The Rover Boys Under Canvas; Or, The Mystery of the Wrecked Submarine



Jefferson Publication



Edward Stratemeyer

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Title: The Rover Boys Under Canvas; Or, The Mystery of the Wrecked Submarine

Author: Edward Stratemeyer

Release date: November 1, 2007 [eBook #23286]
Most recently updated: January 21, 2009

Language: English

Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/23286

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ROVER BOYS UNDER CANVAS; OR, THE MYSTERY OF THE WRECKED SUBMARINE ***

THE ROVER BOYS UNDER CANVAS

By ARTHUR M. WINFIELD



“MY GRACIOUS! LOOK AT THAT!”
(*Frontispiece*)—*Page 28*

THE ROVER BOYS UNDER CANVAS

OR

THE MYSTERY OF THE WRECKED SUBMARINE

BY

ARTHUR M. WINFIELD
(Edward Stratemeyer)

AUTHOR OF "THE ROVER BOYS AT SCHOOL," "THE ROVER BOYS ON THE OCEAN," "THE PUTNAM HALL SERIES," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS
Made in the United States of America

Books by Arthur M. Winfield
(Edward Stratemeyer)

THE FIRST ROVER BOYS SERIES

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THE ROVER BOYS ON THE OCEAN
THE ROVER BOYS IN THE JUNGLE
THE ROVER BOYS OUT WEST
THE ROVER BOYS ON THE GREAT LAKES
THE ROVER BOYS IN THE MOUNTAINS
THE ROVER BOYS IN CAMP
THE ROVER BOYS ON LAND AND SEA
THE ROVER BOYS ON THE RIVER
THE ROVER BOYS ON THE PLAINS
THE ROVER BOYS IN SOUTHERN WATERS
THE ROVER BOYS ON THE FARM
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12mo. Cloth. Illustrated.

GROSSET & DUNLAP, Publishers, New York

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The Rover Boys Under Canvas

INTRODUCTION

MY DEAR BOYS: This book is a complete story in itself, but forms the third volume in a line issued under the general title, "The Second Rover Boys Series for Young Americans."

As mentioned in a number of volumes of the first series, this line was started some years ago with the publication of "The Rover Boys at School," "On the Ocean," and "In the Jungle," in which I introduced my young readers to Dick, Tom, and Sam Rover. The

volumes of the first series related the doings of these three Rover boys while attending Putnam Hall Military Academy, Brill College, and while on numerous outings.

Having acquired a good education, the three young men established themselves in business and became married. Presently Dick Rover was blessed with a son and a daughter, as was also his brother Sam, while Tom Rover became the proud father of twin boys. At first the four lads were kept at home, but then it was thought best to send them to a boarding school, and in the first volume of the second series, entitled "The Rover Boys at Colby Hall," I related what happened to them while attending this institution.

From Colby Hall the scene was shifted to Snowshoe Island, where the lads went for a mid-winter outing. Here they ran into a most unusual mystery, and helped an old lumberman to establish his claim to the island.

In the present volume the boys are back at Colby Hall, but it is time for the annual encampment of the military school, and soon they depart for a brief season "Under Canvas." This is at the time of the World War, and the lads get mixed up in the mystery surrounding a wrecked submarine. What this led to, I leave for the pages which follow to relate.

In conclusion I wish to thank my numerous readers for all the nice things they have said about my books. I trust the reading of the volumes will do all of them good.

Affectionately and sincerely yours,
EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

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THE ROVER BOYS UNDER CANVAS

CHAPTER I

A GAME OF BASEBALL

"Now for a home run, Jack!"

"Soak it out over the bleachers!"

"Show the Hixley boys what we can do!"

"Give him a swift one, Dink! Don't let him hit it!"

"Oh, dear, I do hope Jack scores!" came in a sweet, girlish voice.

"Of course he'll score!" returned a youth sitting near the girl who had made the remark. "He's been holding back for just this chance."

"Oh, do you think so?" asked another girl in the grandstand.

"Surest thing ever was," was the airy rejoinder. "This is the time we're going to show the Hixley boys what's what."

"Not on your life!" bellowed a heavy voice from the rear. "Here is where Colby Hall gets snowed under."

Then came a series of yells, followed by the tooting of horns and the sounding of rattles, making a din that was almost ear-splitting.

The occasion was the annual baseball game between Hixley High and Colby Hall. It had been scheduled to take place on the high-school athletic field, but at almost the last minute this field had been declared out of condition, and it had been decided to hold the contest on the athletic grounds attached to the military academy.

Hixley High was very anxious to win this game. During the previous fall, as related in a former volume of this series, the high-school lads had lost the annual football game with Colby Hall by a single touchdown. This defeat still rankled in their minds, and they were determined if possible to take the baseball game by a score that should be well worth while.

And they had good reason to be hopeful of doing this. While their football team had always been considered by the other teams of that locality to be

of the “second string variety,” the baseball nine was a remarkably strong organization. At its head was Dink Wilsey, a pitcher who was destined at some time in the future to show himself in one of the big leagues.

“Why, Dink alone can walk off with that game,” was the way more than one Hixley High student had expressed himself.

But more than this—Hixley High had an exceptionally good first baseman and a trio of outfielders whose batting average was high.

“We’re going to put it all over Colby Hall this trip,” was the way the manager of the Hixley High ball club declared himself on the day previous to the match.

The game was now at the second half of the sixth inning, and the score stood, Hixley High, 4; Colby Hall, 2. Colby Hall was at the bat with two men out and one man at second.

It was therefore no wonder that the military academy students became anxious when Jack Rover took up his bat and walked to the plate. A home run would mean the tying of the score, and with a chance to do even better.

“Take your time, Jack,” said Gif Garrison, who was the manager of the nine. “Make him give you a ball just where you want it.”

“Watch yourself!” yelled one of the coaches to the runner at second, for the Hixley High pitcher had suddenly whirled around, sending the ball down to the second baseman. There was a quick drop by the runner, and he escaped getting caught by a few

inches only.

"Close shave! Watch yourself, Dan!" yelled Gif Garrison; and Dan Soppinger, at second, nodded to show that he understood, and then danced away in the direction of third base as before.

The first ball pitched to Jack Rover was a slow in-curve, and he stepped back and allowed it to pass him.

"Ball one!"

At this decision a howl of delight went up from the followers of Colby Hall, while a corresponding groan came from Hixley High.

"That's the eye!"

"Better get a pair of glasses!"

"Sure! The umpire must be blind! That was a perfect ball!"

"Sure it was a perfect ball! That's the reason he called it a ball!" came from Andy Rover, who sat on the substitutes' bench.

The second ball delivered was a fairly good one, although rather low. Jack swung at it, and high into the air spun the sphere, well back of the catcher's head.

"Foul!"

"Run, Billy, you can catch it!"

Flinging off his mask, the Hixley High catcher rushed back toward where the ball was coming down. But it was too far away for him, and it struck slantingly on one of the back posts, rolling off

toward the grandstand.

"Line it out, Jack! Don't be fooling with fouls!" yelled Fred Rover.

"Show 'em where the river is!" added Randy Rover.

The next ball to come in was a wide out-curve, and again Jack let it pass him.

"Ball two!" shouted the umpire.

"That's the way to do it, Jack! Make 'em give you what you want!"

With two balls against him, the noted pitcher for the high school exercised a little more care in his next delivery. He sent in a straight, swift one, directly over the outer point of the plate. It was not exactly what Jack desired, but it was good enough, and he swung at it with all his strength. Crack! And the ball went sailing directly over the head of the shortstop and into the field beyond.

"Run, Jack! Run! It's good for a two-bagger!"

"Leg it, Dan! Leg it for home!"

"Send the ball in, Wiffles! Don't let 'em get home!"

These and a hundred other cries rang out as nearly every spectator sprang to his or her feet in the excitement. Dan Soppinger, half way to third when Jack made the hit, had now touched that bag and was tearing for the home plate.

In the meantime Jack, running like a deer, had passed first and was making for second. The shortstop had made a high but ineffectual jump for

the ball, and now he and the fielder behind him were both after the sphere. There was a short mix-up, and then the fielder sent the ball with unerring aim toward the catcher at the home plate.

"Slide, Dan, slide!"

And then Dan Soppinger, running as he had never run before, dropped down and slid to the plate amid a whirl of dust, followed instantly by the ball, which landed with a thud in the catcher's mitt.

"He's safe! He's safe!"

"And look! Jack Rover is going to make third!"

Realizing that it was too late to catch the man at the plate, the catcher threw the ball down to second. But Jack Rover had already started for third, and now he streaked along with all his might, arriving at that bag just an instant before the ball followed him.

"That's the way to do it, boy! Keep it up!"

"Oh, he made three bases!" cried one of the girls in the grandstand. "Isn't that just lovely?"

"I told you he'd do it, Ruth," said another of the girls.

"I wish my cousin Dick was coming up," remarked one of the girls. "I'm sure he would be able to help them out."

"Never mind, May. He'll be coming up pretty soon," answered Ruth Stevenson.

The next cadet to the bat was Walt Baxter. Walt was a good all-around player, but just at present he was not in the best of condition, having suffered

from a touch of the grippe early in the season.

“Bang out a homer, Walt!” sang out Andy Rover.

“Never mind that, Walt. Make a safe hit and bring Jack in,” said Gif Garrison.

“I’ll do my best,” answered Walt Baxter. But it was plainly to be seen that his recent illness had rendered him somewhat nervous. He had a ball and a strike called on him, and then got another strike through a little foul that passed over one of the coaches’ heads. Then Dink Wilsey passed him a slow, tantalizing ball. Walt connected with it but sent up only a pop fly, which the third baseman gathered in with ease.

“Hurrah! that’s the way to hold ’em down,” came the cry from one of the high-school boys.

“Gee, old man, it’s too bad you didn’t have a chance to bring that run in,” remarked Gif Garrison to Jack Rover, as the latter walked in from third base.

“Well, anyway, I brought Dan in,” returned Jack, as cheerfully as he could.

“Yes; but if you had got in that would have tied the score,” went on the manager. “However, the game isn’t over yet.”

“Over! Why, we’ve just begun to play!” returned Jack, with a grin.

“That’s the talk!” cried Andy Rover. “Colby Hall forever! Now then, boys, all together!” he yelled, turning to the grandstand. And a moment later there boomed out this refrain:

"Who are we?
Can't you see?
Colby Hall!
Dum! Dum! Dum, dum, dum!
Here we come with fife and drum!
Colby! Colby! Colby Hall!"

And then followed a great yelling and tooting of horns and sounding of rattles.

"My gracious! if they keep on I'll surely become deaf," said Martha Rover.

"I think I had better retire from this game," remarked Walt Baxter, as he faced the manager. "I told you I didn't feel like going in, and now I am sure I should have kept out of it."

"All right, Walt. I'll be sorry to lose you," answered Gif. And then he told Andy Rover to get ready to get into the game.

With a score still 4 to 3 in their favor, Hixley High opened the seventh inning with vigor. They managed to get a man on first, and then on a sacrifice advanced him to second. Then came a two-bagger, and the play made by Colby Hall in the ending of the sixth inning was repeated by their opponents, thus making the score 5 to 3.

On their part Colby Hall tried its best to score during the seventh, but was doomed to disappointment.

Then came the eighth inning with a goose egg placed on the board for each nine.

"Say, this begins to look bad for us," remarked

Will Hendry, the fattest boy at Colby Hall. “It looks as if Hixley High was going to have a sweet revenge.”

In the Hixley High half of the ninth inning Dink Wilsey showed what a very good all-around player he was. The noted pitcher cracked out a home run, making the tally with ease. Fortunately this was at a time when there was no one on base, so that only one run was scored. Two men were out, and the next player knocked a fly to short, which was gathered in by Frank Newberry with ease.

“Hurrah! Score another for Hixley High!”

“That makes the score six to three!”

“I guess this game is as good as won!”

So the cries ran on among the high-school scholars and their friends. The Colby Hall contingent was, of course, much downcast, but they refused to show it, and once more the slogan of the military academy boomed forth.

“Now, boys, pull yourselves together and go at ’em hammer and tongs,” cried Gif Garrison. “Watch the pitcher. Don’t let Dink put anything over you.”

Fred Rover was at the bat, and he managed to make a safe hit. He was followed by a player who made another safe hit, thus advancing Fred to second. Then came two outs, but in the mix-up Fred managed to steal to third, while the player on first got down to second. Jack Rover was now once more to the bat, and all of his friends were yelling at the top of their lungs for him to “Knock the hide off the ball!” “Send it over the back fence!” “Show ’em where the other side of the river is!” and to “Wipe up

the field with Hixley High!”

One ball was called, and then a strike. Then came another strike, and things began to look gloomy for Colby Hall. But then Jack got a ball exactly where he wanted it, and he swung at it with every ounce of muscle he could command. Crack! went the bat, and the sphere went sailing far down in left field.

“That’s the way to do it! Run, boys, run!”

“Come on home, Jack!”

Fred, on third, was already streaking for home, and close behind him came the player who had been on second. In the meanwhile, Jack raced to first and around to second, and then came plowing up to third.

“Hold it, Rover! Hold it!”

“Come on in—don’t wait! Come on in!”

Jack looked down into the field and saw that the fielder was just in the act of picking up the ball. With a great bound, he started for the home plate, and when ten feet from that place dropped to the ground and slid in with the rapidity of lightning.

“He’s safe! A home run!”

“That ties the score!”

“Now then, boys, go in and finish ’em up!”

The din and excitement was now tremendous. The score was indeed a tie. Which club would win?

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CHAPTER II

ABOUT THE ROVER BOYS

"NOW then, fellows, don't forget to bring in the winning run!"

"Show Hixley High what we can do!"

And then came a rousing cheer from the Colby Hall cadets, and once more they gave the well-known military academy refrain.

Any ordinary pitcher might have been nervous over the prospect ahead of him; but Dink Wilsey was not one of that caliber, and he faced the next batsman as coolly as he had all of the others. Two balls were called, and then two strikes, and then two more balls, and the batsman walked to first base.

"Hurrah! he's afraid to give him the kind we chew up."

"Maybe he'll let the next man walk, too!" cried another.

But this was not to be. The next cadet up went out on a foul, and the inning came to a sudden end.

"A tie! A tie! The game is a tie!"

"Now for the winning run! Hixley High!"

"That's the stuff! Larsen to the bat! And, my, won't he wallop that ball!"

Larsen was the Hixley High center fielder—a tall, sturdy youth with blue eyes and light hair, of

Norwegian descent. He came to the plate with a "do-or-die" look on his face. He allowed two balls to pass him, only one of which, however, was called a strike. Then he made a sweep for the next ball, sending it out in a red-hot liner toward Jack.

Many a young ball player would have stepped out of the way with such a red-hot variety of baseball coming his way. But not so Jack Rover. Like a flash his hands went out and he caught the ball firmly, although the impact of the sphere whirled him half way around.

"Gee, look at that!"

"I wouldn't have caught that ball for a thousand dollars!"

A great shout of approval rang out, and during this Gif hurried over to Jack's side.

"How about it—did it hurt you any?" he questioned quickly.

"It stung me a little, that's all," was Jack's reply. His hands burnt like fire, but he did not intend to let anybody know it.

"One down! Now for the other two!" came the cry.

"Not much! Here is where we score!"

But alas for the hopes of Hixley High! The next man up went out on strikes, and the fellow to follow knocked a foul which was easily gathered in by the third baseman.

"Now here is where we bring home the bacon!" cried Ned Lowe, one of the Colby Hall fans.

Andy Rover had been burning to distinguish himself, and now his chance came. First to the bat, he made a very neat base hit. Then, however, came an out, and the Colby Hall boys were, for a moment, downcast. But they quickly recovered when the next player made a single and Andy slid around safely to third.

"Now then, a hit! Just a neat little hit!" came the entreating cry.

"Oh, if only they do get it!" murmured Ruth Stevenson. "I wish Jack was at the bat."

"It's my cousin Dick!" cried May Powell, and she was right—Spouter Powell was up.

Spouter was not a particularly strong ball player, but he had one feature which was in his favor—he knew how to keep cool, and that helped greatly in this heart-breaking emergency. He waited calmly until two strikes and two balls had been called, and then he struck a low one, sending it just inside the first-base line. It slipped past the baseman, and as Spouter's feet crossed the bag, Fred Rover slid in safely to the home plate.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Colby Hall wins!"

Then followed a wild cheering and yelling, in the midst of which the crowds on the bleachers and the grandstand broke forth to mingle with the players on the ball field. Of course, the Hixley High students were much crestfallen, yet they tried to take their defeat in good part.

"Three cheers for Hixley High!" shouted Gif Garrison, and they were given with a will. Then followed a cheer from the high-school students for

those of the military academy, and then the crowd started to disperse.

"Oh, boys! some celebration to-night, what?" cried Randy Rover, and in the exuberance of his spirits he turned several handsprings on the grass.

"You bet we'll celebrate!" exclaimed his cousin Fred.

"Say! we ought to shoot off the old cannon for this," burst out Andy Rover. He referred to an ancient fieldpiece located on the front lawn of the school.

"Too dangerous," interposed his cousin Jack. "That old cannon is too rusty, and it would fly into a million pieces."

"Yes, but we might——"

Boom!

It was a loud explosion coming from a considerable distance. The cadets, as well as all the others gathered on the ball field, looked at each other in surprise.

"What could that have been?" questioned Fred Rover.

"Sounds like a big cannon going off," answered Walt Baxter.

Boom! Boom!

Two more explosions rent the air, both much louder than the first. The very ground seemed to be shaken by the concussion.

"Say, that sounds like a warship!"

"No warships around here," was the answer.

"Maybe it's a German Zeppelin!"

"Gee! do you suppose the Germans have come over here to bombard us?"

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Several more explosions came now close upon the others, each explosion heavier than those which had gone before. The ground all around seemed to tremble, and those who were still in the grandstand cried out in alarm.

"The grandstand is going down! Everybody jump for his life!"

"Look! Look!" was the sudden cry from Jack Rover, and he pointed to a place on the opposite shore of Clearwater Lake. A dense volume of smoke was rolling skyward. Then came another tremendous explosion, and a mass of wreckage could be seen to be lifted skyward.

"It's the Hasley ammunition factory going up!" cried Fred Rover. "What an awful thing to happen!"

"That factory is right across the lake from our school!" cried Martha Rover. "I wonder if it will damage that place any?"

"I shouldn't be surprised," answered her cousin Andy. And then he added quickly: "I hope Mary will be safe."

"Oh, oh! do you think Mary is in danger?" cried Ruth Stevenson, who had just joined the others. Mary was Fred Rover's sister, who had been left behind at the girls' boarding school because she had

been suffering that day with a severe headache, and had said she preferred resting to attending the ball game, even though she loved to be with the others.

"There goes another building!" yelled Andy Rover, as another report rent the air. Then those who were looking down the river and across the lake saw some strange objects being hurled through the sky in the direction of Clearwater Hall.

"If that whole ammunition factory starts to go up, it will certainly mean damage to the boarding school," declared Jack. "I guess the best we can do is to get down there and see if Mary is safe."

"That's just what I say!" declared Fred. "I'm going to get down there just as fast as I can." And he ran off, to board one of the automobiles headed in that direction.

Now, I know it will not be at all necessary to introduce the Rover boys or their friends to my old readers, but for the benefit of those who have not perused any of my former stories a few words concerning these characters will be necessary. In the first volume, entitled "The Rover Boys at School," I told how three brothers, Dick, Tom, and Sam Rover, were sent off to Putnam Hall Military Academy, where they made a great number of friends, including a youth named Lawrence Colby. From Putnam Hall the lads went to Brill College, and on leaving that institution of learning went into business in New York City with offices on Wall Street. They organized The Rover Company, of which Dick was now president, Tom secretary and general manager, and Sam treasurer.

While at Putnam Hall the three Rovers had become

acquainted with three very charming girls, Dora Stanhope and her two cousins, Nellie and Grace Laning, and when Dick went into business he made Dora Stanhope his lifelong partner. A short time later Tom married Nellie Laning and Sam married Grace.

The three brothers purchased a fine plot of ground on Riverside Drive overlooking the noble Hudson River, and there they built three connecting houses, Dick and his family living in the middle house, with Tom on one side and Sam on the other.

About a year after their marriage Dick and his wife became the proud parents of a little son, who was named John after Mr. Laning. This son was followed by a daughter, called Martha after her great-aunt Martha of Valley Brook Farm, where the older Rovers had spent many of their younger days. Little Jack, as he was commonly called, was a manly lad with many of the qualities which had made his father so well liked and so successful.

It was about this time that Tom and Nellie Rover came to the front with a surprise for all of the others. This was in the shape of a pair of very lively twins, one of whom was named Anderson, after his grandfather, and the other, Randolph, after his great-uncle Randolph of Valley Brook Farm. Andy and Randy, as they were always called, were very active lads, in that particular being a second edition of their father.

About the time Tom's twins were born Sam and Grace Rover came along with a beautiful little girl, whom they named Mary after Mrs. Laning. Then, a year later, the girl was followed by a sturdy boy, christened Fred after Sam Rover's old and well-known school chum, Fred Garrison.

Residing so close together, the younger generation of Rover boys, as well as their sisters, were brought up very much like one family. They spent their winters usually in New York City, and during the summer often went out to Valley Brook Farm, where their grandfather, Anderson Rover, still resided with Uncle Randolph and Aunt Martha.

At first the boys and girls had been sent to private schools in the Metropolis; but soon the lads, led by Andy and Randy, showed such a propensity for "cutting loose" that their parents were compelled to hold a consultation.

"We'll have to do as Uncle Randolph did with us," said Dick Rover. "We'll have to send them to some strict boarding school—some military academy." And to this the others had agreed.

Some time previous their old school chum, Lawrence Colby, who had since become a colonel in the state militia, had opened a military academy, called Colby Hall.

"We'll send them to that place," was the decision of the older Rovers. "Lawrence Colby is just the fellow to make them behave themselves, and as we are such good friends he will be sure to give them extra attention."

So the boys were sent off to this school, as related in detail in the first volume of my second series, entitled "The Rover Boys at Colby Hall." This military school was located about half a mile from the town of Haven Point on Clearwater Lake, a beautiful sheet of water about two miles long and nearly half a mile wide. At the head of the lake was the Rick Rack River, running down from the hills and

woods beyond.

The school consisted of a large stone building, facing the river at a point not far from where the stream emptied into the lake. It was a three-storied structure, and contained the classrooms and a mess hall and also the dormitories and private rooms for the scholars. Close by was a smaller brick building, occupied by Colonel Colby and his family and some of the professors.

On the opposite side was an up-to-date gymnasium, while at the water's edge were a number of small buildings used as boathouses and bathing pavilions. Behind the hall were a stable and barn, and also a garage, and further back were a large garden and several farm fields and a great athletic field where the boys played baseball in the spring and football in the fall.

On arriving at Colby Hall the young Rovers had found several of their friends awaiting them, one of these being Dick Powell, the son of Songbird Powell, a former schoolmate of their fathers. Dick was always called Spouter because of his fondness for long speeches. Another was Gifford, the son of Fred Garrison, after whom Fred Rover had been named. There was also Walter Baxter, a son of Dan Baxter, who years before had been an enemy of the older Rovers, but who had now reformed and was doing very well.

Before coming to Colby Hall, Jack Rover had had a quarrel in New York City with a tall, dudish youth, named Napoleon Martell. Nappy Martell, as he was called by his cronies, was a cadet at the military academy, and he and his crony, an overgrown bully named Slugger Brown, did what they could to make

trouble for the Rovers. But one of their underhanded transactions was exposed, and they were sent away from the academy for the time being.

As mentioned, Colby Hall was located about half a mile beyond Haven Point. On the opposite side of the town was located Clearwater Hall, a boarding school for girls. During a panic in a moving-picture theater Jack and his cousins became acquainted with a number of these girls, including Ruth Stevenson, May Powell, Alice Strobell, and Annie Larkins. They found out that May was Spouter Powell's cousin, and the whole crowd of young people soon became friends. Later on Mary and Martha Rover became pupils at the girls' school.

Ruth Stevenson had an old uncle Barney, who in times past had had a bitter quarrel with Ruth's parents. The Rover boys once went out hunting, and on this occasion saved the old man's life, as related in "The Rover Boys on Snowshoe Island." For this the old man was exceedingly grateful, and as a result he invited them to spend their winter holidays on Snowshoe Island, a place which he said he owned and of which he was very proud.

The boys traveled to this island and had many adventures while hunting and otherwise. They found out that the father of Slogwell Brown, always called Slugger by his comrades, was laying claim to the island. This man, backed up by Asa Lemm, a discharged teacher of Colby Hall, and backed up likewise by his son Slugger and Nappy Martell, did all he could to take possession of the property. But the Rover boys exposed the plot, and held the rascals at bay, and in the end old Barney Stevenson's claim to the land was made safe. During the time on the

island Slugger Brown and Nappy Martell had stolen a tin box containing some valuable papers from the old man, and for this they had at first been threatened with arrest, but had been allowed to go when Slugger's father gave up his claim to the place.

"You think you're smart, don't you?" Slugger Brown had grumbled to Jack when he was ready to depart from Snowshoe Island. "You just wait, Jack Rover! I'm not going to forget you and your cousins in a hurry!"

"And I won't forget you either," Nappy Martell had added. "We'll get even with you when you least expect it."

But for quite a while now none of the Rovers had seen or heard anything more of Slugger Brown and Nappy Martell. But they were destined to hear more from these two unworthies, and in a most unusual fashion.

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CHAPTER III

THE AMMUNITION FACTORY EXPLOSIONS

"Oh, I do hope Mary is safe!" cried Martha Rover, as she and the others ran toward where the automobiles which had brought them over to Colby Hall from the girls' boarding school were standing.

"So far those explosions haven't reached Clearwater Hall," answered her brother Jack. "But there is no telling what a real heavy explosion may do."

"That's just it!" burst out his cousin Randy. "For all we know, those Hasley people may have a large quantity of TNT or some other high explosive stored there, and if that should go up—good-night!"

"It would be fierce!"

"I think it's awful to allow those ammunition people to have their works so close to a town," was Ruth Stevenson's comment.

Boom! Boom!

Two more explosions rent the air. Then followed a series of poppings like the discharge of a machine gun.

"Those must be some of the small shells going off," said Andy. "Gosh, what a shame they couldn't have held this back until the Fourth of July!" he added. Andy would probably have wanted to joke at his own funeral.

The Rovers and their girl friends were soon seated in the automobiles which they had used earlier in the day to bring the girls to Colby Hall. With them went as many of the other cadets and their friends as could pile into the machines or hang fast to the running boards. All of the ball players went in their

baseball outfits, not taking time to change to their uniforms.

The Rovers and their friends were among the first to leave the military institution, and for this reason they got away without any trouble. They had scarcely departed when Captain Mapes Dale, the military instructor attached to the school, appeared and forbade any more of the cadets to leave the grounds.

"There is no telling how dangerous those explosions may become," said Captain Dale, "and Colonel Colby thinks it is best that you remain here where it is comparatively safe. Even as it is, we may have some big shells coming this way."

The Hasley Shell Loading Company had been located on the opposite shore of Clearwater Lake for a number of years previous to the opening of the war in Europe. But at that time it had been only a small concern, employing but a handful of men. A year after the opening of hostilities, however, the plant had been enlarged, and now, since the entrance of the United States into the war, the force of workmen had been again doubled and many additional buildings had been erected, some along the lake front and others in the hills further back. A spur of the railroad had also been built to the plant, and on this were numerous cars, all painted to show the dangerous nature of the freight they were destined to carry.

On two different occasions the Rover boys and their chums had rowed over to the vicinity of the shell-loading works to look at what was going on. Guards around the works, however, had kept them from landing or even getting within a reasonable

distance of the place. This, they knew, was done because the authorities feared that some spies might try to get into the buildings with a view to blowing them up.

"Gee, that certainly sounds like war!" cried Andy, as the explosions continued. There was a continual popping of small shells, punctured every now and then by a decidedly heavier explosion.

"My gracious! Look at that!" burst out Jack a moment later.

What the oldest Rover boy referred to was a curious explosion of a quantity of shells which seemed to go up in the form of an immense sheaf of wheat. Thousands of small objects filled the air, flying off in all directions of the compass.

"I'll bet we'll get some of those over here!" exclaimed Gif Garrison, who was clinging to the running board of the machine.

And he was right. Only a few seconds later several small bits of metal came down around them, two striking the hood of the automobile and one falling into the tonneau on Ruth's lap.

It did not take those in the automobile long to cover the half mile which lay between them and Haven Point, where the railroad station was located. Here they found the town people in great excitement, and learned that steps were already being taken to care for any of the workmen who might be injured by the explosions.

"Of course we have no idea yet how many people have been killed or wounded," declared a policeman who gave the cadets this information. "We are all

upset because we don't know how bad the explosions may get. If they don't get any worse than they have been, we'll be thankful."

The cadets and their girl friends did not remain long in Haven Point. All were anxious to get to Clearwater Hall, to learn if that place was much damaged. The girls' school was directly opposite the shell-loading plant, and consequently more liable to suffer than the town or Colby Hall.

"Look at them getting away from that place, will you?" cried Fred, who had come as far as Haven Point on another automobile and then had rejoined his cousins. He pointed to the lake, where a number of rowboats and other craft were leaving the vicinity of the explosions.

"You can't blame them for wanting to get away," returned Jack. "It may mean life or death to them."

"Oh, I hope nobody has been killed!" murmured Ruth.

"I'm afraid, Ruth, that's too much to expect," answered Jack soberly.

"Oh, I just think war is too horrible for anything!" cried out Alice Strobell, who was along.

"I just wish they could sink all those Germans in their old submarines!" declared Annie Larkins who was also in the crowd.

"I guess we'd all be willing to subscribe to that!" cried Randy.

"You just wait until Uncle Sam gets into this scrap," declared Jack. "We'll show 'em what's what!"

"How I wish I could go to the front," said Andy wistfully. "It would beat going to school all hollow."

"Now that we've gone into the war, we'll have an army over there before long," said Spouter. "I suppose they'll send some of the regulars over first, and then some of the national guard—of course taken into the regular army—and after that we'll have the volunteers. I suppose if Uncle Sam really wanted to do it, he could get together several million men without half trying. And with an army like that, properly trained and equipped, and transported to the battlefields of Europe, we shall be sure to make a showing which will throw terror into the hearts of ——"

"Hurrah! Spouter is off again," broke in Randy.

"Say, Spout! they ought to send you to the front to help talk the Huns to death," put in Andy. "Talk about gas and gas masks——"

"Aw say! you're always butting in when I've got something to say," growled the lad who loved to talk.

There might have been a little friction right then and there, but another explosion came from across Clearwater Lake, and all stopped to gaze at the thick volume of yellowish-black smoke which rolled directly toward them.

"The wind must be shifting," declared Jack, for all of the smoke heretofore had rolled up the lake shore.

"It's too bad it is coming this way," said Ruth. "Miss Garwood declares that a good deal of smoke from such shells is poisonous." Miss Garwood was the head of the school for girls, and likewise an

authority in chemistry.

The road was filled with automobiles going and coming, and Randy had all he could do to send the machine along without getting into some sort of collision. The heavy smoke continued to roll across the lake, and soon they were in the midst of this. It had a curious pungent odor to it, which set them to sneezing and coughing.

“No fun in this, I must say,” declared Jack. The girls all had their handkerchiefs to their faces, and May Powell looked as if she was getting sick.

In a minute more they came within sight of Clearwater Hall, a large structure setting back in well-kept grounds. There were numerous bushes and flowers and quite a number of fair-sized trees.

Several automobiles had reached the school ahead of them so the scene was one of animation. Town people, as well as scholars from the Hixley High School, mingled with the cadets and the girls from Clearwater Hall.

“Go on in and find Mary,” said Jack to his sister. “Tell her we are here to help her in case anything happens.”

Martha rushed off, followed by Ruth, and the two soon located Fred’s sister. She was in a rear room of the school, along with a number of the other pupils and one of the assistant teachers.

“Oh, I’m so glad you’ve come!” declared Mary Rover. “What a dreadful thing this is getting to be!”

“I suppose it has made your head ache worse than ever,” said Martha sympathetically.

"No, strange to say, it's just the other way around," declared Fred's sister, with a faint smile. "Those explosions seemed to have shocked the headache all away."

Mary was glad to join the others, and the Rovers and their friends proceeded to one of the reception rooms of the school. In the meantime the explosions across the lake continued, but seemed to be gradually dying down.

"It looks to me as if the worst was over," remarked Fred, after there had been comparative silence for fully a quarter of an hour.

"Say, I'm going down to the lake front to see what's doing," declared Randy, a little later. "Perhaps we can be of some assistance."

"That's the talk! We can't do anything more here," returned his twin.

"Let's all go down!" cried Jack. "We ought to be able to do something for those poor workmen who have been hurt." And then, turning to Ruth, he continued: "If there are any more big explosions and this place seems to be in danger, we'll be back."

"Oh, Jack! I don't want you to run into any danger down at the lake shore," said the girl, looking at him pleadingly with her big brown eyes.

"I guess we'll be able to take care of ourselves," he answered lightly. But it pleased him a great deal to have Ruth so full of consideration for him.

Leaving their automobiles in the school grounds, the Rovers and their chums left the place, crossed the highway, and followed the footpath leading down to

the Clearwater Hall boathouse. Here they found only a few people congregated, the heavy-rolling clouds of smoke keeping a good many away.

"Not very pleasant here," was Gif Garrison's comment, after the smoke had made him cough. "I don't think I'm going to stay."

"Neither am I," said Spouter. And presently he and quite a few others left, leaving the four Rovers to themselves.

"You know what I've got an idea of doing?" declared Jack. "Why not get out one of the Clearwater Hall boats and row over a little closer to that place? We may be able to be of some assistance to some of the workmen."

The others were willing, and soon a large rowboat was brought out, with two pairs of oars, and the four Rovers manned it and sent it well out into the lake.

"We've got to keep our eyes open in this smoke," declared Jack. "It's worse than a fog."

"You're right there," returned Randy. "If some of those poor chaps——"

Boom!

Another terrific explosion cut short what he was saying. The very water under the rowboat seemed to shake, and the air presently was filled with flying missiles dropping all around them. Then, as Andy stood up in an endeavor to get a better view of the situation, something came flying through the air, hit him on the shoulder, and hurled him overboard!

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CHAPTER IV

A RESCUE ON THE LAKE

"ANDY'S overboard!"

"Grab him, somebody!"

"Wow! what is this anyway—a bombardment?"

Such were the cries coming from the three Rovers when they saw the luckless Andy lose his balance and go over into the lake with a splash.

"It's fire coming down! We've got to get out of this!" cried Fred, a few seconds later.

The youngest of the Rovers was right. It was indeed a rain of fire that had suddenly descended upon them through the pall of yellowish-black smoke. It was falling into the boat and on their persons. Where it struck the lake it sent out a curious hissing sound.

"Come—let us get Andy aboard again and row out of this as quickly as possible!" gasped Jack.

Andy had disappeared from view, but only for a few seconds. He came up, thrashing around wildly, for he had been almost stunned by the thing which had struck him, a block of wood carried up from the ammunition plant by one of the explosions.

"Steady, Andy, steady! We'll save you!" called out his twin, and as Fred and Jack sent the rowboat in the luckless one's direction, Randy bent over and grabbed his brother by the hand. Then, taking care that the craft should not tip over, Fred and Randy pulled Andy aboard.

"Are you much hurt?" questioned Randy anxiously.

"I—I don't know," was the gasped-out reply. "I—I don't think so, though. What did you slam me in the back for?" Andy demanded of Jack, who had been behind him.

"I didn't hit you. It was a block of wood which came sailing over from the ammunition factory," was the quick reply. "Come on—we've got to get out of here, or the first thing you know we'll be on fire."

