his name and address.

There's a dog in the next picture. But I can easily tell him from the boy—Arthur Kantner, 22035-93 Ave., Queens Village, L. I., N. Y., for Art is the one with the cap on. The dog's name, I learn, from the accompanying letter, is Jerry; and recently he ate a loaf of bread. He's the mascot of Art's gang.

The next picture was taken out in sunny California. The two boys shown are in bathing suits—Robert and Louis Rolley,

2906-58 Ave., Oakland. The accompanying letter tells of an exciting water fight that the boys had with another gang. Each gang had a raft, just like Jerry and his pals in *Pirate*. Also Bob has written a poem. But it's about the *Prancing Pancake* book. And I don't think we need any more *Prancing Pancake* poems in this "Chatter-Box." But Bob's poem is a dandy—I think I ought to tell you that much.

And here's another boy and a dog—this time the picture comes from 4923 N. Merrimac Ave., Chicago, Ill., and the boy is Frank Puckelwartz. Frank had intended to ride his bike up this way, to visit me, but he never got here. He writes: "I just finished reading *Trigger Berg and the Sacred Pig*. And, boy, is it ever good where Trigger and his pals do a clever little greasing act with Tony the Terrible, Kavey the Killer, Bloody Bill, etc. Yours till the kitchen sinks."

My, oh my, oh my! I wish you could see the freckles on this next bird—Clifford B. O'Hara, 448 Lincoln Ave., Orange, N. J. And what a grin! I bet the camera that took that picture has a crack in it. Cliff writes that he has 210 books, of which 24 are Todds, Otts, Blakes and Bergs. He writes: "Of the Ott books, I like *Prancing Pancake* best; of the Blake books, I like *Comet Coaster* best; of the Berg books, I like *Sacred Pig* best; and of the Todd books, I like *Oak Island Treasure* the best." Also here's a poem that Cliff wrote:

The Stuttering Parrot

There was an old parrot in Tutter,
And boy, how it could stutter!
 Its name was Sol Grundy,
 'Twas born on a Monday—
This peculiar old parrot of Tutter

There was a detective named Ott,
As a sleuth he wasn't so hot.
 He was put into jail
 Without any bail—
This so-called detective named Ott.

Around the bird store was a spy,
He almost made Red Meyers cry.
 He took just a peek,
 And, boy, did Red squeak!—
At this evil-faced, horrible spy.

The mystery was solved by brave Jerry
And his gang, who were very wary—
 Poppy and Scoop
 And Peg, who did snoop,
And Red, in the Scotch cemetery.

Attached to the next letter are two pictures, one of Bob Quinn and one of Pat Ryan. The accompanying letter is written by Pat, whose address is Oak Summit, N. Y. Pat says: "Bob and I have been the best of pals for the last three years. Last year we discovered a large lake with an island in the middle of it. On our first visit to the lake we found an old rowboat, so we jumped in and paddled to the island, which we found to be a most desirable camping spot. It had a few

big oaks on it, so we named it Oak Island, thinking of course of Jerry's favorite island. Boy, did we have some weird adventures there! But finally we were told to get out by a stingy old man who had bought the island."

The picture of Donald Donovan, 7166 Montague St., Tacony, Philadelphia, Pa., is the next one to turn up. Don is 11; and he writes a very interesting letter.

Then comes a gink in a two-gallon hat. He's leaning on a cane; and his name is William C. Rees, 2626 S. 66th St., Philadelphia, Pa. The picture, I learn, by referring to Bill's letter, was taken at the seashore.

Buddy Savage, Fredericksburg, Va., is next in line. I've had a lot of letters from this peppy young Goldfisher. And now that I have seen what a bright snappy lad he is, I can better understand why his Freckled Goldfish club was such a big success.

Next comes Peter Robert Noling, 2004 E. State St., Rockford, Ill., another chap with a pair of million-dollar eyes; and after him Bob Eastman, 984 Cherry St., Winnetka, Ill.; then Bill Strubank, 12434 Barlow, Detroit, Mich. Here again a dog is included in the picture; and I notice that Bill has also sent me a picture of the family's summer home.

