

James Carson

The Saddle Boys in the Grand Canyon

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The Saddle Boys in the Grand Canyon

Or

The Hermit of the Cave

BY

CAPTAIN JAMES CARSON

AUTHOR OF "THE SADDLE BOYS OF THE ROCKIES," "THE SADDLE BOYS ON THE PLAINS," "THE SADDLE BOYS AT CIRCLE RANCH," ETC.

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BOOKS FOR BOYS

BY CAPTAIN JAMES CARSON

THE SADDLE BOYS SERIES

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THE SADDLE BOYS OF THE ROCKIES
Or, Lost On Thunder Mountain

THE SADDLE BOYS IN THE GRAND CANYON
Or, The Hermit of the Cave

THE SADDLE BOYS ON THE PLAINS
Or, After a Treasure of Gold

THE SADDLE BOYS AT CIRCLE RANCH
Or, In At The Grand Round-Up

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THE SADDLE BOYS IN THE GRAND CANYON

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THE SADDLE BOYS IN THE GRAND CANYON

CHAPTER I

THE WORK OF THE WOLF PACK

"Hold up, Bob!"

"Any signs of the lame yearling, Frank?"

"Well, there seems to be something over yonder to the west; but the sage crops up, and interferes a little with my view."

"Here, take the field glasses and look; while I cinch my saddle girth, which has loosened again."

Frank Haywood adjusted the glasses to his eye. Then, rising in his saddle, he gazed long and earnestly in the direction he had indicated. Meanwhile his companion, also a lad, a native of Kentucky, and answering to the name of Bob Archer, busied himself about the band of his saddle, having leaped to the ground.

Frank was the only son of a rancher and mine owner, Colonel Leonidas Haywood, who was a man of some wealth. Frank had blue eyes, and tawny-colored hair; and, since much of his life had been spent on the plains among the cattle men, he knew considerable about the ways of cowboys and hunters, though always ready to pick up information from veterans of the trail.

Bob had come to the far Southwest as a tenderfoot; but, being quick to learn, he hoped to graduate from that class after a while. Having always been fond of outdoor sports in his Kentucky home, he was, at

least, no greenhorn. When he came to the new country where his father was interested with Frank's in mining ventures, Bob had brought his favorite Kentucky horse, a coal-black stallion known as "Domino," and which vied with Frank's native "Buckskin" in good qualities.

These two lads were so much abroad on horseback that they had become known as the "Saddle Boys." They loved nothing better than to ride the plains, mounted on their pet steeds, and go almost everywhere the passing whim tempted them.

Of course, in that wonderland there was always a chance for adventure when one did much wandering; and that Frank and Bob saw their share of excitement can be readily understood. Some of the strange things that happened to them have already been narrated in the first volume of this series, "The Saddle Boys of the Rockies, Or, Lost on Thunder Mountain," and which, in a way, is an introduction to the present story. In the first book the boys cleared up a wonderful mystery concerning a great cavern.

For several minutes Bob was busily engaged with the saddle girth that had been giving him considerable trouble on this gallop.

"There," he remarked, finally, throwing down the flap as though satisfied with his work. "I reckon I've got it fixed now so that it will hold through the day; but I need a new girth, and when we pull up again at Circle Ranch I'll see about getting it. Oh! did you make out anything with the glasses, Frank?"

He sprang into the saddle like one who had spent

much of his time on horseback. Domino curvetted and pranced a little, being still full of mettle and spirits; but a very firm hand held him in.

"Take the glass, and see if you can make out what it is," Frank remarked, as if he hardly knew himself, or felt like trusting his eyes.

A minute later Bob lowered the glasses.

"There's something on the ground, and I can catch a glimpse of what looks like a dun-colored hide through the tufts of buffalo grass. The yearling was red, you said, Frank? All right. Then I reckon we'll find her there; but not on her feet."

"Come on!"

As he said these curt words Frank let Buckskin have his head; and, accompanied by his chum, started at a full gallop over the level, in the direction of the spot where the dun-colored object had been sighted.

Shortly afterward they topped a little rise, and pulled up. No need to doubt their eyes now. Just before them lay the mangled remains of the lame yearling, very little being left to tell the story of how the animal had met its fate.

"Wolves!" said Frank, gloomily, as he sat looking down at the torn hide.

"I don't know the signs as well as you, Frank, but I'd say the same from general indications. And they had a royal good feast, too. This makes a round half dozen head your father has lost in the last month, doesn't it?" asked Bob.

"Seven, all told. When Bart Heminway told me he had noticed that one of those fine yearlings seemed

lame, I wondered if something wasn't going to happen to it soon. And then, when we missed it from the herd last night, I guessed what had come about. They caught her behind the rest, and pulled her down. The poor thing didn't have a ghost of a show against that pack of savage wolf-dogs."

"I'd like to have just one chance at them, that's all," grumbled Bob, as he let his hand fondle the butt of a modern repeating rifle, which he carried fastened to his saddle.

"This is sure the limit, and it's just got to stop!" declared Frank, grimly.

"Right now?" queried his chum, eagerly.

Two pairs of flashing eyes met, the black ones sending a challenge toward the blue.

"Why not?" said Frank, shutting his jaws hard, "the day is before us still; and we're well primed for the business of hunting that pack to their den. Look at that bunch of rocks a few miles off; that must be where they hang out, Bob! Queer that none of the boys have ever thought of hunting in this quarter for that old she-wolf Sallie, and her brood."

"Then you think she did it, do you?" asked Bob.

"Sure she did. You can see for yourself where her jaws closed on the throat of the poor yearling. Everybody knows her trademark. That sly beast has been the bane of the cattle ranches around here for several years. They got to calling her Sallie in fun; but it's been serious business lately; and many a cowboy'd ride two hundred miles for a chance to knock her over."

"And yet none of the rough riders have even thought to search that rocky pile for her den, you say?" Bob continued.

"Why, you see, the killings have always been in other directions," Frank explained. "Just as shrewd animals often do, up to now Sallie has never pulled down a calf anywhere near her den. I reckon she just knew it might cause a search. But this time she's either grown over-bold, or else the pack started to do the business in spite of her, and she was forced into the game."

"Well, shall we head for that elevation, and see what we can find?" asked Bob, who was inclined to be a little impatient.

"Wait a bit. It would be ten times better if we could only track the greedy pack direct; but that's a hard proposition, here on the open," Frank observed.

"Well, what can we do then?" his chum asked.

"Perhaps put it in the hands of the best trailer in Arizona," and with a laugh Frank pointed off to the left.

The Kentucky boy turned his head in surprise, and then exclaimed:

"Old Hank Coombs, on his pony, as sure as anything! You knew he was coming along all the while, and just kept mum. But I'm sure glad to see the old cowman right now. And it may turn out to be a day of reckoning for that cunning Sallie, and her half grown cubs."

The two lads waved their range hats, and sent out a salute that was readily answered by the advancing

cowman. Hank Coombs was indeed a veteran in the cattle line, having been one of the very first to throw a rope, and "mill" stampeding steers in Texas, and farther to the west.

He was an angular old fellow, grim looking in his greasy leather "chaps;" but with a twinkle in his eyes that told of the spirit of fun that had never been quenched by the passage of time.

"Howdy, boys," he called out, as he drew rein alongside the two lads. "What's this here yer lookin' at? Another dead calf? No, I swan if it ain't a yearling as has been pulled down now. Things seem t' be gittin' t' a warm pass when sech doin' air allowed. Huh! an' it looks like Sallie's work, too! That sly ole critter is goin' t' git t' the end of her rope some fine day."

"Why not to-day, Hank?" demanded Frank, briskly.

The veteran grinned, as though he had half anticipated having such a question asked.

"So, that's the way the wind blows, hey?" he remarked, slowly; and then he nodded his small head approvingly. "Jest as you say, Frank, thar's no time like the present t' do things. The hull pack hes been here, I see, an' no matter how cunning old Sallie allers shows herself, a chain's only as strong as th' weakest link. One of her cubs will sure leave tracks we kin foller. All right, boys count on me t' back ye up. I'll go wharever ye say, Frank."

"We'll follow the trail, if there is one," said Frank, instantly; "but the chances are that's where we'll bring up," and he pointed with his quirt in the direction of the rocky uplift that stood like a

landmark in the midst of the great level sea of purple sage brush, marking the plain.

After one good look the cowman nodded his head again in the affirmative.

"Reckon as how y'r' right, Frank," he remarked; "but we'll see how the trail heads."

Throwing himself from his saddle he bent down over the remains of the yearling that had been so unfortunate as to become lame, and thus, lagging far behind the rest of the herd, fallen a victim to the wolf pack.