"Better wet your clothing," said Andy. "It may help a whole lot."

This was good advice, and the others lost no time in filling their baseball caps with water, which they sprinkled over their shoulders and the other portions of their baseball outfits. They also wet down the bow and stern seats of the rowboat. Then they grabbed up their oars and commenced to row up the lake, trying to get out of the range of both the fire and the smoke.

"Here is what the fire consists of," declared Fred presently, when he caught a whisp of it on his arm. "It's nothing but oil-soaked waste. They must have had a whole lot of it at that plant, and one of the explosions sent it high into the air and scattered it in every direction."

The boys continued on their way for a few minutes, and then ran into another cloud of smoke. This was of a peculiar bluish-green cast, and seemed so sulphurous they were nearly choked by it.

“Listen!” burst out Andy. “I think I heard somebody calling.”

He held up one hand for silence, and all listened attentively. In spite of the roaring of the flames, which were now devouring several of the buildings at the shell-loading plant, and the continual popping of some of the smaller shells, all heard a frantic cry for assistance.

“It’s somebody calling for help!”

“Where is he?”

“I think the cry came from over yonder,” said Jack, in answer to the latter question. “Let’s pull over there and see.”

All were willing, and the four once more bent to their oars, sending the rowboat through the bluish-green smoke, which almost choked and blinded them.

“Hello there!” yelled Fred. “Where are you?”

“Help! Help!” came the cry from off to their left. “Help! Save me!”

The rowboat was turned in that direction, and a few seconds later the Rover boys caught sight through the smoke of a water-logged rowboat to which an elderly man, dressed in the garb of a workman, was clinging.

“Help me! Help me! I can’t hang on much longer!”

gasped the man, as soon as he saw the boys.

"Sure, we'll help you," declared Jack. "Go slow now," he cautioned his cousins. "We don't want to knock him off into the water."

With care the rowboat was brought around so that they came up alongside of the elderly man. He was glad enough to turn from his water-logged craft to the other boat. But he was well-nigh exhausted, and the Rovers had not a little trouble in getting him on board.

"Tell you what—I'm mighty glad you lads came along," panted the old man, when he was safe. "I couldn't have held out much longer. This is something terrible, ain't it? Say, would you mind hooking that boat fast and pulling it to shore? It belongs to me, and I ain't so wealthy that I can afford to lose it. Besides, it's got some of my things in it."

"We'll take it along unless it keeps us back too much," answered Jack. And then he bent down, got hold of the bowline of the craft, and tied it fast to their stern. Fortunately the other boat was a small one, so they had not much difficulty in towing it along.

"I'm a dockman over at the ammunition factory," explained the old man. "And when things began to go off I thought it was high time to get out. I tried to save a few of my things and dumped 'em into my boat and began to pull for the shore. But then one of the big explosions went off, and I got caught in a lot of smoke and a rain of I don't know what, and was nearly rendered senseless. When I came to, I had drifted along to near where you found me.

Something must have hit the boat and gone through the bottom, for she was filling with water fast. Then she tipped, and I went overboard. I can't swim very well, and that confounded smoke got in my lungs, and I thought sure I would be a goner. You boys certainly came in the nick of time."

"And we are glad of it," declared Fred, and the others nodded in approval.

The elderly man said that his name was Jed Kessler, and that he lived on the outskirts of Haven Point. He knew very little about Colby Hall, however, for previous to being employed by the Hasley Shell Loading Company he had worked around the docks at Hixley, at one end of the lake. So much the boys learned from him when they had rowed out of the pall of smoke and the rain of fire and could breathe freely and in comfort.

"Have you any idea what started that fire?" questioned Jack, when they were headed for one of the docks at Haven Point.

"I've got my idea, yes. But I don't know whether it's correct or not," replied Jed Kessler. "Of course, any kind of a slight accident in a place like that might set things to going. But I know one thing, and that is very important, I think."

"What is that?" questioned Randy.

"The first explosion took place down the railroad track, in one of the cars loaded with shells, while the second explosion, which came less than half a minute later, occurred in one of the supply houses."

"Was the supply house near the car where the first explosion happened?" queried Jack.

"No. The two places are at least five hundred feet apart."

"In that case, it isn't likely that the first explosion brought on the second, is it?" questioned Andy.

"It didn't!" was the prompt answer. "Those two explosions had nothing to do with each other—except in one way,—and that is that they were both started by the same person or persons," declared Jed Kessler emphatically.

"Gee! do you suppose there were German spies around?" ejaculated Randy.

"I am sure there were," went on the old dockman.

"But I supposed your guards kept all strangers away from the plant," said Jack.

"They were supposed to. But you know how it is. Those fellows aren't on the watch all the time. They get tired of their job, and sometimes they take it easy. Besides that, it is rather easy to reach the plant from the water front, and it is almost equally easy to come down through the woods on the hill behind the place. Of course, we've got a big wire fence up all around, but it doesn't take much to go through that if a fellow has a good pair of wire cutters."

"Did you ever see anybody suspicious?"

"Lots of times. But, of course, most of the people who looked suspicious proved to be nothing but men who had an idle curiosity regarding the plant. But I saw some fellows around there two weeks ago and again a couple of days ago, and they looked mighty suspicious to me. They were a couple of heavy-set looking fellows, with strong German faces, and I

heard 'em at a distance talking in a language that I'm pretty sure was German."

"Why didn't you report this to the guard?"

"I did. But they were a lot of fresh young fellows, and they only laughed at me and said I was too suspicious," grumbled Jed Kessler. "But that is where I made a mistake. I should have gone right to the offices and reported to the head boss."

"Do you suppose you'd know those fellows again if you saw them?" questioned Jack.

"I think I would—although I'm not sure. They were both fellows with heavy black hair and heavy black beards, and one of them walked with his right foot kind of turned out."

"You certainly ought to report this as soon as possible," declared the oldest Rover boy. "It may furnish the authorities with an important clue. If I were you, I would get into communication with one of your bosses without delay."

Leaving the old man and his rowboat at the dock, the four Rovers rowed up the lake once more in the direction of the Clearwater Hall boathouse. By this time the explosions at the shell-loading plant had practically ceased, and only a small amount of smoke was now coming from the ruins.

When the Rovers arrived at the boathouse connected with the girls' school, they found that Mary and Martha had come down to the place, accompanied by a number of the other girls. All had heard that the Rovers had taken the rowboat, and were wondering if the lads were safe.

"You've given us a terrible scare," declared Martha to her brother. "You shouldn't have taken such a risk!"

"Well, it was worth while," answered Fred, and then told of the rescue of Jed Kessler.

"Well, we've had a surprise since you went away," said Ruth Stevenson presently.

"A thoroughly disagreeable surprise, too," added May Powell. "You'll never guess who was here only a few minutes ago!"

"Some of our folks from New York?" questioned Jack quickly.

"No such luck," answered his sister.

"They were two persons we didn't care to see," said Ruth. "They were Slugger Brown and Nappy Martell!"

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CHAPTER V

MEETING OLD ENEMIES

"SLUGGER BROWN and Nappy Martell!" The cry came from all of the Rover boys simultaneously.

"What were those fellows doing here?" continued Jack.

"Did they dare to speak to you?" demanded Fred.

"Of course they spoke to us—you can't stop fellows like Brown and Martell from doing that," answered Ruth. "But you can be sure we gave them both the cold shoulder."

"What did they want here?" questioned Jack.

"I don't know what they wanted or where they came from," continued Ruth. "Their appearance gave us such a shock we didn't know what to do at first."

"We were on our way from the school to the boathouse, and were just crossing the roadway when Slugger and Nappy came along in a runabout," said May. "The minute they saw us they stopped and jumped out. They asked us a whole lot of questions about how we were getting along at school and if your sisters were here."

"Our sisters!" cried Fred. "What business have they got to ask about Martha and Mary?"

"Of course we didn't answer their questions, and Martha and Mary had gone on ahead, so Brown and Martell didn't see them," said Ruth. "They tried to act in a friendly manner, but we gave them to understand that we wanted nothing to do with them. Then they jumped into the runabout again and drove off."

"Did they go toward Haven Point?" questioned Randy.

"Yes."

"Those fellows certainly have their nerve with them—to show themselves anywhere near Colby Hall after what happened!" burst out Andy.

"One would think they wouldn't want any of their old classmates to see them," remarked Fred.

"They are not that kind," replied Jack. "Both of them are too thick-skinned to be sensitive. More than likely they have been telling their friends that we did our best to get them into trouble and that they were not to blame."

"Oh, Jack! if you go back to Colby Hall by way of the town, I hope you don't get into any trouble with those horrid fellows," said his sister.

"Don't worry about that, Martha," answered her brother quickly. "I'm not afraid of Slugger or Nappy either. They have got to behave themselves; otherwise we may bring up one of the old charges against them."

Of course the girls wanted to know more concerning what had happened to the Rover boys while they were out on the lake, and they related many of the particulars.

"And do you really think those two Germans that that Jed Kessler spoke about set fire to the munition plant?" questioned Ruth.

"I don't know what to think, Ruth," answered Jack. "One thing is certain: If the first explosions weren't accidental, then they must have been due to some underhand work."

During the time the boys spent with the girls at the boathouse there were no more explosions, and now

the fire on the opposite shore of the lake was dying out, while only a small part of the pall of curious-colored smoke remained.

"I guess it's about over," was Randy's comment.

Feeling that those at Clearwater Hall would be safe, at least for the time being, the Rovers decided to return to Colby Hall, knowing that Colonel Colby and his assistants would be anxious concerning the welfare of all the cadets.

Spouter and those with him had taken one automobile, but the other remained, and, bidding the girls good-bye, the Rover boys jumped into this and were soon off. Jack was at the wheel, and in spite of the numerous machines on the road, for the blowing-up of the shell-loading plant had caused great excitement for many miles around, he drove the car with considerable speed in the direction of Haven Point.

"Let us stop at the town for a few minutes and find out, if we can, just how bad this affair has been," said Fred.

"That's it!" returned Randy. "I'd like to know if anyone has been killed or seriously hurt."

They stopped on the main street close to where were located a number of the stores and also the moving-picture theater where the cadets had first met Ruth Stevenson and her chums.

"It's a pretty bad affair," said one of the storekeepers, with whom in the past the boys had done some trading. "I was just down to police headquarters, and they say there that two workmen were killed and about fifteen injured. It certainly is a

rascally piece of business, and the fellows who did it ought to be strung up."

"Then they are pretty certain that it is the work of some German sympathizers?" questioned Jack quickly.

"They can't figure it out any other way. The boss of the plant, and likewise two of his head foremen, have been closely questioned, and they declare that every possible precaution against accidents was taken. More than that, they say that there were two separate explosions occurring almost at the same time—one down on the railroad tracks and another in a storehouse quite a distance away."

"Yes, we heard that, too, from one of the dockmen of the plant," answered Fred. "He said he thought two men who looked like Germans and who had been hanging around the plant might be guilty."

"Yes, I've heard that story, too. I think it was started by old Jed Kessler, wasn't it?"

"That's the man," said Randy.

"I think I saw those two fellows here in Haven Point," continued the storekeeper. "They were heavy-set, round-faced men, and each had heavy black hair and a heavy black beard, just as Kessler described them. They were here several times. I think they had business at one of the machine shops, although I'm not certain about that."

The Rover boys spoke to several other people of the town and gathered a little additional information regarding the destruction of the shell-loading plant, and then reëntered their automobile and started once more for the military academy. With them went Bart

White and Frank Newberry, who had come down to the town directly after the ball game.

"It's too bad this affair had to happen just as it did," declared Bart White. "It kind of takes the shine off of our victory over Hixley High."

"So it does," said Jack. "But that can't be helped."

"If you put it up to the shell-loading people they would probably have been willing to postpone the blowing up indefinitely," remarked Andy dryly.

"I suppose the newspapers here will be full of nothing but this affair," said Fred wistfully; "and they won't give our game with Hixley High more than a brief mention."

"Oh, well, what of it?" cried Randy gaily. "We walloped 'em, and that's the main thing."

"Right you are!" came in a chorus from several of the others.

At one of the street corners, owing to the excitement, there was a congestion of traffic, and Jack had to bring the car to a stop. As he did this there was a sudden yell from behind, and then came a slight bump followed by a jingling of glass.

"Hi, you! what do you mean by stopping so suddenly?" yelled an irate voice from the rear.

"They've busted one of our headlights!" added another voice in surly tones.

Those in the tonneau of the Rovers' automobile looked around quickly.

"Nappy Martell and Slugger Brown!" ejaculated

Fred in surprise.

"They must have been following us!" added Randy quickly.

"Say, I didn't know those fellows were anywhere around here!" burst out Frank Newberry.

"I thought from what you fellows told us those fellows would steer clear of this vicinity," added Bart White.

By this time Jack and Andy, who were on the front seat, were also looking back to see what had happened. They beheld a runabout standing close up to their own car. The collision had not been sufficient to do any more damage than to break the glass in both of the headlights of the runabout. They had struck the framework holding an extra shoe on the rear of the Rovers' car, and for this reason the other automobile had not suffered any damage whatsoever.

"You fellows will pay for this damage!" grumbled Slugger Brown, who was at the wheel of the runabout.

"You did it yourself," answered Bart White quickly.

"You fellows had no business to stop so suddenly!"

"They did it on purpose!" burst out Nappy Martell.

As was usual with the youth, he was loudly dressed, wearing a light checkered suit with a cap to match and a flaming red tie. He looked somewhat dissipated.

"I'll attend to this," said Jack to his cousins and

the others. And without delay he leaped from the front machine and walked back to the other.

"Just see what you've done, Jack Rover!" began Slugger Brown. But then the stern look in Jack's face caused him to come to a stop.

"I'm glad I met you, Brown—and you too, Martell," said Jack in a low, steady voice. "I was hoping I'd see you before you had a chance to leave Haven Point."

"Wanted to see us, eh?" said Slugger; and now a somewhat uneasy look took possession of his face.

"Don't let him talk himself out of paying for the damage done," put in Nappy loftily. He was puffing on a cigarette and blew the smoke high into the air as he spoke.

"We're not going to pay for any damage done," said Jack. "This little accident is your own fault, for you had no business to be driving so close behind our car."

"We'll see about that," grumbled Slugger.

"What I want to talk to you about is another matter," went on Jack, without raising his voice because he did not wish to have any outsider hear. "You took the trouble a while ago to stop at Clearwater Hall and speak to some of the young ladies attending that school."

"Well, what of it? Haven't we got a right to do that if we want to?"

"I guess we can speak to our lady friends any time we feel like it," added Nappy.

"Both of you know very well that none of those young ladies want anything to do with you," continued Jack. "You've had your warning before. Now I want you to leave them alone."

"Huh! you talk as if you were our master," growled Slugger, an ugly look coming into his eyes.

"Never mind how I talk, Brown. You just listen to what I'm saying, and you mind me. If you don't, you'll get into a whole lot of trouble, just as sure as you are born."

By this time Fred had also left the forward car and was standing beside Jack.

"You fellows asked about my sister and about Jack's sister," said Fred. "Why did you do that?"

"That's our business," answered Nappy.

"I know why you did it," went on Fred quickly. "You did it because you thought you might make some sort of trouble for the girls. I know you! Jack," he continued, turning to his cousin, "I think the best thing we can do is to have them both arrested for that affair on Snowshoe Island."

"You can't bring up those old things—they are past and gone!" cried Nappy Martell, his face showing sudden uneasiness. "Old Barney Stevenson agreed to let the whole matter drop provided he was allowed to remain on the island."

"Oh, he's only bluffing, Nappy," broke in Slugger. "They can't do a thing, and they know it!"

"We can and we will unless you leave all the girls at Clearwater Hall alone," declared Jack stoutly. "Not a one of them wants anything to do with you."

"How do you know what they want?"

"Because they told us."

"I don't believe it, Rover."

"You can suit yourself about that, Brown. But just you remember this: If you or Martell attempt to do anything in the future to annoy my relatives or any of our girl friends at that school, I'll see to it that you are punished, and punished heavily."

"Say, do you know what I think?" cried Andy, who had come to the rear of the front car. "I think we ought to give them both a good licking."

"It might do them both good," answered his twin.

"I don't see how you fellows can show yourselves around here," remarked Frank Newberry. "After the way you acted at Colby Hall and up on Snowshoe Island I should think you'd want to keep out of sight."

"What right have you got to butt in here, Frank Newberry?" cried Slugger Brown wrathfully.

"I've got a good deal of right, and you know it, Brown! You and Martell were a disgrace to Colby Hall, and every cadet at the academy is aware of that fact. And I, too, know for a fact that none of the young ladies at Clearwater Hall wants to have anything to do with you."

"Aw, you fellows make me tired!" growled Slugger Brown.

By this time a small crowd had collected, anxious to find out how the damage to the headlights of the runabout was to be settled. Then a policeman pushed

his way forward.

"Any trouble here?" he asked.

"No trouble that I know of," answered Jack. "I stopped my car, and this fellow came up behind me so suddenly that he smashed his headlights."

"I see." The policeman turned to Slugger Brown. "Your own fault, was it?"

"It was his fault! He stopped too quickly," grumbled Slugger. "But—er—I—I—won't make any complaint—at least not—not now," he said lamely. "I'll take this up later."

"And we'll get what's coming to us—you see if we don't!" put in Nappy Martell.

Then Slugger Brown started up the engine of his runabout, backed up a few feet, and turned out into the roadway. He ran around the nearest corner and up the road, and was soon out of sight in the distance.

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CHAPTER VI

CELEBRATING THE BASEBALL VICTORY

"HE was afraid to make a complaint," was Fred's comment.

"I can't understand why two such fellows should act the way they do," said Bart White. "They both come from fairly well-to-do families, and they could be really fine fellows if they wanted to."

"Slugger Brown doesn't come from a very good family—at least as far as his father is concerned," answered Jack. "Mr. Brown is just as mean and dishonorable as Slugger. He was at the head of the plot to do poor Barney Stevenson out of Snowshoe Island."

"Yes, and to my mind Mr. Martell is no better," added Randy. "I've heard my father talking about him several times. Martell has been in more than one shady stock transaction down in Wall Street."

When the Rover boys arrived at Colby Hall they were immediately surrounded by a number of their friends, all eager to learn the particulars of what had occurred in the vicinity of the girls' boarding school. Of course the others who had come in ahead of them had already told their stories, but everybody at the military academy was eager to get all the details possible.

"It's the worst calamity that ever happened around here," said Will Hendry, the stoutest boy in the school, and who was generally called Fatty. Hendry had started to leave the school grounds shortly after the others had gone, but had been stopped by Captain Dale.

"It looks to me as if it was the work of German sympathizers," said Major Ralph Mason, who was the

cadet at the head of the school battalion. Ralph was the oldest student at the Hall, and one who was greatly liked by everybody.

"Ralph, what do you think about our getting into this war in Europe?" questioned Randy. During off hours the young officer was always addressed by the Rovers by his first name, although during school hours and when on parade they invariably addressed the young major by his official title.

"I'm glad we've got into it at last," returned Ralph Mason. "My father thinks we should have gotten into it long ago. I only wish one thing," he added wistfully.

"And I know what that is!" cried Jack. "You wish you were old enough to volunteer for the army or the navy!"

"If we were all older what a grand company of volunteers the Government could get out of Colby Hall," said Randy. "I'll wager more than half of the fellows would want to go."

"I'm certain fellows like Codfish wouldn't want to go," remarked Fred.

He referred to one of the younger boys, Henry Stowell by name, a lad who was a good deal of a sneak and who in time past had been a toady to Brown and Martell. On account of the great width of his mouth, Stowell was usually called Codfish.

"If you fellows will keep a secret, I'll tell you something," remarked Ralph Mason, lowering his voice. "I just heard of this a while ago."

"What is it, Ralph?" questioned Jack quietly.

"Will you fellows keep it to yourselves until it becomes public property?" asked the young major anxiously.

"Sure!" was the prompt response.

"I overheard the talk quite by accident while I was in the library. Colonel Colby was talking to Professors Grawson and Brice. He stated that he intended to leave the Hall under the management of Captain Dale."

"You mean Colonel Colby is going away?" questioned Fred. "Where to?"

"He has offered his services to the Government."

"Hurrah for the colonel! I knew he'd do something like that!" cried Randy.

"Do you know whether his offer has been accepted?" questioned Jack.

"Of course his offer will be accepted," answered Ralph Mason. "Now that we are in this great war Uncle Sam will need all the soldiers he can possibly muster, and of course they've got to have first-class men like Colonel Colby to command them."

"You're right there," said Fred. Then he looked questioningly at Jack and the twins. The others understood that look, but just then nothing was said concerning the thought which had rushed into their minds.

"I've got to go now," said Ralph Mason, a few minutes later. "I suppose you fellows will want to celebrate that baseball victory to-night?"

"Surest thing you know!" declared Jack.

"I don't suppose we'll have as much fun as we would have had if the shell-loading plant hadn't gone up," grumbled Andy. "We can't make any such noise as that."

"Oh, we'll have fun enough—don't worry about that," answered his twin quickly.

"Well, don't tear the old Hall down," returned the young major, laughing, and then hurried away.

"This certainly is great news about Colonel Colby's volunteering for the army," said Jack, a little later.

"I wonder why Captain Dale doesn't volunteer, too?" said Andy.

"Oh, he's too old; and besides he's somewhat crippled by rheumatism or something," said Randy.

The Rover boys hurried off to their room to get into their cadet uniforms. The twins went on ahead, leaving Jack and Fred alone for the time being.

"Jack, what do you think our fathers will do?" questioned Fred. He remembered that both Jack's father and his own had at one time been officers of the cadets at Putnam Hall. The fun-loving father of the twins had never aspired to such a position, being content to remain "a high private in the rear rank," as he himself had often expressed it.

"I'm sure I don't know, Fred," was the sober reply. "It may be that they will be just as anxious to get into the war as Colonel Colby seems to be. But you must remember that they are at the head of The Rover Company, and possibly they won't be able to leave—at least not right away."

"But they are so patriotic they'll want to go,"

declared Fred.

"Well, if they make up their minds to go, I guess we'll be among the first to hear about it."

"Gee, how I'd like to be a soldier boy!" sighed Fred. "Wouldn't it be great if all of us cadets could go into the army?"

"We'll have to wait four or five years before we can do that, Fred. And I rather think that by that time this great war will be over."

"Oh, you can't tell how long a war like this will last. For all you know the Germans may come right over here."

"I don't think they'll do that. They'll have their hands full fighting in Europe."

"Well, they've sent their submarines over here already."

"I know that. But I don't think they've got enough submarines to transport an army that way."

Since coming to Colby Hall the Rover boys had occupied four very pleasant rooms on the second floor in a wing of the great building. But instead of using the four rooms for bedrooms, the twins slept together and all used one of the extra rooms, No. 20, for a sitting-room.

"You fellows have got to hurry up or you'll be late for roll call!" cried Randy, when he entered.

"Oh, I think they'll give us a little leeway on account of all the excitement," returned Fred. And he was right,—the roll call and drill were postponed for half an hour, for which many of the cadets were

thankful.

It did not take the Rovers long to throw off their baseball togs, wash, and don their uniforms. Then they lost no time in rushing below to the gun rack and obtaining their rifles, doing this just as the drums rattled on the parade ground.

Soon the battalion of several companies was examined, and then began the roll call. After this there was a brief inspection by Captain Dale, with Colonel Colby looking on. Then the drums rattled and the fifes struck up a lively march air, and the cadets marched around the grounds, disposed of their rifles, and entered the mess hall of the institution. Here each had his place assigned to him at one of the long tables, each table presided over by one of the officers or a teacher.

The meal was a substantial one, for Colonel Colby believed in treating his pupils well, and it is perhaps needless to state that all of the cadets fell to with vigor. There was a constant clatter of forks and knives, mingled with a flow of lively conversation, carried on, however, in rather a subdued tone, for boisterousness of any sort in the mess hall was against regulations. After each lad finished he excused himself and left the hall, and soon all of them had scattered in various directions.

“Bonfires to-night!” announced Andy gaily, as he turned a handspring on the campus.

“I think we ought to have some sort of feast,” said Fred.

“Great Cæsar, Fred! didn’t you get enough to eat at supper?” queried Jack.

"Oh, you know what I mean—a little something to eat just before we go to bed!" answered his cousin.

"Suits me!" was the cry from the others.

Talk about the victory over Hixley High and about the excitement attending the destruction of the shell-loading plant filled the air. The cadets were only boys, and the facts regarding the awful occurrence across the lake could not subdue their high spirits when they considered their great victory over the high school.

"We've just got to celebrate and let off steam somehow," was the way Randy expressed himself.

Boxes and barrels had already been stored away in anticipation of a victory, and these were promptly brought forth and placed on the river front. They were piled as high as possible and then set on fire, the flames shooting skyward quickly and illuminating the scene for a long distance around.

"Hello there, Codfish!" cried Andy gaily, when he beheld the sneak of the school standing not far from one of the bonfires.

"Got any more boxes to put on the fire, Codfish?" questioned Randy, who was beside his twin.

"I haven't got any boxes," grumbled the young cadet. Since the departure of Slugger Brown and Nappy Martell from the Hall, Codfish had kept a good deal to himself. But he was as much of a sneak as ever, and did many mean things which were exceedingly irritating to the other cadets.

"You haven't any boxes?" said Randy, in apparent surprise. "What's the use of talking like that? You

know better;" and then he winked at his brother.

"I'm on," whispered Andy quickly. "Bring him up to his room in about ten minutes." And then he ran away at top speed.

"It's a waste of good money to burn up boxes and barrels like that," was Codfish's comment. "I don't see why Colonel Colby allows it. Those boxes and barrels could be used to pack all sorts of things in."

"Well, if you don't like to see the boxes and barrels burned up, why don't you furnish us with a little cord wood?" inquired Gif Garrison, who had come up.

"That's the talk!" said Jack quickly. "Show us where you've got your cord wood stored, Codfish," he went on, after Randy had whispered in his ear. Then Randy ran off in the direction his twin had taken.

"I haven't any cord wood, I tell you!" stormed Codfish. "And I haven't any boxes or barrels, either!" and then he walked away to get clear of his tormentors.

But Jack remembered what Randy had said to him, and did not allow Codfish out of his sight. He kept the sneak in view, and quickly gathered Spouter, Gif, Fatty, Walt, and a number of others around him.

"We're going to take Codfish up to his room in a few minutes and treat him to the surprise of his life," he explained. "Don't forget to come along and see the fun."

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CHAPTER VII

FUN WITH CODFISH

THE idea of having a little fun with Codfish had occurred to Andy and Randy on the day previous, when they had been out collecting some boxes and barrels for the bonfires which they hoped to have—provided, of course, that Hixley High was beaten in the baseball contest. They had talked the matter over for some time, and had then set to work, laying their plans to give the sneak of the school the surprise of his life.

"What's doing, Jack?" questioned Walt Baxter, in some surprise.

"Going to put one over on Codfish?" questioned Gif.

"Just you wait and see," announced Jack. And then, turning to Spouter, he continued: "In about five minutes I wish you would go over to Codfish and tell him somebody wants to see him up in his room without delay. Put it to him good and strong so that he goes up at once."

"Trust me for that," answered Spouter, with a grin. "I'll tell him his grandfather has just died and the lawyer is up there waiting to hand him an inheritance of a million dollars."

"Don't pile it on as thick as that!" cried Fred. "If you do, he'll take it for another joke, and won't go at all."

All of the crowd kept their eyes on Codfish, and when the time was up Spouter approached Stowell as if in a great hurry.

"I say, Henry," he said in an earnest voice, "there's a man wants to see you. They just sent him up to your room."

"To see me! What for?" questioned Codfish in surprise.

"I don't know. He seemed to be a very nice man, though. He was in a great hurry. You had better not keep him waiting. He said it was very important," and without waiting to be questioned further, Spouter hurried away.

Codfish looked after the other cadet rather doubtfully, and stood still for a moment. Then, however, his curiosity got the better of him, and he hurried off in the direction of the Hall.

"Come on, fellows!" cried Jack in a low voice. "But don't let him suspect that you are following him, or it may spoil the fun."

Stowell entered the school by a side door and ran up the nearest stairway to the main corridor above. The others hastened around to the front entrance and came up by another staircase. They were just in time to see the sneak hurrying into the room he occupied.

"Hist!" came in a low voice from the other end of the corridor, after the door had closed upon Codfish, and then from a shadowy recess Andy and Randy appeared.

"Did you get everything fixed up?" questioned Jack hurriedly.

"All fixed," answered Andy laconically. "Come on in here," and he motioned to a room next to that occupied by Stowell. This belonged to a student who, for the time being, was away from the school.

Once inside of this room, Randy and Andy took the others to where there was a door connecting that apartment with the one occupied by the sneak. This was partly open, so that they could look into Stowell's room with ease.

"Hello there!" they heard the sneak exclaim. And then followed the switching on of an electric light. "It's only one of their rotten jokes! I knew it all along!" murmured the cadet.

He looked around the room, and then a cry of astonishment burst from his lips. In the center of the floor were piled at least ten boxes of various sizes and shapes. Some of the boxes had had straw in them and others excelsior, and part of this was strewn on the floor.

"Huh! Some of those fellows are mighty smart, putting these boxes in my room!" growled Codfish to himself. "I'd just like to know who did it! If it was that Spouter Powell, I think I'll go and tell on him!"

"Here is where I got in fine!" murmured Spouter.

Codfish glanced further, and his eyes fell on the interior of the closet of the room, the door to which stood wide open. Then he gave a gasp.

"My gracious! if they haven't taken all my clothing, and my hats, and even my shoes!" he groaned. "This is the worst yet!" He rushed to the closet, and another look convinced him that the place was entirely empty. Then he ran to a corner

where stood a clothes tree, which had contained some of his athletic outfit. This was likewise empty. Then he rushed to his chiffonier.

"Gone! Everything gone! Not a thing left!" he groaned. "Oh, if this isn't the worst yet! If I don't tell on somebody for this!"

Coming back to the middle of the room, he surveyed the pile of boxes suspiciously. Then a sheet of paper resting on the top box claimed his attention.

"'For anything that is missing look in the boxes,'" he read from the slip of paper. "Oh, dear! I suppose those fellows were just mean enough to stuff all my things in those packing cases. I wonder what they did that for? Maybe they thought they were going to cart them down to the bonfire and burn them up, and burn all my stuff, too. Just wait and see if I don't fix somebody for this!"

There was rather a small box on top of the others, and this Codfish started to open first. One end of the lid was nailed down, but the other was loose, and he pulled up on this with vigor.

And then the sneak got the first of a series of surprises. The lid of the box held down a large rubber frog, and this bounced out of the box, hitting him full in the face. He staggered back and fell over on his bed.

"Hurrah! First round!" whispered Andy delightedly.

"Just wait for the second," said Randy.

There was nothing else in the box but excelsior, and having rummaged about in this, Codfish threw

the box aside and started to investigate the next receptacle.

The lid to this was screwed on, and he had quite a job opening it. The other cadets watched with interest, doing their best to keep from laughing. When the box was opened, Codfish found that it contained a layer of excelsior. Under this, however, were a number of bundles wrapped in newspapers, each containing a small portion of the stuff taken from his chiffonier.

“Huh! thought they were smart, didn’t they?” he muttered, as he put the things where they belonged. “Just wait! I’ll fix ’em for this.”

The next box contained some of his clothing, which he hung in the closet. Then he tackled a rather large box which was bound up with an old clothesline. He had to tug at the line quite a little to get it loose, not thinking in his excitement that it would be easier to cut the line. The top of the box was filled with all sorts of rubbish. Beneath this were some more of his things, and then at the very bottom a rather small wooden box with a sliding cover.

Any ordinary school boy would have suspected some trick in connection with this box. But not so Codfish. He looked at it carefully, and then, bringing it close under the light, proceeded to pull the sliding cover back.

And then he was treated to another surprise, this time far more disagreeable than the other. The box contained a large codfish, one which, as Andy afterwards explained, had seen better days.

“Phew, what a smell!” cried the sneak, as he

allowed the decayed codfish to fall out on the floor.

The odor when released from the air-tight box was so overpowering that he had to go over and throw open the window.

“Codfish for the Codfish!” sang out Andy gaily, unable to keep quiet any longer.

The sneak of the school whirled around suddenly, and there beheld in the doorway of the next room the Rover boys and their chums in a group, all grinning at him.

“How’d you like the fish, Codfish?” questioned Fred.

“Thought you said you didn’t have any boxes in your room,” came from Jack.

“I didn’t know you were raising frogs for a living,” remarked Randy.

“Why don’t you take those boxes down and put them on the bonfire?” questioned Gif.

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself—littering up your room with all that straw and excelsior,” was Walt’s comment. “If you aren’t careful, you’ll get some mighty bad marks for doing that.”

“What did you do with the man who wanted to see you?” questioned Spouter. “Did you tell him that you were too busy to talk?”

“You’re a fine bunch of fellows!” howled Codfish, not knowing what to say. “You had no business to play a trick like this on me!”

“Play a trick on you?” questioned Andy innocently.

“Who has been playing a trick? Why, we don’t know what it is to do anything like that!”

“I think somebody said you wanted to see us, but I don’t know what for,” added Randy.

“If anybody should ask me, I would say you had a queer way of cleaning house, Codfish,” remarked Fred calmly.

“And to think he stole one of the codfish from the pantry!” said Jack. “By the way it smells, he must have taken it the day he enrolled here.”

“Maybe he likes codfish good and strong,” suggested Gif.

“I’ll ‘codfish’ you fellows if you don’t leave me alone!” howled the sneak. He was so vexed he almost felt like crying. “You just wait till Colonel Colby or Captain Dale hears about this!”

“Yes, I wonder what the colonel will say when he finds out you stole one of the codfish belonging to the school,” said Andy. “You oughtn’t to have done it, Henry, my boy. If you wanted anything to eat, why didn’t you ask one of the teachers for it?”

“Maybe he chews on codfish in the middle of the night when he can’t sleep, or when he is trying to solve a problem in algebra,” suggested Randy.

“I don’t do any such thing, and I didn’t take that codfish from the pantry, and you know it!” howled Codfish, in anger. “It’s a put-up job, and you are the fellows who did it! All of you ought to be sent away from this school.”

“If he took a codfish, maybe he took some other things, too,” said Jack. “I think this ought to be

investigated."

"And how did you happen to get all these boxes?" demanded Fred. "I know them. They were collected for the bonfire some days ago."

"You certainly have no right to have them in your room, Codfish," said Gif. "Better hustle 'em down and put 'em on the fire before the rest of the fellows hear of this."

"And if you've got things belonging to the school victuals besides that codfish, you'd better fork 'em over," admonished Jack.

"You clear out, every one of you! I don't want to hear another word!" screamed Codfish, in a rage. "You just wait until I report you! I think you're all too mean for anything! Go on away!" And he tried to close the door to the other room in their faces. But they held it back so he could do nothing.

"Come on, fellows, let's put those boxes where they belong!" cried Jack. And, marching into the room, he picked up one of the packing cases, and the others quickly followed suit. Then they marched out into the hallway, leaving Codfish staring after them in bewilderment.

"I know you've got some other things belonging to the school besides that fish!" cried Andy. "You've got the pockets of your overcoat just stuffed with good things!"

"Haven't any such thing!" declared the sneak. And then, struck by a sudden idea, he ran to the clothing closet and brought forth his overcoat, which had been in one of the boxes. He rammed his hand into one of the pockets, and then suddenly withdrew it

with a yell of fright and pain.

And his fright and pain were not without good reason, for clinging to the thumb of the hand he had inserted into the pocket of the overcoat was a small, but exceedingly active, snapping turtle!