Well, well! The two boys in the next picture are dressed up fit to kill—white duck pants 'n' everything. This is Leonard Casassa, 377 Pine St., Freeport, N. Y., and his kid brother. Then comes a girl, Melva Waful, 403 Shuart Ave., Syracuse,

N. Y. Melva wants to know if gals can belong to the Freckled Goldfish club. And the answer is: “Sure thing.”

Howard Alphson, 720 Cottonwood St., Grand Forks, N. D., is next. A swell little guy with enough freckles to cover a dozen turkey eggs. Then comes another “dog” picture, with a fat boy on the side lines. This is Robert Curtis, Jr., 2995 Botanical Sq., Bronx, New York, N. Y. And the dog’s name is Rags.

And now I’m simply going to give you a bunch of names and addresses, for I want to mention as many of these fine lads as possible. Here’s Sheldon E. Mishkurd, 681 E. 181 St., Bronx, N. Y. Then Edward Marcus (he has a poem in this “Chatter-Box”), 565 Crown St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Then Jim Sharpe, Reiffton, Pa.; Bobby Sies, 1034 Kent St., Kewanee, Ill.; Ted Haut, 3712 S. Euclid Ave., Berwyn, Ill.; Brent Vivian, Nitro, W. Va.; Joe Kucera, 7102 S. 37th St., Omaha, Neb.; Vernon Harris, Route 5, Des Moines, Ia., and Bob Houser, 328 Market St., So. Williamsport, Pa.

Starting a new paragraph, here is Christy Obrecht, Jr., 312 East Third St., Winona, Minn., sitting on the runningboard of his pa’s flivver; then Andrew Murphy, 2236 N. Keating Ave., Chicago, Ill.; John Stemler and Fred Haubold, 1819 Karlov Ave., Chicago; Nathaniel Dittenhafer, 354 West College Ave., York, Pa.; Daniel F. Murphy, 837 Plymouth Ave., Fall River, Mass.; Erling Larson, 732 52nd St., Brooklyn, N Y.; Alvin Cummins, 37 Poplar Ave., Wheeling, W. Va., and Don Batton, 1101 W. 4th St., Marion, Ind. Don sends three pictures, one of which was taken in Florida.

And going on, here is Walter Taylor, 1336 Paxton Ave., Chicago; Robert Wick, 4916 Rush Ave., Houston, Texas; George A. Taylor, 217 Edgewater Ave., Westville, N. J.; William P. Carton, Towson, Md. This, by the way, is an unusual picture, as it shows Bill posing in front of the statue of Andy Gump, in the grounds of Sidney Smith's summer home at Lake Geneva, Wis. There are three pictures in the next group, one of Betsy Joeck and her girl friends, one of Betsy's sister and another of Betsy herself and her dog.

Gosh! I'd like to mention more of these pictures. But I can't do it now. The balance will have to carry over to the next "Chatter-Box."

SPECIALS

Here are some contributions that deserve special mention, the first of which is a copy of the colored jacket of the book, *Trigger Berg and the Sacred Pig*, drawn by Paul Glenister, 6432 So. California Ave., Chicago, Ill. This is a beautiful piece of work—even better, in some respects, than the original job. Rest assured that this colorful drawing will find a permanent place in my treasure chest.

The next contribution to receive special mention is a group of pencil drawings by Woodrow Welch, 897 Broad St., Providence, R. I. The first drawing shows Red Meyers in *Editor-in-Grief*. Red has been captured by Green Goggles

and is shown tied to a chair, with the captor standing over him. Then comes separate character drawings of Peaceful Hoenoddle, Tail Light (on his way to Betty Sharpe's party), Friday Fish, Henny Bibbler, Sung Lung (in the *Freckled Goldfish*), Red's Aunt Pansy, Caleb Obed, Mrs. Cassidy (in *Pirate*), and Jerry Todd himself. Fine work, Woodrow. You certainly have a "gift."

Howard Smith, Jr., 2420 Palmer Ave., New Orleans, La., is both an artist and a poet. The submitted poem is entitled: *Jerry Todd, Editor-in-Grief*. And the accompanying drawing of Jerry shows him with a pencil in back of his ear. Here's the poem:

Now Jerry Todd is Editor-in-chief,
But mishaps and bungles changed it to grief.
The baker's cakes were turned to "fakes,"
A result of Peg's type-setting mistakes.