"Easy as fallin' off a log," announced old Hank, immediately. "Jest as I was sayin', thar's nearly allers one clumsy cub as don't hev half sense; an' I kin foller this trail on horseback, 'pears to me."

He ran it out a little way; then, once more mounting, went on ahead, with his keen eyes fastened on the ground.

Bob watched his actions with the greatest of interest. He knew Old Hank was discovering a dozen signs that would be utterly invisible to one who had not had many years of practice in tracking both wild animals and human beings.

Now and then the trailer would draw in his horse, as though desirous of looking more carefully at the ground. Twice he even dropped off and bent low, to make positive his belief.

"I reckon you were right, Frank," remarked Bob, after half an hour of this sort of travel "because, you see, even if the trail did lead away from the rocks at first, it's heading that way now on a straight line."

"Thet was only the cuteness of the ole wolf," said Hank. "She's up t' all the dodges goin'. But that comes a day of reckonin' for all her kind; an' her's orter be showin' up right soon."

When another half hour passed the three riders had reached the border of the strange pile of rocks. And as Frank looked up at the rough heap, with its many crevices and angles, he considered that it certainly must offer an ideal den to any wild beast wishing to hide through the daytime, and prowl forth when darkness and night lay upon the land.

"Here's whar the trail ends at the rocks," said Hank, as he dismounted and threw the bridle over the head of his horse, cowboy fashion, knowing that under ordinary conditions the animal would remain there, just as if hobbled, or staked out.

Both of the saddle boys followed his example, and, holding their rifles ready, prepared to search the rocks for some trace of the wolf den. Wild animals may be very cunning about locating their retreat in a place where it will be hidden from the eye of a casual passer; but, in course of time, they cannot prevent signs from accumulating, calculated to betray its presence to one who is keenly on the watch.

The three searchers had not been moving back and forth among the piles of rocks more than ten minutes when Old Hank was observed to raise his head, smile, and sniff the air with more or less eagerness.

"Must be close by, boys," he said, positively. "I kin git the rank odor that allers hangs 'round the den of wild animals as brings meat home, an' leaves the bones. The air is a-comin' from that quarter, an' chances are

we'll find the hole sumwhar over yonder."

"I think I see it," said Frank, eagerly. "Just above that little spur there's a black looking crevice in the rock."

"As dark as my hat," added Hank; "an' I reckon as how that's whar Sallie lives when she's t' home. Now t' invite ourselves int' her leetle parlor, boys!"Contents

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CHAPTER II

RIDDING THE RANGE OF A PEST

"Well, what do you think now, Frank?" asked Bob, as they stood in front of that gloomy looking crevice, and observed the marks of many claws upon the discolored rock, where hairy bodies had drawn themselves along countless times.

"I'm wondering," the other replied; "what ails our boys at the ranch never to have suspected that old Sallie had her den, and raised her broods, so close to the Circle Ranch. Why, right now we're not more'n ten miles, as the crow flies, away from home. And for years this terrible she-wolf has lived on the calves and partly grown animals belonging to cattlemen in this neck of the land. It makes me tired to think of it!"

"But Frank, it's a long lane that has no turning," remarked Bob; "and just now we've got to the bend. Sallie has invited her fate once too often. That lame yearling is going to spell her finish, if Old Hank here has his way."

"It sure is," agreed Frank. "And when we get back home with the hide of that old pest fastened to a saddle, the boys will be some sore to think how anyone of the lot might have done the job, if they'd only turned this way."

"But what's Hank going to do?" asked the Kentucky boy, watching the veteran cow-puncher searching on the ground under a stunted pinon tree that chanced to grow where there was a small bit of soil among the rocks.

"I don't know for a dead certainty," replied the other; "but I rather think he's picking up some pieces of wood that might make good torches."

"Whew! then he means that we're to go into the cave, and get our game—is that it, Frank?" demanded the other, unconsciously tightening his grip on his rifle, as he glanced once more toward that yawning crevice, leading to unknown depths, where the wolf pack lurked during the daytime to issue forth when night came around.

"That would be just like the old chap, for he knows nothing of fear," Frank replied; "but of course there's no necessity for *both* of us to go with him. One might remain here, so as to knock over any stray beast that managed to escape the attention of those who went in."

"All right; where will you take up your stand, Frank?"

asked Bob, instantly; at which his chum laughed, as though tickled.

"So you think I'd consent to stay out here tamely, while you two were having a regular circus in there?" he remarked. "That would never suit me. And it's easy to see that you count on a ticket of admission to Sallie's parlor, too. Well, then, we'll all go, and share in the danger, as well as the sport. For to rid the range country of this pest I consider the greatest favor under the sun. But there comes Hank with a bundle of torches under his arm."

"We're off, then!" chuckled Bob.

"Make sure o' yer guns, lads," said the cowman, as he came up; "because, in a case like this, when ye want t' shoot it's apt t' be in a hurry. An' anybody as knows what a fierce critter ole Sallie is, kin tell ye it'll take an ounce of lead, put in the right place, t' down her fur keeps."

"I'm ready," Frank assured the old hunter.

"Then, jest as soon's I kin git this flare goin' we'll push in." Hank announced.

"Will we be able to see the game with such a poor light?" asked Bob, a trifle nervously, as his mind went back to school days, to remember what he had read of that old Revolutionary patriot, Israel Putnam, entering a wolf's den alone, and killing the beast in open fight; truth to tell Bob had never seen a real den in which wild beasts hid from the sun; and imagination doubled its perils in his mind.

"Fust thing ye see'll be some yaller eyes starin' at ye outen the dark," said Hank, obligingly. "Then, when I gives the word, both of ye let go, aimin' direct

atween the yaller spots."

"But what if we miss, and the beast attacks us?" Bob went on, wishing to be thoroughly posted before venturing into that hole.

"In case of a mix-up," the veteran went on; "every feller is for hisself; only, recerlect thar mustn't be any shootin' at close quarters. Use yer knives, or else swat her over the head with yer clubbed guns. We're bound t' git Sallie this time, by hook er by crook! Ready, son?"

Both boys declared that they had no reason for delaying matters. Since it had been decided as best to invade the wolf den, the sooner they started, the better.

True, Bob thought that had it been left to him, he would have first tried to smoke out the occupants of the cleft, waiting near by to shoot them down as they rushed out of the depths. But then Hank was directing matters now, and whatever he said must be done.

Besides, Hank had known wolves ever since he first "toted" a gun, now more than fifty-five years ago. Perhaps he understood how difficult it is to smoke out a pack of wolves, that invariably seek a cave with a depth sufficient to get away from all the influences of the smudge.

Without the slightest hesitation Old Hank got down on hands and knees, and began to crawl into the gaping mouth of the crevice.

It did not go straight in, but seemed to twist around more or less. All the while the two boys kept close at the heels of the guide who carried that flaring torch.

They watched ahead to detect the first sign of the enemy; and had their ears on the alert with the same idea in view.

Stronger grew the odor that invariably marks the den of carnivorous animals.

"We ought to stir her up soon now, Frank," whispered Bob, on whom the strain was bearing hard, since he was not used to anything of this sort.

"Yes, unless the sly old beast has a back door to her home; how about that, Hank?" asked the cattleman's son.

"Don't reckon as how it's so," came the ready response. "In thet event, we'd feel a breath of fresh air; an' ye knows as how we don't. Stiddy boys, keep yer wits about ye! She's clost by, now!"

"I heard a growl!" admitted Bob.

"And there were whines too, from the half grown cubs," ventured Frank.

"Once we turn this bend just ahead, likely enough we'll be in the mess," Bob remarked.

"Range on both sides of me, boys," directed Hank, halting, so that they could overtake him; because he knew full well that the crisis of this bold invasion of the she-wolf's den was near at hand.

In this fashion, then, the three turned the rocky corner.

"I see the yellow eyes!" whispered Bob, beginning to bring his gun-stock nearer to his shoulder. "Say, there's a whole raft of 'em, Frank!"

"Sure," came the quick reply, close to his ear. "Hank said there was about five of the brood. Hold your fire, Bob. Pick out the mother wolf first."

"That's what I want to do; but how can I make sure?" demanded the Kentucky lad, trying his best to keep his hands from trembling with excitement.

He had sunk down upon one knee. This allowed him to rest his elbow on the knee that was in position, always a favorite attitude with Bob when using a rifle.

"Take the eyes that are above all the rest, and which seem so much larger and fiercer. Are you on, Bob?" continued the other, who was also handling his gun with all the eagerness of a sportsman.

"Yes," came the firm reply.

"Then let her go!"

The last word was drowned in a terrific roar, for when a gun is fired in confined space the din is tremendous. Even as he pulled the trigger Bob knew that luck was against him; for the animal had moved at a time when he could not delay the pressure of his finger.