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CHAPTER VIII

AN INTERRUPTED FEAST

"OH, oh, oh!" yelled Codfish, dancing around the room wildly. "Take that thing off! Oh, I'll be bitten to death! Take it off, somebody! What is it, anyhow?"

"Hello! Codfish has been fishing," cried Andy gaily.

"Maybe he got that from the cook's pantry, too," broke in Randy.

"What's the dear creature's name, Codfish?" questioned Fred.

"You haven't got to let go of him if you don't want to, you know," came from Jack.

All this while the sneak of the school was dancing

around the room, doing his best to shake off the snapping turtle. But the creature, though small, had a hold that was very tenacious, and refused to budge.

"Say, he won't be seriously bitten, will he?" questioned Spouter, in a low tone.

"No, it's only a baby snapping turtle," answered Andy slowly. "Codfish is far more scared than hurt."

The sneak of the school was so frightened that he did not dare to take hold of the snapping turtle. He held the creature out at arm's length and continued to dance around, asking the others to take it off.

"He'll eat my finger!"

"Put it in some water and it will let go quick enough," suggested Fred presently.

"Yes, give him a chance to swim around in a bathtub," added Randy quickly, when he saw Stowell make a move toward the washbowl in one corner of the room. "That isn't big enough for a good healthy turtle."

"Oh, oh! I'll have the law on you for this!" yelled the sneak, and then bolted for the door and ran down the corridor in the direction of the nearest bathroom.

As it happened, at that moment Job Plunger, the school janitor, was coming along the corridor carrying an armful of old magazines which he had been ordered to store away in the attic. As my old readers know, Plunger, who had been nicknamed "Shout," was quite deaf, and with eyes in another direction he did not see Codfish coming. The two collided violently, and the janitor was sent over

backward, scattering the magazines in all directions, while Codfish came down on top of him.

"Hi you! what you mean by knockin' me down that way?" shrilled the janitor, when he could regain his breath.

"I—I didn't mean to do it," stammered the sneak, as he arose to his feet. "I was in a hurry."

"You ain't got no right to race through these halls like a crazy horse," went on Plunger. "I ought to report you."

"I told you I was in a hurry," explained Codfish.

"Worry?" queried Plunger, not hearing aright. "Ain't I got a right to worry if a feller like you sends me sprawlin'?"

"I didn't say worry—I said I was in a hurry. A snapping turtle had me by the finger, and I wanted to get rid of it."

"Rappin'! Well, you ain't goin' to rap me. I'll let you know that!" growled the deaf janitor.

"I said snapping—not rapping—a snapping turtle!" Codfish put his mouth close to the janitor's ear. "*A snapping turtle!*"

"What's that? No, I ain't got no snappin' turtle. What would I be doin' with a snappin' turtle?" queried Plunger blankly.

"I said I had one here—on my thumb!" cried Codfish. "It's gone now. I guess my fall knocked it off," and he looked around in the rather dim corridor to see what had become of the turtle, but without locating the creature.

"I'm off, am I?" snarled Plunger, who had been asked that day to do a large amount of extra work by the cadets, and was consequently in no good humor. "I ain't half as much off as you are, you young rascal!" He grabbed Codfish by the arm. "You jest pick up them magazines and put 'em in my arms ag'in, or I'll report you."

At this the sneak muttered something under his breath. But he was afraid of the deaf janitor, and so he began to pick up the various magazines that had been scattered around and piled them high in Plunger's arms. While he was doing this, he continued to look around for the snapping turtle, but the little creature had disappeared.

"Now you be careful after this," said Plunger, when the task of gathering up the scattered magazines had been completed. "After this when you want to run through the halls, you walk!" And then he continued on his way.

The Rovers and their chums had witnessed the scene in the corridor, but as soon as Stowell turned to come back to his room they ran off and down a side stairs, carrying the packing cases with them.

"Say, but that was rich—the way he thumped into Shout," was Andy's comment.

"Yes, and the way Shout took him up for what he said," returned Randy. "Gosh! it seems to me as if poor old Shout is getting deafer every day."

"I wonder what became of the snapping turtle," said Fred.

"If they fell on it, they must have crushed the poor creature," returned Jack.

The boxes were soon placed on the various bonfires, and then the boys mingled with the other students in having a good time generally. The cadets sang songs and danced around the fires, and then organized an impromptu parade up and down the river front and around the Hall.

"How about that little feast we were going to have before we went to bed?" questioned Randy presently.

"Just what I was thinking about," answered Fred. "I'd like to have it first rate; but where are we going to get the eats?"

"Perhaps we can get something from the Hall pantry," suggested Jack.

"Nothing doing in that direction," came from Ned Lowe, who was present.

"What makes you say that?" questioned Spouter.

"Bart White and I tried it a little while ago, and everything is locked up as tight as a drum. I guess the head cook and the head waiter got on to the fact that we might make a raid."

"Then there is only one other thing to do," said Randy quickly. "And that is to go down to town for something."

"That would be easy enough, especially if we could get some one on the road to give us a lift," said Jack.

The Rovers and their chums talked the matter over for several minutes, and then it was decided that Jack, Fred, Spouter, and Gif would pay a hurried visit to Haven Point, bringing back with them such good things as they could pick up quickly in the stores and carry back. A cap was passed around, and

eight dollars was collected for the proposed feast. The cadets who had been selected as a committee lost no time in leaving the school grounds, and then hurried off down the road leading to the town.

"Let's watch our chance for a ride," said Jack. "We don't want to waste any time on this trip."

He had scarcely spoken when they heard the rumble of a truck approaching. It was a motor truck belonging to a dairy company doing business in Haven Point and other towns around the lake.

"Hello there! Give us a ride into town, will you?" questioned Fred of the driver, as the truck came to a halt at their signal.

"Sure! Climb on board," said the good-natured driver. He had only a small load and was glad of their company, feeling sure that they would treat him well for the accommodation.

By means of the truck it did not take the cadets long to reach the town, and there they left the driver, Jack tossing him a quarter for his kindness. Then the lads hurried to such of the stores as were still open.

They had already made up their minds as to what they wanted if the things could be obtained. At a delicatessen store they purchased a pasteboard box lined with waxed paper and filled with chicken salad, and also some ham and tongue sandwiches. Then they rushed into a bakeshop, the proprietor of which was just closing, and purchased several layer cakes and also a generous supply of ginger snaps. Then they hurried to a confectionery, and there obtained some bottled soda water and ginger ale, and likewise several quarts of ice-cream.

"Now I guess we're pretty well fixed for a little spread," declared Jack, when they were once more on the street, each loaded with several bundles.

"I hope we can get a ride back to the school," said Fred. "These bundles are pretty heavy."

"I've got an idea," said Andy. "See that automobile yonder? Well, that belongs to the man who owns the moving-picture theater. There he is in front of his place. I wonder if he wouldn't let his chauffeur run us down to the Hall? He knows all the boys at the Hall are pretty good customers at his show place."

"It wouldn't do any harm to ask him, Andy," answered his cousin.

The crowd crossed the street and was soon interviewing the owner of the moving-picture theater. He had seen the boys there a number of times, and remembered them, and was keenly alive to anything that might aid his business.

"Sure, my man can run you down to the school," he said readily. "Here he is now." He turned to his colored chauffeur. "Joe, take these young gentlemen to Colby Hall and then come back here just as soon as you can."

The run to Colby Hall in the automobile took but a few minutes, and the driver very condescendingly agreed to take them around to the rear entrance of the building. The cadets paid him for his trip, and then lost no time in sneaking what they had bought up a back stairway and into the rooms occupied by the Rovers.

By this time the celebration over the defeat of Hixley High had about come to an end. The cadets

were disappearing in all directions, some going to their rooms and others to the library of the school, a large room which was often used as a general meeting place.

Word had been passed around to a number of others, so that a crowd of about a dozen assembled in the Rovers' rooms to take part in the feast.

"I'll tell you one thing we ought to do," said Randy. "We ought to square ourselves somehow with Codfish. Otherwise he may be just mean enough to give us away."

"I guess I can fix it for you," said Ned Lowe, who in the past had been a bit more friendly with the sneak than any of the others present. "Just give me a plate of ice-cream and a piece of cake, and I'll go and smooth it over with the little sneak."

"Go ahead and do it, by all means, Ned," answered Andy quickly. "I don't begrudge the little sneak a bit of something good. It will make him forget how his thumb hurts."

Ned soon departed with the ice-cream and cake, and then the others passed around the food which had been provided. They had brought along some paper dishes and paper drinking cups, and likewise a few tin spoons, and the boys made themselves comfortable on various chairs and on the beds.

"It's all right," said Ned, when he returned. "Codfish was sitting by the window in his room wondering what he was going to do. He was suspicious at first, thinking there was some trick about the ice-cream or the cake, but when he found it was all right he felt better, and he has promised to

keep quiet. But just the same, we'll have to keep quiet ourselves in here, or we'll get into trouble. I just heard the professors going around giving orders that the celebration was now over and everybody would have to turn in."

With such healthy appetites as all of the cadets possessed, the good things to eat and drink disappeared as if by magic. Some of the boys wanted to sing, but this had to be tabooed. Spouter, however, was called on to make a little speech, much to his delight.

"It's a grand occasion," he began. "A grand and glorious occasion, and one which will live long in the memory of those attending this school. In years to come we can point with great pride to our baseball association and how, in spite of the fact that our opponents possessed a pitcher whose renown had traveled for many miles, and an outfield which was classed as second to none in this district, yet our invincible heroes——"

"Hurrah! Hurrah! That's the stuff, Spouter!" interrupted Andy.

"Did you say invisible heroes?" queried Randy.

"I did not," snorted Spouter. "I said our invincible heroes. And as I was about to further remark, our invincible heroes covered themselves with a glory which will ever remain as a bright guiding star to this glorious school, and when in days to come——"

"How do you know the days are to come?" questioned Andy. "Maybe the days will go."

"Stop your interrupting!" cried the young speechmaker. "And in the days to come——" he

repeated, “and in the days to come—er—we shall, in the days to come——”

“Great Cæsar, Spouter! how long are those days coming?” queried Randy.

“Say, how can a fellow make a speech if you’re going to interrupt him all the time?” cried Spouter. “If you want to listen to what I’ve got to say——”

At this moment came another interruption, but not from any of the others present. There was a loud knock on the door, something which brought all of the cadets to their feet in alarm.

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CHAPTER IX

A TELEGRAM FROM HOME

“I’LL bet it’s one of the professors!” whispered Fred.

“Just our confounded luck!” grumbled Andy.

“And when we were having such a dandy time!” added his twin.

“Say, you fellows get that stuff out of sight, and be quick about it!” commanded Jack in a low tone of

voice. “Take everything into the other rooms.”

With alacrity the cadets removed all traces of the spread, placing the empty soda-water bottles and ginger-ale bottles and other things in a closet and in the adjoining rooms.

“Now you outside fellows get into the other rooms, and hide in the closets if necessary,” said Jack. “I’ll stay here with my cousins.”

The knock on the door had been repeated several times, and Jack had answered in a sleepy voice that he was coming. Then, when all was ready, he threw the door open—to find himself confronted, not by one of the professors, as he had expected, but by Bob Nixon, a fellow who was employed as a chauffeur and a general man of all work around the school.

“You must sleep pretty sound,” announced Nixon good-naturedly. “I thought I’d have to knock the door down to make you hear.”

“I told you I was coming, Nixon,” answered Jack. “What do you want?”

“Got a telegram for you,” answered the man curtly. “Professor Brice asked me to bring it up to you. Say, you fellows certainly did trim up Hixley High to-day, didn’t you?” the chauffeur went on, grinning.

“You’re right we did!” answered Jack. He was immensely relieved to think it was not one of the professors come to spoil their feast. “Where is the telegram?”

“Here you are,” and Nixon held it forth.

“Any charges?”

"No; it's a prepaid telegram. It was delivered with another one for Colonel Colby. He signed for it, thinking you might be asleep. I hope you haven't got any bad news."

"I hope so myself," answered Jack. His heart had given a little jump on first receiving the news, thinking that possibly something had happened at home. He lost no time in opening the envelope, and while he did this Fred and the twins crowded around him.

The telegram was from Jack's father, and read as follows:

> "Your Uncle Sam and I have volunteered for the army. We have both received commissions. Tell Fred of this and break the news gently to Mary and Martha. Uncle Tom will manage business and remain head of Liberty Loan Committee. Colonel Colby will tell you more.
>
> "RICHARD ROVER."

"What is it?" queried Fred.

"It's great news, Fred; especially for you and for me," answered Jack, whose eyes had traveled swiftly over the telegram.

Then he read the message aloud. Bob Nixon had retired, and Randy had closed the door after him.

"Well, what do you know about that!" ejaculated Fred. "My father in the army! Good for him!"

"And to think my father is going, too!" remarked the oldest of the Rover boys. "And he also has a commission." He looked at Andy and Randy and wanted to go on, but somehow could not.

"And they are going to make our father remain at home and take care of the business," remarked Randy soberly. "That's what I call tough luck!"

"It sure is!" declared his twin emphatically. "I'll wager he wanted to go to the front just as much as anybody."

"Why, of course he did," answered Jack readily.

"Uncle Tom is just as brave as anybody! We all know that!" burst out Fred. "It was only that somebody had to stay in New York and take care of The Rover Company."

"Of course our dad was never as much of a soldier as your fathers," continued Randy. "He never became an officer at Putnam Hall. Just the same, I'll wager he'd like to have a chance to put one over on the Huns."

By this time the other cadets had come from their various hiding places and were listening with much interest to what was being said.

"It certainly is great news!" declared Gif Garrison. "I wonder if my dad will want to go, too?" He knew that his parent and the older Rovers had been great chums.

"They leave us to break the news to Mary and Martha," said Fred. "That isn't going to be a very nice job. I'm afraid the poor girls will be all broke up."

"I can't see it that way," answered Jack. "They ought to feel proud to think our fathers are brave enough to volunteer."

"The telegram says that Colonel Colby will tell you more about this," said Randy. "Why don't you go over and interview him?"

"Maybe he has gone to bed," suggested Spouter.

"I don't think so—not if he was up to receive that telegram Nixon mentioned," said Jack. "Anyhow, I'm going down and find out. Do you want to come along, Fred?"

"Sure!" was the instant response.

"Find out if the colonel knows anything about my father," said Randy. And then he added to his brother: "We can stay here and get rid of the remains of this feast."

"All right," was Andy's answer. And then he added in a low tone. "Just the same, I can't understand why dad didn't volunteer along with Uncle Dick and Uncle Sam," and his face wore anything but a pleasant expression.

Leaving the others to dispose of what remained of the feast as they saw fit, Jack and Fred brushed up a bit, and then lost no time in hurrying downstairs and to the main entrance of Colby Hall. Here they found a night watchman on guard.

"You can't go out this time of night," said the watchman, following orders.

"We have just received this telegram," answered Jack, showing the yellow slip; "and we must confer with Colonel Colby at once. The telegram states that he can give us some information we want."

"Oh, all right, if that's the case," said the watchman, and allowed them to pass.

As stated before, the colonel and his family, along with a number of the professors, lived in a building some distance away from the Hall proper. Crossing the campus, the boys noted a light in the colonel's library, and presented themselves at the door of this place, and knocked.

"Come in," called out Colonel Colby.

They found the head of Colby Hall seated at his

desk, looking over a number of private papers and accounts. He looked up questioningly, and then smiled as he recognized his visitors.

"Got your news from home, I suppose," he said, after motioning them to seats. "I knew it was coming."

"It's great news, Colonel Colby!" cried Jack, his eyes shining. "Here is the telegram. You see it says you will give us more information. Of course, both Fred and I are curious to know all the particulars."

"I'll be glad to tell you all I can, boys," answered Colonel Colby. "And first of all let me say that I have also volunteered, and I, too, have been commissioned."

"Isn't that fine!" exclaimed Fred. "Are you going with our fathers?"

"Yes. And I may as well tell you a little secret. Quite a crowd of us, all former pupils of Putnam Hall, have volunteered, and we hope to go into the war together."

"May I ask what sort of commission my father obtained?" questioned Jack.

"He has been made a captain and your Uncle Sam has been made a lieutenant."

"A lieutenant!" said Fred. "Well, that's something anyhow!"

"And what about you, if I may ask?" continued Jack.

"I, too, have been made a captain."

"Who of the others of the Old Guard are going?" asked Fred.

"Oh, there are quite a number, including Harry Blossom, Bart Conners, Dave Kearney, and Hans Mueller."

"For gracious sake! you don't mean that Hans Mueller is going?" queried Jack. He had often heard of this German-American who had been a school chum of his father. Mueller had never learned to use the English language correctly, and had been intensely German in many of his ways.

"Yes, Hans Mueller has volunteered," answered Colonel Colby. "But he is going into the heavy artillery, so I'm afraid your fathers and I won't see very much of him. In spite of his German blood, Hans Mueller is very patriotic, and that counts for a good deal."

"I should say it did!" said Fred.

"And what about Mr. Powell and Mr. Garrison?" questioned Jack.

"We have been corresponding with those two gentlemen, but up to to-day have not heard what they have decided to do. We are hoping that they will go with us if they can leave their business. And that puts me in mind. You will probably want to know about your Uncle Tom, and I presume the twins would like to know, too."

"Yes, indeed!"

"Well, when the question of going to the front came up, your Uncle Tom was just as eager to go as anybody, even though he was never an officer during

his days at Putnam Hall Military Academy. But it was realized that some one must remain behind to take charge of The Rover Company. More than this, your Uncle Tom is at the head of one of the most important committees connected with the sale of Liberty Bonds, and he is also at the head of one of the Red Cross committees, and doing splendid work in both positions. The matter was talked over a number of times, and finally, much, however, against his will, he consented to withdraw in favor of your fathers. It is understood that he is not only to look after the business, but that he will likewise look after all of you young folks, including your sisters."

"And how soon do all of you expect to leave, if I may ask?" questioned Jack.

"That will depend somewhat on circumstances. As soon as I receive any word, I'll let you know. In the meanwhile, however, you may get some word from home."

The two cadets continued to talk the matter over with Colonel Colby for several minutes longer, and then, realizing that he was a very busy man, they withdrew and hurried back to their own rooms.

"Now tell us all about it," said Andy. All of the outsiders except Spouter and Gif had gone to their own quarters.

"Tell it straight," said Randy.

Sitting down, Jack and Fred did so, the others listening closely to every word that was said. As they proceeded the twins showed their satisfaction over the news.

"I knew dad would want to go just as much as

anybody," declared Randy.

"So did I," added his twin. "As it is, I guess he'll have as much to do as anybody."

"He'll certainly have his hands full, running The Rover Company and being on those two committees, as well as looking after all of us young folks."

"Just as if we couldn't look after ourselves!" exclaimed Fred.

"Oh, well, you know what I mean!"

"This gets me!" said Spouter. "I'd like to know what my father is going to do. If he is going into the army, I'd like to know it."

"And I'd like to know what my father is going to do, too," said Gif. "I don't believe he cares much for military matters, but just the same, he is intensely patriotic, and I know he would like to get a chance at those Boches."

"I suppose we'll get more news in a day or two," said Jack. "This telegram was sent more to break the ice than anything else. It puts it up to us to let Mary and Martha know," and he looked at Fred as he spoke.

"We'll go over to-morrow and see them," was Fred's reply. "I don't think I care to telephone news like this. No, we'll take them off by themselves and let them know."

A little later Spouter and Gif retired. The four Rover boys sat up for fully an hour longer, discussing the subject from every possible point of view. To Jack and Fred the entrance of their fathers into the army of the United States meant a great deal. The

great war was on in all its fury, and they knew that sooner or later their fathers would be sent to France to face the enemy.

"It's all well enough to talk about going to the front and covering oneself with glory," was the way Fred expressed himself. "But some of those who go to the front never come back."

"That is true, Fred," answered Jack soberly. "But a good citizen has got to be ready to do his duty, no matter what the cost."

"Oh, I know that! Just the same, this going to the front is a serious business. Even if a person isn't killed, he may come back minus an arm or a leg, or something like that."

"Well, don't you go to talking like that to Mary and Martha."

"I don't intend to. Just the same, what I said is true."

"I know it."

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CHAPTER X

ON THE WAY HOME

"OH, Jack, you don't mean it! Father and Uncle Sam have really volunteered for the war!"

It was Martha Rover who spoke. She and her brother were seated in a small summerhouse attached to Clearwater Hall. Not far away sat Mary and Fred.

"It's the truth, Martha," answered Jack; "and here is the telegram that was sent. We at once went to Colonel Colby and got some particulars."

"But he may be shot down and killed!" and Martha's face grew white as she spoke.

"That's a chance every soldier takes when he goes to the front, Martha. But let us hope that dad will escape—and let us hope that Uncle Sam will escape, too."

Jack and Fred had come over early in the morning and had asked permission of Miss Garwood to see the girls on an important errand. They had left the school building under the curious eyes of Ruth and a number of their other chums.

"Well, in one way, I'm glad of this," declared Mary, her pride showing in her face. "It's exactly what I thought dad would do the minute we got into the war. I knew he wouldn't want to be thought a slacker."

"But, Mary! suppose they got killed—or even wounded?" murmured Martha.

"Martha Rover! do you want your father to hang back when he thinks it's his duty to go to the front?" demanded Mary, her eyes snapping questioningly.

"No, no!" answered her cousin quickly. "I know it's

the right thing to do. Just the same, it worries me a great deal; and I know it will worry mamma, too."

"You mustn't say anything about being a slacker," admonished Jack. "If it should get to the ears of Uncle Tom, it might make him feel very bad."

"Oh, I don't put Uncle Tom down as a slacker," returned Mary quickly. "I think he is making a great sacrifice, by staying behind to keep the business together, and to serve on that Loan Committee and the Red Cross Committee."

The young folks talked it over for some time, and decided to wait until they got further word from home. Then the two girls went back into the school to tell Miss Garwood and their chums the news, while the boys hurried to Colby Hall, arriving there during the morning recess.

"Say, but we've had some fun since you went away!" cried Andy gaily, when they appeared. "Pud Hicks, the janitor's assistant, got the surprise of his life."

"How is that?" questioned Fred.

"Why, Pud was using a vacuum cleaner in the upper hall when he saw something in a dark corner that he couldn't quite make out. The thing got stuck in the cleaner, and he put down his hand to see what it was. The next minute he let out a yell like a wild Indian and came flying down the corridor, scared stiff."

"What was it—the snapping turtle?" asked Jack.

"You've struck it. The turtle must have crawled into the corner, and when he felt Pud's hand on him

he took a good solid hold on Pud's little finger.

"I had just gone upstairs to get a book when I saw Pud tearing around. Half a dozen fellows were there, and the way Pud cut up was like a circus. Shout Plunger came tearing upstairs to find out what it was all about, and Pud gave the snapping turtle a sling, and it hit Shout right in the face and then fell down inside his coat. Shout put his hand inside to find out what it was, he being too deaf to hear the talk about a snapping turtle, and then the turtle got busy and got Shout by the hand. Then there was more fun!"

"What did they do with the turtle at last?" questioned Jack.

"Oh, Shout wouldn't take any chances," answered Andy. "He put the turtle down on the floor and smashed it with his heel; and then, of course, the fun was all over."

"Did they find out how the turtle came to be there?" questioned Fred.

"No, they didn't. Codfish came along, and he started to say something, but I put up my fist and motioned to him, and then he shut up like a clam."

"He'll give you away sooner or later, Andy," remarked Jack.

"If he does, he'll pay for it," retorted the fun-loving Rover.

Several days went by, and during that time the boys learned not a little concerning the catastrophe at the Hasley Shell-Loading plant, the local papers giving a full account of the affair. Fortunately the report that several had been killed was untrue, but

about sixteen men had been injured, and several of them quite seriously.

There were many speculations concerning what had started the explosions. It was proved that the first had occurred in one of the cars which was standing loaded on the railroad track, while the second explosion had come less than a minute later from what was known as Storehouse No. 3. Then had followed an explosion at Storehouse No. 2, and after that the explosions had come so rapidly and there had been so much excitement that no one could tell exactly what had happened next. But fortunately the explosions had been confined to the storehouses and the loaded cars on the track. The main building of the shell-loading plant had suffered considerably, but a portion was still standing, and some underground vaults, filled with high explosives, had not been reached. Had these explosives gone up, it is more than likely Haven Point, as well as Clearwater Hall and possibly Colby Hall, would have been shaken to their foundations and with great loss of life.

A rigid investigation had been started by three different parties—the owners of the plant, the local authorities, and the Secret Service of the national government. The Secret Service men, of course, made no public report, but the others in authority came to the conclusion that the explosions had been started either by some spies working for the shell-loading plant or by two suspicious-looking men who had been seen several times around the place—the same fellows described by Jed Kessler.

“Maybe those two fellows on the outside had confederates on the inside,” remarked Jack, in talking the affair over with his cousins.

"More than likely that's the truth of it," said Randy. "Those fellows often work in gangs."

During the days following the victory over Hixley High, a number of the cadets had gone down to Haven Point at various times, and several brought back the report that they had met Slugger Brown and Nappy Martell driving through the town in their runabout. Slugger and Nappy had put on a lordly air, bowing very condescendingly to those they knew, but refusing to stop for any conversation.

"Those fellows make me weary in the bones," was the way Dan Soppinger expressed himself. "What ever brought 'em to Haven Point? If I had been fired out of the school the way they were, I wouldn't want to show my face around here again."

"Yes, Dan; but you aren't the sort they are," declared Jack. "I don't believe either Slugger Brown or Nappy Martell has a particle of real pride. They think just because they have a little more spending money than most fellows, they can lord it over anybody."

It worried all of the Rovers to think that Brown and Martell were hanging around Haven Point, and Jack telephoned to Clearwater Hall several times, calling up Ruth and also his sister Martha, asking if they had been annoyed in any way by the pair.

"We saw them again down near our boathouse," said Ruth over the telephone. "They acted as if they wanted to talk to us, but we did not give them any chance to do it."

"If they dare to say a word to any of you, just let us know and we'll take care of them," declared the

oldest Rover boy.

On the third day came a long letter to Jack and an equally lengthy communication for Fred. The letters were from their fathers, and in them Dick and Sam Rover gave the particulars of how they had volunteered for service in France and how Dick had been commissioned a captain and Sam a lieutenant. They mentioned the fact that they were soon to leave New York City, along with a number of other volunteers, to go to Camp Huxwell, a beautiful site selected by the government and located on the Atlantic coast.

"Why, say, that isn't very far from here!" exclaimed Jack. "I've often heard them talk about that place."

Jack's father also mentioned the fact that Colonel Colby had obtained a commission as a captain and that a great many others of his old school chums from Putnam Hall, and likewise two of his comrades from Brill College, were going. He added that if Jack wanted to come home to see him off, he could do so.

"And that's just what my dad says, too," said Fred, after both boys had finished reading the letters. "Of course we'll go!"

"Ten horses couldn't hold me back," answered Jack.

"Well, if you fellows go, we're going, too," declared Randy, when the matter was talked over.

"Bet your life!" added Andy slangily. "I want to know what dad has got to say about all this."

Jack and Fred communicated at once with their

sisters, and learned that they, too, had received letters from home and were going to depart for New York City at the earliest possible moment. It was then arranged that the young folks should all leave together on the following morning.

"Remember me to your fathers," said Colonel Colby, after they had asked for and received permission to go. "Tell them they will hear from me very shortly."

The two girls met the four boys at Haven Point, and Ruth, May, Gif, and Spouter came to see them off.

"I've got a surprise for you," said Spouter, who had come to the railroad station at Haven Point earlier than the others, in order to obtain parlor-car seats for the party.

"What is that?" questioned Fred.

"When I came in for the seats, who do you think was just ahead of me at the ticket window?"

"You don't mean Slugger and Nappy?" questioned Randy quickly.

"You've struck it!"

"What were they doing there?" asked Jack with interest.

"They were getting tickets for New York."

"Oh, dear! do you mean to say we've got to put up with those fellows on this trip?" sighed Martha.

"You won't have to notice them, Martha," declared her brother.

"Don't worry but what we'll make them keep their distance," added Fred.

The whole crowd looked around the depot, and presently made out Slugger and Nappy at the far end of the platform. They were smoking cigarettes and talking in low, earnest tones.

"I hope they didn't get seats in the parlor car," said Mary.

"I don't think they did," answered Spouter. "They're such smokers, I guess they'd just as lief hang out in the smoking car."

In a few minutes the train came along, and, bidding their friends good-bye, the Rovers got aboard and had a porter show them to their seats. From the window Jack waved Ruth a good-bye, and then the long train pulled out of Haven Point and began its trip to the metropolis.

It was rather a long journey, and it was necessary that they obtain a meal on the train.

"Let me go into the dining car and have a look around first," remarked Fred, when it came time to eat.

"What's the matter—afraid we won't be able to get seats?" inquired Randy.

"I want to see if Slugger and Nappy are around. I don't want to eat when they do."

"Right you are!" answered Jack.

He and Fred hurried through the train and into the diner. Neither Brown nor Martell were present, for which they were thankful. They found a table for

four on one side of the car, with a table for two directly opposite, and at once engaged both. Then, while Jack held the tables, Fred hurried back and brought the girls and the twins.

"I never eat in a dining car but what I think of that fun we had with Asa Lemm when we first came to the Hall," remarked Andy, as they sat down. "My, what a pickle we did get that professor in!" he chuckled, referring to a series of incidents, the particulars of which were related in "The Rover Boys at Colby Hall."

"I wonder if we'll ever meet old Asa Lemm again?" remarked Fred.

"Sure!" returned Randy. "He's like a bad penny—bound to turn up some time."

The young folks ordered soup for a first course, and this was quickly served. Mary and Martha sat at the larger table with Andy and Randy opposite, while Fred and Jack occupied the smaller table on the other side of the car.

The soup was finished and the young folks were waiting to be served with the more substantial portion of the meal, when suddenly Fred, who was looking toward the far end of the dining car, pressed his foot down on that of his cousin.

"What is it?" questioned Jack quickly.

"Here come Slugger Brown and Nappy Martell," was the low reply.

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CHAPTER XI

TOM ROVER'S DILEMMA

ANDY and Randy were facing the same way as Fred, and they, too, noticed the approach of Brown and Martell. Randy whispered something in a low tone of voice to Martha and Mary, and the two girls pursed up their lips, but said nothing, nor did they look around.

The dining car was almost full, and the only table vacant was a small one directly behind where Fred was sitting. Slugger and Nappy were conducted to this by the head waiter, thus passing the Rovers. They did not, however, notice our friends until they had seated themselves and given their order.

"Humph! what do you know about that?" murmured Nappy Martell to his crony. He was seated where he could stare directly at the two girls.

"What's the matter?" returned Slugger Brown, and then turned around to follow his crony's gaze. "What do you know about that? I didn't know they were in such a hurry to get to the diner, did you?"

"I knew they would most likely want to eat," answered Nappy.

The newcomers winked at each other, and then, while they were waiting to be served, Nappy began to stare boldly at Martha. But she refused to look at him, confining her attention to her plate and to Mary and the twins.

Fred could no longer see the unworthy pair, as they were behind him. But Jack, looking over his cousin's shoulder, got a good view of how Martell was staring at his sister, and he also saw how uncomfortable this was making Martha. He waited a minute or two longer, hoping that Nappy would desist. But then, as the dudish young man continued to gaze at the girl, trying his best to catch her eye, he whispered something to Fred, and then rose to his feet.

"All right, Jack, I'm with you if you want any help," returned Fred promptly.

Without hesitation, Jack approached the table at which Brown and Martell sat eating their soup, and placed himself close to the latter's side.

"Now listen to me, Nappy Martell," he said in a low but distinct voice, meant only for the dudish youth. "You keep your eyes to yourself and leave my sister and my cousin alone. If you don't, I'll smash you one in the face that will put you in the hospital. Now remember—I won't give you another warning!" And having thus spoken, Jack turned on his heel and went back to his own table.

Nappy Martell flushed up and an angry retort arose to his lips. Then, however, he became pale and not a word escaped him.

"What was that he said, Nappy?" demanded Slugger in a whisper.

"I—I'll tell you afterwards," stammered Martell. "He's mighty fresh—that fellow!"

"Did he threaten you?"

"I guess he wants to start a row," grumbled Nappy. "But I don't want any fight in front of those girls."

"Those Rovers are getting too fresh to live," was Slugger's comment. "Some day we'll have to get after 'em and polish 'em off."

"We can't get after 'em any too quick to suit me," answered his crony.

After that Nappy confined his gaze to his chum and to the lunch set before him. Never once did he allow his eyes to rove over to the table opposite. Jack had spoken with an intensity that showed his earnestness, and for once Nappy Martell was completely subdued.

"Those Rovers are getting to be a regular bunch of rough-necks," he growled, after he and his crony had finished a somewhat hurried meal and gone back to the smoking car.

"Did he want to fight you?" queried Slugger.

"That's what he had in mind to do—as if I would want to fight before that crowd of people! Why, we would all have been arrested!"

Jack's meal had been spoiled for him, but he did not let the others know this. He, however, kept his eyes on Brown and Martell until they left the dining car. Then he breathed a sigh of relief.

"Gee! I'm glad they're gone," was Fred's comment.

"You're no more glad than I am," answered his cousin. "I'll teach him to stare at my sister! For two pins I'd have wiped up the floor with him!"

"I wish I'd have gotten the chance," put in Andy,

from across the aisle. “Wouldn’t I like to have peppered up their food good for them!”

In due course of time the young Rovers reached the Grand Central Terminal at Forty-Second Street, in New York City. They had sent a telegram, announcing their coming, and found Mrs. Dick Rover and Mrs. Sam Rover awaiting them, each with a touring car.

“Well, I see you got in on time,” said Mrs. Dick Rover, after the greetings were over. “I thought on account of so many soldiers being sent to the various camps, the train might be late.”

“We saw some soldiers on the way,” answered her daughter.

“And we also saw some freight cars carrying cannon,” put in Mary.

“This war is going to make a great change all around,” declared Mrs. Sam Rover. And then she added to her daughter: “What do you think about your father going to the front?”

“It’s just what I expected,” answered Mary promptly. “He’s a real patriot—dad is!”

“You are right. But I hate awfully to see him go away,” sighed the mother.

The young folks were soon seated in the two automobiles, and their handbags were disposed of in the tonneau. Then the cars were started up, and they were soon whirling away over to Broadway and Riverside Drive, and then to the comfortable mansions occupied by the three Rover families.

It was still rather early in the afternoon, but Sam

Rover had already come uptown from his office and was there to greet his son and daughter and the others.

"It's great news, Dad!" cried Fred, shaking him warmly by the hand, while Mary clung around his neck and kissed him.

"Oh, I'm going to be real proud of you!" said the daughter.

A little later Dick Rover arrived, and Jack shook hands with a warmth that was most unusual. When Martha kissed her father a curious lump arose in her throat, and her eyes grew misty.

"I suppose it's all right, Dad," she whispered in his ear. "But, oh! I do hope you'll come back all right." And she clung to him in a way that spoke volumes.

"Of course I'll come back all right, Martha," said Dick Rover confidently. "And for all you know, your dad will come back a major or a colonel, or maybe a brigadier general."

"Oh, I don't care about that! All I want is for you to come back safe and sound!"

"Your father will be up in a little while," announced Dick Rover to the twins. "He had a meeting to attend in reference to the next Liberty Loan. He's a tremendously busy man these days."

"But Uncle Dick! he wanted to go to the front just as well as you did, didn't he?" questioned Randy eagerly.

"Of course he wanted to go," was the ready response. "But we couldn't all go, you know. Somebody had to stay behind to look after our

business interests in Wall Street."

"But—but couldn't you hire somebody else to run the business for you?" questioned Andy. Now that he and his brother were face to face with the fact that their Uncle Dick and their Uncle Sam were going into the army, it did not look right at all to them to have their father left behind.