Friend Red turns a totem-pole sitter
(You know, that pole that used to titter),
But the pole disappears, and so does Red.
The gang tries to solve this, but are badly misled.

The jeweler dies dead, but remains alive!
And a green-goggled man makes mystery thrive.
The printer goes "nuts" and so does Jerry.
But they all finish up happy and merry.

But to me, the best contribution of all is a printed newspaper called the *Coaldale Bugle*. The editor, James Gildea, Jr., 142 Ruddle St., Coaldale, Pa., writes: "*The*

Coaldale Bugle grew out of our reading *Jerry Todd, Editor-in-Grief*. Here is a copy of our first edition.”

I wish you could see it, fellows. It’s a scream. The “staff” is listed as follows: James Gildea, Jr., Editor-in-Grief. Vincent O’Donnell, Asst. Editor. “Pud” Yorke, Cub Reporter. “Red” Campbell, Asst. Reporter. The first article reads: “Tootin’ Our Own Bugle (that is the heading). The Bugle is issued just in fun. Vince, Pud, Red and myself (Ye Editor-in-Grief) enjoy the adventures of the Tutter kids as told in the Jerry Todd books, and seeing the fun they got out of publishing the Tutter Bugle, I asked Dad if we could get out a *Coaldale Bugle*. It was all right with him, so herewith we sound the first notes on our new toy. ‘Maybe it will keep you out of mischief,’ said Dad, when he told us to go ahead. ‘Maybe it will get you into more mischief,’ said Mr. O’Donnell. But anyway here it is and here’s a line on the *Bugle* staff. Vince O’Donnell is a seed of the original ‘POD’ and as such can be counted on for an original column of poems and other things. Bernard Yorke’s father is the movie operator at McTague’s. You ought to get a kick out of Pud’s efforts. Red Campbell is the staff’s danger signal. You gotta watch your step if you try to slip any false notes over on the assistant cub. All four of us are in the elementary grades in St. Mary’s and we ask you to keep in mind that anything we say is just in fun and is intended for the amusement of those who don’t take life or kids too seriously. Don’t get hot under the collar at what you might think is the freshness of us kids—but give us a chance. We may get a chance to learn something about printing and as long as Dad puts up with us, send in your news and we’ll try to make it snappy.”

Following this editorial is the following: “Sunday School Notes: Gee, I’m glad we don’t have Sunday School.”

And how’s this? “WANTED: A young lady who knows her onions to do society reporting. Don’t all apply at once.”

Here are some of the classified ads: “See KATE DALEY’S stockings. They give you a run for your money.” “Why go elsewhere and be cheated more?—JOHN PUSCHAK has a dandy store.” “BOLONEY—the missing link at CORNIE SHARPE’S.” “PAINLESS DENTISTRY—it don’t hurt him a bit—Dr. W. B. BOYLE.” Then comes this poem(?):

As the teacher raised her eye
A spitball she did spy—
It hit Mary Jones right on the nose,
And spoiled her freckled face pose.

Oh, how she did scold—
That boy, she did call bold.
But right in the middle of her speech.
No more can she preach—
'Cause she got the same medicine.

Here’s a news item: “The Coaldale Boat Club gets a new member this year. A young son was born to Mr. and Mrs. George Breslin on Tuesday and George is looking ahead to teaching him how to swim.”

And, bu-lieve me, this copy of the *Coaldale Bugle* is something else that goes into my treasure chest!

LETTER PALS

If you'll notice, we provide the complete addresses of all contributors. And there's a reason for that. A great many boys and girls like to exchange letters. If that's your hobby, pick out the name of some boy and write to him. You may not get a reply. But it's worth trying.

SCHOOL CLUB

Do you belong to this club? It's easy to be a member. All you have to do is to take one of my books to school, induce the teacher to read it aloud, or let you read it aloud, reporting the matter to me, after which your name will be included in the club file. This club has nothing to do with the big Freckled Goldfish club.