He heard a second report close beside him. Frank had also fired, realizing what had occurred, and that in all probability the first bullet would only wound the savage beast, without putting an end to her activities.

The torch went sputtering to the floor of the cave, having been knocked from the hand of Hank when the wolf struck him heavily. He could be heard trying to rescue it before it went completely out, all

the while letting off a volley of whoops and directions.

Fortunately Frank had kept his wits about him. And his rifle was still gripped firmly in his hands, he having instantly pumped a new cartridge into the chamber after firing. The half grown cubs showed an inclination to follow their mother in her headlong attack on the human invaders of the den; for the numerous gleaming pairs of eyes were undoubtedly advancing when Frank turned his gun loose on them.

The din was simply terrific. Bob was more concerned with the possibility of an attack from the ferocious mother wolf then anything else. He had lost track of her after that first furious rush, and crouching there, was trying the best he knew how to locate the creature again.

Meanwhile Old Hank had succeeded in picking up the torch, which, being held in an upright position, began to shed a fair amount of light once more.

Not seeing anything else at which he could fire, Bob now started in to assist his chum get rid of the ugly whelps that were advancing, growling, snarling, and in various other ways proving how they had inherited the fearless nature of the beast that had nursed them in that den.

Perhaps it was all one-sided, since the animals never had a chance to get in touch with the invaders. Neither of the boys ever felt very proud of the work; but in view of the tremendous amount of damage a pack of hungry wolves can do on a cattle ranch, or in a sheepfold, they had no scruples concerning the matter. Besides, every one along the Arizona border hated a wolf almost as badly as they did a cowardly

coyote; for while the former may be bolder than the beast that slinks across the desert looking for carrion, its capacity for mischief is a good many times as great.

"I don't see any more eyes, Frank!" called out Bob, presently, as he tried to penetrate the cloud of powder-smoke that surrounded both of them.

"That's because we got 'em all, I reckon," replied his chum. "How about that, Hank?"

"Cleaned the hull brood out, son," replied the other, chuckling; "an' no mistake about it either."

"But where did the big one go to; has she escaped after all?" asked Bob, with a note of regret in his voice; for he thought the blame would be placed on him, for having made a poor shot when he had such a splendid chance to finish the animal.

"Oh! I wouldn't worry myself about her, Bob," chuckled Frank, who had already made a discovery; and as he spoke he pointed to a spot close by, where, huddled in a heap, lay the heavy body of the fiercest cattle thief known for years along the border.

"She was mortally hurted by the fust shot," said Hank, as they stood over the gaunt animal, and surveyed her proportions with almost a touch of awe; "but seemed like the critter had enough strength left t' make thet leap, as nigh knocked me flat. Then she jest keeled over, an' guv up the ghost. Arter this the young heifers kin stray away from their mother's sides, without bein' dragged off. Thar'll be a vote o' thanks sent ter ye, Bob, from every ranch inside of fifty mile, 'cause of what ye did when ye pulled trigger this day."

Hank, being an experienced worker, did not take very long to secure the pelt of the dead terror of the desert. Then they left the rocks, finding their horses just where they had left them.

All of the animals showed signs of alarm when they scented the skin of the wolf; and Domino in particular pranced and snorted at a great rate since his education had been neglected in this particular. So Hank, having the best trained steed in the bunch, insisted on carrying the pelt with him on their return trip to the ranch.

Ten miles, as the crow flies, and they would be at home; and with comparatively fresh steeds, that should not count for more than an hour's gallop.

Before they had gone three miles, however, Bob called the attention of his chum to a horseman who was galloping toward them. It was a cowboy, and he waved his broad-brimmed hat over his head as he came sweeping forward.

"Is he doing stunts; or does he want us?" asked Bob.

"It's Ted Conway," replied Frank, with a sudden look of anxiety; "one of the steadiest boys at the ranch; and he acts as if something had happened at home!"Contents

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CHAPTER III

THE FLOATING BOTTLE

Waving his hat after the extravagant manner of his kind, the cowboy swept constantly nearer the little party. Indeed, it was impossible for them to guess whether Ted Conway bore a message, or was simply delighted to see the son of his employer, and his chum.

Presently he reached the constantly advancing trio, and under the pull of the reins his pony reared upon its hind legs.

"What's wrong, Ted?" asked Frank, immediately.

"Wanted at the ranch, Frank," came the answer. "The boss has sent me out to look you up on the jump. Told me as how you started out on a gallop this way, an' I took chances. Reckon I was some lucky to strike you so easy."

"But what has happened, Ted?" insisted the boy, trying to read the bronzed face of the other, and get a hint as to whether his mission verged on the serious or not.

It was so very unusual for Colonel Haywood to send anyone out to find him, that Frank's suspicions were naturally aroused.

"Well, the Colonel had a little tumble with that game leg of his—same one that the steer fell on, and broke two years back, in the big round-up—" began the cowboy, when Frank interrupted him.

"Then he must have been seriously hurt this time, or he wouldn't send you out for me. Tell me the worst,

Ted; you ought to realize that it's better for me to know it all in the start, than by degrees. Is my father dead?"

"No. Last I seen of the Colonel, he was a real live man; only he had his leg done up agin in splints; an' the ole doc. from the Arrowhead Ranch was thar, 'tending to him. No, it ain't on count of his leetle trouble with that leg that made him send me out huntin' for you, Frank."

"What then?" demanded the boy, curtly; but with a sigh of relief, for his father was very dear to him.

"Thar come a messenger to the ranch a while ago, an' somethin' he fetched along with him, 'peared to excite the boss right from the word go," Ted admitted.

"A messenger, Ted?" the boy echoed, wonderingly.

"Never seen him afore, an' think he kim from town," the new arrival went on to say. "Leastwise, he looked like a stray maverick, an' had a b'iled shirt, with a collar that I reckoned sure would choke him. Atween you an' me I tried to get him to chuck the same; but he only grinned, an' allowed he could stand it."

"Oh! a messenger from town, was it?" said Frank, with a relieved look. "Then the chances are it must have been some business connected with a shipment of cattle. Perhaps the railroad has had a bad wreck, and wants to settle for that last bunch we sent away."

But Ted shook his head in the negative.

"'T'wan't no railroad man; that I know," he affirmed, positively. "'Sides, the boss was holdin' of a bottle in his hand, an' seemed to set a heap of store by it."

"A bottle, Ted?" cried Frank, deeply interested.

"That's what," replied the cowboy, energetically. "But jest why he should reckon such a thing wuth shucks I can't tell ye. But he sent me out to bring you back to the ranch house like two-forty. I seen that he was plumb locoed, and some excited by the news, whatever it might be."

Frank looked at his chum in a puzzled way, and shook his head.

"I don't seem able to make head or tail of this business, Bob," he remarked; "but there's only one thing to be done, and that's to romp home on the gallop. So away we go with a rush. Who's after me! Hi! get long, Buckskin! It's a race for a treat of oats as a prize! Here you are, Bob; hit up the pace!"

With the words Frank gave his horse free rein, and went tearing over the level plain, headed as straight for the distant ranch as though he were a bird far up in the clear air, and could see to make a direct line "as the crow flies!"

And after a time, in the distance, they saw the whitewashed outbuildings of Circle Ranch. Frank never viewed the familiar and dearly loved scene with more anxiety than he did now; but so far as he could see there did not appear to be anything out of the ordinary taking place around the ranch house.

"Looks all right, Bob!" exclaimed Frank, as though a great load had been taken from his heart.

The sudden coming of Ted Conway, with that queer message that meant a hurried return, had mystified the boy not a little. But he knew that all would soon be made plain now, since they were nearly home.

Dashing up in front of the house, the two lads jumped to the ground almost before their mounts had come to a halt. The door was open, and Frank led the way in a headlong rush.

As they entered he saw his father seated in his comfortable easy-chair, with that unfortunate leg, that had given him more or less trouble for two years now, propped on another seat, and bound up.

There was a stranger with him, but no sign of the Arrowhead Ranch cowboy doctor; which would indicate that, having done his duty, the roving physician and bone-setter had returned to his regular business, which was roping and branding cattle.

Colonel Haywood was a man in the prime of life. Up to the time that clumsy steer had broken his leg he had been most active; but since then he had not been able to get around on his feet so well, though able to ride fairly comfortably.

"Hello! Frank, my boy!" he exclaimed, as the two came rushing in. "So Ted managed to round you up in great style; did he? Well, I always said Ted was the sharpest fellow on the range when it came to finding things. Where have you been to-day?"

"Doing a little missionary work for the country," replied Frank, smiling. "We came across that lame pet yearling, the dun-colored one you thought so much of; and there was mighty little left of the poor beast but a torn hide, not worth lifting."