"We thought something of that, but we really couldn't see how it could be done. You see, we have a great many important deals under way, and if those transactions are not looked after carefully, we might stand to lose a great deal of money."

"I don't care—if dad wanted to go to the front, he should have had the chance to go!" burst out Randy.

"I declare, Randy, you'll be as hard to manage in this affair as your father was," said Dick Rover, with a faint smile.

"Was he really hard to manage?" queried Andy eagerly.

"He sure was! We had to talk to him for several days before he would agree to remain behind. He told us once that the whole business could go to pot."

"Hurrah for dad! That's the way I knew he'd act!" burst out the boy.

"If I was him I'd let the business go to pot!" declared Randy. "What good will your old business be if those Germans win this war and start in to rule everything? For all you know, they'll come right over to New York and take your whole business away from you."

"Well, that might possibly happen," put in Sam Rover seriously. "Although I don't think it is very probable."

Knowing that the young folks were usually very hungry when they got home and that they always enjoyed home cooking, their mothers had prepared quite a spread for them. Mrs. Tom Rover had gone downtown to meet her husband, and now she came back in a flutter of excitement.

"Hello, Ma! Where is Dad?" questioned Randy, as he ran up and gave her a hug and a kiss, followed by his twin.

"He's downtown, up to his ears in that Liberty Loan business," answered Mrs. Tom Rover. "Oh, dear! I never saw such a busy man! Half a dozen men are coming in and going out all the time, wanting to know what to do next and asking him if he won't make another speech here, there, or somewhere else. They want him to talk at two Liberty Loan meetings to-night and one Liberty Loan meeting and a Red Cross meeting to-morrow afternoon."

"Isn't he coming home at all?" questioned both of the twins in a breath.

"Oh, yes. He'll be here in a little while. But he won't be able to stay long," returned the mother.

When Tom Rover arrived he looked rather tired out, but he greeted all the boys with a smile and gave each of the girls the kiss he knew they were expecting.

"Oh, I'm in it neck deep," he answered, in reply to his sons' questions. "They must think I can talk just like a coffee-grinder grinds out coffee. And the nerve

of some of them!" he continued. "Here they have asked me to go somewhere uptown and meet a lot of bankers and tell them how some of the work on the Liberty Loan is to be done! As if those bankers don't know as much about it as I do, and maybe more!"

"You've bought some of the bonds yourself, haven't you, Dad?" questioned Randy.

"Yes, Son—twenty thousand dollars' worth, and The Rover Company, as a company, has taken twice that amount."

"And my father has taken twenty thousand dollars' worth, too," said Mary.

"And so has mine," added Martha.

"All told, I think we're doing pretty well by Uncle Sam!" cried Jack. "Just the same, Uncle Tom, I think it's a shame that they are going to make you stay behind to run the business."

"I won't stay behind if things get much warmer!" burst out Tom Rover suddenly. "I'll put somebody in my place and grab a gun and go after those Huns."

"Hurrah! that's the way to talk," cried Andy enthusiastically.

"Would you really, Dad?" burst out Randy, his eyes shining.

"Do you want me to go, Son?" demanded the father, catching him by the shoulder.

"Of course I do! I don't think you ought to stay behind with Uncle Dick and Uncle Sam going."

"It doesn't seem right," added his twin.

"And it isn't right! But what am I going to do?" asked their father somewhat helplessly. "We've all our money locked up in our various business deals. Those deals have got to be looked after. Who is going to do it if we all go away?"

"Oh, you can get somebody!"

"This getting somebody that you can trust absolutely is not so easy," answered Tom Rover. "I did think of getting one gentleman we know very well—a Mr. Allen Charter, who graduated from Brill College a year after your uncles and I were admitted to the institution. Mr. Charter is a very fine business man, and understands the deals we are in perfectly."

"Well, then, why didn't you get Mr. Allen Charter to take hold?" questioned Randy.

"He was going to take hold, but at the last minute he declined, stating that he had made up his mind to volunteer for the army."

"Well, there must be somebody else."

"There was another student at that college, named Stanley Browne. He is a cousin of Colonel Colby. We were very good friends, and I thought sure that we could get him to take charge. But Browne has also gone into the United States service."

"Oh, if that isn't a shame—every one of them going in and you left behind!" grumbled Randy. "I don't think it's fair at all!"

"Well, I suppose I've got to make the best of it," answered Tom Rover. But as he spoke he heaved a mountainous sigh. This being left behind while his brothers and his best friends went to the front was

going to almost break his heart.

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CHAPTER XII

AT THE ROVER COMPANY OFFICES

"WELL, we're off at last! Good-bye to everybody!"

The words came from Dick Rover as the last call was given for the volunteers who were going to Camp Huxton to entrain.

"Don't forget to write regularly!" came from Sam Rover.

"Oh, we'll do that—don't fear!" answered his wife Grace. "And don't you forget to answer every letter."

"And please, please, both of you be careful, and don't get hurt!" murmured Martha.

"Oh, say, Martha! don't put a wet blanket on things that way," whispered her brother. "Don't you know you have to send them away with a smile?"

"And I'm going to," she answered quickly, and then began to smile, even though the tears were forming in her pretty eyes.

"I know you will take good care of things while we are away, Tom," said Dick Rover to his brother.

"You can rest assured of that," answered Tom Rover. "Just the same, I wish I were going along."

"So do I, now that the time has come."

"We may never have to go to France," put in Sam Rover. "The war may be over before that time." Yet, as he spoke, he knew in his heart that such was not likely to be the case. But he wanted to say something to ease the minds of his wife and the other womenfolks.

There were quite a number of volunteers to entrain, and friends and relatives were hurrying this way and that to see them off. Among the Rovers there was much handshaking and not a few kisses, and then Dick Rover and Sam entered the train, which, a few seconds later, glided from the station.

It was a sober crowd that returned to the Rover homes, even Andy and Randy being subdued. No one felt like talking. Poor Martha seemed to be the most affected, and had she attempted to speak she would certainly have broken out crying.

"Well, I suppose we've got to get back to Colby Hall to finish out the term," remarked Jack, after Tom Rover had departed for the offices in Wall Street.

"Gee! I wish I could volunteer and go to that camp," sighed Fred.

"Well, we'll get a touch of camp life soon," returned Jack.

He referred to the annual encampment of the

Colby Hall students. Every year the cadets of the school were marched away to some place either in the mountains or on the seashore, there to erect their tents and live under canvas for several weeks. During this encampment the cadets were given a taste of real military life, with strenuous drills and marches, target and bayonet practice, and usually ending with a thrilling sham battle.

“Well, we can’t get under canvas any too quick to suit me,” announced Randy. “I’d rather be out in the open air than in the Hall.”

It was arranged that the young folks should return to Haven Point on the following morning. Andy and Randy wanted to see as much of their father as possible, and so decided to run down to Wall Street late in the afternoon and come home with him.

“And you fellows can come along, if you want to,” said Randy to his cousins.

“That suits me,” answered Jack. “I’d like to see how things look at the offices. I haven’t been down there in a long time.”

“I’d like to go, too,” came from Fred. “Maybe we can cheer Uncle Tom up a bit. He certainly deserves it—having all this business thrust on his shoulders!”

It did not take the four boys long to reach Wall Street, and then they hurried down to one of the small but better-class office buildings in that vicinity.

The Rover Company occupied the entire fourth floor of this building. There was a large general office and a counting room and three private offices, one for each of the brothers. The office help numbered about twenty, and the place during

business hours was usually a busy one.

They found Tom Rover in his private office at a large desk piled high with sheets and documents. He was hard at work signing his name to a number of sheets, but smiled pleasantly when he saw who his visitors were. The boys, of course, were well known to most of the employees, and so had passed in without being questioned.

“Come to help me out, I suppose,” said the father of the twins, with a grin. “All right. Take off your coats, roll up your sleeves and pitch in. There is plenty to do.”

“If that is the case, Uncle Tom, I guess you don’t want us to disturb you,” said Jack quickly.

“I’ll be through here in less than half an hour,” announced Tom Rover. “Just make yourselves at home for that length of time, and then I’ll be with you.”

This was a gentle hint that he must get through with his work, and the boys lost no time in backing out of his office. They went into the offices usually occupied by Dick Rover and Sam Rover, looking over a number of books, magazines and pamphlets.

“Let’s go down in the street for a while and take a look around,” suggested Andy, who always liked to be on the go.

As there was nothing particular for them to do in the offices, the others agreed to this, and so, telling the twins’ father that they would come back at the end of the half hour, they walked out into the corridor opening upon the elevators and the stairway.

As they waited at one of the elevators for a chance to go down, the elevator came up and stopped to let out a messenger boy. Then it continued on its way upward.

“Say, did you notice who was in that elevator?” cried Randy quickly.

“I thought I saw Mr. Martell,” answered Fred.

“Yes, it was Martell, and Nappy was with him.”

“Well, there is nothing strange about that,” came from Andy. “Probably he wants to see his father now he is in New York again.”

“I’d like to know what Nappy has told his father about us,” went on Fred. “You can wager it’s nothing good.”

“I don’t care what he says, so long as he leaves us alone,” said Jack.

Another elevator appeared, and the four boys descended to the ground floor of the office building. Here half a dozen people were waiting to go up, while several others were at the rear of the corridor, talking earnestly.

“Hello! there are Slugger Brown and his father,” exclaimed Fred, pointing down the corridor. “Now, what do you know about that!”

“They must be in this building to visit the Martells,” returned Jack.

“They are talking to two men,” put in Randy. “I wonder who they can be?”

“Oh, some friends or business acquaintances, I

suppose," answered the oldest of the Rover boys.

Ordinarily none of the Rover boys considered eavesdropping honorable, but they thought it a different thing when dealing with their enemies, and Andy, being naturally inquisitive anyway, sauntered down the corridor and passed the group that was talking so earnestly. The backs of both Mr. Brown and Slugger were toward him, so neither noticed the lad.

"And if you will do that, Mr. Brown, you will make very good money by it," Andy heard one of the strange men say. He spoke with a strong German accent.

"You will make far more money that way than you ever did in your business," added the other stranger.

"Yes, but I'll be running a big risk," Mr. Brown replied. "Those things are getting more dangerous every day."

"Say, Pop, why don't you go up and see Mr. Martell about this?" put in the son.

"Yes, I think we ought to go up and see Nelson Martell," answered Mr. Brown.

"I have already seen him," said one of the strangers.

"Well, it won't do any harm to talk it over again," returned Slogwell Brown. "Come on; his offices are up on the fifth floor."

The party of four turned, and as they did so Andy raised his hand and made a quick motion to the other boys to get out of sight. Then, as Slugger Brown and the men passed him, he turned quickly

and, bending down, pretended to fix the lace of his shoe. Thus he was passed without being recognized. A few seconds later the four were in the elevator, going up.

"Why did you motion for us to get out of the way?" demanded Jack, as soon as Andy rejoined the others.

"Because I didn't want Slugger and his father and those other men to see you," was the quick reply. "Do you know what I think?"

"What?" came in a chorus from the others.

"I think that whole crowd is up to no good. Both of those men look like Germans, and each of them talked with a strong German accent, even though they are both evidently very well educated."

"What did they say?" demanded Jack; and when told, he looked grave.

"There may be something in this," he said slowly. "Suppose we go up to the fifth floor and try to find out a little more."

"We might get caught," said Fred.

"I don't see how," went on the oldest Rover boy. "Martell doesn't occupy the whole floor. He has the front offices only. There are several other firms in the rear. We might be calling on them, you know," and he winked.

The boys talked the matter over for a minute or so, and then, as an elevator came down, they entered and got out at the fifth floor. The little corridor here was empty, for which they were thankful.

"Of course there may not be a thing in this," announced Jack. "It may be some ordinary business deal which is perfectly legitimate."

"Not by the way those two German-looking fellows talked," said Andy. "I didn't like their looks at all. Unless I miss my guess, they are a slick pair."

The two strangers had looked to be about forty years of age. Each was tall and rather stout, with a clean-shaven, florid face and close-cut, sandy hair. Their eyes had had a shifty snake-like look, and this it was, as much as anything, which set Andy against them.

The doors to the Martell offices were two in number, one marked "Private" and the other, "Entrance." The boys waited for a few seconds, and then walked softly over to the latter door. They heard a murmur of voices, but could not make out what was being said.

"Perhaps they are in the office marked 'Private,'" whispered Jack, and tiptoed his way in that direction, followed by his cousins.

In front of the door to this office they could hear slightly better. The murmur of voices was at times quite distinct, and they caught the words: "Supplies," "Canned goods," "Immediate delivery," "Motor trucks," "Machinery," "Cash payment," "Night work," and a number of others. Then the murmur of voices grew a little more animated, and finally they heard Nelson Martell exclaim: "I think we ought to have a thousand dollars at least in advance!"

"Better make it two thousand," came from Slogwell Brown.

There was an exclamation from the strange men, and then the voices sounded lower so that the Rovers could not hear what was being said. Suddenly, however, one of the strangers cried out:

"Oh, I forgot! I have an important engagement in less than half an hour. I must go at once."

"I guess it's time we got out of here!" exclaimed Jack, and started to retreat, as did the others.

The Rover boys had just reached a place in front of the elevators when the door to one of the back offices opened and much to their surprise Nappy Martell and Slugger Brown came out. Evidently they had been sent off by their fathers while their parents had been doing business with the two strange men.

"Hello! what are you fellows doing here?" grumbled Nappy, gazing at them suspiciously.

"Did my father come up here?" questioned Randy, before the others could speak. "We want to see him," continued the quick-witted Rover. "Maybe he's in Mr. Benson's office, fellows," he added. "Come on."

There was a Mr. Benson on that floor with an office in the rear. Without saying another word to Nappy or Slugger, the Rover boys marched to the door of the Benson place, knocked, and went in.

"Say, that was a neat trick, all right enough," whispered Jack to Randy. "But now you've got us into it, you'll have to get us out."

"Humph! that's easy enough," was the ready reply. "Just leave it to me."

A clerk came up, looking inquiringly at the boys.

"Excuse me, but did my father come up here?" questioned Randy innocently. And then, as the clerk looked puzzled, he added: "I am Randy Rover. My father is Thomas Rover of The Rover Company."

"Oh, I see!" and the clerk smiled. "No, I don't think your father came up here, but I'll ask Mr. Benson." The clerk disappeared into an inner office, to reappear a moment later. "Sorry, but your father hasn't been up here to-day."

"Thank you," returned Randy; and then he and the others backed themselves out.

The stairway was close at hand, and a few seconds later the four Rover boys were on the fourth floor. Here they waited for the elevator, and soon found themselves on the ground floor, and from that walked to the street.

"Let's hang around and see if that fellow really goes away," advised Fred.

This they did, and in a few minutes saw the two German-looking men come from the building. They seemed to be in a great hurry, and lost no time in disappearing up Wall Street in the direction of Broadway.

"I wonder if we hadn't better follow them?" said Fred.

"It might be rather a long-winded job, and we haven't time," answered Jack.

"Let us stay around until my father is at leisure," said Randy. "Then we can tell him what we have heard and see what he thinks of it." And so it was decided.

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CHAPTER XIII

FUN AT THE RAILROAD STATION

"THERE may be a good deal in this, and there may be nothing at all," were Tom Rover's words, after he had listened to the story the boys had to tell. "This may be a perfectly legitimate business transaction, although, as I have said before, Nelson Martell has been known to go into more than one shady transaction here in Wall Street. Generally, however, he just manages to escape falling into the clutches of the law."

"Yes, but Dad! you must remember how Mr. Brown tried to treat old Barney Stevenson," broke in Randy.

"Yes, I remember that," answered his father. "And I have heard that Brown is no more reliable than is Martell. But to know a fact is one thing, to prove it in a court of law is another."

"And those two strangers were certainly Germans," said Andy.

"I'll look into this a little further as soon as I get time," said Tom Rover, after a moment of thought.

"And perhaps I'll speak to one of the Secret Service men about it. It certainly will do no harm to have these men watched for a few days."

A little later Tom Rover was through with his labors at his office, and then he and the boys returned to the homes on Riverside Drive. The father of the twins had to go out in the evening, and the boys spent the time at home with their mothers and the girls.

"We can't go straight through to Haven Point this morning," announced Jack, on the following day, when they had arrived at the railroad terminal. "They are shipping some soldiers and some naval supplies, and the road is somewhat balled up. The gateman told me we should have to make two changes."

All of the mothers had come down to see the young folks off. Jack and Fred, as well as their sisters, felt particularly sorry for their parents, now left entirely alone so far as their own families were concerned.

"But never mind, Ma," said Martha. "The term at Clearwater Hall will soon be at an end, and then we'll be home again."

"And don't forget that we are to pay a visit to Camp Huxwell if the authorities will permit it and dad is still there," added Mary to her parent.

"Sure! we'll all go," cried Fred.

Owing to war conditions, there was no parlor car on the train, but the boys and girls managed to get seats together, for which they were thankful. They made themselves as comfortable as possible, and

then settled down to read their newspapers and magazines, or gaze out of the window at the scenes which were flashing by.

There was no dining car on this train, but from the conductor the young folks learned that they would have to change at a place called Raymonton, and they would there have half an hour in which to get lunch.

“I can get all I want in less time than that, provided it’s to be had,” said Fred. “We can go to the lunch room just as soon as the train gets in.”

Raymonton was nothing but an overgrown village containing but a handful of stores, a church, a garage, and a canning factory, with the houses occupying half a dozen straggly-looking streets. There was only a small and not an altogether inviting-looking lunch room, and here the bill-of-fare was decidedly meagre.

A tall, angular Irish girl waited on them. She was pleasant enough, and smiled broadly at the twins’ jokes. She served them with sandwiches, cake, pie, and hot chocolate, and they also purchased from her a bag of grapes and pears.

“I told you we’d have plenty of time,” remarked Fred, looking at a clock on the wall. “We have still ten minutes to spare.”

“I think I’ll get a shoe-shine,” said Jack. “I saw a bootblack outside roaming around doing nothing. If I give him work it may keep him out of mischief.”

At the end of the railroad platform was a stand devoted to the sale of newspapers and periodicals, chewing gum and candy. There was also a rack with

postcards, and the girls busied themselves at this, picking out such cards as they desired. Not far from where the stand was located stood a long auto-stage, marked "*Raymonton to Clappville. Fare 10 Cents.*" On the seat of the stage sat an elderly driver, smoking, and the bus contained one or two men and several women and children, evidently waiting for the stage to start on its journey.

Jack had just finished having his shoes polished when he and the other boys noticed a man at the newsstand talking to the proprietor. Both men appeared to be out of sorts.

"Sorry, Sir, but you can't have that magazine!" they heard the stand keeper exclaim.

"I'd like to know why not!" demanded the would-be customer. "I am ready to pay for it."

"That's all right—but you can't have it! I get only two copies of that magazine, and one is for the hotel and the other for Doctor Johnson's daughter. They both take it regular."

"Humph! I guess you don't want any customers," growled the other man savagely. "Well, if you don't want to sell me any of your old magazines you can keep them! I guess I can get all the magazines I want elsewhere." And the man stalked off in haughty anger.

The boys had watched this scene and listened to the talk with much interest. They had recognized in the would-be customer Asa Lemm, the professor who previous to his discharge from that institution had made life so miserable for them at Colby Hall.

"I'm glad the fellow didn't let him have the

magazine," said Fred.

"Gee, I wish we could put one over on old Lemm!" whispered Andy.

"I wonder what he is doing in this town?" queried Randy.

"I think I can answer that," replied Jack. "I once heard that he had some relative—a brother I think—living at Clappville. Maybe he came from there, or is going over to that town in the stage."

Without allowing themselves to be noticed, Andy and Randy kept their eyes on Asa Lemm and saw him hurry over to one of the stores on the main street of the town, where a number of magazines were displayed in the window. He came out of the place, however, empty-handed, and looking more sour than ever. In the meantime Jack sauntered up to the keeper of the stand at the railroad station.

"Not a very pleasant sort of a fellow, that," he remarked.

"Say, that fellow makes me tired!" growled the newsstand man. "I have a run-in with him nearly every time he comes here. The last time it was over a plugged ten-cent piece he tried to pass on me. When I handed it back to him and told him I wanted a good one, he was as peppery as sin."

A minute or two later the driver of the auto-stage tooted his horn to show that he was about ready to start on the trip. At once several men and women came running from various directions and began to enter the stage. The last man to arrive was Asa Lemm. He had picked up a valise and a bundle from somewhere, and he had to stand in the rear, waiting

for those ahead to enter the stage.

"I suppose there won't be any seat for me by the time I get aboard," he grumbled to the driver.

"Ain't my fault," answered the stage driver calmly. "If you don't want to stand, you can wait until the next trip."

"I haven't time to wait. I'll crowd in somehow," grumbled Asa Lemm.

While this was going on, Andy and Randy had come up close behind the professor. Both were wondering if they could not play some sort of trick on him before he departed.

The newsstand was similar to many of that kind, and on two sides of it were long rows of periodicals, fastened by clips to a wire held in place by small hooks. Watching his chance, Andy unfastened the end of one of these wires, and motioned to his twin to unhook the other end.

"Now I guess we'll fix Mr. Asa Lemm!" muttered Andy, and with a quick move he came up behind the former teacher of Colby Hall and twisted one end of the wire around a back button of Asa Lemm's cutaway coat.

By this time all of the others had gotten into the stage, and, being somewhat in a hurry, the driver made a move as if to start away.

"Hi there! Wait till I get in!" shouted Asa Lemm and threw his bags and his bundle into the stage. Then he got on to the stage step and the driver started off.

"Hello, look at that!"

"Say, what is that fellow dragging behind him?"

"Hi, Mr. Gasaway! That fellow is running away with your magazines!"

"Talk about the tail of a kite—this beats any kite tail I ever saw!"



“TALK ABOUT THE TAIL OF A KITE—THIS BEATS ANY EVER SAW!”

Such were some of the cries that rent the air as the stage started away from the depot. On the step, clutching the handrails, was Asa Lemm, and streaming out behind him was the wire, loaded with magazines and picture papers.

“Hi you! Come back here!” roared the stand keeper in bewilderment. “What do you mean by running off with my stuff? Come back, I say!” and, throwing up a flap of the counter, he ran out of his stand and after the auto-stage.

Asa Lemm did not know what to make of the hullaballoo. People were rushing toward the stage from all directions, and many were pointing their fingers at him. He felt a tug in the rear, but could not put his hand back to the button on which the wire was fastened for fear of falling from the stage step.

“Stop that stage! Stop that stage, I tell you!” bawled the newsstand keeper. “He’s running off with my magazines!”

And then the crowd set up a roar of laughter.

“I ain’t got no time to waste. I’m behind time already!” yelled back the auto-stage driver. “What do you want, anyway?”

“Oh, my! did you ever?” screamed Martha, dropping several of the postcards she had purchased.

“Just look at all those magazines dangling after that man!” screamed Mary. And then, as she caught sight of Andy and Randy, both doubled up with laughter, she continued: “I’m sure those twins must have done it!”

Jack and Fred had also come up, and both were on

a broad grin. In the meanwhile the stage moved on with Asa Lemm still dragging the wire and the periodicals attached to it behind him.

"Hurrah! he believes in loading up on information!" cried Andy gaily.

"He's what you can call a real live wire!" added his twin.

"Come back with those magazines, I tell you!" bawled the stand keeper, shaking his fist at Asa Lemm. "Come back, I say!" And then he set off on a run after the stage.

He could not catch up to the vehicle, but he did catch up to the end of the wire, and as he stepped on this there was a tearing sound from beyond, and away came the button from Asa Lemm's coat, bringing with it a strip of cloth.

"Hurrah, he's got his magazines back!" exclaimed Randy.

"And a souvenir of Asa Lemm's coat to remember him by!" added his brother.

Just as Andy said this a train came rolling into the station.

"I hope that is our train," cried Fred.

The boys ran around to the other side of the station and found out from the conductor that the train which had come in was that for which they had been waiting. They at once called to the girls; and all lost no time in hurrying on board.

"Wait! I want to see the end of this!" cried Andy, and threw up a window. He stuck out his head, and

as the train rolled away from Raymonton he was just in time to see Asa Lemm pulled from the step of the auto-stage by the irate man from the newsstand. Then the former Hall professor was tripped up and sent flat on his back in the dust of the road.

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CHAPTER XIV

BACK TO COLBY HALL

"WELL, that is where we got back at Asa Lemm!" cried Randy, after all of the Rovers had gazed out of the car windows as long as the scene near the auto-stage remained in view.

"I'll wager that stand keeper is mad," said Jack.

"And what a beautiful coat old Lemm has, with the tail torn to ribbons!" Fred added.

"Oh, I think you boys are simply dreadful!" cried Mary, but she smiled as she spoke.

"Don't you think you were rather hard on the professor?" questioned Martha dubiously.

"No, I don't!" answered Andy promptly. "He treated us as mean as dirt while he was at Colby

Hall. He was more than stern—he was thoroughly unreasonable! That's why Colonel Colby discharged him."

"And please to remember how he backed up Slugger Brown's father on Snowshoe Island," added Randy. "He was perfectly willing to swindle old Barney Stevenson out of his property. He deserves no sympathy."

The remainder of the journey to Haven Point passed without special incident. The boys and the girls had sent word ahead that they were coming, and when they reached the town they found Bob Nixon there with one of the Colby Hall turnouts, and also a driver with a stage from the girls' school.

"Well, here is where we part and get back to the grind," said Fred, after he and Jack had placed their sisters' baggage in the proper car.

"Good luck to both of you girls!" cried Jack.

The girls were soon started off in one direction, and then the boys started off in the other. The latter were still some distance from Colby Hall when they saw Spouter Powell and Gif Garrison approaching on foot.

"Glad to see you back!" cried Spouter, as he climbed into the machine.

"We've got great news," announced Gif, his eyes beaming.

"Our fathers have volunteered for the war!" broke out Spouter.

"Really?" came from the Rover boys.

All were much interested, although Andy and Randy looked a trifle disturbed. The fact that their own father would have to remain behind while all of the others were going to the front was continually in the minds of the twins. They felt much disappointed.

“When did you get the news?” questioned Jack.

“It came in by the first mail this morning,” returned Spouter. “I got a letter, and so did Gif. My father and Mr. Garrison are both going to do their best to join the crowd from Putnam Hall and Brill College.”

Of course the Rovers wanted to know more particulars, and they were given so far as Spouter and Gif knew them.

“And we’ve got more news, too,” announced Gif. “They’ve finally settled on the place where we are to have our annual encampment.”

“And where will that be?” asked Randy eagerly.

“We’re to go to Barlight Bay on the Atlantic coast. It’s quite a distance from here.”

“Barlight Bay!” exclaimed Jack. And then he looked inquiringly at Fred. “Isn’t that in the vicinity of Camp Huxwell?”

“Sure it is!” answered Fred. “They are almost side by side.”

“I asked about that,” said Spouter; “and Captain Dale told me that our camp and the government camp will be not very far apart. There is a thick belt of timber and some rocky land between.”

“Why then, we’ll be close to our fathers!” cried

Fred joyfully. “This suits me right down to the ground!” and his face showed his delight.

“Gee, I wish we were going under canvas to-morrow!” sighed Jack.

The next day found the Rovers deep in their studies. The examinations previous to the annual encampment were now close at hand, and all were anxious to make a good showing.

“Because, you see, it’s this way,” said Jack to his cousins, and especially to the fun-loving twins. “We didn’t come here merely to cut up and have a good time. Our folks sent us to Colby Hall so that we would settle down and get good educations. If we don’t make a good showing, you know how disappointed every one of them will be.”

“Oh, I’m going to study like an Indian,” answered Andy quickly. “I’m going to cut out every bit of horseplay until after the examinations are over.”

“And so am I,” added Randy.

And, strange as it may seem, the twins kept their word, and as a result, when the examinations were held for the term, both came through with markings which were exceedingly gratifying.

Jack and Fred likewise did very well, for which they were thankful. They telephoned the results to their sisters, and got back word from Clearwater Hall that Martha and Mary were also coming through finely.

“And what about Ruth and May?” questioned Jack, who was on the ’phone, with Fred beside him.

“Ruth is at the head of the class,” announced

Martha, over the telephone. “May will stand third or fourth.”

“Then give them both our congratulations,” said Jack.

“And also our best regards,” added Fred, crowding his cousin to one side.

“Hold the wire a minute and you can talk to them yourselves,” said Martha. And a minute later Jack was talking to Ruth and later still Fred managed to get in a few words with May.

Following the examinations, Colonel Colby called the entire school together, and then announced that he was going to take his departure for Camp Huxwell and would leave the scholars in charge of Captain Dale and Professors Grawson and Brice.

“I am sorry to leave you,” announced the colonel, “but I have accepted the call of our country and shall go to the training camp without further delay. But you all know Captain Dale very well, and I feel sure that you will be glad to learn that he will have charge during the annual encampment. He will be assisted by the professors and some others, and all arrangements have been perfected for making this outing a great success.

“With talk of war filling the air, we shall try to show what Colby Hall can do in the way of first-class military training. Captain Dale will see to it that you are given an opportunity to show what you can do at target and bayonet practice, and in marching and other camp activities. There will, of course, be the usual athletic contests, and as you are going down to the coast, you will likewise have an opportunity to

make use of the water."

Here the colonel paused, and there was a faint handclapping, quickly followed by a generous round of applause.

"Evidently you all like the idea of going in camp near the water," said Colonel Colby, smiling.

"It's dandy!" called out Andy, and at this there was a general laugh.

"Before you depart for Camp Barlight, as the place will be called, Captain Dale will hold the annual election of officers. As the old cadets here know, no cadet who has not been at this school for at least six months can hold any office in the battalion. Apart from that rule, the cadets can make up their tickets to suit themselves. You will first vote for a major, then for three captains, one each for Companies A, B, and C, and then for two lieutenants for each company. The other officers, including the quartermaster, will be selected by Captain Dale and the professors.

"And now, young gentlemen, I must bid you good-bye, and I trust that you have a good time during the encampment. As I expect to be at Camp Huxwell for some weeks at least, I shall probably have the opportunity from time to time of coming over to see how you are getting along."

Colonel Colby bowed and stepped back, and again there was a round of applause. In the midst of this Major Ralph Mason arose and walked to the front.

"Colonel Colby," he said in a loud voice, as soon as the applause had subsided, "in the name of the battalion which I have the honor to command, I wish

to thank you for all your kindness to us as students here, and we trust you will accept our best wishes for good luck to you in the course you are taking. We feel sure that with such men as you in our army Uncle Sam is bound to help very materially in winning this World War.

"And now, sir, as a token of our esteem, and also as a reminder of what we hope you will do to the enemy, allow me, sir, in the name of all the cadets of Colby Hall, to present you with this."

As the young major concluded he drew from behind him a leather case which he sprung open as he presented it to the astonished master of the institution. There, in the case, rested a very fine automatic pistol, its polished handle engraved with Colonel Colby's name and also the fact that it was presented to him by the school, with the date. The hat had been passed around among the boys for contributions to this gift, and every cadet had given something.

Though the colonel was much astonished, he was likewise greatly pleased at this evidence of their friendliness and interest in him, and he accepted the gift in a few words which showed his emotion.

"If I ever get to France this automatic shall go with me," he announced. "And you can rest assured that if ever the opportunity comes, the weapon shall render a good account for itself." And following these remarks there was another round of applause, and then the school was dismissed.

Of course the boys had known about the annual election for a long time, and there had been a good deal of wire-pulling over the question of candidates

for the various offices. It was felt by many, including the Rovers, that Ralph Mason should remain the major of the school battalion, because he was so well liked and was such a thoroughly good officer. It was also felt that the captains of Company A and Company B should remain, and likewise several of the lieutenants.

"What we want most is a new captain for Company C," said Spouter.

"Yes, and we want two lieutenants for that company, too," put in Walt Baxter.

"And the whole company wants to be jacked up," added Don Soppinger. "The way they have been drilling has been a disgrace to this school. They don't do half as well as the other companies."

"Well, you must remember one thing," said Jack. "Company C was formed long after they had Company A and Company B. That company always got all the new fellows, and you can't expect new cadets to do as well as the old ones."

"Yes, but now that they are getting ready to form a Company D, the fellows in Company C ought to be jacked up," said Fatty Hendry. "They need it."

"Say, Fatty, do you want to become an officer of them?" queried Randy slyly.

"Well, I wouldn't mind the job," answered the stout cadet. "I think I could boss 'em around a little better than Phil Huber did." Huber had been the former captain, but he had left the school, and the command was now in charge of the first lieutenant, a fellow named Gabe Werner.

Now it chanced that Lieutenant Werner was not very well liked at Colby Hall. He was a tall, angular youth, with watery blue eyes and straw-colored hair, and he had a general manner about him which was anything but inviting. How he had ever gotten to be a lieutenant of the cadets was a mystery.

"I think they'll dump Lieutenant Werner," remarked Fred. "I don't believe anybody wants him for an officer again."

"I guess you're right," answered Dan Soppinger. "If anybody at all voted for Werner, it would be Bill Glutts."

"Well, Glutts isn't any better than Werner," was Jack's reply. "He's a regular blockhead, in my opinion."

Glutts was a youth who had come from the Middle West, and it was said that his father was in the wholesale butcher business. He was a broad-shouldered, beefy-looking youth, with prominent front teeth and a face that was far from inviting.

"Say, Jack, why don't you run for captain?" queried Gif. "I'm sure our whole crowd would stand by you."

"Oh, I don't know, Gif," returned Jack modestly. "I didn't expect to become an officer yet. Let some of the older cadets take hold. You might run yourself."

"No, I don't think I want the job," answered Gif.

"Maybe you'd like it, Spouter?" said Jack.

"No, I'll give it up in your favor, Jack," was the prompt response. Spouter looked at the assembled crowd. "Say, fellows, what do you think of it? Shall

we put up Jack Rover for captain of Company C?"

"Sure!"

"Jack will be sure to run well!"

So the comments ran on, and almost before he knew it, Jack had been nominated by his friends for the position of captain of Company C. Then began an animated discussion over the other offices to be filled, and a little later Fred was nominated for a lieutenancy.

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CHAPTER XV

THE ELECTION FOR OFFICERS

"JACK, I hope you win out in that election," said Fred, after the conference had come to an end and the cadets had dispersed.

"I hope you win out, too, Fred," was the quick reply.

"I think if anybody has a job to get elected, it will be you, Jack," came from Randy. "You can bet your bottom dollar that Gabe Werner will make every effort to secure that office."

"Well, as he is acting captain now, perhaps he deserves it," answered Jack slowly.

"He deserves nothing!" came promptly from Andy. "He's a regular bear. He never has any consideration whatever for the cadets under him. Why, only last week it made my blood boil the way he treated a couple of new fellows. Of course, they didn't know what he wanted, but that's no reason why he should howl at 'em the way he did. If he had done that to me, I'd have thrown my gun at his head."

What had been said about Gabe Werner's ambition to become the regular captain of Company C was true. The angular lieutenant was of the opinion that the place belonged to him, and he did not hesitate to tell this to all those with whom he was intimate.

Now that Slugger Brown and Nappy Martell had left Colby Hall for good, Henry Stowell had established himself as a satellite of Werner, doing all the mean little jobs the big cadet desired.

"Of course you'll be elected," declared Codfish to the lieutenant, when the talk over the coming election was rife. "The place belongs to you."

"Sure it does," answered Gabe Werner readily. "But I suppose I've got to work like the rest of the candidates if I want it," he added, heaving a deep sigh. Werner was lazy by nature, and he did not like the idea of electioneering, any more than he did the idea of studying.