We have already drawn the names of ten prize winners. These names were published in *Trigger Berg and the Sacred Pig*. Ten members, whose names were drawn "out of the hat," got free autographed copies of *Sacred Pig*. There will be a similar drawing when we bring out *Trigger Berg and the Cockeyed Ghost*. But instead of just ten names, we're going to draw twenty; and the names of earlier prize winners will not be included. The twenty names will be published in *Cockeyed Ghost*. Later the names of thirty School Club members will be drawn and the list published in the fifth *Trigger Berg* book. Now, wouldn't you like to belong to this

club, and stand a chance of getting one of these fifty free autographed books?

“Yesterday,” writes Albert Morgan, Jr., 147-31 Hoover Ave., Jamaica, N. Y., “the teacher didn’t know we would get through with our work so quick. So she didn’t have anything to read to us. She then asked us who had a good book. I said I had, and I lent her your *700 Mouse Traps*. Boy, we couldn’t stop the class from laughing.”

“I have had two Jerry Todd books read to our class in school,” writes Harry Nelson, Jr., 1005 So. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge, Ill. “The books were *Jerry Todd and the Whispering Mummy* and *Jerry Todd and the Bob-Tailed Elephant*. And did we ever laugh when that bloomin’ Rory Ringer recited his poem.”

“Yesterday,” writes Truman Pounds, 126 So. Waverly Dr., Dallas, Texas, “I took my *Bob-Tailed Elephant* book to school and asked the teacher to read it and see how she liked it. After she read it she liked it so well that she has had the school board buy a set of your Jerry Todd books.”

AUTOGRAPHED BOOKS

Would you like to own an autographed Todd, Ott, Blake, Berg or Bean book that you don’t have to win? If so, write to me, tell me that you want an autographed book, and I’ll tell you how to get it.

FRECKLED GOLDFISH

Our Freckled Goldfish club is several years old. We have almost 20,000 members. Poppy Ott started the club. He and Jerry had a similar club in their book, *Poppy Ott and the Freckled Goldfish*. Even before the book was published, informed young letter pals of mine were asking me if they could get up branch clubs like Poppy's. That gave me an idea. Why not organize a national club, calling it the Secret and Mysterious Order of the Freckled Goldfish, taking in members from coast to coast. "Fine!" said my publisher, when I presented the idea. So membership cards designed by Bert Salg were prepared, and soon the requests for membership began to roll in. Members then wanted pins. These were provided. Then we published a little book, called a ritual, to help boys and girls who wanted to organize branch clubs.

To-day we have hundreds of branch clubs, all of which are providing boys and girls with added fun. I've attended many club meetings and I want to tell you that the young organizers of these clubs know their stuff. A boy or girl who can get up a club like that, and make a success of it, is a real leader. And if you want to be a leader, here is your chance to show what you can do.

To join the club simply observe the following rules:

- (1) Print your name plainly.
- (2) Supply your complete printed address.
- (3) Give your age.

(4) Enclose two three-cent U. S. postage stamps.

(5) Address your letter to

Leo Edwards,
Cambridge,
Wisconsin.

Remember that each new member receives a unique membership card designed by Bert Salg, the popular illustrator of these books. The rules are printed on the card, which also contains a comical picture of Poppy's Freckled Goldfish. And every card bears my own personal autograph.

LOCAL CHAPTERS

Any boy who wants to start a Freckled Goldfish club in his own neighborhood can't afford to be without the official ritual. This booklet tells how to organize the club, how to conduct the meetings, how to transact all club business, and, probably most important of all, how to initiate candidates.

The complete initiation is given, word for word. Naturally these booklets are more or less secret. So, if you send for one, please do not show it to anyone who isn't a Freckled Goldfish. The initiation will fall flat if the candidate knows what is coming. Three chief officers will be required to put on the initiation, which can be given in any boy's home, so, unless each officer is provided with a booklet, much memorizing will have to be done. The best plan is to have

three booklets to a chapter. These may be secured (at cost) at six cents each (two three-cent stamps) or three for fifteen cents (five three-cent stamps). Address all orders to

Leo Edwards,
Cambridge,
Wisconsin.

BOOKS BY LEO EDWARDS

ILLUSTRATED. EVERY VOLUME COMPLETE IN ITSELF.