"Huh! wolves again!" exclaimed the stock-raiser, with a frown.

"Sure thing, sir," Frank went on. "We saw a heap of

signs that told us our old friend, Sallie, with the broken tooth, had been on the job again. But that was the last of our beef the old lady'll ever taste, or anybody else's, for that matter."

"What's that? Did you sight her, and get a shot?" demanded the pleased rancher, forgetting his broken leg in his excitement, and making a movement that immediately caused him to give a grunt, and settle back again.

"Old Hank happened to run across our trail just then," Frank continued; "and we made up our minds to track the beast to her lair. Where do you suppose we found it, dad, but in the big bunch of rocks that lies about ten miles to the west?"

"You surprise me; but go on, tell me the rest, and then I'm going to let you in on something that will open your eyes a little," remarked the stockman.

"Oh! there isn't much more to tell, dad," the boy hastened to say, for he was eager to learn what all this mystery meant. "We found the opening, easy enough, and made up our minds to crawl in after Sallie, the whole three of us. So Hank picked up some wood for a flare, and in we went."

"And you found her home? You met with a warm reception, I warrant!" the other exclaimed, his eyes kindling with pride as he saw the quiet, confident air with which Frank rattled off his story.

"Sallie was in, ditto five of her half-grown brood, and all full of fight," the boy continued. "But of course they didn't have a ghost of a show against our two repeating rifles. Hank held the torch, and Bob fired first. Then the brute jumped, and nearly got Hank,

who lost the flare for a few seconds. We keeled over the ugly whelps as they started for us; and later on found old Sallie, just as she had dropped. That big jump was her last."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that, son," declared the rancher, who had suffered long and seriously from the depredations of that sly animal and her various broods, despite all efforts to locate her, and put an end to her attacks.

"I'm glad you're pleased with what we did," Frank remarked.

"It will mean a lot to all honest ranchmen in this section," continued the cattleman. "With Sallie gone, we can hope to raise a record herd the coming season, without keeping men constantly on the watch, day and night, for a slinking thief that defied our best efforts. Shake hands, Bob, and let me congratulate you on making the shot that ended the loping of the worst pest this country has known in five years."

"But when Ted came whirling along, shouting, and waving his hat, to tell us you wanted me back home on the jump, it gave me a bad feeling, dad; especially when I heard that you'd gone and hurt that leg again!" Frank cried, as he, too, seized the other hand of his father, and squeezed it affectionately.

"But I told Ted to be sure and let you know that it was not on account of my new upset that I wanted you back," declared the ranchman, frowning.

"Yes, he delivered the message all right, dad; but all the same I was bothered a heap, let me tell you," Frank went on. "And now, please, tell us what it's all

about; won't you; and what this gentleman has to do with it; also the bottle Ted said you were handling?"

At that Colonel Haywood smiled, and looked up at the stranger.

"This is a Mr. Hinchman, Frank," he remarked. "He lives in a small place on the great Colorado River called Mohave City. And one day, not long ago, a man who was fishing on the river at a place where an eddy set in, found a curious bottle floating, that was sealed with red wax on the top, and seemed to contain only a piece of paper. This is the bottle," and as he spoke he opened a drawer of the desk, and drew out the flask in question.

Frank took it, and turned it around. So far as he could see it was an ordinary bottle. It contained no cork, but there were signs of sealing wax around the top.

"Mr. Hinchman, is, I believe," the ranchman went on, "though he has been too modest to say so himself, a gentleman of some importance in Mohave City, which accounted for the fisherman fetching his queer find to him. The bottle had evidently come down the great river, perhaps for one or two hundred miles, escaping destruction from contact with rocks in a marvelous manner, and finally falling into the hands of one who had both the time and the curiosity to examine its sealed contents."

Colonel Haywood thereupon took up a small piece of paper from the pad of the desk.

"This is what he found in the bottle, Frank," continued the stockman. "It bore my address, and the name of my ranch here; so thinking that it might be

something more than a practical joke he concluded to journey all the way across the country to see me. It was a mighty nice thing for Mr. Hinchman to do, and something I am not apt to forget in a hurry, either."

"Then the paper interested you, dad, it seems?" Frank remarked, eagerly.

"It certainly did, son, and I rather think you will feel the same as I did when I tell you whose name is written at the bottom of this little communication," the cattleman went on.

"All right, I'm ready to hear it," Frank remarked, laughingly.

"Felix Oswald!" replied his father, quickly.

The boy was indeed intensely surprised, if one could judge from his manner.

"Your Uncle Felix, dad, who has been gone these three years, and whose mysterious disappearance set the whole scientific world guessing. And you say his name is there, signed to that paper found in the sealed bottle? Well, you sure have given me a surprise. Then he's still alive?"

"He seemed to be when he wrote this," the cattleman said, reflectively; "but as he failed to put any date on it, we can only guess how long the bottle has been cruising down the Colorado, sucked into eddies that might hold it for weeks or months, until a rise in the river sent it forth again."

"Say, doesn't that beat everything you ever heard of, Bob?" declared Frank, turning to his chum.

"It certainly does," replied Bob, and then the

ranchman's boy continued:

"Perhaps you remember me telling you some things about this queer old uncle of dad's, Bob, and how, after he had made a name for himself, he suddenly vanished in a night, leaving word behind that he was going to study the biggest subject any man could ever tackle. And as he didn't want to be bothered, he said he would leave no address behind. They've looked for him all over Europe, Asia and Africa, but he was never heard from again. And now to think that he's sent word to dad; and in a sealed bottle too!"

"That looks as if he must be somewhere on the Colorado River, don't it?" suggested Bob.

"Undoubtedly," replied the stockman; "in fact, in this brief communication he admits that he is located somewhere along the Grand Canyon, in a place where travelers have as yet never penetrated. I can only guess that Uncle Felix must have been seized with a desire to unearth treasures that might tell the history of those strange old cliff dwellers, who occupied much of that country as long as eight hundred years ago. All he mentions about his hiding place is to call it Echo Cave. You never heard of such a place, did you, Mr. Hinchman; and you've lived on the lower river many years?"

"I never did, Colonel," replied the man from Mohave City; "and perhaps few people have climbed through that wonderful gash in the surface of the Arizona desert as many times as I have."

"In this brief note," continued Colonel Haywood, "Uncle Felix simply says that he has become aware of the passage of time; and since his labors are not yet

completed, and he does not wish to allow his friends to believe him dead, he has concluded to communicate with me, his nephew. And as he knew of no other way of doing so, he resorted to the artifice of the floating bottle."

"Mighty considerate of him, that's sure," chuckled Frank. "Been gone now two or three years, and suddenly remembers that there are people who might worry about his dropping out of sight."

"But son," remarked the stockman, "don't forget that Uncle Felix is wrapped up in his profession, and cares very little about the ties of this world. I know him well enough for that. But it happens, singularly enough, that just now it is of the greatest importance he should be found, and communicated with. I would undertake the task myself, only for this unfortunate break that is bound to keep me laid up for another month or two. The doctor set my leg afresh, and tells me that this time I will really get perfectly well, given time. But it's hard to think that my cousin Janice, his only child, will lose so great a sum if some one fails to locate Uncle Felix, and get his signature to a paper inside of another month."

"Why, how is that, father?" asked Frank.

"Circumstances have arisen that will throw a fortune into her hands;" the stockman continued; "but the time limit approaches, and if his signature is not forthcoming others will reap the benefit, particularly that rascally cousin of mine, Eugene Warringford. You remember meeting him a year ago, Frank, when he came around asking many questions, as though he might have tracked his uncle out this way, and then lost the trail?"

"Why not send us, dad?" demanded Frank, standing up in front of the stockman, with a smile of confidence on his face.Contents

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CHAPTER IV

THE LISTENER UNDER THE WINDOW

"That was what I had in mind, Frank, when I hurried Ted Conway out to find you both," Colonel Haywood remarked, his face filled with pride and confidence.

"Will you let me see the note, please?" asked Bob; who expected some day to study to be a lawyer, his father's family having had several Kentucky judges among their number.

Just as the owner of the ranch had said, the communication was exceedingly brief, and to the point, not an unnecessary word having been written. It was in pencil, and the handwriting was crabbed; just what one might expect of an elderly man, given over heart and soul to scientific research.

"I suppose you know the writing well enough to feel sure this came from your noted uncle, sir?" asked Bob, as he turned the paper over.

"Certainly, Bob," replied the cattleman, promptly.

"There is not the least possibility of it's being a practical joke. Nobody out here knows anything about my uncle, who disappeared so long ago. Yes, you can set it down as positive that the letter is genuine enough. He's located somewhere up in that most astonishing hole, the greatest wonder, most people admit, in the entire world. But just how you two boys are ever going to find him is another question."