"I'll tell you what you ought to do, Gabe," said Bill Glutts. "You ought to give the boys a spread, or treat them to an entertainment in town. That would nail the captaincy for you."

This idea pleased Werner, and, as a result, that night he invited all the cadets he dared to approach to the moving-picture theater at Haven Point. A crowd of about thirty accepted this invitation, and they not only went to the show, but later on dined at one of the restaurants at Gabe's expense.

"That sort of thing makes me tired," declared Spouter, when he heard of this. "Why, the poor fish is trying to buy votes!"

At first Dan Soppinger had said that he did not care to run for the captaincy, but a number of his friends insisted that he allow his name to be put up, and finally he consented. Others went to Walt Baxter and told him that he must run, too.

"You've simply got to do it, Baxter," said Ned Lowe. "If you don't, some of the fellows who might vote for you will go over to Werner, and he'll have a walkover from the start."

"All right then, if you want me to stand I'll do it," said Walt. "Just the same, I think Jack Rover ought to have it, and I'm going to vote for him."

The voting was to be held on the following Saturday, and on Monday morning the cadets were to leave Colby Hall for Camp Barlight. Consequently between getting ready to vote and preparing for the encampment, all of the students were unusually busy.

The election was held in the main hall of the school, and was presided over by Captain Dale and Professor Brice. It was announced that the total number of votes to be cast would be 111 and the number necessary for a choice would consequently

be 56.

"We will ballot for the major and the three captains separately," announced Captain Dale. "Then we will have the balloting for the lieutenants."

The electing of a major for the next term proved easy. Ralph Mason obtained ninety-one votes on the first ballot and was consequently declared reëlected.

"Hurrah for Major Ralph Mason!" cried one of the cadets, and the cheers were given with a will.

Then followed the balloting for the captain of Company A and the captain of Company B, and they were likewise reëlected, and there was more cheering.

"We will now ballot for a captain for Company C," announced Captain Dale.

There was a murmur, and the cadets once more formed a long line and marched up to the platform, where each deposited his ballot in a big box, located there for that purpose.

There was a smug grin on the face of Gabe Werner when he dropped in his vote. It seemed to show that he felt sure of being elected.

A few minutes of silence occurred, during which time the votes were being tabulated, and then Professor Brice struck a bell to attract the attention of the cadets, and, stepping forward, read the result:

"Total number of votes 111

Necessary to a choice 56

Gabe Werner has 32

.....

Jack Rover has 32

Daniel Soppinger has 30

Walter Baxter has 17."

At this there was a murmur of voices, and all the cadets looked at each other.

"As no candidate has received the required number of votes, I will leave you for ten minutes to talk matters over among yourselves, and then we will have another vote," announced Captain Dale.

"Say, Jack! what do you know about that?" cried Fred. "You and Werner are tied for first place!"

At this moment Walt Baxter came up.

"Listen, Jack," he said in a low voice. "I voted for you, and I would just as lief withdraw in your favor, but some of the fellows who voted for me say if I withdraw they will vote for Werner, so I'll have to stay on the ticket. But it's a blamed shame!" and Walt's face showed that he meant what he said.

"Say, Bill, we've got to get a hustle on and get more votes," growled Gabe Werner to his crony, as they walked over to a corner.

"I don't see how we're going to do it. I've talked to every fellow in the school," said Glutts.

"I'm entitled to this captaincy, and if they won't give it to me I don't want anything," growled Gabe Werner. It angered him to think that in spite of all the money he had spent he could muster up only thirty-two votes.

While this was going on, Dan Soppinger had been

circulating among those who had been supporting him. Dan was gratified over the showing he had made, but he did not want the position. Now he came up and announced that he was going to withdraw.

"I'm withdrawing in favor of Jack Rover," he declared in a loud voice, and went around the hall repeating this statement. "I want everybody who voted for me to vote for Jack."

"Not much we won't!" cried one cadet. "If you won't run, we'll vote for Walt Baxter."

"We want Bart White to run!" put in another cadet.

"All right, suit yourselves," said Dan, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Just the same, I'm out of it, so I don't want anybody to vote for me again."

It was not long after this that the call came for the next ballot, and once again the cadets filed up and placed their slips of paper in the box. Then the counting began and was soon finished. Both Captain Dale and Professor Brice seemed to be much disturbed over something that had occurred, and the bell for silence rang out sharply.

"This ballot cannot be counted!" declared Captain Dale, in a stern voice. "There are but one hundred and eleven cadets present, but one hundred and fifteen votes have been cast, showing that some person or persons voted more than once. You will immediately prepare new votes and stand in one long line, handing each vote to me as you come up."

"Gee! what do you know about that?" whispered Randy.

"I wager some of the Werner crowd did that," remarked his twin.

"How foolish to do anything of that sort," said Jack. "They ought to have known they couldn't get away with it."

"Maybe they thought because Dan Soppinger retired some of the fellows wouldn't vote," suggested Fred.

"Well, if they thought that, they got left."

The next vote proved correct so far as numbers went, and once more the figures were announced:

"Number necessary to a choice 56

Jack Rover has 54

Gabe Werner has 30

Walter Baxter has20

Bart White has7."

"Hurrah, Jack, you're going up!" cried Fred enthusiastically.

"You're only two votes shy of a choice," said Randy.

"I guess you would have been elected if Bart White hadn't gone on the ticket," returned Spouter.

At that moment both Walt Baxter and Bart White came rushing up to Jack.

"I'm going to retire in your favor, Jack," said Walt.

"So am I," declared Bart.

"Well, now, I didn't expect this," stammered Jack, hardly knowing what to say.

"I can't get it anyway," declared Walt, "and as Werner is falling behind, I think it's perfectly safe now to withdraw."

"And I only went in to keep the votes from going to Werner," declared Bart.

Both of these cadets hustled around among their supporters and let all in the Hall know that they were withdrawing from the contest.

In the meantime Gabe Werner and his cronies circulated among the crowd, and it was afterwards said that Werner even went so far as to attempt to buy some votes, but without avail.

Then the next ballot was called for, and it was quickly cast.

"We have at last reached a result," announced Captain Dale. "And I am glad of it." And then he read the figures.

"Total number of votes cast 111

Necessary to a choice 56

Jack Rover has 81

Gabe Werner has 30."

"Hurrah! Jack Rover is elected captain of Company C!" and a great cheer went throughout the hall.

"He got all the votes that were cast for Baxter and White!" cried Fred.

"Right you are!" added Gif. "Gabe Werner did not

get a single vote more than he had before."

"And that was two less than he got at the start," added Spouter.

"I hereby declare Jack Rover duly elected captain of Company C for the ensuing term," said Captain Dale. "Captain Rover, if you will come forward, I shall be glad to shake hands with you," he added. And then, as Jack walked to the platform to grasp the instructor's hand, there was a great burst of applause.

"Never mind, Gabe. We'll make you lieutenant again, anyway," declared Bill Glutts, while this scene was being transacted.

"I don't want to be lieutenant again!" howled Gabe. "If they don't want me for a captain, they needn't have me for anything. I'll decline to run!" And thus speaking, Gabe Werner marched out of the room in great disgust.

"He sure is a sweet one!" was Gif's comment.

A little while later it was announced that the balloting for lieutenants would begin. The names of eight aspirants were put up, including that of Fred Rover. There was a good deal of wire-pulling, and it took nine ballots to decide the various choices. But in the end Fred became the first lieutenant of the company of which Jack had been made captain.

"Good for you, Fred! I congratulate you!" cried Jack, catching his cousin by the hand.

"I guess we'll all do that," declared Randy.

"Three cheers for Lieutenant Fred Rover!" exclaimed Spouter, and the cheers were given with

great heartiness, for Fred had made himself a favorite throughout the school.

“And now to get ready to go to Camp Barlight” said Andy. “My, but won’t we have the best times ever while we are under canvas!”

“I hope we do,” answered Jack.

But a little later the newly-elected captain became somewhat doubtful of this. As he and Fred, followed by the twins, went upstairs to their rooms they passed Gabe Werner and his cronies in the main corridor. The angular ex-lieutenant did not say a word, but he glared at Jack in a baneful way that boded no good.

“Werner has got it in for you, Jack,” remarked Andy, when the four Rovers were in their rooms and the doors had been closed.

“I guess you’re right,” was Jack’s reply. “Well, I’m not going to worry. I think I can take care of myself.”

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CHAPTER XVI

OFF FOR THE ENCAMPMENT

As was the usual custom at Colby Hall, all of the old officers and those newly elected were invited to participate in a dinner given by Captain Dale. This was held in a private dining room of the school, and was usually a function looked forward to with much pleasure by those to take part.

"Now we've got to look our prettiest," announced Fred to Jack. "Of course, we'll wear our new officers' uniforms."

The dinner proved to be one long to be remembered by the two Rover boys, and they were sorry to think the twins had not been present to see what took place. There were some speeches and a good deal of merrymaking, and the two Rovers were congratulated over and over again on having been elected.

"I'm mighty glad to think you're going to be at the head of Company C, Captain Rover," said Major Ralph Mason. "And glad, too, that your cousin Fred is going to be a lieutenant of that company. I shall expect great things from both of you."

"Well, I intend to do the best I can," announced Jack modestly.

There was but one drawback to the affair. Gabe Werner did not show himself, nor did he send any letter of regret to Captain Dale.

"Gabe is sore, all right enough," declared one of the under officers. "When I asked him if he was coming to the spread, he merely shook his head and looked like a thundercloud."

Sunday proved rather a busy day for all of the cadets, yet the Rovers, along with a number of

others, went to Haven Point where they met some of the girls. All attended services at one of the local churches. Then the young folks paired off, the boys walking with the girls to Clearwater Hall.

"Oh, Jack, you can't think how proud I am to know they have made you a captain!" said Ruth, who was walking beside the newly-elected officer. "And I think you ought to be very proud yourself."

"I admit it makes me feel pretty good, Ruth," he answered.

"But you'll have to be careful," went on the girl anxiously. "Randy told me on the way to church that a cadet named Werner is very angry because you cut him out of one of the captaincies."

"I'm not afraid of Werner or any of his crowd!"

"Yes, but he may try to make trouble, Jack. Don't forget how Brown and Martell acted—and are acting still."

"I won't forget, Ruth." And then, making sure that none of the others was noticing, he pressed the girl's fingers tightly within his own. "It's awfully nice to have you so interested," he whispered. And, although she did not answer to this, she gave him a bright look that lingered in his memory for many a day afterward.

In the meantime Fred was walking along with May Powell, and had also been congratulated on attaining a lieutenancy. May was full of fun, and her eyes showed it.

"I suppose some day it will be Major Fred Rover!" she exclaimed. "My, won't you look grand with a

whole lot of gold lace, and a cockade hat, and all that sort of thing!"

"No gold lace for mine, May!" he laughed.

Spouter and Gif were walking with Martha and Mary, and soon the whole crowd reached Clearwater Hall. Here the boys had to say good-bye to the girls, and this was rather a lingering process, since the young folks did not know exactly when they would get together again.

"But don't forget we expect to march past here to-morrow morning about ten o'clock," said Jack. "If you are really patriotic you'll be watching for us and have your flags out."

"Don't you worry about that," answered Ruth. "We're going to ask Miss Garwood for a special recess in honor of the occasion."

The evening was spent by the boys in packing their things and in otherwise getting ready for the encampment. There was, however, the usual song service at eight o'clock in the assembly room of the Hall, on this occasion presided over by a minister who had stopped at the Hall to visit his two nephews, who were pupils there. The minister was a good speaker, and he made an address which the cadets listened to with close attention.

Early in the morning came a sound that told all the cadets that the annual encampment was now at hand. Instead of the school bell ringing, there were the notes of two bugles ringing through the corridors. Then from outside came the vigorous rattle of several drums.

"Hurrah! No more studying! From now on we are

soldier boys!" exclaimed Andy, and he bounced out of bed. "Get up, you sleepyheads!" And in the exuberance of his spirits he threw a pillow at his twin's head. Randy returned the compliment by throwing a shoe at him, hitting Andy in the stomach.

"Hi! What's this?" exclaimed Fred, scrambling up at the confusion.

"Over the top at the Huns!" shouted Andy, charging on Randy and sending him backward into a stand loaded with books. "Forward, the light brigade, and on to the gas attack!"

"Hi! You fellows are making altogether too much noise," came from Jack. "Attention, company! Line up! Eyes right!"

"My! but don't the bugles and drums sound fine?" was Fred's comment, as he hurried into his new uniform, of which, it may be said privately, he was exceedingly proud.

"I suppose we won't have a bit of fun at this outing, with a captain and a lieutenant keeping their eyes on us," grumbled Andy; but, of course, he did not mean what he said.

"Sure, I'll make you line up and toe the chalk mark," answered Jack, with a grin. "You won't dare to call your souls your own. If you infringe one fixed rule the sixteenth of an inch, I'll place you in the guardhouse."

"Yes, and we'll feed you on nothing but dry bread and dry water," added Fred.

"Good-night!" came solemnly from Randy. "Please lead me to the dungeon at once! What's the use of

looking at the sunshine and trying to smile!"

It had been decided that the cadets should march to Barlight Bay, which was about thirty-five miles distant. They were to take two days for the journey, stopping over night on the outskirts of the village of Rackville, where Captain Dale had already rented a farm field for that purpose. All of their belongings were to be transported in several motor trucks, engaged for that purpose, these trucks being under orders from the battalion quartermaster.

Of course, it must be understood by my young readers that Colby Hall was only a military school for boys, and that the military matters there, while conducted somewhat on the lines of those at West Point, were by no means so strict. The officers, from the young major down, were expected to do their duty the same as if they were at a government camp, but all were under the supervision of Captain Dale and the Hall professors.

More than this, the boys did not pretend to do any of the camp cooking or any of the menial camp labor, this being accomplished by hired helpers. And again, the officers were only officers while on parade or during special hours of duty—otherwise they were just like the other cadets and were treated accordingly.

There was the usual morning roll call, and also the drill and inspection, this time the latter being unusually severe, for Captain Dale wanted to make sure that everything was right before the cadets left the Hall. The parade around the grounds, however, was omitted, and the lads went in to their breakfast half an hour earlier than usual. Then it was announced that they would leave the Hall at exactly

nine o'clock.

At the roll call and inspection it was a new thing for Jack to take command of Company C, and for Fred to fill the position of a lieutenant; but both acquitted themselves creditably, and for this received a nod of approval from Captain Dale.

On Sunday evening it had been rumored about that Gabe Werner had decided not to attend the encampment. This rumor had its foundation in the fact that the angular ex-lieutenant had sent a telegram to his father explaining the situation and stating he wanted to come home. In return, however, Mr. Werner commanded his son to remain at Colby Hall, and so, much against his will, Gabe was on hand when the cadets were ready to march away.

"But I ain't going to do anything that I don't want to do," growled Gabe to Bill Glutts. "You just wait and see!"

"Maybe you'll get a chance to make it warm for Jack Rover and his bunch," suggested the wholesale butcher's son.

"You bet!" answered Werner laconically.

The cadets were all assembled on the parade ground, and the motor trucks, piled high with all of their belongings, as well as the camping paraphernalia, had already left the grounds. There was a final rattle of drums to call any cadets who might still be missing.

"Battalion attention!" commanded the young major, after he had received his orders from Captain Dale.

At once the three companies came to attention.

"Shoulder arms!" came the command a few seconds later. "Forward—march!"

Boom! Boom! Boom, boom, boom! went the drums, and the Colby cadets stepped off gaily, while the professors and helpers left behind at the Hall cheered loudly and waved their hands. From the big flagstaff on the campus floated a large American flag, this being run up every morning at sunrise and taken down at sunset.

Soon the drums gave a preliminary rattle, and then the shrill fifes struck up into a lively marching air, and one company after another passed out of the Hall grounds and on to the road leading to Haven Point.

"Hay foot, straw foot!" murmured Andy jokingly to Randy, who was marching by his side. "I wonder how our feet will feel after we have covered the eighteen miles we have to do to-day?"

"Oh, that will be all right, I think," answered his twin. "I've done more than eighteen miles in a day, and so have you."

It did not take long for the cadets to reach the outskirts of Haven Point. Their coming was expected, and quite a crowd of town folks were out to see the parade. Some few had put out flags, for all were proud to have such an institution as Colby Hall in that vicinity.

The moving-picture theater was decorated with flags from top to bottom, and across the street the enterprising manager had hung a big banner inscribed with the words:

Good-bye
COLBY HALL
Have a good time, boys

Captain Dale was marching beside Major Mason, and as the school came in sight of this banner the major whispered a few words to the elderly military man, who nodded in approval. Then the young major turned and, walking backward, cried:

"Battalion attention! Three cheers for Mr. Felix Falstein!"

The cheers were given with a right good will, and a number of the cadets swung their caps at the manager of the moving-picture theater, who stood in the doorway, smiling at them. The cheer had been totally unexpected, and Mr. Falstein grew exceedingly red in the face. But he bowed and smiled, and kept on bowing, in the meantime waving his hat at the cadets, until they had passed up the street.

Leaving Haven Point behind, and with a generous following of small boys, the cadets continued their march by taking to the road leading past Clearwater Hall. Here another surprise awaited them. The girls of the school had strung long lines of colored paper across the roadway, and had decorated the entire front of the school grounds with small flags. More than this, all of the girls were out in a long line facing the roadway, and many of them carried flags and wore red, white and blue ribbons.

"Good-bye! Have a good time!" called out Ruth.

"Don't forget to write!" came from Martha.

"Oh, but you do look nice!" called May.

And then there was such a babble of exclamations that hardly a word of what was said could be understood. And in the midst of this the cadets gave a rousing cheer for Clearwater Hall and everybody connected with that school.

"Oh, but don't they look lovely!" cried May, when the boys had passed. "Did you see Jack at the head of the third company?" she asked of Ruth.

"Why, of course! And he certainly looked every inch a captain."

"I wish I were a boy and could go along!" sighed Mary.

"Oh, I guess we all wish that," declared Ruth. "But come—let us give them another cheer!" And this rent the air just as the cadets reached a turn in the road and passed out of sight.

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CHAPTER XVII

A NIGHT ON THE ROAD

"THIS is the life, boys!"

"Ho for a life under canvas!"

"Beats rooming in a school all hollow, doesn't it?"

"Exactly so! And think—we haven't any studying to do. Oh, boy!" and Andy, who was the speaker, felt so light-hearted that he turned several cartwheels on the grass.

"Say, you look out, Andy, or somebody will grab you and put you in the circus," was Spouter's comment.

The Colby Hall cadets had finished their first day's march and were now in camp on the outskirts of Rackville. They had made the hike without mishap, stopping at noon for lunch along the roadside.

The encampment consisted of three long lines of tents, one for each company. As was the usual practice, the cadets had erected the canvases themselves, doing it with real military precision. They were in the center of a large, sloping field, one end of which bordered the road running into Rackville. The field was a pasture lot belonging to a large farm owned by a man named Oliver Appleby. Appleby owned a dairy farm, and employed about a dozen hired hands.

"I know one thing we'll get here," remarked Fred, after a look around. "We'll probably get all the milk we want to drink."

And in this surmise he was correct. Captain Dale had made the necessary arrangements with Oliver Appleby, and that evening and the following morning the cadets were furnished with the best of cream and also all the fresh milk they desired.

After the setting up of the tents came supper, and my readers can rest assured that none of the boys were "backward about coming forward," as Randy expressed it. All were as hungry as wolves, and the amount of food they stored away was simply astonishing. But Captain Dale had received orders from Colonel Colby that the students should be well treated, so everybody got all he wanted.

"Gee! this is so different from a school I used to attend," remarked Fatty Hendry, with a sigh of satisfaction. "At that place we only got about half enough to eat, and many a time I had to go down to the village and buy something extra to keep from starvation."

Having spent so many of their vacations at the old Rover homestead at Valley Brook, the Rovers were much interested in the Appleby place, and after the evening meal Jack and Fred took a stroll up to the cow barns to inspect the herd. Oliver Appleby had a number of prize cattle, of which he was very proud.

"They are certainly beautiful cows," remarked Fred, when they were walking through the shed which housed the best of the herd. "They must have cost a mint of money."

The two young officers were on the point of leaving the cow sheds when, quite unexpectedly, they ran into Jed Kessler.

"Hello! I thought I'd see some of you fellers," cried the old dockman. "Out for your annual encampment, I understand."

"Yes," answered Jack. "How are you these days? Have you got over the effects of that explosion?"

"I'm about over it—although I haven't returned to work yet," answered Kessler. "You see, those awful shocks, and being thrown into the lake that way, kind of got on my nerves. My folks don't want me to go back until I'm feelin' stronger."

"Have they resumed work at the shell-loading plant?" questioned Fred.

"They're startin' up to-day. One gang is clearin' up the wreckage, while a number of the old hands are at work in the places that wasn't damaged very much. And say! I've got something to tell you that I know you'll be interested to hear," went on old Jed Kessler.

"What is that?" questioned Jack.

"I saw those two German-lookin' fellers again early this morning, when I was on my way here to visit my brother who works on this farm."

"You did!" cried the two Rovers simultaneously.

"Where were they?" added Jack.

"They was down on the road that runs to Barlight Bay."

"Walking?" queried Fred.

"No, they was in an old wagon pulled by the sorriest lookin' nag I ever set eyes on. They had the wagon piled high with packages."

"Were you sure they were the same men?"

"I think they was the same. Of course, I wouldn't like to swear to it until I got a better look at 'em. They was just goin' past as I came in from a side road, and as soon as they saw me they whipped up

their horse and started down the road in a cloud of dust."

"You ought to have stopped them," said Jack.

"How could I do that? I wasn't close enough to catch hold of the horse. And besides that, what chance would an old feller like me have against two husky men? More than likely, too, they was armed, while I didn't have anything—not even a cane."

"But you should have notified the authorities," said Fred.

"Oh, I did that, knowing that they was on the lookout for those fellers. I hurried to Rackville just as fast as I could, and called on the justice of the peace and the town constable. Then they got busy and telephoned to the next town and notified the police. They got a gang of six or eight men lookin' for the men and the wagon, but up to this afternoon they hadn't got any trace of 'em."

"Well, that certainly is interesting," remarked Jack. "You say you are pretty sure they are the same fellows who were around the plant just previous to the explosion?"

"Well, as I said before, I wouldn't like to swear to it until I got a better look at 'em. But those two fellers on the wagon had the same bushy black hair and whiskers and the same round faces. More than that, they wore the same slouch hats that the other fellers had."

"Have you any idea what was in the packages in the wagon?" questioned the young captain.

"Sounded to me as if it might be iron, or

something like that. It jangled just like hardware."

"It's queer they would be on that back road with such stuff," said Jack slowly. "Did the folks at Rackville think they might live down near the bay?"

"They said there wasn't any folks around there so far as they knew that wore bushy black hair and black beards. They knew about everybody who lives within several miles of here," answered Jed Kessler.

The two Rovers talked the matter over with the old man for a few minutes longer, the foreman of the dairy also having his say. Then the boys had to hurry back to the camp, to fulfill their duties as captain and lieutenant.

As was to be expected, there was a certain amount of horseplay in camp that evening to which those in charge turned something of a blind eye.

"We'll have to leave the boys let off steam a little," said Captain Dale to the professors who had come with him. "I think they'll soon settle down to regular routine."

But the excitement of getting ready for the encampment, and the long tramp over the dusty roads, had tired all of the cadets, and it was not long before the great majority of them were ready to retire. Only a few, like Andy and Randy, wanted to continue the fun, but Jack and Fred quickly subdued the twins.

"You'll have plenty of time for your jokes when we get into the regular camp," said the young captain. "Now you had better get a good night's rest, for we have a long hike before us for to-morrow—over the Lookout Hills."

As members of Company C, Gabe Werner and Bill Glutts would have been under the direct command of Jack and Fred. This was a thorn in the side of the ex-lieutenant, and as soon as he had received word from home that he must remain at the school for the period of the annual encampment, he went to Captain Dale and asked to be transferred to another company, and requested that Glutts be transferred also.

"I think I can understand your feeling, Werner," said Captain Dale kindly. "I am very sorry that you refused to run for a lieutenancy after your defeat. Which company would you like to go in—A or B?"

"If it's all the same to you, Glutts and I would like to go into Company B."

"Very well. I'll have the necessary shifts made, and you can report to the captain of that company before we start away." And so it was arranged.

"The Rovers ain't going to get me under their thumb!" growled Werner to Glutts. "I know they would like nothing better than to find all sorts of fault and to get me into trouble."

This, of course, was not true, because both Jack and Fred had decided to treat the defeated candidate with every consideration.

"But I'm glad they've been transferred," said Fred, when he heard the news.

"You're not half as glad as I am, Fred," answered the young captain.

Jack and his two lieutenants occupied a tent together, while Andy and Randy were under canvas

with Gif and Spouter. The night was a pleasant one, neither too hot nor too cold, and it was not long after the young cadets had turned in before most of them were sound asleep. But not so Gabe Werner and Bill Glutts.

During the halt at noon for lunch, the cronies had held an animated conversation, and this talk had been continued after the battalion had gone into camp for the night. The subject of their discussion had been the question of getting square with Jack and Fred because of what had occurred during the election. Werner attributed his downfall entirely to the Rovers.

"I'll show 'em a thing or two before I get through with 'em!" he asserted to his crony. "They can't walk all over me and get away with it!"

"Well, Gabe, you know I'll be on deck to help you in anything you try to put over on 'em," responded the wholesale butcher's son.

"Of course we'll have to be careful what we do," went on Werner. "We don't want to run afoul of Captain Dale or any of the professors. If we did they might set us some awful mean tasks to do while we were in camp."

"Yes, we'll have to be on our guard and work on the sly."

Neither Werner nor Glutts were particularly brilliant in evolving their scheme, but finally the ex-lieutenant hit upon something which he thought would answer. Then he told his crony of what had occurred to him.

"That's the talk!" cried Bill Glutts, his eyes

gleaming wickedly. “Let’s go and do it this very night, just as soon as they are sound asleep. My, won’t there be some rumpus in the morning when they wake up and find out what has happened!”

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CHAPTER XVIII

ONE SURPRISE AND ANOTHER

FRED Rover was so tired that he closed his eyes in slumber almost as soon as he touched his cot.

But not so the young captain. Jack was fatigued, but he was also worried over some of the problems connected with his company, and these he tried to solve as he lay there in the darkness.

As the cadets were to remain in this camp for but one night only, nothing had been done toward putting any flooring in the tents. The cots of the captain and the two lieutenants rested on the short grass of the pasture. More than this, as the night was rather warm, one of the tent flaps was left open for ventilation, and for the same purpose a corner of the canvas in the rear was turned up.

As all of the cadets had tramped the distance from Colby Hall, no one was called on that night to

remain on guard. In place of this a professor who had ridden over in an automobile agreed to sit up to see that nothing was stolen by any outsiders who might have an idea of doing such a thing.

But no outsiders appeared in view, all of the curiosity seekers having left the pasture lot before it came time for the cadets to turn in. As a consequence, the professor had nothing to watch, and soon grew exceedingly sleepy. Sitting in the tonneau of an open automobile, he presently began to nod, and then his head fell forward on his breast.

Jack had thought that he would soon drop to sleep, but the problems in his mind worried him so that presently he found himself wide-awake in spite of his fatigue.

“Confound it! why can’t I go to sleep?” he murmured to himself. Then, punching his pillow to freshen it up, he turned over and tried his best to drop off.

He was just on the edge of dreamland when a sound from outside the tent attracted his attention. At first he thought some night bird or a bat might be flying around. But then came a low murmur of voices.

“Somebody is up,” he thought. “Perhaps it is Professor Grawson taking a walk around. He said he was going to keep an eye on things until morning.”

Jack lay perfectly still, and presently saw a ray of light shoot into the tent from the rear. It was the gleam of a small pocket flashlight. A thin silk handkerchief was over the end, so that the light was quite dim.

"Sure this is the right tent, are you?" he heard, in a low tone.

"Yes, this is the place," was the reply, in the faintest of whispers. "Keep quiet now, and if there is any alarm, run for your life."

On hearing these words, the young captain was puzzled for the time being. But then he realized that the voices had a familiar sound, and he smiled grimly to himself.

Slowly and cautiously Gabe Werner and Bill Glutts wormed their way into the tent by way of the opening in the rear. Gabe had the flashlight, and this he cast from one side to another, taking care, however, that the rays did not fall into the face of any of the officers.

Jack kept his eyes closed when the marauders looked at him. But as they turned around he eyed them sharply. A line had been strung from the front to the rear pole of the tent, and on this were a number of hangers containing the three officers' uniforms and some of their other belongings. Stepping up to the uniforms, the two from outside looked them over quickly. Then Werner pointed to one uniform and to another, to signify that these belonged to Jack and Fred.

Not a word was spoken by those who had come in to play their mean trick on the Rovers. Silently each drew out his pocketknife and opened one of the blades.

Werner's scheme, to which Glutts had agreed, was to cut all the buttons from both uniforms and then slit the garments so that they would be next to

useless. Then they were going to take the other belongings of the young captain and the lieutenant and throw them into a muddy brook located in one corner of the pasture.

Watching the marauders as a cat might watch a mouse, Jack saw the pocketknives opened and saw the two rascally cadets take hold of his coat and that belonging to his cousin.

“No, you don’t, you rascals!” he cried loudly, as he bounced off the cot. “Leave those uniforms alone!”

The interruption came so unexpectedly that both Werner and Glutts were dumbfounded. As Jack pounced on Gabe from the rear, Glutts, muttering a cry of terror, plunged through the opening of the tent by which he had come and fled down past the other nearby shelters at top speed.

“Let go of me!” hissed Gabe Werner, as he turned swiftly to find himself in Jack’s embrace.

The flashlight had dropped to the ground and rolled under one of the cots. The young captain and the ex-lieutenant began to wrestle, and in doing this fell over on the cot occupied by Lieutenant Blake just as this lieutenant and Fred were awakening.

“Hi! what does this mean?” spluttered Tom Blake, as both Jack and Werner came down on top of him.

The combined weight of the three brought the cot down with a crash. In the meantime Fred had jumped up.

“Say, what’s all this row mean?” he demanded quickly.

“Here is a fellow who was going to play a dirty

trick on us!" shouted Jack. "Grab him! Don't let him get away!"

He said this because in the tumble his hold on Gabe had been somewhat lessened, and in the mix-up Werner was now endeavoring to slip out of his grasp. All had fallen to the ground, and the ex-lieutenant kicked out vigorously with his heavy shoes, landing one blow in Blake's stomach, and the other on Jack's knee.

It was so dark in the tent that but little could be seen, and as Fred made a leap forward he fell over somebody's legs and went down. Then in the mix-up Blake got in the way, and both Jack and Fred grabbed him, each by an arm, thinking he was the intruder.

"Give in!" cried Jack sternly. "If you don't, it will be the worse for you."

"You've got the wrong man, Captain!" cried Blake. And then, as he was released, he added: "Wait until I make a light so that we can see what we are doing."

A lantern was hanging at the front of the tent, and, striking a match, Blake lit this. In the meantime, however, Fred saw a form disappearing through the hole in the back of the tent.

"There he goes!" he yelled to Jack.

"Stop him!"

This suggestion was unnecessary, for Fred was already crawling through the opening. But, being aroused from a sound sleep so suddenly, he was still somewhat dazed, and by the time he had got on the outside of the tent and was on his feet, Gabe Werner

was a good distance away and running like a deer.

"Come back here!" shouted Fred, looking after the flying figure.

In a few seconds Fred was joined by Jack. By this time the hubbub around the officers' tent had been heard by others, and even Professor Grawson was awakened from his nap.

"What's the trouble here?" demanded the professor, leaping from the tonneau of the automobile and hurrying in that direction.

"Two outsiders came into our tent," said the young captain.

"What did they want?"

"I guess they were going to play some trick. But I woke up and scared them off."

"Do you wish to make any complaint, Captain Rover?" went on the professor, as Blake came around with the lantern and some other cadets began to gather.

"I don't think so—at least not to-night, Professor," answered Jack, after a few seconds of rapid thinking.

"I hope they didn't do any damage," went on Professor Grawson.

"They didn't have time. Although in the struggle, when I tried to catch one of them, we fell over one of the cots and broke it down."

"I see." The professor mused for a moment. "Well, perhaps you might better let the matter rest," he continued. He was afraid someone would ask him

about himself, and then he would have to acknowledge that he had been asleep instead of remaining on guard.

The excitement soon died away, the report being that some of the cadets had been starting in for a little more horseplay, but that the scheme had been nipped in the bud. Andy and Randy were on hand, and asked Jack for some of the particulars.

"I'll tell you about it to-morrow," whispered the young captain. "But mum is the word just now."

Returning to their tent after the excitement was over, the Rovers assisted Lieutenant Blake to put up his cot, so that he could sleep upon it. In doing this, Jack picked up the flashlight and the silk handkerchief with which the end had been covered. In the struggle the light had been turned off. Without saying anything about his find, the young captain slipped the articles into his pocket.

Running as fast as his somewhat clumsy steps would permit, Bill Glutts reached the tent which he and Werner occupied along with two of their cronies, cadets who had asked them to join Company B just previous to their leaving Company C. Glutts had run so fast that he could hardly breathe, and he sank down on his cot gasping.

"You look to be in a hurry, Bill," remarked one of the other cadets, who was awakened by the sudden entrance.

"Shut up—don't make a sound!" whispered Glutts, half savagely. "If you do you'll get the whole bunch into trouble."

While trying to regain his breath and to undress,

Glutts kept his ears wide open, and presently heard Gabe Werner approaching. Then the ex-lieutenant dove into the tent, quickly tying the flaps behind him. Without saying a word, he began to pitch off his clothing.

"Gee, I'm glad they didn't catch you, Gabe," muttered Glutts, in a hoarse whisper.

"They did! But I gave 'em a couple of kicks they won't forget! And then I ran for it."

"Do you suppose they recognized you?"

"I don't think so. The minute we went down the light went out."

"We sure did make a botch of that job," grumbled the wholesale butcher's son.

"How was I to guess that they'd be awake watchin' us?" retorted the ex-lieutenant. "When I looked into the tent I thought the whole bunch was fast asleep. But shut up now—they may be coming this way, and we want to do the innocent act."

"It's me for that," chuckled Glutts, and, having finished undressing, he turned over on his cot and commenced to snore. And in this Gabe Werner soon followed his example.

Both waited impatiently for five minutes or more. Then, as nothing came to disturb them, both breathed more freely.

"I guess they missed us," whispered Glutts.

"It looks like it, Bill. But, say! I just thought of something," went on Werner, and the tone of his voice showed his dismay.

"What's wrong now?"

"In the struggle I dropped that flashlight and the silk handkerchief I had tied over it."

"Gee, that's too bad! Did either of the things have your name or initials on it?"

"No."

"Well, that's good. You haven't got to admit that you own 'em."

"That's all right, Bill, but that flashlight and the handkerchief cost money," grumbled Gabe Werner.

After that there was silence, but it was a long while before either of the rascally cadets could get to sleep. Both were bitterly disappointed over the failure of their scheme to do Jack and Fred an injury, and both wondered whether they would be found out.

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CHAPTER XIX

AT CAMP BARLIGHT

THERE was so much to do in the morning, getting breakfast, taking down the tents and packing them in

the motor trucks, and doing other necessary things, that the Rovers got no opportunity to talk over the stirring events of the night before. As officers Jack and Fred had many duties to perform.

Jack and Fred noticed that Gabe Werner and Bill Glutts were in their usual places in the company ahead of them. Once or twice they caught the ex-lieutenant and his crony gazing at them furtively, but to this they paid scant attention. Both were satisfied that these two unworthies were the guilty parties.

“I’m sure they are the ones,” said Jack to Fred and the twins, when they had come to a halt at the roadside for the noon-day meal and the cadets had some time to themselves. The story had been told to Andy and Randy, who had listened with much interest.