Hundreds of thousands of boys and girls have laughed until their sides ached over the weird and wonderful adventures of Jerry Todd and Poppy Ott and their friends. Mr. Edwards' boy characters are real. They do the things other boys like. Pirates! Mystery! Detectives! Adventure! Ghosts! Buried Treasure! Achievement! Stories of boys making things, doing things, going places—always on the jump and always having fun. His stories are for boys and girls of all ages.

THE JERRY TODD BOOKS

JERRY TODD AND THE WHISPERING MUMMY

JERRY TODD AND THE ROSE-COLORED CAT

JERRY TODD AND THE OAK ISLAND TREASURE

JERRY TODD AND THE WALTZING HEN

JERRY TODD AND THE TALKING FROG

JERRY TODD AND THE PURRING EGG

JERRY TODD IN THE WHISPERING CAVE

JERRY TODD: PIRATE

JERRY TODD AND THE BOB-TAILED ELEPHANT

JERRY TODD: EDITOR-IN-GRIEF

JERRY TODD: CAVEMAN

JERRY TODD AND THE FLYING FLAPDOODLE

JERRY TODD AND THE BUFFALO BILL BATHTUB

THE POPPY OTT BOOKS

POPPY OTT AND THE STUTTERING PARROT

POPPY OTT'S SEVEN LEAGUE STILTS

POPPY OTT AND THE GALLOPING SNAIL

POPPY OTT'S PEDIGREED PICKLES

POPPY OTT AND THE FRECKLED GOLDFISH

POPPY OTT AND THE TITTERING TOTEM

POPPY OTT AND THE PRANCING PANCAKE

POPPY OTT HITS THE TRAIL

FOOTBALL AT ITS BEST
“Hot Off The Gridiron” Stories

UNDER THE GOAL POSTS
by **EDDIE DOOLEY**

A rousing story of college football by a great player.

By **HAROLD M. SHERMAN**
ONE MINUTE TO PLAY

There wasn't room in Red Wade's trunk for his football togs and his textbooks too—so he left his textbooks at home!

TOUCHDOWN!

A thrilling, smashing, breath-taking football story—introducing the “big three.”

BLOCK THAT KICK!

Tingling romance, breath-taking mystery. Climaxed by a championship football game at the Yankee Stadium.

CRASHING THROUGH!

How a clever little quarterback kept his big rivals' fighting spirit at high pitch in order that his eleven might win a big game.

FIGHT 'EM, BIG THREE

Plenty of action on the gridiron and in other fields also. A story of three youths, Stuffy, Pepper and Brick.

GOAL TO GO!

Shrimp and Tubby, the "David and Goliath" of the Merwin College eleven, bring a great football crowd to its feet shouting like mad.

HOLD THAT LINE!

A story of the heart-breaking and nerve-trying experience one college player underwent before success.

NUMBER 44

How Bun Ritter, former mascot, becomes as famous as the mighty Branson, makes a story packed with football sensation!

TALES OF ADVENTURE IN THE GREAT NORTHWEST

By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

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The story of Thor, the biggest grizzly in the Rockies, and the hunter who pursued but never shot him.

NOMADS OF THE NORTH

Neewa, the bear cub, and Miki, the pup, separated from their master, grow up in the wilderness until, in the end, they find him and bring to him the girl he loves.

SWIFT LIGHTNING

The adventures of a wolf in whose veins is a drop of dog blood. His desperate combats and killings, and his mating with a lost collie make a tale of breathless suspense.

THE WOLF HUNTERS

A tenderfoot, a young Indian and their faithful guide battle courageously with a savage band of outlaw Indians in the Canadian wilderness.

THE GOLD HUNTERS

A search for a lost gold mine leads the three heroes of “The Wolf Hunters” on a hazardous trail of mystery and amazing adventure.

BACK TO GOD’S COUNTRY

The courage and devotion of Wapi, the wolf dog, saves the life of a woman imprisoned on an ice-bound ship in the Far North.

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Philip Raine, of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, taken prisoner by the murderer he is pursuing, finds strange adventure with a half-mad wolf-man, a beautiful girl and a courageous Swede.

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Illustrated. Every Volume Complete in Itself.