"We can try, dad; and that's all you could do if you were able to tramp. It happens that the Grand Canyon isn't more than a hundred and thirty miles from our ranch here, and we can ride that in a few days. How do you feel about it, Bob?"

"Nothing would please me better," replied the other boy, quickly, his face lighting up with delight at the prospect of a long ride in the saddle, to be followed by days, and perhaps weeks, of roaming through that wonderland, where Nature had outdone all her other works in trying to heap up astonishing surprises.

"So far as I'm concerned," Frank went on, "I've always wanted to visit the Grand Canyon, and meant to do it some day later on. Of course I've seen what the little Colorado has to show, because it's only a long day's ride off. Mr. Hinchman can, I reckon, give us some points about the place, and maybe even mention several smaller canyons where we might be likely to find Uncle Felix in Echo Cave."

"Which I'll be only too happy to attempt," answered the gentleman from Mohave City; "and as I said before, I know considerable about the mysteries of the big hole in the desert, all of which is at your service. Somehow, the queer way that message in the floating bottle came to me, excited my curiosity; and

I'll be satisfied if I can only have a hand in the finding of the noted gentleman who, as your father has been telling me, vanished in the midst of his fame."

"And now, dad, please explain just what we are to do in case luck follows us in our hunt, and we run across the professor," said Frank.

"You are to explain to him that the long option which he held on that San Bernardino mine will expire in one more month. The work had been going on in a listless way for three years. All at once some time back they struck a wonderfully rich lode, and vein has been followed far enough to show that it is bound to be a record breaker."

"That sounds great!" declared the deeply interested Bob.

"The mine couldn't be bought for a million to-day," continued the stockman; "and yet Uncle Felix is probably carrying around with him (for it couldn't be found at his home) a little legal document whereby it will become his sole property in case he chooses to plank down the modest sum of twenty thousand dollars by the thirtieth of next month!"

"Whew! that's going some, eh, Bob?" exclaimed Frank, with a little whistle that accentuated his surprise.

"Then if we are fortunate enough to find Uncle Felix before that time has expired, what shall we do, sir?" asked the precise Bob, who was always keeping an eye out for the legal aspect of things.

"Coax him to accompany you to the nearest notary

public, where he can sign his acceptance of the terms under which he holds the option on the San Bernardino. But if this happens after the thirtieth it is all wasted energy; for at midnight of that day, I happen to know, the option expires," the ranchman continued, somewhat impressively.

Just as he finished speaking he suddenly turned toward the window, at which his keen vision had caught sight of a moving shadow, as though someone might have been crouching without, and listening.

"Who is there at the window?" he called out, sternly.

All eyes were turned that way. After several seconds had passed a figure rose up, and a head was thrust through the opening. It belonged to a dark-faced cow-puncher, named Abajo, who was supposed to be a half-breed Mexican. Although never a favorite with the owner of the Circle Ranch, Abajo was a first-class handler of the rope, and could ride a horse as well as anyone. He had been employed by Colonel Haywood for half a year. He talked "United States," as Frank was used to saying, as well as the average cowman. But Frank had never liked the fellow. There seemed something crafty in his ways that was foreign to the make-up of the boy.

"It's only me, boss," said Abajo, with an attempt at a grin. "I wanted to ask you about that job you set me on yesterday. I took Pete along, and we found the lost bunch of stock in a valley ten mile away from Thunder Mountain in the Fox Canyon country. Got 'em all safe in but seven. Never seen hair nor hide of them; but after gettin' back it struck me there was one place they might a strayed to that we didn't look up. If so be you say the word I'll pick up Pete again, and make another try."

"Why, of course you had better go, Abajo," remarked the stockman, looking keenly at the other, for he did not like the way in which the half-breed had been apparently loitering under that open window, as though listening to all that was passing in the room beyond. "I told you not to draw rein till you'd found all the missing stock; or knew what had become of them. That's all, Abajo."

The Mexican cowboy hurried away. A minute later and they heard him shouting to Pete; and then the clatter of horses' hoofs told that the pair were galloping wildly across the open.

"I wonder how much he heard?" said Frank; from which it would appear that he also suspected the other of having spied upon them for some purpose.

"Much good it could have done him, even if he caught all we said," replied his father. "Because, of course, he doesn't know anything about Uncle Felix; and couldn't be interested in whether he is living or dead."

"No," remarked Mr. Hinchman, "but the mention of a mine going a-begging that is worth a comfortable fortune, like a million or two, would interest Abajo. I know his type pretty well, and you can rest assured that they're always on the lookout for easy money."

"But didn't it strike you, dad," ventured Frank, "that his excuse for being under that window was silly?"

"Yes, because Abajo has always been able to understand, without asking what he should do under such conditions. He wanted some excuse for drawing near the open window, and he found it. Perhaps he's heard something about the coming of Mr. Hinchman

here, and the queer finding of the bottle that floated down the Colorado for one or two hundred miles. I spoke to the foreman, Bart Heminway, about it."

"When would you want us to make a start?" asked Bob, looking as though he might be ready to jump into his saddle then and there.

"Oh! there is no such rushing hurry as all that," replied the cattleman, laughing at the eagerness of the two lads. "Your horses are a bit off, just now, and after all that fight in the wolf den you boys need a rest."

"But when do we start?" asked Frank.

"Suppose you get ready to move in the morning," Colonel Haywood replied, after reflecting a moment. "That will give me time to write a letter to Uncle Felix, so that you can deliver it, if you're lucky enough to find his Echo Cave; and at the same time you can make up your packs; for you will need blankets, and plenty of grub along."

"Well, I reckon you're right, dad," admitted Frank; "only it seems as if we might be losing valuable time. All the same we're going to do just what you say. Now, if you haven't anything more to tell us, we'll just skip out, and begin looking up some of the supplies for our campaign in the Grand Canyon."

"Get along with you, then," laughed the ranchman. "I want to ask Mr. Hinchman a few more questions that have occurred to me since you came home. And, boys, grub will be ready in a short time, now, for there's Ah Sin stepping to the door every little while, to look around and see if the boys are in sight. You know what that sign means."

Frank and his chum went off, to make out a list of things they would take along with them on the strange expedition upon which they were about to start on the following morning.

"What do you think of that slippery customer, Abajo?" Bob asked his chum, as the afternoon waned, and they were sitting on the long porch of the ranch house.

"I've never liked him ever since he came here; but dad was in need of help, and the half-breed certainly knows his business to a dot," replied Frank, who was examining the new girth his chum had attached to his saddle, mentally deciding that whatever the young Kentuckian attempted, he did neatly and well.

"Didn't I hear something about his being a relative to that Spanish Joe who gave us so much trouble a little while back, on Thunder Mountain?" Bob continued.

"Well, I couldn't say for sure, but some say he is a nephew," Frank answered. "Both of them have Mexican blood in their veins; and, when you come to think of it, there is some resemblance in their faces."

"But do you really think Abajo was listening?" the other asked.

"It looked like it; that's as far as I've got," laughed Frank.

"But," Bob protested, "even if he knew that there was a big fortune connected with the paper this queer old professor carries on his person, what good would that do Abajo?"

Frank shrugged his broad shoulders as he replied:

"Well, you never can tell what crazy notions some of these schemers after a fortune will hatch up. He might make up his mind to start a little hunt for the hermit of Echo Cave on his own hook; with the idea of getting a transfer of that valuable paper."

"That's a fact!" declared Bob, looking interested. "Perhaps, after all, we won't have our work cut out for us as easy as we thought."

"Small difference that will make," Frank went on, with a shutting of his teeth that told of the spirit animating the boy when difficulties hove in sight.

"I agree with you, all right, Frank," his companion remarked. "And perhaps it'll only make the hunt all the more interesting if we believe we've got opposition. You know how it was when Peg Grant threw his hat in the ring, and tried to find out what made those queer sounds in the heart of Thunder Mountain?"

"Sure I do," came the quick reply. "It stirred us up to doing bigger stunts than if we'd thought we had it all our own way. Nothing like competition to get the best out of any fellow."

"Correct you are, Frank. But speaking of Abajo, perhaps that's him coming back now," and as he spoke the Kentucky boy pointed across to a point where a single rider could be seen heading for the ranch house.

He was still far away, but the eyes of Frank Haywood were very keen. Besides, he knew the "style" of every cowboy who was in the employ of his father, and was able to pick them out almost as far as he could see them.

"You're away off there, Bob," he remarked quietly.

"Then it isn't the half-breed?" asked his chum.

"I know the way that chap sits in the saddle," came the reply. "Only one man on the pay roll of Circle Ranch holds himself that way. It's Pete."