“What did you do with the flashlight and the handkerchief?” questioned Andy.

“I’ve got them both in my pocket.”

“Are you going to return them?” asked Randy.

“I don’t see what else to do. I don’t care to carry them about, and I don’t care to give them up to Captain Dale or any of the professors. I wouldn’t want Werner and his crowd to think we are squealers.”

The matter was talked over among the Rovers and Spouter and Gif, who were let into the secret. Spouter looked the flashlight over, and was certain that it belonged to Gabe.

“I was down in Haven Point when he bought it,” he said. “I was thinking of getting one of them

myself, so I looked them over pretty carefully."

"I've got an idea!" cried Andy. "Just let me have those things, and I'll see to it that Werner and Glutts get them back—and with a vengeance."

"What's the scheme?" questioned his twin eagerly, while the others listened, being equally curious.

"I'll put each of them in a real, nice, comfortable, little package," answered Andy, with a grin. "And then to-night, if I can get the chance, I'll put one in Werner's cot and the other in Glutts's."

"What do you mean by a 'real, nice, comfortable, little package?'" questioned Fred.

"Oh, a package that he'll feel when he lies down on it. Something that he won't be apt to overlook," returned Andy innocently.

"Wow! that's the stuff," cried Randy eagerly. "Let's have those things, Jack. We'll fix 'em up O. K."

"Well, you take care that you don't get caught at it," answered the young captain, and then passed the flashlight and the silk handkerchief over to the twins.

The cadets were now among the Lookout Hills, and after the lunch hour they had a long hike over two more of the hills. On the top of the last of these, they paused to rest and to look around them. A grand panorama burst upon their view, stretching many miles in all directions. Directly ahead, through a somewhat dense forest, they could see Barlight Bay, the waters of which sparkled brightly in the sunshine. Off to the northeast were some cleared fields, and this spot was pointed out to them as that where the camp was to be located. To the southeast,

beyond the timber and a series of jagged rocks, was another cleared space stretching for several miles, and this was dotted by numerous low buildings and tents.

"That must be Camp Huxwell!" exclaimed Jack, as he looked at the buildings and tents.

"It is," announced Captain Dale, who was standing near. "If you care to look through my fieldglasses, Captain Rover, you will be able to see the camp quite distinctly."

"I'll be pleased to do that," answered Jack quickly, and took a good look through the glasses. Nearly everybody wanted to look, and Captain Dale good-naturedly allowed them to pass the fieldglasses around.

"It's not quite so close to our camp as I thought it was going to be," remarked Fred disappointedly. "There's a wide belt of rocks and timber between."

Barlight Bay, opening up on the rolling Atlantic, was shaped very much like a half moon. Within the semicircle there were two smaller bays, on the lower one of which was located Camp Huxwell, while on the upper one was to be established Camp Barlight. Between these two minor bays, as stated before, was a series of rocks and cliffs broken by a thick forest, with here and there patches of dense undergrowth.

"I'd like to take a tramp through those woods some time while we are in camp," said Jack. "It might be lots of fun."

"Oh, sure! We'll take more than one walk that way," answered Fred. "And don't forget, we want to go over to Camp Huxwell."

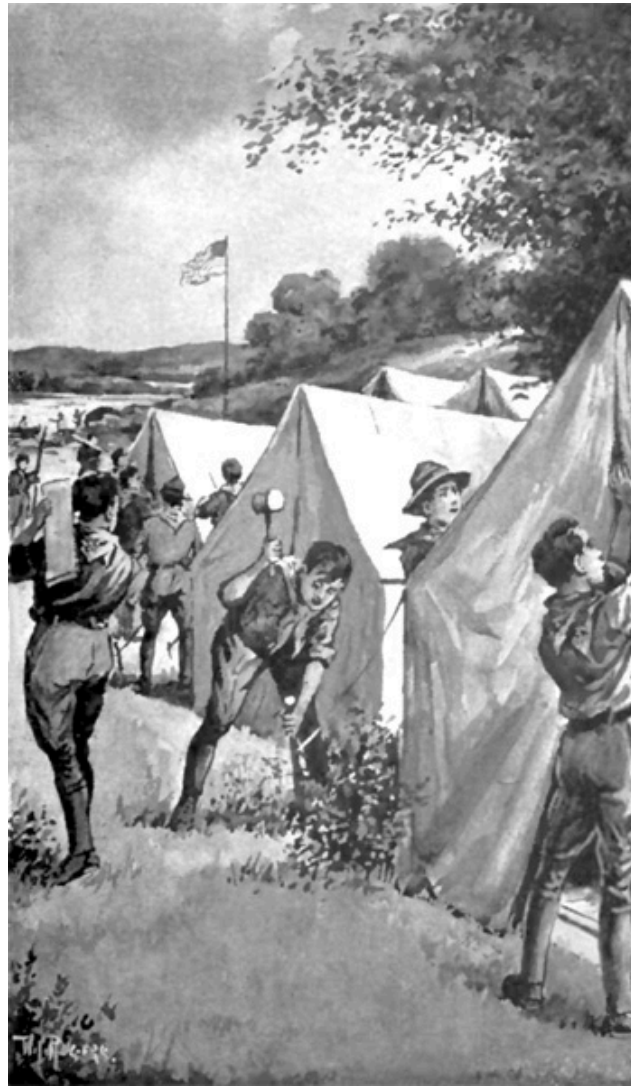
The climb to the top of the last of the hills had tired a good many of the cadets, and they were glad that the remainder of the march would be downward instead of upward. Soon they were once more on the way, and reached the site of Camp Barlight about four o'clock in the afternoon.

The motor trucks had preceded them, and as the work of getting the place into shape had been proceeding for over a week, the sights to be seen were decidedly interesting. At one end of the grounds there were three long rows of platforms. Upon each platform a tent was to be erected. To one side was a much larger platform, and over this had already been erected a large mess tent, made quite substantial by means of a wooden frame. This mess tent had behind it the cooking quarters.

The opposite end of the camp site had been leveled for a parade ground, and here a tall flagpole had been erected, from the top of which floated the Stars and Stripes in all of their glory.

"Oh, see how close we are to the water!" exclaimed Randy. "That looks mighty good to me. I'm going in swimming at the first opportunity."

The cadets were allowed to rest for half an hour, and then they were set to work to erect the tents and otherwise get the camp in order. A few of the lads grumbled at the work to be done, but the most of them were cheerful and obliging.



THEY WERE SET TO WORK ERECTING THE TE

Down at the water's edge there was one spot where there was a wide, sandy beach, and here several small tents had been put up for use as bathing houses.

"Any one who cares to do so can take a dip in the bay just before supper," announced Captain Dale, after the work of putting up the tents had come to an end. "But don't stay in longer than fifteen minutes."

Away rushed about half of the cadets, the Rovers among them. They lost no time in divesting themselves of their uniforms and getting into their bathing trunks, and then there was another rush to see who could be the first in.

"Wow, but it's cold!" exclaimed Fred, as he ran in up to his knees.

"Cold!" exclaimed another cadet. "Gee, it's icy!"

"This is the way to go in!" cried Jack, and, rushing in part way, he took a plunge and disappeared from sight.

Almost immediately a score of cadets followed him. Then came a wild plunging and swimming about, those in the water sending the spray flying over those who were too afraid to enter. There was a good deal of horseplay, but every one enjoyed himself immensely.

Following the evening meal the cadets were told they could do as they pleased until nine o'clock, but must not leave the confines of the camp. Many of the lads were too tired to do much of anything, and so sat around, taking it easy and talking over the prospects.

"Don't forget that we have got to fix up things for Werner and Glutts," whispered Andy to his brother, when it was almost time to retire.

"Right you are!" returned Randy. "Come on—let's slip away while the others are not noticing."

The first move the twins made was in the direction of the cooking quarters of the camp. Watching their chance, they entered a tent where the stores were kept, and soon found what they were looking for—a sack filled with onions.

"All we want is two good juicy ones," whispered Randy, and these onions were quickly procured.

After this the two boys wandered down to the edge of the forest, and there picked up a number of sharp sticks and stones, placing these in two dirty towels they had procured at the cook's quarters. Then they retired to a corner of the woods where no one could observe them and went to work to finish what they had in mind to do.

It was about an hour after this when taps was sounded and all the cadets were supposed to turn in for the night. Previous to this Andy and Randy had rejoined their cousins.

"We've got 'em fixed, all right enough," whispered Randy. "Don't you fellows want to see the fun?"

"Can't do it—not as captain of this company," answered Jack promptly.

"If we got caught we'd have to do a lot of explaining," added Fred.

"Well, that's where it pays to be a private," chuckled the fun-loving Rover. "Never mind, Randy

and I will tell you all about it to-morrow, and we'll also tell you something else."

The twins, along with Spouter and Gif, occupied a tent together; and, as luck would have it, this was almost in a direct line with the tent assigned to Werner and Glutts and two of their cronies. Watching their chance, the twins stole out of their own quarters and hurried over to the side of the tent occupied by their enemies.

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CHAPTER XX

FIRST DAYS UNDER CANVAS

"GEE, but I'm tired!" Andy and Randy heard Glutts grumble. "I'll bet I'll be stiff all over to-morrow morning."

"It was too much of a hike over those hills," answered Werner, yawning and stretching himself. "I'll bet I'm getting a blister on my left heel."

"Huh! I'll bet your left heel isn't any worse than my right shoulder from carrying that gun," growled the wholesale butcher's son. "That old piece of iron weighs about a ton."

"Say, will you fellows shut up and get to bed?" grumbled one of the other cadets in the tent.

"That's it!" came from the fourth occupant. "Do your visiting in the morning. With your monkeyshines last night, I'm all tired out now."

Werner and Glutts wished to remonstrate, but did not dare, fearing that more might be said concerning the escapade of the night before. They undressed as quickly as possible, blew out the light, and then each threw himself on his cot.

"Cats and dogs! what in thunder is this?"

"Say! who put these rocks in my bed?"

"Something stuck me right through the back!"

"And I got stuck, too! Gee, this is the worst yet!"

Such were some of the exclamations from Werner and Glutts as they sat up and then bounced off of their cots. Then, in a rage, the ex-lieutenant and his crony began to accuse the others in the tent of having played a trick on them.

"We didn't do anything of the sort," growled one of the cadets.

"You fellows make me tired," howled the other. "If you don't shut up and settle down I'm going to ask to be put in another tent."

"I'm going to light up and see what that confounded thing in my cot is," growled Bill Glutts.

Something had stuck him in several places on his back, and he felt anything but comfortable. Werner was rubbing himself and saying things under his

breath that were far from complimentary. The lantern was lit, and both made an inspection of their cots. Each found a bundle tied up in a thin, dirty towel.

"Rocks and sticks!" cried Gabe Werner, in deep disgust. "Hang the luck, anyway!" He took up the bundle and gazed at it closer. "Well, what do you know about this?"

"What is it?" questioned his crony.

"Here is a card! What do you know about this?" and he looked at a bit of pasteboard on which had been scrawled:

"*Returned with the compliments of the Rovers.*"

"You might know they'd try to get back at us," remarked Glutts.

"I'll fix 'em—you see if I don't!" and, in a rage, Gabe took up the bundle which had been placed on his cot and threw it with all his force to the back of the tent It struck a pole, and from inside came a crash.

"Hello, you've broken something!" cried Glutts. "Maybe it's a bottle. I wouldn't put it past 'em to put one in there, thinking you might get cut with it."

To this Werner did not reply. A sudden thought had come to his mind, and hastily he picked up the bundle, now somewhat torn, and opened it. In the midst of the sticks and stones lay his flashlight, bent and with the glass broken.

"Huh! that's a fine way to treat your own property," remarked Glutts, with malicious humor. "Why didn't you examine the bundle before you

threw it away?"

"Aw, you shut up! You make me tired! Go on and look in your own bundle."

The wholesale butcher's son did so, and there found another card from the Rovers. This was pinned fast to the silk handkerchief, which was neatly folded.

"Well, anyhow the handkerchief is all right," said Glutts consolingly, as he passed it over.

"I ought to make 'em pay for that broken flashlight," grumbled Werner.

"I think I see you doing it," came with a laugh from the other. "You'll pocket your loss and say nothing about it."

"We've got to get square with the Rovers for this."

"I agree with you there. But now I guess we had better go to bed and try to get some sleep;" and then the two turned in once more.

Andy and Randy, crouching low at the side of the tent, had, of course, taken in all that was said and done. Each was on a broad grin as they stole back to their own quarters.

"Wasn't it rich?" chuckled Andy. "I had the greatest desire in the world to burst out laughing."

"I could hardly keep still," returned his twin. "When Gabe threw his own flashlight away and busted it I nearly exploded."

"But wait until to-morrow—oh, boy!" cried Andy.

Both of the fun-loving youths slept soundly that

night, but each was up early, and they lost no time in acquainting their cousins and Spouter and Gif and a few of the others with what was likely to happen next.

As was usual with them, Werner and Gabe were late in getting up, so they had to hustle in order not to be late at roll call. Then they hurried back to their tents to get their mess kits, for this camp was conducted on real military lines when it came to eating. Each cadet had been provided with his own kit, including a big covered cup, plate, and knife, fork and spoon.

"Now watch!" cried Randy to his chums. "I think you'll see something."

"And maybe you'll smell something," added Andy, slyly.

The cadets formed in a long line to be served by the cook and his helpers. Glutts was behind Werner, and the Rovers and their friends got close by, but not too close, being warned by the twins to keep a respectable distance.

As they came up to receive their food, both Werner and Glutts opened their kits, and as they did this a powerful, penetrating smell filled the air around them.

"Hello! what in blazes have you got in your kits?" cried one of the cook's helpers, who was ready to serve them.

"Why, I ain't got——" began Werner, and then stopped short. The smell coming from his mess kit was sickening, and it made his eyes water until the tears ran down his cheeks.

"It's onions!" yelled Glutts. "It's chopped-up onions!"

"Gee, what a smell!" came from another cadet.

"Say, who opened up the onion factory?"

"Somebody shut the cover down before we faint!"

Such were some of the cries that arose as the odor of the chopped-up onions floated out on the morning air. In the meanwhile Werner and Glutts stood there in helpless fashion, holding their mess kits at arm's length. Both were red-eyed, and looked as if they were weeping copiously.

"Say, if this is a joke, it's a mighty poor one!" stormed the cook, stepping forward with a big ladle in his hand. "You chase yourselves and get out of here!" And he flourished the ladle so threateningly at the pair that Werner and Glutts ran as if for their lives. They did not look where they were going, and so dashed headlong into Professor Grawson, who was coming forward to get his own breakfast, for he had decided to rough it with the students.

"Here, here! What is this?" exclaimed the professor, as some of the chopped-up onions flew over his clothing. "My, what an awful smell! What are you young gentlemen eating?"

"We're not eatin' this stuff!" exclaimed Glutts. "Somebody played a joke on us. They filled our mess kits with onions."

"Ah, I see." Professor Grawson held his nose and stepped back several feet. "Please do not come any closer. Raw onions are very healthful, so I understand, but I never cared for them."

"We don't want 'em either. I hate 'em!" roared Werner. "Come on—let's go over to the water tank and wash up," he added to his crony; and then rushed away.

By the end of three days the cadets felt quite settled at Camp Barlight. Everything had been put in the best of order, and drills and other exercises had been held daily. Captain Dale was teaching the cadets a new bayonet exercise, and one afternoon he had an officer come over from Camp Huxwell to show the students some of the fine points in handling a bayonet. This was decidedly interesting, especially to Jack, and he did his best to imitate what the regular military instructor had done.

"No use of talking, when it comes to fighting the Huns our men have got to be pretty quick," was the young captain's comment.

"I hope we see some of those exercises when we get over to Camp Huxwell," returned Fred.

During those first days in camp the boys did not forget to write long letters to the folks at home, and also to the girls at Clearwater Hall, telling of how they were settled down. They invited the girls to call at the camp before going home, and a couple of days later came back word that the girls would do this, paying the visit in a touring car.

"It will be mighty nice to have all of them here for a day," said Jack. "We can show them all around the camp and let them look at our exercises. And maybe we can have a little picnic in the woods, too."

"That would suit me right down to the ground," answered Fred.

To give the camp a truly military aspect, Captain Dale instituted a regular guard, both night and day. The cadets were given a password, and it was understood that no one could get into the camp without giving this.

"Well, it's my turn to go on guard to-night," announced Randy one evening at supper time. "And I must say, I don't like the outlook much. It looks to me as if it was going to rain."

"Well, you'll have only four hours of it, Randy," answered Jack. "That isn't so very long. What time do you go on?"

"Twelve o'clock. Then I am to relieve Ned Lowe."

Randy retired early, and was awakened about half past eleven o'clock. Then he dressed, got a cup of the hot chocolate that one of the cook's helpers had ready for the sentries, and then went out to join the detail which was to go on guard from midnight until four o'clock in the morning.

The post which Ned Lowe had covered, and which was turned over to Randy, lay on the far side of the camp, not a great distance from where the cliffs overlooked the bay. It was a lonely spot, particularly on a night like this, when the sky was overcast and a rising wind was moaning through the branches of the trees.

"See any ghosts to-night, Ned?" said Randy to Ned Lowe jokingly, as he relieved that sentry.

"Well, I saw something, Randy," was the unexpected reply. "I've been trying to make up my mind for the last half hour what it was."

"Saw something! What do you mean?"

"I think I saw somebody sneaking through the woods over yonder," said Ned Lowe, pointing into the forest. "I shouted out, but no one answered, and then the figure—or whatever it was—vanished."

"Oh, say! you must be seeing things," returned Randy lightly. "Just the same, I'll keep my weather eye open," he added. "Maybe some of the other cadets were out, and tried to play a trick on you."

"No, I don't think it was one of our cadets," said Ned Lowe. "I think it was a stranger. But what he was doing around here at this time of night is a mystery to me."

"Maybe he was a tramp, and thought he could get a chance to steal something," ventured the fun-loving Rover, sobering down.

"Maybe. I guess you had better keep your eyes wide open," said Ned Lowe, and then turned away and left Randy alone on the post.

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CHAPTER XXI

STRANGE NOISES

LEFT to himself Randy tramped up and down slowly along the post assigned to him. The distance was several hundred feet, and at either end he met another guard. One of these was Codfish, and it must be admitted that the sneak of Colby Hall was thoroughly scared.

"I don't like this at all," Codfish declared, when he and Randy met. "There's a terrible wind sighing through those trees."

"Have you seen anybody?" questioned Randy.

"I thought I did, but I'm not sure whether it was some person or an animal."

"When was that?"

"Nearly an hour ago."

"Maybe it was the same person Ned Lowe thought he saw," went on Randy. "He called out, but nobody answered."

"If I see anybody again, I'll shoot off my gun and call the corporal," announced Codfish.

His whole manner showed that he was much disturbed. His post was along the edge of the wood beyond where Randy was stationed, but the latter saw that the sneak never walked very close to the trees and brushwood.

The time dragged heavily, and Randy heaved a sigh when he looked at his watch and found that it was only one o'clock.

The young cadet, as was the custom with many of the lads, had supplied himself with a thin cake of sweet chocolate, and to help pass the time he

munched on bits of this. Then it commenced to rain, the scattering drops making quite a noise on the trees and fallen leaves.

Fortunately Randy had brought his raincoat with him. It hung on a bush about midway between the ends of his post, and, turning, he hurried to get the garment. He was just in time to see a figure sliding away between the bushes. This figure had confiscated the raincoat only a few seconds before.

“Come back here!” yelled Randy, in justifiable anger. “Come back, I say, or I’ll fire at you!”

“Fire, and be hanged!” came in a somewhat familiar voice. Evidently the speaker knew that Randy’s rifle contained only blank cartridges.

Randy’s blood was up, for he felt certain the raincoat had been taken by one of his fellow cadets, probably Werner or Glutts. Leaping forward, he cleared some low bushes at a bound, and then made after the figure skulking along among the trees.

“Drop that raincoat or I’ll crack you on the head with my gun!” he roared, as he drew closer to the fleeing fellow.

“Keep back, or it will be the worse for you, Randy Rover!” cried the other cadet, and now Randy recognized the voice of Gabe Werner quite distinctly.

The fun-loving Rover did not reply to Werner. Instead he hurried on faster than ever, coming so close presently that he was able to reach the ex-lieutenant with his gun. He swung the weapon by the barrel, and the stock caught Werner a severe blow on his right shoulder.

"Ouch!" yelled the big cadet, and his right arm dropped to his side and the raincoat slipped to the ground.

"You're a fine rascal to steal my raincoat," remonstrated Randy, raising his gun as if to give the ex-lieutenant another blow.

"Aw! can't you take a joke? You Rovers didn't think anything of smashing my flashlight."

"You did that yourself, throwing it against your tent pole," answered Randy.

"Huh! who told you that?"

"Never mind who told me—I know it's the truth. Now, after this, Gabe Werner, you leave my things alone!"

"Bah! don't talk to me, Randy Rover. If it wasn't that you have nearly broken my right shoulder, I'd give you the licking you deserve."

"And for two pins, Gabe Werner, I'd report you for being absent from camp without leave," retorted Randy. "Now you get back to your tent just as fast as you can."

"Rats! don't you talk to me," growled the ex-lieutenant. Nevertheless, he turned and walked through the woods toward the encampment, and then lost no time in hurrying to his tent.

Randy slipped on his raincoat, and then resumed his duty as a sentinel. Back and forth he tramped, occasionally exchanging a word or two with Codfish or with the guard at the other end of his post. Thus two hours more dragged by. For half of that time it rained steadily, and if his feet did not get wet, they

at least got very damp. Then, however, the shower passed on, and presently the morning stars shone forth.

Randy was watching for the first streaks of the coming dawn and congratulating himself that his lonely vigil would soon come to an end, when an unusual sound broke upon his ears. From a distance came a curious clank! clank! followed by another sound that seemed to be the rattle of several chains.

"Hello! where does that come from?" he asked himself. "Somebody must be getting to work pretty early in the morning."

The noises kept up for a minute or two, and then abruptly ceased. The young cadet listened for quite a while, and then resumed his tramp. But a little later the strange clanking and rattle of chains was continued, and once more he halted, trying to locate the direction of the sounds.

"Must come from somewhere in the woods," he reasoned, and he thought this rather strange, for he was of the opinion that this portion of the forest was entirely uninhabited.

Several times after that he heard the strange clanking, and every time it was followed by a rattle as of chains. Then came a sharp tapping, as of a hammer on steel, and with this a curious humming sound, as if some big blowing machine was in action.

"Maybe it's an airship, or something like that," he said to himself. "That humming sound may be the propellers going around. Maybe they had an accident and had to come down for repairs."

It lacked ten minutes of the time for the new

sentry to go on duty when Randy, who had come to a halt to learn if the curious clanking was still taking place in the woods, saw a movement behind some trees at a distance.

"Must be either an animal or a man," he said to himself.

With strained eyes he watched the location, and presently saw two slouch hats moving behind the top of some brushwood. Then for a brief instant he caught sight of the forms of two men as they disappeared in the distance.

"I wonder if those were the two men who were making all that noise?" he mused.

At such a distance it had been impossible for him to note anything of the features of the men. Both wore dark clothing and dark slouch hats, but beyond that he made out nothing concerning them.

When the corporal of the guard came along to change the detail, Randy said nothing about the attempt of Gabe Werner to deprive him of his raincoat, but he did mention the sounds he had heard in the woods, and also the appearance of the two men.

"Oh, I guess they were a couple of lumbermen," remarked the corporal, in an offhand way. "They occasionally come here, I suppose, to get a stick of timber." And not thinking it of any importance, he dismissed the matter from his mind.

It was not until after the morning drill that Randy got a chance to speak to his brother and his cousins, telling them of the encounter with Werner.

"I supposed he would try to get square!" cried Jack. "I'm mighty glad he didn't get away with it."

Then Randy told of hearing the strange clanking noises and also the sounds of chains rattling and of some big blower in motion.

"That's certainly curious," remarked Jack. "From what Captain Dale said, I thought these woods had no one in them. In fact, I supposed they belonged to the government and were a part of the Camp Huxwell reservation, and that all outsiders were to be kept out."

"I thought the blowing sound might be an aeroplane's propellers," went on Randy. "I was thinking a machine might have been disabled and come down, and the fellows on board might be trying to make repairs."

"They couldn't come down safely between those trees and on those rocks," cried Andy. "They'd break their necks!"

"Well, I certainly heard something, and I saw two men."

"Say, did those two fellows look anything like the two Germans Jed Kessler spoke about?" queried Randy's twin quickly.

"I don't know about that. I only got a glance at 'em, and they were a long way off. All I know is that they were dressed in very dark clothing and wore dark slouch hats."

"I think it might be a good thing to mention this to Captain Dale," said Jack thoughtfully. "The authorities are very anxious to get on the track of

those two men who were seen around the ammunition plant. It won't do any harm to have this matter investigated." And then he and his cousin sought out the old West Pointer for that purpose.

Captain Dale listened attentively, and nodded his head several times while Randy was speaking.

"You are right, Captain Rover," he said to Jack. "And I'm glad that you brought your cousin here to tell me this. I'll go over to town this morning and report to the authorities. Of course there may be nothing in it, but as you remarked, it is a clue that should not be overlooked. Those two men with the wagon load of stuff certainly disappeared somewhere in this vicinity, and I know the forest is supposed to be a part of the government reservation, and no strangers would be permitted to go into it and cut down any trees. More than that, the strange sounds heard by your cousin Randy make it look as if something unusual was being done there."

"Would there be any objection to our going into the woods and taking a look around?" questioned Randy.

"Not the least, Rover. But I think you had better go slow, because if those men we are looking for are really there, and they know the authorities are after them—well, that may make them very desperate, and you may get into serious trouble."

"Oh, I guess we could take care of ourselves," answered Randy quickly. "Of course, Jack and I wouldn't go alone. We would take quite a bunch with us. There is generally safety in numbers, you know," and he grinned.

"All right, you may go if you want to. Only take good care of yourselves."

So the matter was arranged, and in less than half an hour later the four Rovers, accompanied by Spouter, Gif, and Walt Baxter, set off into the forest.

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CHAPTER XXII

AT THE RIFLE RANGES

IT did not take the cadets long to reach the place where Randy said he had noticed the two strangers. Here, to the surprise of the Rovers and their chums, they discovered a faint trail leading north and south through the forest.

"The men must have been following this footpath," remarked Fred. "Now then, Randy, which way were they headed?"

"They were headed north," was the reply.

They found that following the footpath was by no means easy. It led in and out among big trees and around various clumps of bushes, and more than once they found themselves in a hollow where going was exceedingly treacherous. Then in spots they had

to climb over the rough rocks.

"Hello, here is something!" cried Jack presently. "Now, what in the world is it?" he went on, as he held up an object he had picked from between two of the rocks.

It was a curiously-shaped bar of steel, about a foot and a half long, round at one end and flattened at the other, with several square holes punched through the latter end.

"Looks like a piece of machinery of some kind," said Spouter, after the thing had been passed around for examination. "You know, Randy, you may be right, after all, and that may be a piece from an aeroplane," he added, looking the bar over critically.

Carrying the bar of steel, Jack continued along the footpath, followed by the others, and a few minutes later emerged on a much larger trail. Here were the marks of wagon tracks, and also horses' hoofs.

"Hello, this proves that a wagon came this way!" cried Fred.

"Maybe it was the one those Germans were riding in," added Andy.

"Oh, I wouldn't want to say that," returned Jack. "This may be a regular thoroughfare through this corner of the forest."

They followed the wagon tracks, and soon found that the road, came to an end among some rocks overlooking Barlight Bay. Then they came back and walked in the other direction, and presently emerged on the highway along which they had marched on their way to the camp.

"That ends it, as far as following this trail is concerned," said Jack. "Those men could go to almost anywhere from here."

The cadets looked around for a while, and then went back to the spot where Randy had seen the men early in the morning. They looked for footprints, but were not successful in finding any they could follow for a distance.

"Gee, I'm getting tired!" said Randy, with a yawn. "Please remember I did not get much sleep last night."

"Yes, and I'm getting hungry," added his twin. "I think we'd better go back to camp."

The others thought so, too, and a few minutes later all set off. As before, the young captain took the lead, and he and Randy lost no time in visiting the tent occupied by Captain Dale.

"Well, this certainly is a find," declared the old West Pointer, looking the steel bar over critically. "I agree that it belongs to some sort of machine, although what, I haven't the least idea. If any of the authorities come here I'll let them look it over."

Several days, including Sunday, passed without anything new developing. Several of the local authorities had appeared, and also a Secret Service man from Camp Huxwell. All listened closely to what Captain Dale and the Rovers had to tell, and examined the steel bar critically. Then they went off, and that, for the time being, was all those at Camp Barlight heard of them.

"Hurrah! the girls are coming soon, and then maybe we'll get a chance to run over to Camp

Huxwell," cried Fred, one day after the mail had been brought in.

"They say they will be over late in the week," said Jack. He looked at his cousins. "We'll have to lay plans to treat them royally."

The young cadets had continued their drills and also their bayonet and other exercises. Now it was announced that target practice would start the following morning and continue until all of the cadets had proved what they could do in hitting the mark.

"Well, Fred, here is your chance to show what you can do!" cried Andy, after this announcement had been made. "You were the high man in our family last term." He remembered that out of a possible score of 25 Fred had netted 19, while Jack had received 18, Randy 12, and himself but 10.

"Please don't forget that I've got Lewis Barrow to shoot against," answered Fred. Lewis Barrow had been the high man on the previous occasion, with a score of 20.

There were three targets to be shot at—one at short range, one at medium, and one at long range. It would be possible to score 20 points at each target, making a total of 60 points for each cadet.

In the past Gabe Werner had been a fairly good shot. He was in the habit of patronizing a shooting gallery in Haven Point, and the proprietor of this had given him many lessons in how to hold a rifle and how to take aim.

"I guess here is where I get a chance to show those dubs what I can do," remarked Gabe to his cronies.

To make the contest more interesting for the cadets, Colonel Colby had authorized Captain Dale to put up six prizes; the first a gold medal, the second a silver medal, and the others various books of more or less value.

"Now, Fred, I want you to do your prettiest," said Jack to his cousin. "You came out ahead of us last term, and this time I want you to top the whole school."

"I'll do my best," answered the youngest Rover boy. "But, Jack, you've got to do your best, too."

"Sure I will!"

The target practice lasted for three days, and the competition among more than half of the cadets was very keen. The others were such indifferent marksmen that they had no hopes of winning any of the prizes, and so they shot more because they were expected to do so than for any other reason.

"Well, I guess I'm keeping up my reputation!" cried Randy, with a grin, when his shooting had come to an end. "Twelve points at the first target, six at the second, and four at the long distance—a total of twenty-two points."

"I'm a whole barrelful better than that!" answered his brother gaily. "I made twenty-three points. I guess we had both better open a school for target practice," and he grinned broadly.

At the short-range target Jack and Fred were tied with 16 points each, and, strange as it may seem, Lewis Barrow and Gabe Werner were tied with 17 points each.

"Say, Werner can certainly shoot," remarked Spouter, who had made but eleven points. "I knew Barrow could do it, but I didn't expect it of Gabe."

"Shooting at the short-range target is his specialty," announced Walt, whose score was also a modest one. "Remember, he has been doing a lot of practicing at the Haven Point shooting gallery."

At the medium-distance target the scores were not so good, Jack making 10, Fred 11, Barrow 13, and Werner 14.

"Hello, what do you know about this! Werner is ahead!"

"He shot one point better than Lew Barrow."

"I knew he could do it!" boasted Bill Glutts. "Just wait until you fellows get at the long-distance range! He'll show you what's what!"

The score now stood, Jack 26, Fred 27, Barrow 30, and Werner 31. The others had all dropped behind several points more.

"Say, you fellows have got to hump yourselves," declared Randy, as he came up to his cousins. "Werner is four and five points ahead of you."

"Well, I am doing the best I can," declared the young captain. He would have resented such familiarity from anyone except his fun-loving cousin.

"And I'm doing the best I can," asserted the young lieutenant.

At the long-distance range Lewis Barrow was the first of the four to show his skill. He was a young Westerner, and had a great familiarity with firearms.

He shot quickly and neatly, making a score of 10.

"Hurrah! That gives Lew Barrow a total of forty points!"

"Good work, Lew! I guess that gold medal is yours."

"Not much!" returned the Westerner, with a faint smile. "I didn't do very well. I guess the wind was against me."

The next to shoot was Fred, and to the amazement of many of those looking on, the youngest Rover made a score of 15, giving him a total of forty-two points.

"Good work, Fred!" cried Jack, grasping his cousin by the hand.

"Oh, it takes our Fred to do it!" cried Andy, dancing around. And then he had to turn a couple of handsprings to relieve his feelings.

"Huh! you just wait till Gabe shoots," said Bill Glutts.

"He's the one to win that gold medal!" piped in Codfish.

"Well, there is one thing sure—you'll never walk off with any medal, Codfish," returned Randy; and at this there was a laugh, for the sneak of the school had made a poor showing on all of the targets—in fact, he was so timid that he was almost afraid to discharge his rifle.

Gabe Werner strode forward with a superior air and inspected the rifle that was handed to him critically.

"I want a gun that shoots straight," he said.

He took a long time to shoot, sighting his rifle several times before each discharge. His first shots were fairly good, but then his nervousness asserted itself, and he all but missed the target. His total was eight points, bringing his grand total up to thirty-nine points.

"Hello, Werner's dropped down!"

"He is one point behind Barrow and three points behind Fred Rover."

"Say, Gabe, what happened to you? Did you get a dose of the shakes?" asked one of his followers.

"Maybe somebody moved the target on him," suggested Andy slyly.

"Perhaps the rifle had a twist in the barrel," announced Randy.

"Oh, say, this is none of your affair!" growled Gabe Werner, as he threw down the rifle in disgust and faced the two fun-loving Rovers. "You mind your own business!"

"Gracious, but you're peppery!" said Andy.

"I'll pepper you some day!" howled Werner, and then turned on his heel and strode off, looking anything but pleasant.

"Gee! but he takes it hard," remarked Walt.

"How foolish," returned Gif. "Even if I was disappointed, I wouldn't show it."

It was now Jack's turn to shoot, and he did so without delay. His first two shots were not

particularly good, but then he found the bull's-eye twice in succession, much to the amazement of all the onlookers.

"Say, there's shooting for you!"

"Fred, you'd better look to your laurels or Jack will beat you," cried Spouter.

"I want him to beat me—if he can," answered Fred generously.

And beat his cousin Jack did by just one point. He scored a total of forty-three, while Fred had forty-two.

Barrow came in for third place with forty points, and Werner fourth with thirty-nine points. Frank Newberry was fifth, and a cadet named Henkerson sixth.

"Well, you beat me fairly and squarely, Jack!" cried Fred, shaking hands.

"Not such an awful lot at that, Fred. Only one point," returned the young captain good-naturedly.

"But it gives you the gold medal, while I'll have to content myself with the silver medal. Just the same, I'm glad I did as well as that," added Fred.

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CHAPTER XXIII

GIRL VISITORS

AFTER the target practice the cadets of Colby Hall settled down to the usual routine of the camp. The Rovers and their chums were eagerly awaiting the arrival of the girls from Clearwater Hall, and they made arrangements with Captain Dale so that the visitors might be appropriately entertained.

The girls came in two large touring cars, which had been hired at the Haven Point garage. The Rovers and their chums were on the lookout for them, and set up a cheer as soon as they appeared.

“Oh, what a lovely spot for a camp!” exclaimed Ruth Stevenson, as she leaped to the ground and shook hands with Jack.