Frank and Joe Hardy are sons of a celebrated detective. Often the boys help him in his investigations. In their spare hours and during vacations they follow up clues “on their own hook.” These activities lead them into many strange adventures and dangerous situations. Yet their efforts are usually successful in tracking down criminals. These stories are packed with action, adventure and mystery.

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THE TOWER TREASURE
THE HOUSE ON THE CLIFF
THE SECRET OF THE OLD MILL
THE MISSING CHUMS
HUNTING FOR HIDDEN GOLD
THE SHORE ROAD MYSTERY
THE SECRET OF THE CAVES
THE MYSTERY OF CABIN ISLAND
THE GREAT AIRPORT MYSTERY
WHAT HAPPENED AT MIDNIGHT
WHILE THE CLOCK TICKED
FOOTPRINTS UNDER THE WINDOW
THE MARK ON THE DOOR

THE HIDDEN HARBOR MYSTERY
A FIGURE IN HIDING

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You'll like Ted Scott. He's a daring young American whose feats of flying thrill the whole world, but with it all he keeps a level head on his shoulders. The whole flying series has been inspired by recent aerial exploits and is dedicated to Lindbergh, Commander Byrd, Clarence Chamberlin and other heroes of the skies.

OVER THE OCEAN TO PARIS
RESCUED IN THE CLOUDS
OVER THE ROCKIES WITH THE AIR MAIL
FIRST STOP HONOLULU
THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST FLYERS
SOUTH OF THE RIO GRANDE
ACROSS THE PACIFIC
THE LONE EAGLE OF THE BORDER
FLYING AGAINST TIME
OVER THE JUNGLE TRAILS
LOST AT THE SOUTH POLE
THROUGH THE AIR TO ALASKA
FLYING TO THE RESCUE
DANGER TRAILS OF THE SKY
FOLLOWING THE SUN SHADOW
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BRUSHING THE MOUNTAIN TOP
CASTAWAYS OF THE STRATOSPHERE

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Thrilling tales of the great west, told primarily for boys but which will be read by all who love mystery, rapid action, and adventures in the great open spaces.

The cowboys of the X Bar X Ranch are real cowboys, on the job when required, but full of fun and daring—a bunch any reader will be delighted to know.

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THE X BAR X BOYS IN THUNDER CANYON
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THE X BAR X BOYS ON BIG BISON TRAIL
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THE X BAR X BOYS AT NUGGET CAMP
THE X BAR X BOYS AT RUSTLER'S GAP
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THE X BAR X BOYS LOST IN THE ROCKIES
THE X BAR X BOYS RIDING FOR LIFE
THE X BAR X BOYS IN SMOKY VALLEY
THE X BAR X BOYS AT COPPERHEAD GULCH
THE X BAR X BOYS BRANDING THE WILD HERD
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Good, clean football at its best—and in addition, rattling stories of mystery and schoolboy rivalries.

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Author of "The Tom Swift Series"

Every red-blooded boy will enjoy the thrilling adventures of Don Sturdy. In company with his uncles, one a big game hunter, the other a noted scientist, he travels far and wide—into the jungles of South America, across the Sahara, deep into the African jungle, up where the Alaskan volcanoes spout, down among the head hunters of Borneo and many other places where there is danger and excitement. Every boy who has known Tom Swift will at once become the boon companion of daring Don Sturdy.

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DON STURDY IN THE TOMBS OF GOLD
DON STURDY ACROSS THE NORTH POLE
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DON STURDY IN THE PORT OF LOST SHIPS
DON STURDY AMONG THE GORILLAS
DON STURDY CAPTURED BY HEAD HUNTERS
DON STURDY IN LION LAND
DON STURDY IN THE LAND OF GIANTS
DON STURDY ON THE OCEAN BOTTOM
DON STURDY IN THE TEMPLES OF FEAR

GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK



Transcriber's Notes

- Silently corrected a few typos.
- Retained publication information from the printed edition: this eBook is public-domain in the country of publication.
- Moved illustrations on unnumbered pages to the relevant location in the text.
- In the text versions only, text in italics is delimited by underscores.

[The end of *Poppy Ott Hits the Trail* by Edward Edson Lee]