"Pete Rawlings, the fellow who went with Abajo to round up the missing cattle?" asked Bob.

"He's the one," Frank went on. "And from the fact that he rides alone, I take it he's bringing news."

"Of the seven head of cattle that have disappeared, you mean, Frank?"

"Perhaps. They may have found them, and Abajo is standing by, while Pete comes in to make some sort of report. There's that rustler bunch that comes from the other side of the Gila river once in a while, under Pedro Mendoza, you remember. But he'll soon be on deck, and then we'll know. Come along, Bob, and we'll let dad hear that Pete is sighted. He'll be interested some, I reckon."

A short time later the single rider threw himself from his saddle after the usual impetuous manner of cowboys in general.

"Back again, Pete; and did you see anything of that seven head?" asked Colonel Haywood, who had come outside.

"Ain't run across hair nor hide of 'em, Colonel," replied the squatty cattleman, as he "waddled" up to the spot where the little group awaited his coming; for like many of his kind, Pete was decidedly bow-legged, possibly from riding a horse all his life; and his walk somewhat resembled that of a sailor ashore

after a long cruise.

"Where did you leave Abajo?" asked Frank, unable to restrain his curiosity.

"Didn't leave him," replied the other, with a grin. "He gave me the merry ha! ha! and said as how he reckoned he'd had enough of the old Circle. Got his month's pay yesterday, you see, an' he's even. I reckoned somethin' was in the wind when I seen him talkin' with that feller."

"Who was that, Pete?" questioned Colonel Haywood; and the prompt answer made Frank and Bob exchange significant looks, for it seemed to voice their worst fears.

"A gent as you had avisitin' here some time back, Colonel. Reckon as how he don't feel any too warm toward you, accordin' to the way he used to bring them black brows of his'n down, when he thought you wa'n't lookin'. And his name was Eugene Warringford."Contents

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CHAPTER V

STARTING FOR THE GRAND CANYON

No one appeared to be greatly surprised at this piece of news. Apparently it had been already discounted in the mind of Frank, his father, and even Bob Archer.

"So, that's the way the wind sets, is it?" remarked the colonel, frowning.

"Anyhow, dad, that proves one thing," declared Frank.

"Meaning about that business of listening under the window?" observed the owner of Circle Ranch. "It certainly does. Abajo has been in the employ of Eugene Warringford from the start. But there must have been some other good reason why that schemer wanted to find Uncle Felix. He suspected that, sooner or later, the old gentleman would communicate with me, because I used to be quite a favorite of his, years ago."

"Yes, and he sent the half-breed here to get employment from you just to spy around," declared Frank. "All the time he was accepting your money, he had a regular income from Eugene."

"Oh! well, he earned all he got here," said the ranchman, quickly. "Say what I may about Abajo, he had no superior when it came to throwing the rope, and rounding up a herd. Those Mexicans make the finest of cowboys. They are at home in the saddle, every time."

"Also in hanging around under windows, and listening to what is said," added Frank. "As for me, I have little use for their breed. And, dad, if ever you give me the reins here, no Mexican will ever get a job on old Circle Ranch."

"Well," remarked the stockman, laughing at the vigor with which his son and heir made this assertion, "perhaps I'm leaning that way myself. After all, there's nothing like your own kind. We don't understand these fellows. Their ways are not the same as ours; and I reckon we puncture their pride often enough. But there's no trouble now about understanding why Abajo gave us the go-by to-day."

"Huh! he had some news worth while carrying to his boss," said Frank. "And I can just imagine how Eugene's little eyes will sparkle when he hears about that valuable paper; eh, dad?"

"You're right, son," the ranchman replied. "Because, it stands to reason he couldn't know anything about it before. The mine was a dead one up to a few months back, when that lucky-find lode was struck by accident. Eugene will put up a big chase to find this Echo Cave, now that he knows Uncle Felix is located somewhere in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado."

"But it won't make a bit of difference in our plans, dad; will it?" asked Frank.

"That depends on you two boys. If you think you can carry the game along, even with Eugene against you, I see no reason to make any change," the stockman replied, with a look that spoke of much confidence.

The balance of the afternoon was spent in exchanging views, and much study of the map of the famous canyon of the Colorado, which it happened the ranch owner had in his desk.

All sorts of theories were advanced by first one and then another of the group. It happened that Colonel Haywood himself had never as yet paid a visit to the

strange gash in the soil of northwestern Arizona; and he admitted the fact with a rueful face.

"Then just as soon as you get well, dad, make up your mind you're going to take a little vacation, and see the Grand Canyon," said Frank. "When we come back, perhaps what we have to say will set you wild to go. And we expect to bring news of old Uncle Felix too, if he's still in the land of the living."

"Let's go over that ground again," remarked Bob.

"Now you're referring to what was said about the funny old stone dwellings of the cliff dwellers, who used to live there centuries ago," remarked Frank.

"And he's right, too," declared the ranchman. "I get the point Bob makes. It was about these wonderful people that Uncle Felix was so deeply interested, and he made up his mind to shut himself away from all the world, just to study up their history, as left in the holes in the rock."

"And it would seem to follow, then," said Bob, readily, "that he will be found located in one of those series of terraces where these holes are discovered. I notice that there are a number of these villages connected with the map of the Grand Canyon; but the chances are your Uncle Felix wouldn't take up with any where tourist travel was common."

"Now, that sounds all right," admitted Frank. "In the first place he would have been heard from long ago, if tourists ran across him; because they always talk, and send their accounts to be published in the papers."

"Besides, these scientific men hate to be watched

when they're wrapped up in work like this. I've known a couple back in Old Kentucky," Bob went on.

"According to your idea, then," said the Colonel, nodding approvingly, "this Echo Cave he mentions will prove to be some new place that the ordinary tourist in the big canyon has never set eyes on?"

"That's my opinion, sir," replied Bob.

"And if that's so, then it wouldn't pay you boys to waste any time looking into these ruins of the homes of the cliff dwellers located around Grand View; and in Walnut Canyon, some nine miles from Flagstaff," the ranchman continued.

"I think we'd save more or less time that way, sir," Bob declared.

"And you still want to go on horseback; when you might reach the railroad, and take a train, easily enough?" asked Colonel Haywood.

The boys exchanged glances. They were wedded to the saddle, and disliked the idea of leaving their favorite steeds behind them when embarking on this new venture.

"We've picked out the trail we expect to follow, dad," Frank said, pleadingly; "and it seems to run pretty smooth, with only a few mountains to cross, and a couple of rivers to ford. If you don't object seriously, Bob and I would prefer to go mounted."

"Oh! as far as that goes, I don't blame you, boys," the stockman hastened to say in reply; for he could understand the yearning one feels for a favorite horse; and how a seat in the saddle seems to be the finest thing in the world.

"Thank you, dad!" exclaimed Frank. "I reckoned that you'd talk that way. Somehow or other I just don't feel more'n half myself out of the saddle. And when we start to go down into the canyon we can find some place to leave our mounts where they'll be 'tended decently enough."

Ah Sin, the Chinese cook of the ranch, who generally accompanied the boys when the whole outfit went on the grand round-up, with the mess wagon in attendance, now came outdoors, and beat his gong to announce dinner.

The cowboys were not far away, awaiting the summons with the customary range appetites held in check; and when they were seated at the table they presented a merry crowd. Frank's mother happened to be visiting East at this time. He had a maiden aunt, however, who looked after the household duties, and sat at the end of the long table to pour the coffee.

Of course there was more or less talk about the sudden flitting of the half-breed, Abajo. Nobody had any regrets, for he had never been liked. And there were several who secretly felt pleased, because they had happened to quarrel with the dark-skinned Mexican at different times, and did not altogether fancy the way he had of scowling, while his finger felt the edge of the knife he carried in his gay sash, after the manner of his countrymen.

Colonel Haywood did not see fit to explain the real cause for the going of Abajo, except to his foreman, Bart Heminway. But during the evening, when Frank and Bob were making up their packs so as to get an early start in the morning, the ranch owner might have been seen in earnest consultation with the

foreman.

Presently Bart went out, to return with Old Hank Coombs, and another cowman known as Chesty Lane; who had of course received this name on account of the way he thrust out his figure, rather than from any inclination on his part to boast of his wonderful deeds.

"Chesty tells me, Colonel," said Bart, "that he used to be a guide in this same Grand Canyon, years ago. I never knowed it 'till right to-day. And if so be you intend to send Old Hank up thar to keep tabs on the doings of that ugly pair, Abajo and Warringford, thar couldn't be a better man to pick out than Chesty. You can depend on him every time."

Then followed another conference, of which the two boys, wrapped up in their own plans in another room, were of course entirely ignorant.