The visitors were escorted by Captain Jack to Captain Dale’s quarters. He knew some of the young ladies already, and soon made all of the crowd feel perfectly at home.

“Your friends will show you around our camp, and if you care to do so you may have regular mess with our cadets,” said the old West Pointer, smiling.

“Oh, let’s have a regular mess dinner by all means!” cried Mary. “I’ve always wanted to know how it tasted.”

“Grandest soup you ever struck, Mary,” said Gif.

“Especially if a pinching bug or a worm chances to drop into it,” came from Andy.

“You horrid boy!” cried Martha. “Jack, you ought

to box his ears for that."

The girls were shown over the camp, and even taken down to the rifle ranges, in the meantime being told about the very excellent scores Jack and Fred had made.

It had been arranged that the girls were to be away from Clearwater Hall for two days. They were to spend one day with the boys at Camp Barlight and the following day near Camp Huxwell, where Alice Strobell had an aunt living who had promised to take them all in for the night.

"We'll come over here early in the morning for you boys," said Martha, "and then all of us can visit Camp Huxwell together. I've already sent word to dad, and Mary has sent word to Uncle Sam, so they will be on the lookout for us."

"That will be fine!" cried Jack. "I've been wanting to see that camp ever since we got here, but, somehow, I couldn't get away to do it."

"And I want to see my dad, too," added Fred enthusiastically.

The twins were likewise eager to see the government camp and their uncles, but they were somewhat depressed, and could not help but show it.

"I know what's the matter," whispered Martha to her brother. "They are thinking about their father. Poor Uncle Tom! What a shame it is that he couldn't join father and Uncle Sam."

"Well, you know how they arranged it," answered the young captain. "Somebody had to stay at home to manage the business."

While the Rovers and their chums were showing the girls around the camp, Gabe Werner and Bill Glutts eyed them enviously.

“I don’t see why they are permitted to have girls come here and visit them,” growled the ex-lieutenant.

“Girls are all out of place in a camp like this,” added the wholesale butcher’s son. “You can’t have the same amount of freedom with those skirts around.”

“I just heard something,” put in Codfish, who had come up a moment before. “The Rovers and those other fellows are going to take the girls out into the woods for a picnic.”

“Where did you get that news?” asked Glutts quickly.

“I heard the cook telling one of his helpers. They are fixing up a great big bunch of grub for them.”

“Huh! some folks have nerve,” grumbled Werner. “I suppose he’ll let ’em have all the best things there are in camp and we can take what’s left.”

“Chopped-up onions, for instance,” and Glutts grinned.

“I’ll onion them, you see if I don’t!” cried Gabe Werner. And then he suddenly caught his crony by the arm. “Say, I’ve got an idea! If we can get away and follow those fellows maybe we can spoil their old picnic for ’em.”

“I get you!” cried Glutts quickly.

“What are you going to do?” questioned Codfish.

"Will you keep your mouth shut if we take you in on this?" demanded the ex-lieutenant.

"Of course I'll keep my mouth shut."

"All right then, you can come in, Henry. But remember, if you open your trap on us we'll come down on you like a ton of bricks," added Gabe.

The matter was talked over for several minutes by Werner and Glutts, and then Codfish was dispatched to the cook's quarters on an errand.

The girls enjoyed eating the regular mess lunch immensely. Each was provided by the boys with a new mess kit and instructed into the art of using the same. They sat at the main table in the mess hall, a table presided over by Captain Dale himself.

"This is quite an honor, ladies," said the old West Pointer politely. "It's the first time we have had so many of the opposite sex in any of our camps."

"It is very lovely of you, Captain Dale, to permit us to come," said Ruth. "I am sure we all thank you very much for all the courtesies you have shown us."

"Indeed we do!" came from the others.

"I'm afraid this meal will put a little damper on our picnic," remarked Fred. "We should have eaten our lunch out in the woods."

"Don't you worry about that," retorted Andy. "We'll be ready for another meal after we've tramped about over the rocks and among the trees for several hours."

The food to be taken along had been placed in three old knapsacks with which the camp was

provided, and these the twins and Spouter placed on their back when they set off for the woods. All were in high spirits, and Andy and Randy whistled gaily as they trudged along.

"Let us go up on top of one of the cliffs," suggested Jack, after they had been tramping for the best part of an hour. "We ought to be able to get a splendid view of the bay from there."

The others were willing, and about the middle of the afternoon they reached a high, rocky point, overlooking Barlight Bay and the rolling Atlantic. It was a clear, sunshiny day, and consequently they could see for miles in several directions.

"I see a big steamer coming up the coast!" cried Gif presently. "See the trail of smoke she is leaving behind her?"

"I wonder if those big coastwise steamers are in any danger of the German submarines?" remarked Martha.

"Oh, I don't believe there are any submarines around here," said Randy.

"Don't be too sure about that," put in Jack. "Don't forget that the Huns sent over several of their U-boats before we even got into the war."

"There may be more German submarines lurking in these waters than we have any idea of," remarked Spouter. "It is a well-known fact that the Central Powers have an enormous number of submarines, and that they have been sent to all the important lanes of travel in the Atlantic Ocean, as well as the Mediterranean Sea and the North Sea. They have got the science of building U-boats down exceedingly

fine, and they evidently know exactly how to handle such craft. And not only that, but they have invented some exceedingly destructive torpedoes, and likewise some devices——"

"Say, Spouter, have you started to deliver a lecture on German submarines?" demanded Randy.

"Please remember that we came to camp for the sole purpose of escaping lectures," added his twin.

"I'm not delivering a lecture," returned Spouter coldly. "I was only trying to pound into your somewhat bonelike heads a few important facts. But, of course, the task is rather a useless one, because you wouldn't be able to assimilate such knowledge even if——"

Spouter's oratory was cut short by a wad of wet leaves which Randy picked up and hurled at him. Then Andy poked him with a long tree branch he had picked up, and for a few minutes there was quite a good-natured pitched battle, the girls looking on with much interest.

"Avast and heave to!" roared Andy, melodramatically. "Over the top and at 'em! Chew 'em up alive! Don't let 'em cry '*Kamerad*'! Make 'em yell, 'Have you used Brickbat's Soap!'" And at this there was a shriek of laughter from the girls.

When the horseplay had finally come to an end, the young folks walked out on the rocks where they might get a better view of the bay and the ocean beyond. As was quite natural, the boys and the girls paired off together, and Jack saw to it that Ruth obtained a seat that was comfortable. Fred did the same for May, while Spouter and Gif walked on a

short distance further with the two Rover girls.

The knapsacks containing the food had been left on some flat rocks a short distance to the rear. So that they might not get too warm, the boys had placed some brushwood over them, along with some wraps which the girls had brought along.

Although the Rovers and their chums did not know it, they had been followed into the woods by Werner, Glutts and Stowell, who had obtained a brief leave of absence from the officer of the day. The trio had watched the girls and their cadet friends closely, and viewed the disposal of the knapsacks and the wraps with satisfaction.

"Here is where we get square with them," muttered Gabe. "We'll fix 'em for putting chopped-up onions in our mess kits!"

"What are you going to do with those onions I got for you?" questioned Codfish.

"We'll doctor up every bit of their food with 'em," answered Glutts. "They can have onion sandwiches and onion cake and onion pie galore. My, but that lunch will be one sweet mess when we get through with it!" he added gleefully.

"Yes, and I'll tell you another thing we can do," pursued Gabe Werner maliciously. "We can put some of the chopped-up onions into the pockets of those girls' coats. That will make 'em all smell fine!"

"Oh, say! do you think you ought to touch the girls' things?" questioned Codfish timidly.

"Sure! That will give those fellows a job cleaning the mess up," answered Gabe heartlessly.

"But we don't want to get caught." Now that the time had arrived to play the joke on the Rovers and their friends, the sneak of the school was beginning to tremble.

"Oh, we won't get caught," said Werner. "Come on. They are all out of sight, and it will be dead easy to turn the trick."

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CHAPTER XXIV

TOM ROVER'S ANNOUNCEMENT

FRED and May had gone up to the topmost point of the cliff overlooking Barlight Bay. Here they could get a view not only of the water front, but likewise of the Colby Hall camp stretched out in the clearing to the northeast of the woods. The wind was blowing rather freely, and presently the youngest Rover noticed that the girl beside him shivered.

"Why, you are cold, May! You should have brought your coat along," Fred declared.

"I wish I had," May answered.

"Let me run back and get it."

"Oh, don't bother, Fred. We won't stay up here so very long."

"It's no bother at all. It will take me only a few minutes to get it," answered the young lieutenant gallantly, and began to climb down the rocks.

It did not take Fred long to reach a point where the cliff was more level, and then he hurried off in the direction where the knapsacks and the wraps had been left.

"Hello! what's this?" he asked himself, coming up beside the flat rocks. "I'm sure we left them here." But neither the knapsacks with food nor the wraps were anywhere in sight. Fred scratched his head, wondering if he were dreaming.

"Hi, fellows!" he called out. "Something wrong here!"

"What's the matter?" yelled Gif, who was the nearest of the others.

"The knapsacks and wraps! They are gone!"

"Gone! Do you mean somebody has taken them?" exclaimed Gif.

"Yes, I do! Call the others, quick."

As Fred uttered the last words he darted away from the flat rocks. He had seen a movement behind some trees and bushes not a great distance away. As he drew closer to the spot he heard Codfish give a cry of alarm.

"We're discovered! Fred Rover is coming!"

"Hi, Codfish! what are you doing here?" demanded

Fred. But instead of answering, the sneak of the school set off on a run through the woods as fast as his legs could carry him.

By this time Gif was coming up, followed by Andy and Randy, while Jack and several others of the party were trying to get down from the rocks at the front of the cliff.

“Who was it? Who took the things?” questioned Gif hurriedly.

“I saw Codfish,” answered Fred. “And there are Glutts and Werner!” he added suddenly, as the pair came into view between the trees. They were running swiftly, carrying the three knapsacks between them. Codfish had been carrying the girls’ wraps, but had dropped them in his fright.

“The mean rascals, they were going to make off with our eats!” roared Spouter. “Come ahead! Let’s catch ’em!”

There was no need for him to utter these words, for already Gif and Fred were making after Werner, Glutts and Codfish at top speed. Behind them came all of the other cadets, each now aware of what had occurred.

“Hang the luck! I didn’t think they would spot us like this,” panted Gabe, as he lumbered along. He had a knapsack in each hand, while Glutts carried the third. Codfish, free-handed, was just ahead of them.

The three had a fair start, and might have gotten away by hiding behind the trees and brushwood of the forest had not the unlucky Codfish met with an accident. His foot caught in an exposed tree root, and

down went the sneak of the school flat on his breast. Then, before they could stop themselves, Werner and Glutts fell over him, banging him on the head with the heavy knapsacks as they did so.

"Oh! Oh!" moaned Codfish. "Don't hit me like that! Get off! You are smashing my ribs!"

Werner and Glutts rolled over, letting go of the knapsacks as they did so, and scrambled to their feet. But these movements took time, and in the meanwhile Fred and Gif rushed up, catching each by the arm.

"You let go of me, Fred Rover!" cried the wholesale butcher's son; and when the youngest Rover did not do as commanded, Glutts made a savage pass with his fist.

Had the blow landed as intended, Fred would have been struck full in the nose, but he knew something about boxing, and dodged cleverly, and then he came back at Glutts with a blow in the ear which sent that youth sprawling once more.

In the meantime Werner attempted to get away from Gif. But that athletic youth put out a foot behind the ex-lieutenant, and down went Gabe once more on the panting and bewildered Codfish. Both rolled over among the tree roots, and it was several seconds before they could untangle themselves and get to their feet.

By this time Andy and Randy had come up, and a short while later Jack and the others appeared.

"What's this all about?" demanded Jack, who, as a captain of the cadets, felt that he was in charge.

"They were sneaking off with the grub and with the girls' wraps," answered Fred. "I spotted them just in the nick of time. Another half minute, and they would have been out of sight."

"We weren't going to take the things away. We were only going to hide 'em," said Gabe Werner. He saw that there was now no chance to run for it, because he and his cronies were completely outnumbered.

"Gee, what an awful smell!" broke suddenly from Randy.

"No cologne there," said Jack.

"Smells like garlic," said one of the other cadets, holding his nose.

"It's onions!" declared Andy emphatically. "I guess I know onions when I smell 'em," he added significantly.

Werner started, and then looked more disturbed than ever, and so did Bill Glutts. Both clapped their hands to their side pockets. Something was soaking through the cloth of their uniforms. The others came closer, and then Andy and Randy set up a roar of laughter.

"Chopped-up onions!" cried the former of the twins. "What do you know about that! They are carrying pockets full of chopped-up onions! Wow!"

"I'll bet I know what they were going to do with those!" declared Randy. "They were going to doctor up our grub with 'em!"

"Well, what if we were?" said Gabe Werner boldly. "Didn't you fellows doctor up our mess kits?"

"Did they have a chance to get at the stuff in the knapsacks?" questioned Jack anxiously.

The girls were now coming up in a bunch, wondering what the disturbance meant. A swift examination proved that Werner and those with him had had no opportunity to disturb the things to eat, nor had they done any harm to the girls' wraps outside of mussing them up a trifle.

"Say, we ought to give those fellows the licking of their lives," declared Fred emphatically. "The idea of wanting to play a joke like that with the girls around!"

"No, we want no fighting to-day," declared Jack. "This affair can wait." He turned to the unworthy ones. "You clear out of here, and be mighty quick about it! We'll settle with you another time."

"Come on—I'm going back to camp!" cried Codfish timidly, and without waiting for a reply he struck off through the woods.

"You needn't think you can boss everything, Jack Rover, even if you are a captain," growled Werner. "On account of the girls, we won't say anything more about it just now. Come on, Bill." And a few seconds later he and his crony followed Codfish, and soon all were out of sight.

For the time being the encounter with the Werner crowd put a damper on the others. But they were young in hearts and spirits, and soon they forgot what had taken place and went back to the front of the cliffs. Here they presently opened up the knapsacks, and the boys allowed the girls to fix the spread for them while they built a small fire in a

hollow between the rocks where they made a large pot of chocolate. It is needless to say that all enjoyed the outing very much, and were sorry when it was time to bring it to an end.

When the boys and their visitors had returned to Camp Barlight, and the young cadets had seen the girls safely on their way in the two automobiles, they set out on a hunt for Werner and his crowd. But those unworthies kept well out of sight, only showing themselves at roll call and when it was time to eat, and then disappearing as if by magic.

"They are afraid to meet us," was Fred's comment.

"Well, I'm just as well satisfied," answered Jack. "If we got into a fight it might mean all sorts of trouble for us if Captain Dale or the professors heard of it."

The Rovers were up bright and early the following morning and on the lookout once more for the girls. Soon they came in sight, and then the Rovers, along with Gif and Spouter, got into the two automobiles, and all headed straight for Camp Huxwell.

"My, what a big place!" exclaimed Jack, when, after being inspected, they were permitted to pass through the main gateway.

"I understand they have over twenty-five thousand men here now," said Spouter.

Some bodies of soldiers at a distance were going through various maneuvers, while other bodies still further away were hard at work at bayonet practice, charging and stabbing some sacks of hay hung on long wires. At still another point the soldiers were constructing trenches and dugouts in real military

fashion.

"They've got to learn a lot to be real soldiers," was Randy's comment.

By following the directions given to them, it did not take long for the young folks to reach the vicinity of the regiment to which Dick Rover and his brother Sam were attached. The captain and the lieutenant were on the lookout for them, and hurried to meet them.

"We are very glad to see all of you," said Dick Rover, catching his son by the hand and kissing his daughter affectionately. "You can't imagine how much we have missed you."

"Nor how much we have missed you," returned Martha, her eyes growing suddenly misty.

"How are you making it, Dad? Do you feel like a regular soldier yet?" questioned Fred of his parent.

"Oh, we are working into it, Fred," replied Sam Rover.

"How soon do you expect to go to Europe?" questioned Mary quickly.

"There is a rumor that we shall leave in a week or two."

"Oh! as soon as that?" came from several of the others.

"Of course we can't tell positively," went on Fred's father. He turned to Andy and Randy. "By the way, boys, I've got a surprise for you," he added. "Your father will be down here this morning. In fact, we are expecting him any minute."

"Is he coming alone?" asked Andy.

"I don't think so. He spoke about bringing your mother with him, and possibly he may bring your Aunt Dora and your Aunt Grace."

"Oh, that would be fine!" exclaimed Mary. She happened to glance around. "Well, I declare! Here they come now!" And in a moment more the folks from New York City leaped out of a newly-arrived automobile and strode toward the others. There was a great amount of kissing and handshaking, and Tom Rover's face showed his great excitement.

"I've got an announcement to make," said the father of the twins, when he could command the attention of the others. "A very important announcement. I am going to become a soldier and fight with the rest of the fellows in France."

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CHAPTER XXV

AT CAMP HUXWELL

FOR a moment after Tom Rover made the important announcement all of the others stared at him, unable to speak.

"Do you really mean it, Dad?" cried Randy, the first to break the silence. "Are you really going to the front?"

"Yes, Son. I just got word early this morning which makes it possible for me to leave New York and join the army," answered the father, with a smile.

"Hurrah! That's the best ever!" shouted Andy, throwing his cap into the air. "I knew you'd do it, Dad." And, rushing forward, he grabbed his father and gave him a big hug.

"But—but—I really don't understand," stammered Dick Rover, for once so surprised he could scarcely speak. "How did you fix it up, Tom?"

"Allen Charter is going to do the trick for me," answered Tom Rover.

"Allen Charter?" exclaimed Sam Rover. "I thought you said he had declined and was going to volunteer!"

"He did volunteer; but they wouldn't accept him—something the matter with his heart, I believe. Anyway, they wouldn't take him. Of course, Charter was much downcast. But he at once came to me and said he would take hold of our concern. He's going to do it in connection with Mr. Frank A. A. Powell, Songbird's uncle, the lawyer who helped us out so much when we had our trouble with Pelter, Japson & Company," continued Tom Rover, referring to a matter the details of which were given in the volume entitled, "The Rover Boys in New York."

"And he's been just the craziest fellow ever was since he fixed it so he could go," declared Nellie, Tom's wife. "He tore around the house like a wild

Indian, trying to get his things into shape. I guess he has an idea he's going to take a kit and a gun and go over to France this afternoon."

Of course the older folks wanted more of the particulars, and as the whole party strolled over to Captain Dick Rover's quarters, Tom related them.

"Of course I'm sorry that Allen Charter can't go to the front," said the father of the twins, "but I am mighty glad that we can get him to take charge, for he is not only a first-class business man, but you know he is honesty itself."

"Yes, I know that," answered Dick. "I wouldn't want a better fellow."

"And if Mr. Frank Powell works with him, I'm sure matters will go along very nicely," put in Sam. He caught his brother by the shoulder. "Say, Tom, this is the best news yet! Don't you know Dick and I have had the worst kind of blues thinking that you must be left behind?"

"But, Dad! aren't you going in for a commission of some sort?" questioned Andy quickly.

"Nothing doing in that line," answered Tom Rover promptly. "I've always been a high private in the rear rank in the past, and I suppose that is what I shall be in the present and the future—although, of course, I don't expect to stay in the rear rank when there is some real fighting ahead," he added quickly. "Then I want to get in the front-line trenches and go over the top."

"Bully for you, Dad!" shouted Andy slangily.

"I've already put in my application, and Major

Kirby, who is an old friend of mine, has promised to push it right through; so I think I'll be landed here in a day or two."

The coming of Tom Rover and the ladies from New York City made the party at the camp quite a large one. The boys and girls enjoyed themselves thoroughly. It could be seen that a great weight was lifted from the minds of the twins, and there was no holding them in when it came to making fun.

All too soon it came time for the boys and girls to depart. The Rover boys shook hands warmly with their fathers, and the girls of course came in for a number of hugs and kisses.

"Take good care of yourself, Dad," said Jack to his parent. "Don't let those Huns shoot you."

"I'm sure you'll be coming back a general, Dad," remarked Fred to his father.

"And don't forget to bring back some German helmets, Dad, and things like that!" cried Randy.

"We'll take any kind of souvenir, Dad—even a German sauerkraut masher," put in Andy.

Then the boys and girls said good-bye to their mothers, and all hurried off to the two automobiles awaiting them. In a minute more they were leaving Camp Huxwell and were on their way to Camp Barlight. Martha was openly crying, and tears filled the eyes of Mary, and who could blame them? Even the boys looked mighty serious, and Ruth and the others had quite a task trying to cheer them up.

"There is no use in talking," was the way Fred expressed himself: "Going to France is a serious

business. It's all well enough to talk about shooting up the Huns, and all that sort of thing, but don't forget that the Huns may do a little shooting on their own account."

"Oh, they'll come back safe and sound," declared Andy. "They've just *got* to!" Yet behind it all the fun-loving Rover felt just as bad as any of them, but he was trying hard not to show it.

The boys were dropped off at the encampment, and then the girls continued on the way to Clearwater Hall. They were to remain at the Hall for the best part of a week longer, and then Mary and Martha were going to join their mothers and their aunt for the summer vacation. What the boys were going to do after the encampment came to an end, had not yet been decided.

Sunday was passed quietly by the Rover boys and their chums. Religious services were held in the open air, and were attended by nearly all of the cadets. In the afternoon Fred and Jack took a walk, accompanied by Gif and Spouter, the twins remaining behind to write some letters.

The walk took the cadets to the foot of the cliff nearest to their camp, and in rounding this close to the water front they made a somewhat interesting discovery. They came to quite an opening among the rocks, and, going inside, found themselves in a regular cavern, ten feet high in some places and half again as broad. In the rear was a smaller opening, leading downward and filled at the bay level with water.

"Who would think there would be a cave like this around here!" remarked Jack.

"Good place to come to in case of a storm," said Spouter. "A fellow could play Robinson Crusoe if he wanted to."

By the aid of some matches the cadets examined the cavern, but found nothing in it of value. At some time in the past birds had nested there, but that was all. They were just ready to leave when Jack suddenly put up his hand.

"Listen!" he said. "Am I mistaken, or do I hear something?"

All did as he commanded, and from a great distance a faint tapping reached their ears. Then came a series of muffled explosions and a clanking as of chains.

"That's something like the noise Randy said he heard when he was on sentry duty," remarked Fred. "Don't you remember how worked up he was over it?"

"What do you suppose it is, and where do you suppose it comes from?" put in Gif.

No one could answer those questions. All was now silent, but presently they heard another series of explosions, and then the tapping continued steadily for several minutes. Then, however, the sounds died away.

"That's got me guessing," declared Jack, after the crowd had left the cavern. "We'll have to tell Randy about this, and maybe we had better tell Captain Dale, too."

Monday proved an exceedingly sultry day. The thermometer went so high that drills and exercises in

the sun were all curtailed.

"Looks to me as if this was a weather breeder," remarked the young captain to the others.

"Well, I don't care what it does, if only it cools off," grumbled Randy. "Why, I feel as if I was living in a bake oven!"

He had been told of the strange noises heard in the cavern at the bay front, and had been much interested. The boys had also spoken to Captain Dale, who had promised an investigation.

When the hour came for the cadets to retire the sky was so overcast that not a star was showing. A breeze had sprung up, and this was growing brisker every minute.

"I think we are in for a storm, and a good big blow with it," announced Captain Dale. And then he told Major Ralph Mason to give orders that all the tent fastenings should be looked to.

"I'm sure our tent is down tight enough," announced Randy, after he and his tent-mates had made an investigation.

"Well, you want to be sure of it," remarked Fred, who was making the round of the tents. "You don't want that canvas to be sailing skyward or out into the bay."

As was usual with them, Gabe Werner and Bill Glutts growled when ordered to look to the fastenings of the tent they and their cronies occupied. But as the wind increased Glutts pulled Gabe to one side and whispered something into his ear.

"All right—I'm with you," answered Werner promptly. "Let's do it at once. Got your pocketknife handy?"

"Yes. Have you?"

"I have. And it's as sharp as a razor. All we'll have to do is to cut the ropes about half way through. The wind will do the rest," announced Gabe gleefully.

"What's the matter with fixing up both tents?" went on the wholesale butcher's son. "You can slide over to the officers' quarters while I attend to the tent down in the Company C line."

"All right! But hurry up. And come back as soon as you're through," cautioned Werner.

He reached the vicinity of the tent occupied by Jack and Fred just as the first of the rain drops began to come down. The wind was now blowing half a gale, and the canvases of the encampment were flapping and slapping loudly.

Werner had his pocketknife open, and it did not take him long to begin operations. Five of the ropes which held the tent to the pegs were all but severed, and then he began work on the next.

"Stop that! What do you mean, you rascal?"

Gabe Werner turned, and as he straightened up he found himself face to face with Jack. The young captain had been on an errand to the next tent, and had seen the rascally ex-lieutenant in the darkness more by chance than by anything else.

"What's the matter out there?" called Fred from the interior of the tent.

"Here is Gabe Werner! He's cutting the ropes!" And now Jack caught the big youth by the arm.

"Let go of me, Rover!" demanded the ex-lieutenant, and then he raised the hand that held the pocketknife.

It is not likely that he would have used the weapon. But Jack did not care to take any chances. As quick as a flash he hauled back, and then his fist crashed into Gabe Werner's chin, sending him sprawling on his back.

For a second or two the big ex-lieutenant was dazed, but then, with a muttered imprecation, he leaped up, dropping his pocketknife as he did so, and rushed at Jack, hitting him in the shoulder.

By this time the blood of the young captain was up. He dodged a second blow delivered by Werner, and then his fist shot out quickly, landing on the ex-lieutenant's nose, drawing blood.

"Ouch!" spluttered Werner, and then he made a leap and grappled with Jack. There followed a lively mix-up in which blows were given and taken freely.

In the meantime Fred set up a cry of alarm, not knowing who was attacking his cousin. In a few seconds a number of cadets and Professor Brice came hurrying in that direction.

"I've got to clear out, but I'll fix you another time, Rover," hissed Gabe Werner, and attempted to retreat.

"You're not going to get away, Werner!" cried Jack, and, making a leap forward, he gave the ex-lieutenant a blow behind the ear which sent him to

the ground all but unconscious.

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CHAPTER XXVI

AN ASTONISHING DISCOVERY

"WHAT does this mean, Captain Rover?" demanded Professor Brice, as he rushed up, lantern in hand and followed quickly by Major Ralph Mason and a dozen other cadets.

"I caught this rascal cutting the ropes to our tent," explained Jack.

"Gee, you'd better hold that tent down!" cried one of the cadets. "There go three of the ropes now!" And what he said was true, the ropes in question being those that Werner had partly severed with his knife.

Fred had come out of the tent, and now he and a number of the other cadets held down the canvas so that the wind could not get under it. It was blowing furiously, so that they had no easy job of it to keep the tent from going up.

"Do you mean to say he really cut the ropes here?" demanded Professor Brice sternly, as Werner gathered himself together on the wet ground and

slowly arose to his feet.

"Yes, sir," said Jack. "And there is the knife he did it with," he added, pointing to the pocket piece which had fallen under the ex-lieutenant.

"It was—er—it was—er—only a bit of fun," stammered Werner, not knowing what else to say. "And Jack Rover had no right to pitch into me the way he did!"

"I had a perfect right to do so, Professor Brice," announced Jack. "If I wanted to say more—- But I won't do it now," he added. "I'll make a report to you in private."

By this time the camp was in an uproar, for down the line where Company C was located there had been another rumpus. Gif, going out on guard duty, had caught sight of Bill Glutts just as the latter had cut two of the ropes to the tent occupied by him and Spouter and the twins. Gif had treated the wholesale butcher's son rather roughly, and Glutts had finally yelled for mercy, bringing out a crowd of twenty or thirty, including the twins.

"This is a despicable piece of business, Werner," said Professor Brice sternly. "I will at once report the matter to Captain Dale, who, as you know, is in authority in this camp. Come along with me."

Captain Dale had been down to the shore of the bay, to make certain that there was no danger of the tents which were used for bath houses being blown away. He soon came up and looked closely at the ropes which Werner had partly severed.

"I don't like this sort of thing at all," he said to the ex-lieutenant. "If that tent had come down while

those inside were asleep somebody might have been seriously injured. More than that, nobody would care to be without shelter on such a night as this, and with all their possessions getting wet. You will report to the corporal of the guard at once." Then Captain Dale passed on to where the others were having trouble with Glutts, and he was also ordered to report to the guard.

In the meanwhile, as the storm seemed to be increasing, Captain Dale gave orders that the fastenings of every tent should be inspected thoroughly and extra ropes and pegs should be put down wherever necessary. He did not want any of the school property damaged.

"Gee, we'll catch it for this!" growled Bill Glutts, when he and Werner had been placed in a small wooden shanty, designated a guardhouse. "I suppose they'll make us do all sorts of disagreeable things as a punishment."

"I won't stand for it!" stormed Werner, whose nose was still bleeding from the blow Jack had dealt. "They can't make me the laughingstock of this camp."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going home," announced the ex-lieutenant.

And that is what he did, stealing away from the camp early in the morning just as the heavy storm of the night was passing away. He managed to get a few of his possessions, but the others had to be left behind. He wanted Glutts to go with him, but the son of the wholesale butcher was afraid to do so.

In the morning Jack and the others had to make a

full report to Captain Dale of what had occurred. The young captain mentioned the fact that Werner had had his pocketknife in his hand.

"I'm not sure that he was going to use it," said Jack. "In fact, I would rather think that he wouldn't do so. But I wasn't going to take any chances, and so I hit him. Then he hit back, and—well, we mixed it up pretty freely. Finally I gave him a blow that knocked him flat, and then the others came up."

"Captain Rover, you know I do not approve of fighting, especially among officers," declared Captain Dale sternly. "However, the introduction of the pocketknife changes the situation somewhat. I will hear what Werner has to say."

Then it was discovered that Gabe Werner had left the camp. He had written a note saying that he was going home and that he guessed he would never come back to Colby Hall again. This being so, the matter was dropped so far as Jack was concerned. Nor was Gif punished for the way he had treated Bill Glutts. Captain Dale read a stern lecture to that unworthy, and for the remainder of the camp term Glutts was deprived of many liberties he might otherwise have enjoyed.

It must not be supposed that the boys had forgotten the strange noises they had heard while in the woods and in the cavern at the front of the cliff. They had reported to Captain Dale, and several investigations had been made, but without results. The captain had also communicated with the authorities at Rackville, and likewise with the Secret Service men stationed at Camp Huxwell.

"Well, I see they haven't made any progress in the

matter of that explosion at the Hasley Shell Loading plant," remarked Spouter one day, after reading a copy of the Haven Point newspaper which had come in. "They are looking all over for those two Germans, but have been unable to spot 'em."

"I see the company is offering a reward of ten thousand dollars for the apprehension of the men," came from Fred, who had likewise read the sheet. "Gee, I'd like to get a chance at that reward!"

The next day the boys were treated to another surprise. As was their custom when the weather and their duties permitted, they went in bathing, and while diving Fred noticed a peculiar knocking sound under water. He called the attention of the others to this, and each cadet heard it quite plainly.

"It must come from the same place as those other noises we heard," declared Jack.

"I move we make a real investigation!" cried Andy. "Let's ask for a day off and scour the woods thoroughly."

"That's the talk," cried Fred.

The others were willing, and received permission to go out two days later, the party consisting of the four Rovers and Gif and Spouter. They took their lunch with them, and also some canteens of water, expecting to be gone until nightfall.

There was quite a discussion as to how they should start the investigation. Some wanted to go along the base of the cliff at the water's edge, while others were for making their way through the forest. The latter suggestion prevailed, and they started near the point where Randy had first heard the strange noises.

The young cadets tramped hither and thither among the trees and over the rough rocks for four hours without coming upon anything unusual. They stirred up a number of birds and small animals, but that was all.

“Looks like a wild-goose chase,” remarked Jack, when they sat down to rest and to eat their lunch.

The climbing over the rocks had been very tiring, and all of the lads were glad after eating to take their ease for a while.

Randy was resting on his side, wondering whether it would be worth while to play a trick on Gif and Spouter, who were but a few feet away, when a movement among the trees at a distance attracted his attention. He sat up, and as he did so felt certain that he had seen a man moving along.

“Listen, boys!” he cried in a low voice. “There is some one now!”

“Where?” came from the others, and all aroused themselves on the instant.

Randy pointed out the direction, and, gathering up their things, the cadets hurried off to where he had pointed. There, sure enough, was a man plodding along with a bundle over his shoulder. He was a short, thick-set man, and wore a heavy mustache curled up at the ends.

“Let’s see where he goes,” said Jack. “Maybe he’ll take us to that place where the noises come from.”

They followed the man without his being aware of their presence. The fellow climbed over and around a number of rocks, and then pursued his way past a

dense clump of bushes. Then, of a sudden, he disappeared from view.

The cadets were amazed, the more so after they had tramped around the spot without ascertaining what had become of the man.

“Looks as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up,” remarked Randy.

The cadets had advanced with caution, but now they grew bolder, and made a closer examination. But it was all of no avail—the man had disappeared, and where he had gone to or how, there was no telling.

“One thing is sure,” declared Jack. “He didn’t walk away from here, and he didn’t go up into the air. That being so, he must have gone down somewhere among the rocks and bushes. We had better hunt around for some sort of an opening to a cave, or something like that.”

The others were willing enough, and spent the best part of an hour in the task. But no opening presented itself, although the rocks and rough places in that vicinity were numerous.

“Here is something else we can report to Captain Dale,” was Fred’s comment.

Not knowing what else to do, the boys marked the spot so that they could remember it, and then pushed onward through the forest. Two hours later they reached a sort of gully, with the rough rocks on one side and an overhanging cliff on the other.

“Fine place for snakes,” remarked Spouter, as they walked along.

"We're not looking for snakes, so please don't mention them," answered Jack.

Why they did it, the boys could not explain afterwards, but they continued along the gully until they reached a point where there was something of a split in the face of the cliff.

"Here's another one of those caves just like that which we found over on the bay front," declared Fred. "Let's go in and see what it looks like."

With nothing in particular in view, the others were willing, and, turning on a flashlight which they had brought along, they climbed down into the cave-like opening. It was very irregular in shape, and they had to proceed with caution.

And then, while they were climbing down among the rocks, something happened which caused each of the cadets to start wildly. A strange rumbling sound filled the air, a blowing and hissing, and then came a pounding and a clanking, sounding with great clearness in that confined space.

"It's the same noises we heard before, and they are not very far off!" cried Jack to the others. "There must be a workshop of some sort around here."

Hardly knowing what to expect, the boys continued to climb down into the opening they had discovered. Soon they reached a narrow passageway, where going was a little easier. Then they came to a spot where there was considerable wetness, showing that they had reached the level of the water in the bay beyond.

"Here is a regular underground waterway," declared Gif presently. "It looks to be pretty deep,

too."

He was right. To the surprise of everybody they had come out upon what seemed to be an underground pond. On the side upon which they had emerged there was a small sandy slope. The other side, and the far end, were covered with jagged rocks.

The strange blowing, pounding, and clanking continued, and almost deafened the cadets. They felt that they were on the point of a great discovery, but could not imagine what it would be.

"It's a workshop, all right enough," declared Fred, a minute later. "Jack, put out that light, quick!" And at this command the flashlight was turned off.

The cadets had rounded a bend of the underground waterway, and now at a distance they saw a number of electric lights shining brightly. There was some machinery set up among the rocks, and several workmen were present, all seemingly busy.

"Look!" exclaimed Jack, his eyes almost starting out of his head at the sight. "What do you think of that, fellows?"

He pointed to a spot beyond where the strange men were working. There the waterway seemed to broaden and deepen, and in the water lay a strange-looking craft more than three-quarters submerged.

"It's a submarine!" breathed Fred excitedly. "A submarine! What do you know about that?"