It was decided, however, that the two cowmen should wait until the boys were well on their way. Then, supplied with ample funds, they could ride to the nearest station, meet the first train bound north, and be at Flagstaff before night came around.

In this way the Colonel figured that he was safeguarding the interests of Bob and Frank. Already had he begun to regret allowing them to go, and if it had not been for the high regard he had for his word, once given, he might have backed down. However, perhaps the sending of Hank and his companion might answer the purpose, and prove a valuable move.

The night passed, and with early dawn there was a stir all about Circle Ranch.

Every cowboy on the place accompanied Frank and Bob several miles on their long journey, every fellow wishing he had been asked to join them for the adventure. And when Bart Hemingway gave the word to turn back, the entire group waved their hats, and cheered as long as the two lads remained within hearing.Contents

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CHAPTER VI

BUCKSKIN ON GUARD

"A good day's ride, all right, Bob!"

"You never said truer words, Frank. And now, with night setting in, how far do you think we've covered since the start this morning?"

The Kentucky boy sat in his saddle with a slight show of weariness, which was not to be wondered at, considering the steadiness with which they had kept on the move, hour after hour, heading in a general Westerly direction.

The satin skin of Domino was flecked with foam. Even the tough little Buckskin mount of Frank showed signs of weariness; though ready to keep on if his master gave the word.

"That would be hard to tell," replied the rancher's son; "but it must be all of sixty-five miles, I reckon."

"Then that beats my record some," declared the other.

"But it was a glorious gallop all the way through," asserted Frank.

"That's what; and more to follow to-morrow," his chum hastened to remark.

"But a different kind of travel, the chances are, Bob. To-day it happened that we were crossing the great mesa, and it was like a floor for being level. Over yonder, ahead, you can see the mountains we must cross. Then there are rivers to ford or swim. Yes, variety is the spice of life; and unless I miss my guess we're due for a big change to-morrow."

"Think we can make Flagstaff by to-morrow night?" asked the Kentucky lad, who, at a time like this, seemed to depend very much upon the superior knowledge of his chum, who had been brought up on the plains.

"We're going to make a try; that's as far as I've got," laughed Frank. "But what about camping here?"

"As good as anywhere," answered Bob. "Fact is, I'm admitting to being ready to drop down in any old place, so long as I can stretch my legs, and roll. No wonder a horse likes to turn over as soon as you take the saddle off. Shall we call it a go, Frank?"

The other jumped to the ground. Bob thought he heard him give a little grunt in doing so; but just then he was interested in repressing his own feelings.

However, when they had moved about somewhat, both boys confessed to feeling considerably better. As for the horses, there was no danger of their straying after that gallop of many hours in the hot sun. They took their roll, and then began hunting for stray tufts of grass among the buffalo berry bushes.

The sun had already set, and twilight told of the coming night. Around them lay the mesa, with the mountains cropping up like a crust along the edge. It was a familiar scene, to Frank in particular, and one of which he never tired.

"I noticed some jack rabbits as we came along," remarked Bob, "and as they always come out of their burrows about dusk to play, suppose I try and knock over a couple right now."

"Wouldn't object myself to a good dinner of rabbit, after that ride," Frank admitted, as he proceeded to get the little tent in position, a task that was only a pleasure to a boy fond of all outdoors.

So Bob immediately sauntered off toward the spot where he had noticed the long-eared animals, calculated to make a good meal for hungry campers.

"I heard gophers whistling," called out Frank, "and that means there's a village somewhere close by. Keep your eyes out for the rattlers; they are always found where prairie dogs live."

"I never forget that, Frank," came back from the disappearing hunter.

Frank went on with his preparations. A fire would be necessary, if they expected to cook fresh meat; and it is not always an easy thing to have such when out on the open plain or mesa. But Frank had already

sighted a supply of fuel sufficient for their needs and it was indeed next door to a miracle to find the dead branch of a pine tree here, far away from the mountains, where the nearest trees seemed to grow.

"I reckon it was just lifted up in some little tornado, and carried through the air, just to land where we needed it," he remarked, as he dragged the log closer to where he had quickly put up the tent; and then began chopping at it with his little camp hatchet.

As he worked there came a quick report from a point not far away.

"That means one jack," he remarked, raising his head to listen; but to his surprise no second shot followed.

"Well, if he hopes to get a pair, he'll have to hurry up his cakes," Frank went on; "because the night's settling down on us fast. But then one will give us a taste all around, and help out."

It was some little time before he heard Bob coming, and then the Kentuckian seemed to be walking rather unsteadily. Frank jumped to his feet, with the suspicion that possibly after all Bob had met with a misfortune. In the minute of time that he was waiting for his chum to appear, a number of things flashed through his head to give him uneasiness.

Had Bob been unlucky enough to run across one of those aggressive little prairie rattlesnakes after all? Could he have wounded himself in any way when he fired his repeating rifle? Neither of these might prove to be the case; and yet Bob was certainly staggering as he came along.

Now he could be seen by the light of the little fire. Frank stared, for his chum was certainly bending

over, as though bearing a load. He had heard no outcry that would signify the presence of others in the neighborhood. Ah! surely those were the long slender legs of an antelope which Bob gripped in front of him.

"Bully for you!" exclaimed Frank. "Where under the sun did you run across that fine game? Say, you sure take the cake, stepping out just to knock over a couple of long-ears; and then coming back ten minutes later with a fine antelope on your back. How did you do it, Bob?"

"I don't know," laughed the other. "Happened to start up against the wind, and was creeping up behind some buffalo berry bushes to see if there were any jack rabbits beyond, when this little fellow jumped to his feet. Why he didn't light out when we came along, I never could tell you."

"Oh! he just knew we wanted a good supper, I reckon," Frank remarked. "And now to get busy."

It did not take them long to cut some choice bits from the antelope, which they began to cook at the fire, thrusting the meat through with long splinters of wood, which in turn were held in a slanting position in the ground. When one part gave evidence of being browned the novel spit was turned until all sides had been equally served.

"Remember the way Old Hank showed us how to toll antelope for a shot, when you can't find cover to get near enough?" asked Frank, as they sat there, disposing of their supper, with the satisfaction hunger always brings in its train.

"You mean with the red handkerchief waved over the

top of a bush?" Bob went on. "Hank said there never was a more curious little beast than an antelope. If he didn't have a red rag a white one would do. Once he said he just lay down on his back and kicked his heels in the air. The game ran away, but came back; and each time just a little bit closer, till Hank could fire, and get his supper. I've done something the same for ducks, in a marsh back home, trying to draw their attention to the decoys I had out."

A small stream ran near by, at which the boys and horses had quenched their thirst. Sometimes its gentle murmur floated to their ears as they sat there, chatting, and wondering whether their mission to the Grand Canyon was destined to bear fruit or not.

"I can get the smell of some late wild roses," remarked Frank. "And it isn't often that you find such things up on one of these high mesas, or table lands. Do you know, I rather imagine this used to be a favorite stamping ground for buffalo in those good old days when herds of tens of thousands could be met with, rolling like the waves of a sea over the plains."

"What makes you think so?" asked Bob, always seeking information.

"The grass, for one thing," came the reply. "Then I noticed quite a few old sun-burned remnants of skulls as we came along. The bone hunter didn't gather his crop in this region, that means. Besides, didn't you see all those queer little indentations that looked as though they might have been pools away back years ago?"

"Sure, I did; and wondered whatever could have made them," Bob admitted.

"I may be wrong," Frank continued; "but somehow I've got an idea that those must be what they used to call buffalo wallows. Anyhow, that doesn't matter to us. We've made a good day of it; found a jim-dandy place for a camp; got some juicy fresh meat; and to-morrow we hope to land in Flagstaff."

"And what then?" queried Bob.

"We'll decide that while we ride along to-morrow," Frank answered. "Perhaps it may seem better that we leave our horses there, and take the train for the Grand Canyon; though I'm inclined to make another day of it, and follow the old wagon trail over the mesa, and through the pine forest past Red Butte, to Grand View."

"Listen to Buckskin snorting; what d'ye suppose ails him?" asked Bob, as his chum stopped speaking.

"I was just going to say that myself," remarked Frank, putting out his hand for his rifle; and at the same time scattering the brands of the dying fire so that darkness quickly fell upon the spot.

"Too late, I'm afraid," muttered Bob.

"Seems like it, because the horses are sure coming straight for us," said Frank; "but there are many people moving around in this section, and perhaps some tenderfeet from the East have lost themselves, and would be glad of a chance to sit by our blaze and taste antelope meat, fresh where it is grown. Step back, Bob, and let's wait to see what turns up!"Contents

CHAPTER VII

STANDING BY THE LAW

"What had we ought to do?" asked Bob.