“A SUBMARINE! WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT '

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CHAPTER XXVII

ON BOARD THE SUBMARINE

THE Rover boys and their chums were so astonished at the discovery they had made that for a moment they could do little else than stare at the strange object resting in the water ahead of them.

"Get out of sight, every one of you!" whispered Jack, who was the first to recover his self-possession. "Don't let those men see you!"

All backed away as silently as possible until they were once more in the shelter of the rocks of the bend around which they had come.

"Say, do you think those fellows are Germans?" whispered Randy excitedly.

"I certainly do, Randy," answered the young captain.

"Of course they are Germans!" put in Gif. "If they were Americans why would they be concealing themselves in such an out-of-the-way place as this?"

"It's a German submarine, as sure as you're alive!" remarked Spouter. "Fellows, we have made a

wonderful discovery!"

"And this accounts for all the strange noises we heard, and the fellows we saw going through the woods with bundles on their backs," added Randy.

"Yes, and I guess it straightens out that story Jed Kessler told about the two Germans in the wagon with stuff that rattled like hardware," said Jack.

"It's as plain as day," cried Fred. "Those two fellows must be connected with this gang here who are working on the submarine. And more than likely they were the same two Jed Kessler saw hanging around the ammunition plant just before the explosion."

"If that's a German submarine, it must have come from the other side of the Atlantic!" exclaimed Andy in a low, excited voice. And then he added, his eyes snapping: "What do you suppose happened to it? Do you think she ran afoul of some of our big warships or our submarine chasers?"

"Either that, or in cruising up and down the coast here she may have run afoul of some of the rocks and maybe knocked a hole in her bottom or side," answered Jack. "And I guess it's true that all the pounding and strange noises we have heard came either from this underground place or from some overhead spot close by."

"What gets me is—how did that submarine get into this underground place?" questioned Gif.

"There must be a much larger outlet than the one by which we entered," answered Jack. "More than likely those fellows don't know anything about the way by which we got in. They must have a large

entrance by way of the water from the bay, and they must also have an entrance from the forest—that place where the man disappeared."

"I guess you're right," said Fred. "Gee, this certainly is an important discovery! I guess the best thing we can do is to hurry back to camp as fast as possible and notify Captain Dale. He will probably want to let the Secret Service men and the authorities at Rackville know at once, so they can round up these fellows before they have a chance to get away."

"I'd like to stay here awhile and watch these chaps," said Randy. "Maybe we may learn something more that is worth while."

The matter was talked over by the cadets for fully ten minutes. At the place to which they had withdrawn they could talk freely, because the noises near the submarine continued, so there was little danger of their being overheard. While they talked they peeped out from time to time at the workmen, and saw that they were laboring over several sheets of steel and odd pieces of machinery, using a forge, a lathe, and a small drop hammer for that purpose. They had a gangplank leading over the waterway to the upper portion of the submarine, and from an open hatchway of the U-boat ran a number of coils of insulated wire, evidently carrying power to the electric lights and also to the machinery.

"They must be getting all their power from the engines of the submarine," said Jack. "They've certainly got themselves pretty well fixed down here."

"But how in the world did they manage to find this

place?" questioned Spouter.

"That remains to be found out, Spouter. Probably the German authorities had some spies around here who found the place for them, or otherwise they paid some of the natives for the information."

"You know my dad spoke about German U-boat bases along our coast, and also bases for secret wireless telegraphy plants," put in Fred. "There is no telling what those rascals are up to."

It was decided that Andy and Randy, accompanied by Spouter, should make their way back to the opening by which they had gained entrance to the underground waterway, and then return to Camp Barlight as quickly as possible and acquaint Captain Dale with what had been discovered. In the meanwhile, Jack, Fred, and Gif would remain behind on guard in case the Germans should attempt to make a sudden move.

"We don't know how far along they are with their repairs," declared the young captain. "It would be just our luck to have them sail away right under our noses."

"Oh, Jack! couldn't you stop them in some way from doing that?" questioned Andy quickly.

"I should hope so, Andy. That is, if they really did try to get away. Of course, they may not be anywhere near ready to leave—although they have been here for some time according to the noises we have heard. I'd like to find out something about the other end of the passageway."

"Maybe you can find out by going out with us and around to the other end of the bay," suggested

Spouter.

"I was thinking of that. But for the present I would rather stay right here and watch these fellows."

It was not long after this when the twins and Spouter departed, stating that they would report to Captain Dale as speedily as possible. Then Jack and his cousin and Gif settled down to watch the Germans.

For Germans they were, beyond a doubt. They were all heavy-set, burly fellows, and once or twice when the machinery was stopped the cadets heard one man, who was evidently in charge, give a number of commands in the German tongue.

For nearly an hour longer the pounding and clanking continued. Most of the work was done on the rocky shore of the waterway, but some took place inside the submarine and also on the forward deck of the craft. The submersible was of good size, being over two hundred feet in length.

"I'd like to get a whack at that U-boat," declared Gif. "I bet I'd make it so she wouldn't do any more cruising in a hurry."

"Exactly what I was thinking, Gif," said Jack. "If we could only injure the propellers, or something like that, there wouldn't be any danger of their sailing away. You see, they may have it all fixed to leave at a minute's notice in case of an alarm."

"If they did that they'd have to leave some of their machinery behind," put in Fred. "But I suppose they'd be willing to do even that rather than risk capture."

When the cadets thought that their ears could no longer bear the awful noise to which they had been subjected, the sounds of the machinery suddenly ceased. They heard a strange humming from the interior of the submarine, but even this presently came to an end, and then there was a silence within the cavern which was absolutely oppressive.

“I guess some kind of a move is at hand,” whispered Jack. “Let’s lay low and see what they do next.”

Several men, including two who were evidently officers and in charge of the work, came out of the submarine. The workmen were now washing up at the underground waterway, and presently all cast aside their working clothes and donned ordinary street garments.

“Looks as if they were going to leave,” whispered Fred excitedly. “Maybe they are going out into the open for some fresh air. I can’t blame them for that,” he added, for throughout the cavern there was a strong smell of used gasoline.

Five minutes passed, and then one by one the Germans walked away from the submarine. They did not come in the direction of the cadets, but passed around another bend of the rocks, and so out of sight.

“That must be the way used by that fellow we saw in the forest,” declared Jack.

All but three of the electric lights had been put out, so that the interior of the cavern was now quite gloomy. The only sound that broke the stillness was the soft lap, lap of some distant waves, evidently

where they broke on the shore of the bay close to the larger entrance of the cavern.

"I'd like to bet that the entrance is under water," said Fred. "If it was at the surface some one would have discovered this place a long time ago." And in this surmise the youngest Rover was correct. The passageway, which was amply large, was over ten feet below the surface of the bay even at low tide.

"Do you suppose they've all left the submarine?" whispered Gif presently. With the intense silence prevailing, they felt that they must be very cautious in making any noise.

"That's hard to say," answered Jack, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"It looks so to me," put in Fred. "I don't believe any of those fellows would care to stay down here unless it was necessary. They have stopped all the engines and things like that. I guess those electric lights are burning simply from a storage battery."

The three cadets waited for another ten minutes, and then, as no one appeared, and as the submarine seemed to be deserted, they stole forward cautiously, all anxious to get a closer look at the U-boat.

"If we could only throw a chain around the propellers, or something like that, maybe it would keep them from getting away if they tried to run for it," said the young captain.

"We'll look around and see what we can do, anyway," answered his cousin.

"There are plenty of chains around," put in Gif. "Those are what made the awful clanking sounds we

heard."

Step by step the three cadets came up until they were at the spot where the Germans had set up their repair plant. Some of the things they had been working upon were still lying about, but other parts had been taken aboard the submarine.

"I guess they have all gone," said Jack, after a look around. "I'm going aboard that craft and take a peep at her."

The others were also anxious to do this, and all three were soon across the gangplank which led to the open hatch of the U-boat. They gazed down this hatch with some awe, and discovered that several electric lights had been left turned on below. A steel ladder ran down into the interior of the submersible.

"What do you say—shall we go below?" questioned Jack.

"I'm willing if you are," answered his cousin.

"And so am I," added Gif. "I don't believe there is any one around."

"Well, we'll take a chance," answered the young captain. "If there is any alarm, we'll have to run for it."

"Yes, and we may have to fight for it," added Fred.

Jack went down the ladder quickly, followed by the others. They now found themselves in what might be termed the main room of the submarine. Beyond were several other compartments, including one where was located much of the machinery which ran the undersea boat.

"It's a good deal like being downstairs on a small warship," declared Fred. "See, there are staterooms and messrooms and everything else!"

"Well, I suppose they have to give the crew some comforts, they take such long, disagreeable trips," remarked Jack.

The three cadets wandered around in the interior of the submarine for over a quarter of an hour. They saw where a number of repairs were being made to the side of the U-boat and also to some of the machinery, and they also saw where some stores had been taken on board, boxes and barrels of various kinds.

"I guess they are stocking up for another cruise," remarked Gif.

"It must be quite a job to get all that stuff to this out-of-the-way place," said Jack.

"Yes, and to do it so secretly, too," added Fred.

"I think I see a way of making this boat stay here for a while, at least," remarked Jack. "It will be an easy matter to put some of that delicate machinery forward out of commission."

"Come on and do it!" cried his cousin quickly.

The three cadets were inspecting the machinery and wondering how they could damage it effectively with the least possible trouble, when there came a sudden interruption.

"What are you doing here?" came in a guttural German voice. "Hands up, or I will shoot you!" And, turning quickly, the three cadets found themselves confronted by a burly German, holding in each hand

a pistol.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CABIN IN THE WOODS

IT was a comparatively easy matter for the twins and Spouter to get out of the cavern by the way they had entered. It was, however, not so easy for them to climb up the face of the cliff fronting that portion of Barlight Bay.

"Some climb, believe me!" panted Spouter, when they had reached a spot where going was easier.

"I came pretty near slipping and breaking my neck at one point," said Randy. "I don't believe those Germans ever use that entrance, do you?"

"Not very often," answered his twin.

The three cadets had reached the woods at a point which was new to them, being almost a mile from the other cliff, where they had had the outing with the girls. Between the two points there was a split in the land, and here the waters from the bay dashed in over a long series of jagged rocks.

"We can't cross there," remarked Randy, when they had reached the brink of this split. "We'll have to go back into the woods and go around."

It was now about five o'clock in the afternoon, and the tramping and climbing had tired all of the boys, yet they set off as rapidly as possible, feeling that it would be best to make a report to Captain Dale as soon as possible.

"I wish we had some trail to go by," remarked Randy, after they had been walking for at least half an hour. "I begin to think we are not moving in the right direction."

"I've been trying to guide myself by the sun," answered Spouter. "Just the same, I don't believe we are headed exactly for the camp."

"I've got to go a bit slower," sighed Andy, who for once was by no means light-hearted. "Both of my feet are beginning to hurt from all that climbing over the rocks. I came pretty close to twisting my ankle this afternoon, and it has been paining ever since."

Another half hour went by, and then, as the declining sun began to cast long shadows through the trees of the forest, the cadets looked at each other in alarm. The same thought had come into the minds of each of them.

"It looks as if we were lost," said Randy laconically. "How about it?"

"Oh, as the Indian said, we're not lost," responded Andy, with a faint smile. "It's only the camp that has gone astray."

"This is no time for joking," said Spouter coldly.

"We've got to get back to camp, and do it just as fast as we can!"

"All right then, Spouter, show us the way," answered Andy readily.

"That's something I'm not so sure of," was the slow reply. "Which direction do you think it is in?"

The matter was talked over for several minutes, and finally the cadets moved off once more, this time at an acute angle to the direction they had before pursued. They went forward for perhaps a quarter of a mile, and then, much to their surprise, suddenly came out upon a well-defined wagon road.

"Well, what do you know about this!" cried Randy in astonishment.

"Where do you suppose this road leads to?" questioned his brother.

At this Randy shook his head, and Spouter did likewise. They could see the tracks of a horse and wagon in the road, and also the marks of automobile tires.

"It must be quite a road if it is used by automobiles," was Spouter's comment. "Now the question is—which way shall we go in order to get to our camp?" All had noticed that the road ran in something of a semicircle.

While the cadets were deliberating, they made another discovery. Smoke was coming up from among some of the trees near by, and, walking in that direction, they made out a fair-sized cabin, nestling deep between some trees and brushwood.

"Maybe we can get some assistance at that place,"

remarked Andy.

"I don't believe it!" returned his brother quickly. "It's more than likely the people who live there are in league with those Germans. They must have heard those noises the same as we did, and probably know all about how they are being made."

"That's it!" warned Spouter. "If I were you, I'd go slow in showing myself to anybody who may be at that cabin."

The boys approached with caution, keeping their eyes wide open, and presently discovered a touring car standing among the trees to one side of the cabin.

"I don't believe that car belongs here," said Randy. "I don't see anything in the way of a garage. And that looks like a nice city car."

Keeping in the shelter of some of the trees and brushwood, the cadets came still closer, and then made another discovery, which was to the effect that two young men were seated in the tonneau of the car. Each was smoking a cigarette, and they were conversing in low tones.

"I tell you I'm going to hit my dad for a hundred dollars on the strength of this," they heard one of the occupants of the car remark. "And I bet I get it, too."

"Well, if you get a hundred, Nappy, I'm going to hit for a hundred myself," was the reply of the other occupant. "I guess my father can afford to give me that amount just as well as your father can afford it."

"Oh, well, Slugger, you must remember that my dad has quite a bunch of money."

"Huh! I don't think he's any better fixed than

mine. Here, pass over another cigarette. Don't forget I paid for the last ones we bought."

"Slugger Brown and Nappy Martell!" whispered Randy excitedly. "Would you believe it?"

"What can those fellows be doing away out here in the woods?" questioned Spouter.

"I'll bet I know what they are here for!" cried Andy, in a low voice. "They brought their fathers out here in that touring car."

"What would they be doing that for?"

"Don't you remember, Spouter, our telling you about how we saw Mr. Brown and Mr. Martell down in Wall Street, New York, talking to those fellows who looked like Germans, and how they mentioned supplies, and canned goods, and machinery, and night work, and a whole lot of things like that?"

"Sure I do! And you think——"

"I'll bet Andy has it right!" interrupted Randy. "Brown and Martell must be in league with those Germans, and the goods and machinery and other things they spoke about must be connected with this affair of the disabled submarine! They wanted extra pieces of machinery most likely, and they also wanted extra supplies, having probably used those that they had brought along from Germany."

"You're making a pretty long guess, it seems to me," answered Spouter. "Just the same, you may be right."

Not to be seen by Slugger Brown and Nappy Martell, the three cadets had withdrawn to a safe distance. Now, however, all were anxious to

ascertain who might be in the cabin, and so by crouching low and hiding behind one tree and another and then some rocks and low bushes, they at last came up close to the opposite side of the shelter in the forest.

"Now don't show yourselves if you can help it," said Randy in a whisper. "And if any one is discovered, leg it for all you are worth, and keep your faces turned away so that they can't see who you are."

With this understanding, the three cadets surveyed the situation critically. The cabin consisted of three rooms, each boasting of a window on either side. As it was warm, all the windows and doors were wide open to admit the fresh air.

"And that is what I mean when I say I want to settle this matter," they heard, in the voice of Slogwell Brown.

"I think it's a shame that the thing has hung fire so long," said another person in the cabin, and now the three cadets recognized the voice of Nelson Martell. "I would never have gone into it if I had known there would be so much delay. We took a big risk in getting the supplies for you."

"But, gentlemen, we are not keeping you waiting any longer than is necessary," answered a voice with a strong German accent. "We have had a delay in receiving our own remittance. Even now it is not yet arrived."

"Do you mean to say you haven't got the money yet?" demanded Mr. Brown. His tone of voice showed that he felt ugly.

"It was promised to-night sure," was the answer. "Captain Fuerhman was to obtain the money at the Haven Point bank this afternoon."

"Was he to come here with it?"

"Yes."

"Then he ought to be here by now," grumbled Nelson Martell, consulting his watch.

"He had to see about a small piece of machinery that was to be cast for us," resumed the man who spoke with a German accent. "I, however, expect him here by eight o'clock this evening at the latest."

"Well, in that case there isn't anything left for us to do but to wait," said Slogwell Brown, surlily.

"You may do that, or you may come back at that time," said the German. "I am very sorry to keep you waiting, but as I said before, gentlemen, it cannot be helped."

"I don't believe the two boys will want to wait outside for two hours," said Mr. Martell to Mr. Brown. "Suppose we ride into town and get a bite to eat, and then come back here?"

"That will suit me, Martell. Anything to kill off the time," answered Slogwell Brown. He turned to the German. "We'll be back here by eight o'clock. And remember! that money has got to be paid to-night."

"You shall have every dollar that is coming to you, gentlemen," answered the German, who, as it afterwards proved, was the commander of the disabled submarine.

A few more words passed, and then Mr. Brown and

Mr. Martell came out of the cabin to where they had left Slugger and Nappy in the touring car. They entered the machine, which was immediately backed to the forest road, and then the whole party set off, Slugger driving the car.

“Say, listen!” cried Spouter excitedly. “I believe that German is here all alone! What do you say if we make him a prisoner?”

“No, no, don’t do that!” answered Randy quickly. “We want to bag the whole bunch. Let us get to camp just as soon as we can and notify Captain Dale. Then he can organize a crowd and come back here and give Brown and Martell and the Germans the surprise of their lives.”

“But how are we going to find our camp?” questioned Spouter.

“Dead easy. If that is the road to Haven Point, it must pass through Rackville, and if it does that, it must come pretty close to our camp. Come on!”

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CHAPTER XXIX

THE FIGHT ON THE SUBMARINE

IT must be admitted that Jack, Fred, and Gif were much startled when they suddenly found themselves confronted by an armed German who looked as if he meant what he said when he commanded them to throw up their hands.

On first going aboard the submarine the three cadets had been very cautious, but as they had wandered around without seeing any one aboard the craft, they had come to the conclusion that it was deserted, and consequently they had become less careful both in their actions and their conversation.

Of course their hands went into the air. The German had two pistols, and he looked as if he would be willing to use the weapons upon the slightest provocation. He was a burly, red-faced man, and only about half dressed. Evidently he had been sleeping soundly when they had come aboard.

"You back up there into a corner," growled the German. He spoke English quite well, although his accent was Teutonic.

The young cadets did not know what else to do, and so obeyed the command. As they were in uniform, the German took them to be American soldiers, and this disturbed him greatly.

"Are there any more in your party or are you alone?" he demanded.

This question gave Jack a sudden idea.

"Alone?" he cried. "Not much! There are over a hundred of us," he answered, referring, of course, to the number of cadets at Colby Hall.

"Are you telling the truth?" growled the German,

and his voice betrayed his nervousness.

"He sure is telling the truth! Look behind you and see," said Fred, and began to laugh in a suggestive way.

This laugh took the German off his guard, and he turned swiftly to see who might be behind him. It was the opportunity that the young captain and the young lieutenant had hoped would come, and, taking a perilous chance, they threw themselves on the back of the German, each at the same time catching hold of a hand that held a pistol. Then Gif rushed in; and between them the cadets succeeded in hurling the fellow, muscular though he was, to the floor.

"Give up!" cried Jack suddenly, and, bringing out his flashlight, he placed the cold glass of the end against the German's neck.

"*Kamerad! Kamerad!*" yelled the fellow promptly, thinking that it was a pistol which was pressing upon him, and on the instant he released his hold on the two pistols while he stretched out flat on his chest on the floor of the submarine.

Jack lost no time in picking up one of the pistols, while Fred picked up the other. The flashlight was turned over to Gif, who, meanwhile, had armed himself with a steel bar.

"Now the question is—what are we going to do with this fellow?" remarked Jack, after the short encounter had come to an end. It must be confessed that he and the others were much worked up over the situation, for they had not dreamed of coming in such personal contact with one of the enemy.

"We've got to get out of here, and do it quick,"

returned Gif. “Those other Germans may come back at any minute.”

“Yes, but we’ll have to take this fellow along,” said Fred. “No use of leaving him here to give an alarm.”

“We’ll gag him!” declared the young captain. And without loss of time the three cadets fixed up a gag such as they sometimes used when they were initiating a new member of one of the secret societies of the military academy. Then the German’s hands were bound tightly behind him, and he was ordered to get up and march.

“Wait a minute,” said Fred. “We’ll have to fix things here so it won’t look suspicious. We’ll make it look as if this chap had just stepped out for some fresh air.”

This was done, and a few minutes later the whole party left the submarine, Gif going ahead and the Rovers following the prisoner, each with a pistol ready for use. In this fashion they passed over the gangplank, and then made their way alongside of the underground pond until they came to the spot where the cadets had first discovered the Germans.

“I don’t believe we ought to leave him here,” declared Jack. “That gag might slip and he might have a chance to make considerable noise, and if he did that the others might take the alarm and sail away before we could get help.”

“We made a mistake!” cried Gif. “I thought we were going to injure some of the machinery, so that they couldn’t use the U-boat.”

“You’re right, Gif! I got so excited I forgot all about that,” declared Jack.

"You can run back now and do it if you want to," said Fred. "I'll watch the prisoner."

The young captain and Gif did as had been suggested. On the submarine they looked over the intricate machinery with care, and presently found some things which they could disarrange and which would probably not be noticed immediately. They went to work with vigor, and came away again in less than ten minutes.

"I guess she's fixed now," declared Jack to his cousin, when they had rejoined Fred and the prisoner. "If they start up those engines, that submarine will perform stunts they never dreamed of."

With the flashlight shining ahead and at times on the prisoner, the Rovers and Gif compelled the German to move along the passageway until they gained the opening near the gully.

"Look out there, will you?" cried Gif suddenly, pointing between the bushes to the bay. "There is a big motor boat cruising up and down! Maybe they can give us aid."

"It looks to me like a revenue boat," declared Jack, after a hurried inspection. "Say, maybe they are patrolling the bay!"

"That's right!"

"I am going to signal to them and find out!" exclaimed Fred; and without waiting for the others to reply, the young lieutenant dashed over the rocks and through the brushwood in the direction of the bay shore. As he did this he took out his handkerchief and waved it wildly, at the same time

calling at the top of his lungs.

The motor boat, a long, rakish-looking craft, was cruising quite close to the shore, and presently some of those on board noticed Fred's call for aid. The motor of the craft was shut off, and the boat drifted up to the shore.

"What do you want?" demanded one of the men on board, sharply.

"We want help, and we want it right away!" declared Fred. And then he added as he got a better view of those aboard the boat: "Are you United States officers?"

"What do you want to know that for?" was the counter question.

"Well, if you are, we want your help, and want it right away."

"Why? Have you discovered anything unusual?" demanded one of the officers on the boat, and his manner showed his intense interest.

"We certainly have! And more than that, we have made a prisoner—a German."

"You don't mean it!" said one of the other men aboard the motor boat, and then looked more sharply at Fred than ever. "We'll have to investigate this," he added to his companions.

There were three officers and a crew of eight aboard the boat, which was quickly brought long-side the rock on which Fred was standing. As the officers leaped ashore, the young lieutenant saluted and was saluted in return. Then Fred told who he was and again asked the men if they were United

States officers.

"If you've got a German prisoner, and you know he is really a German sympathizer, you had better take us to him at once," said one of the men, and, turning back his coat, he exhibited his badge.

Feeling that the craft was one really belonging to our government and that the officers were Secret Service men, Fred told his story, at the same time leading the way to where he had left Jack, Gif, and the prisoner.

"Bailey was right, after all," said one of the Secret Service men to his fellow officers. "He always declared that that wrecked submarine was in hiding somewhere around these waters."

"Then you know about the submarine?" queried Fred quickly.

"If it's the craft we think it is," was the reply. "That U-boat had an encounter with one of our submarine destroyers, and in trying to escape we think she hit some of the rocks on the reef beyond here. Some of the naval people were of the opinion that she had gone down, but others thought she had escaped to some base, which, of course, was unknown to our authorities. We have always had a suspicion that there was some sort of a base around here. We were cruising to-day trying to locate it."

It was decided that the Secret Service men should take charge of matters, and that they would sail to the nearest town on the bay so that they might obtain additional help with which to round up all the Germans and those in league with them.

"This will prove a very important capture," said

Mr. Blarcomb, who was the head officer of the crowd. “And you, young men, can rest assured that you will get full credit for what you have done.”

“If you don’t mind, I wish you would drop us off at our camp,” said Jack. “It will save us a whole lot of tramping.”

“We’ll do that willingly.”

It did not take the motor boat long to cover the distance to the front of the camp where the cadets were in the habit of bathing. A few were now in the water, and they looked in wonder at the sudden appearance of the Rovers and Gif.

“There is Captain Dale now!” cried Jack, when they had landed and the motor boat had gone on its way. “My! won’t he be surprised at the story we have to tell?”

“Maybe he has already heard it, from Andy and Randy and Spouter,” suggested Gif.

But the old West Pointer had heard nothing, for the others had not yet come in from the forest. He listened in amazement to the story the boys had to tell.

“I would like to be at that round-up myself,” he declared. “I trust that they capture every one of the rascals.” And then he added with a smile: “This is certainly a feather in your caps, lads.”

It was only a little later when the twins and Spouter came in. They, of course, were also excited.

“Got one of the Germans and got the Secret Service men on the trail!” declared Fred proudly.

"Good enough!" cried Andy. "But say! we have got our little story to tell, too;" and then he and the others related what had been discovered at the cabin in the woods.

"This certainly is important," declared Captain Dale. "Who would ever suppose that Mr. Brown and Mr. Martell were in league with these Germans! They certainly ought to be captured."

"And I'd like to be there when they are caught," declared Randy.

"Well, perhaps you will be," answered Captain Dale significantly.

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CHAPTER XXX

AN IMPORTANT CAPTURE—CONCLUSION

EVEN though somewhat old and likewise rheumatic, Captain Dale was still a man of action, and less than half an hour later he had perfected an arrangement with the Secret Service authorities both at Rackville and at Camp Huxwell. Three automobiles were requisitioned and a detail of sixteen men, accompanied by several Secret Service authorities soon left Camp Huxwell, stopping on the

way at the edge of Camp Barlight. They took on board the Rovers and their chums, and likewise Captain Dale, all of whom were anxious to see the wind-up of this remarkable happening.

While still some distance from the cabin, the automobiles were brought to a standstill, and the officers and soldiers, as well as the cadets and Captain Dale, alighted, and all took to the shelter of the brushwood.

A wait of nearly half an hour ensued, and during that time the three automobiles were run deep into the woods, where they would not be noticed by any passersby. Then Randy, who had been sent down the road, came back on the run.

"An auto is coming!" he announced.

He was right, and a minute later, the machine, driven by Slugger Brown, came into sight and ran up to the side of the cabin. Mr. Brown and Mr. Martell alighted, leaving Slugger and Nappy in the car as before.

"Don't let 'em keep you here all night, Dad!" cried Nappy.

"Make 'em come to terms quick," said Slugger. "They have no right to hold back on you."

"You leave this business to us—we know what we are doing," answered Mr. Brown.

Of course, those who had come to the place from the two camps had not shown themselves. All were secreted behind the trees and bushes on the opposite side of the cabin. Now they watched intently while Mr. Brown and Mr. Martell entered the cabin, and as

they did this they noted a steady *put-put* on the forest road, and soon a motorcycle came into sight, ridden by a middle-aged man carrying a satchel over his shoulder.

"That must be the fellow who went to the bank to get the money," whispered Andy.

The Secret Service men had arranged their plans with care. At a given signal four of the soldiers from Camp Huxwell surrounded the automobile occupied by Slugger and Nappy, who as before were making themselves comfortable in the tonneau and smoking cigarettes. To say that those two unworthies were surprised, would be putting it mildly. Slugger leaped to his feet in amazement, while Nappy set up a howl of terror, begging the soldiers not to shoot them.

"We haven't done anything wrong!" howled Nappy. "Please don't point that gun at me!"

"I don't understand this," said Slugger nervously. "There must be some mistake."

"The only mistake is the one you made, young man," declared one of the soldiers briefly.

In the meantime there was an interesting scene going on in the main room of the cabin. The German in charge of the place and the fellow who had come in on the motorcycle were talking earnestly to Slogwell Brown and Nelson Martell. The men from New York had a number of documents on a table, and were trying to prove that the Germans owed them over eleven thousand dollars, while the Germans were equally emphatic in declaring that the amount due was less than ten thousand dollars.

"You've got to pay the full amount," growled Mr.

Brown. “I won’t take off a cent!”

“That’s the talk!” broke in Mr. Martell. “And you ought not to kick, either. We have taken terrible chances in having these things supplied to you.”

“Yes, and don’t forget that you would never have had this secret base on Barlight Bay if it hadn’t been for me,” put in Slogwell Brown.

“We’re not forgetting anything,” said one of the Germans. “And if you insist upon it that we owe you that amount, we will pay it.”

The man who had come in on the motorcycle had opened his valise, and now he took out several packages of banknotes. Evidently Brown and Martell were to be paid in cash. Probably they had refused to accept anything in the way of a check.

The money had just been paid over and some receipts given when the leader of the Secret Service men gave the order, and the cabin was immediately surrounded.

“Hands up in there, everybody!” was the stern command.

If Slugger and Nappy had been surprised, their fathers were even more so, while the two Germans were taken completely off their guard. Each of the latter was armed, but one look at the United States officers with their pistols and the soldiers with their rifles was too much for them, and with grunts of disgust they threw their hands into the air.

“Who—what—I—er—I don’t understand this,” stammered Slogwell Brown, turning pale.

“There—there—must be—er—some mistake,”

faltered Nelson Martell, and then with shaking knees he sank slowly back on a bench.

A brief war of words followed, Brown and Martell doing everything they could think of to explain the situation so that they might not be placed under arrest. But their guilt was so bare-faced that the government officers would hardly listen to them. Both they and the Germans were searched and all their weapons were taken from them. Then the prisoners were handcuffed together, and the officers made a thorough search of the cabin, picking up everything it contained of value. One took charge of the documents found and also the money which had been passed over to Mr. Brown.

"A fine piece of business for a so-called American to be in!" said the head Secret Service man to Brown and Martell sternly. "I wouldn't be in your shoes for a billion dollars."

"It's—it's—all a mistake. I'll—er—explain everything later," said Slogwell Brown weakly.

As for Nelson Martell, he was on the verge of a collapse, and had to be supported when all left the cabin.

In the meanwhile other interesting happenings were taking place in the vicinity of the wrecked submarine. There a number of Secret Service men and other officers of the law under the leadership of Mr. Blarcomb, did what they could to round up all those connected with the U-boat. There was something of a running fight, and quite a few shots were exchanged. In this fight two of the Germans were seriously wounded, and one of the Secret Service men got a bullet through his shoulder. But in

the end all of the enemy were captured, and then the authorities took charge of the disabled submarine, and also the underground workshop, where the Germans had been laboring so hard to get their undersea boat once more into shape to sail.

It was after midnight before all these happenings came to an end and the evildoers had either been placed in jail or under a strong military guard. The capture, of course, was kept as secret as possible by the government officials.

“And to think that the fathers of Nappy Martell and Slugger Brown are guilty!” cried Ruth Stevenson, when Jack met her later on and told her some of the particulars. “Isn’t it dreadful? What will they do with them?”

“Most likely they will be interned for the period of the war, and maybe they will get regular jail sentences,” answered the young captain.

“And what will they do with Nappy and Slugger?”

“Oh, they will probably be interned also.”

After the men at the cabin in the forest and the Germans from the wrecked submarine had been rounded up, Jed Kessler was called in, and without hesitation he recognized two of the men he had seen at the ammunition plant just before the explosion occurred. One fellow was a clean-shaven man, but it was proved that he was in the habit of wearing a heavy wig and a heavy false beard.

“That fellow is one of the two we saw in New York talking to Mr. Brown and Mr. Martell!” cried Randy. And he was right, as it afterwards proved.

For catching these two men who, it was later proved, had caused the wreckage at the ammunition plant, the reward offered was divided equally between Jed Kessler, the four Rovers and Gif and Spouter, much to their satisfaction.

“This gives each of us a very neat bank account,” declared Spouter. “I’m going to save most of it, but some of it I’ll spend this summer on my vacation.”

“Maybe we’ll all do that,” put in Andy.

From the authorities it was learned that Slogwell Brown had owned a large portion of the shore front lying between Camp Huxwell and Camp Barlight. He had sold all his holdings to the government, but this had not prevented the unscrupulous man from making a deal with some German agents for the use of the cave under the cliff by our country’s enemies.

“He was a rascal both ways,” declared Captain Dale, in talking the matter over with the Rovers. “He took the government’s money at one end and the Germans’ money at the other. It is right that he goes to jail.”

And to jail Slogwell Brown went, accompanied by Nelson Martell, each to serve a number of years at hard labor. Slugger and Nappy were sent to a detention camp in the South; and that for the time being was the last the Rovers heard of them.

Although there was considerable excitement around the encampment caused by the discovery of the German submarine base, the cadets were not allowed to forego their drilling and their army maneuvers. Nor did they give up the athletic contests they had promised themselves. There were

swimming races and boat races, and likewise several baseball matches, and also contests in running, high and broad jumping, and in a tug-of-war.

"I'll tell you one thing—this encampment is one long to be remembered," remarked Jack, when the outing had almost come to an end.

The next day came a message from Camp Huxwell. The fathers of the Rovers, as well as many of their friends, were to depart immediately for Hoboken, there to take one of the big transports for France. Of course, the boys, as well as their sisters and their mothers, went to see Dick, Tom, and Sam Rover off.

"The best of luck to you, Dad!" cried Jack, when the time came for parting. "I hope you make a good record for yourselves."

"You can rest assured, Son, we will do our best," answered Dick Rover.

Then there were numerous handshakes, the waving of handkerchiefs, and while the girls and the women were trying hard to smile and to keep back the tears, the soldiers departed on the train.

"Gee, I wish I was going along!" sighed Fred. But this, of course, could not be, for all the boys were much too young to join the army.

By leaving Camp Barlight that day the Rovers had missed one of the important baseball games, but for this they did not care. They tried to join in the festivities that evening, but it was a failure. Their thoughts were with their fathers. Would they come back from the war in safety?

"All we can do is to hope for the best," remarked

Randy; and there the matter was allowed to rest.

Of course, the boys were eager for news concerning the Browns and the Martells, and also the Germans who had been captured, and they eagerly devoured every shred of information that came their way.

"Well, one thing is certain—we are well rid of Slugger and Nappy and their fathers," remarked Jack.

"Yes, and I guess we are rid of Gabe Werner, too," returned Fred. "He seems to have dropped out entirely."

But in his remark concerning Werner the young lieutenant was mistaken. Gabe Werner turned up in their path most unexpectedly, and how will be related in the next volume in this series, to be entitled "The Rover Boys on a Hunt; or, The Mysterious House in the Woods."

In that volume we shall learn what the Rover boys did on a most important outing, and also learn something of what happened to their fathers while fighting on the great battlefields of France.

"Well, boys, I've got pretty good news to-day," remarked Randy, rushing into the camp one afternoon and holding up a letter. "Mr. Powell has invited all of us to spend ten days or two weeks at his camp on Lake George this summer. May is going to have all the girls there, including Mary and Martha and Ruth, and Mr. Powell wants every one of us to come up and take part in the good times."

"Gee, that suits me right to the top of the flagstaff!" burst out his twin brother. And then, in

high spirits, Andy turned several flipflaps, and ended by beginning a wrestling match with Fred.

"Well, we'll be there, all right enough!" cried Jack.

"Will we?" came from Fred. "Just wait and see!"

Then the drums rattled, and the young captain and the young lieutenant, followed by the others, rushed off to get ready for the evening roll call and parade. And here, for the time being, we will leave the Rover boys and say good-bye.

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