"They must have seen our fire, and that's what made them head this way. So, all we can do is to wait, and see what they want," replied Frank.

"But there don't seem to be many in the party," his chum went on.

"I think not more than two, Bob."

"You can tell from the beat of their horses' hoofs—is that it?" inquired the boy who wanted to learn.

"Yes, it's easy enough, Bob."

By this time the sounds had grown quite loud, and both boys strained their eyes, trying to locate the approaching horsemen. In the old days on the plains every stranger was deemed an enemy until he had proven himself a friend. Nowadays it is hardly so positive as that; but nevertheless those who are wise take no chances.

"I see them!" Bob announced; but although the other saddle boy had not said so, he had picked up the advancing figures several seconds before.

"One thing sure," remarked Frank, as though relieved, "I reckon they can't be horse thieves or cattle rustlers."

"You mean they wouldn't be so bold about coming forward?" ventured Bob.

"That's about the size of it; but we'll soon know," Frank went on.

As the strangers drew rapidly nearer he began to make out their "style" for the night was not intensely dark. And somehow Frank's curiosity increased in bounds. He discovered no signs of the customary cowboy outfit about them. They wore garments that savored of civilization, and sat their horses with the air of men accustomed to much riding.

"Hold hard there, strangers; or you'll be riding us down!" Frank sang out, as the newcomers loomed up close at hand.

At that the others drew rein, and brought their horses to a halt. Bending low in the saddle they seemed to be peering at the dimly-seen figures of the two boys.

"Who is it—speak quick!" one of the strangers said; and Frank believed he heard a suspicious click accompanying the thrilling words.

"Two boys bound for Flagstaff and the Grand Canyon," he answered, not wishing to take any unnecessary chances.

"Where from, and what's your names?" continued the other, in his commanding voice, that somehow told Frank he must be one accustomed to demanding obedience.

The ranch boy no longer felt any uneasiness. He believed that these men were not to be feared.

"I am the son of Colonel Haywood, owner of the

Circle Ranch; and this is my chum, Bob Archer, a Kentucky boy," he said, boldly.

Then the other man, who as yet had not spoken, took occasion to remark:

""Taint them, after all, Stanwix! Perhaps we've been following the wrong trail."

The name gave Frank an idea. He had heard more or less about the doings of a sheriff in a neighboring county, called Yavapai, and his name was the same as that mentioned by the second dimly seen rider.

"Are you gentlemen from Prescott?" he asked.

"That's where I hold out when I'm home," replied the one who had asked about their identity.

"Are you Sheriff Stanwix?" pursued the boy, while his companion almost held his breath in suspense.

"I am; and this is Hand, who holds the same office in this county of Coconino," replied the other, as he threw a leg over his saddle as though about to dismount.

Both of them joined the boys, leaving their horses to stand with the bridles thrown over their heads, cowboy fashion.

Frank meanwhile had picked up some small fuel, and thrown it on the still smouldering fire. It immediately started up into a blaze that continued to increase.

They could now see that their visitors were two keen-eyed men. The evidence of their calling lay in the stars that decorated their left breasts. Both looked as though they could hold their own against

odds. And of course they were armed as became their dangerous profession.

Bob was especially interested. He had never really had anything to do with an officer of the law; and surveyed the pair with all the ardor of boyish curiosity.

To see one sheriff was a treat; but to have two drop down upon them after this fashion must be an event worth remembering.

"We had the good luck to knock over a young antelope just before dark," Frank remarked, after each of the men had insisted in gravely shaking hands with both himself and Bob. "Perhaps you haven't had any supper, and wouldn't mind taking pot luck with us?"

"How about that, Hand?" questioned the taller man, turning with a laugh to the second sheriff.

"Just suits me," came the reply, as the speaker threw himself down on the hard ground. "Half an hour's rest will do the hosses some good, too."

"Thank you, boys, we accept, and with pleasure," Mr. Stanwix went on, turning again toward Frank.

Bob immediately got busy, and started to cut further bits from the carcase of his small antelope. There would be plenty for even the healthy appetites of the two officers, and then leave enough for the boys' breakfast.

"We're in something of a hurry to get on to Flagstaff ourselves, boys," the Yavapai sheriff remarked, as he sniffed the cooking venison with relish; "but the temptation to hold over a bit is too strong. You see,

Hand and myself have just made up our minds to bag our birds this trip, no matter where it takes us, or how long we're on the job."

"Then you're after some cattle rustlers or bad men, I reckon," Frank remarked.

"A couple of the worst scoundrels ever known around these diggings," replied the officer. "They've been jumping from one county into another, when pushed; and in the end Hand, here, and myself concluded we'd just join our forces. We've got a posse to the south, and another working to the north; but we happened to strike the trail of our birds just before dusk, and we've been following it in hopes of reaching Flagstaff before they can get down into the gash, and hide."

"A trail, you say?" Frank observed. "Could it have been the one I've been following just out of curiosity, and because it seemed to run in the very direction my chum and myself were bound?"

"That's just what it was, Frank," the sheriff answered, as he accepted the hot piece of browned venison, stick and all, which Bob was holding out. "We saw that there had come into the trail the marks of two new hosses; and naturally enough we got the idea that it might mean our men were being followed by a couple of their own kind."

"Then when you saw our little fire, you thought we were the kind of steers you wanted to round up?" the boy asked.

"Oh! well," Mr. Stanwix replied with a little chuckle; "we kept a touch on our irons when I was asking you who you were; and if the reply hadn't been all that it

was, I reckon we'd have politely asked you to throw up your hands, boys. But say, this meat is prime, and seems to go to the spot."

"I don't know which spot you mean, Stanwix," remarked the other officer, who was also munching away like a half-starved man; "but mine suits me all right. I'm right glad we stopped. The rest will tone the nags up for a long pull; and as for me, I'll be in great shape after this feed."

Bob was kept busy cooking more and more, for the two men seemed to realize, after once getting a taste, that they were desperately hungry. But he did it with pleasure. There was something genial about the manner of Mr. Stanwix that quite captured the heart of the Kentucky lad. He knew the tall man could be as gentle as a woman, if the occasion ever arose when he had a wounded comrade to nurse; and if his reputation did not speak wrongly his courage was decidedly great.

While they sat there the two men talked of various subjects. Frank was curious to know something about those whom they were now banded together in a determined effort to capture, and so Mr. Stanwix told a few outlines of the case.

The men were known as the Arizona Kid and Big Bill Guffey. They had been cattlemen, miners, and about every other thing known to the Southwest. By degrees they had acquired the reputation of being bad men; and all sorts of lawless doings were laid at their door. And finally it came to defying the sheriff, evading capture by flitting to another county, and playing a game of hide-and-seek, until their bold methods were the talk of the whole country.

Then it was the Coconino sheriff had conceived the idea of an alliance with his brother officer in the adjoining county, of which the thriving city of Prescott was the seat of government.

Frank even had Mr. Stanwix describe the two men whom the officers were pursuing.

"We expect to be around the Grand Canyon for some weeks," the lad remarked; "and it might be we'd run across these chaps. To know who they were, would be putting us on our guard, and besides, perhaps we might be able to get notice to you, sir."

"That sounds all right, Frank," the other had hastened to reply; "and believe me, I appreciate your friendly feelings. It's the duty of all good citizens to back up the man they've put in office, when he's trying to free the community of a bad crowd."

Then he explained just how they might get word to him in case they had anything of importance to communicate. Although the Tarapai sheriff knew nothing about wireless telegraphy, he did understand some of the methods which savage tribes in many countries use in order to send news hundreds of miles; sometimes by a chain of drums stationed on the hill tops miles apart; or it may be by the waving of a red flag.

"And I want to tell you, Frank," Mr. Stanwix concluded, "if so be you ever do have occasion to send me that message, just make up your minds that I'll come to you on the jump, with Hand at my heels. But for your own sakes I hope you won't run across these two hard cases. We've got an idea that they mean to do some hold-up game in the Grand Canyon,

where hundreds of rich travelers gather. And if luck favors us we expect to put a spoke in their wheel before they run far!"Contents

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CHAPTER VIII

THE MOQUI WHO WAS CAUGHT NAPPING

Sheriff Stanwix arose with a sigh.

"Reckon we'd better be moving on, Hand," he said, evidently with reluctance; for it was very pleasant sitting there, taking his ease beside the camp fire of the two boys; but when duty called this man never let anything stand in the way.

Their horses had not strayed far away. Like most animals they had sought the company of their kind, as various sounds indicated, Buckskin doubtless showing his prairie strain by sundry nips with his teeth at the strangers.

Another shake of hands all around; then the sheriffs threw themselves into their saddles, and were off. The last the two lads saw of them was when their figures were swallowed up in the night-mists; and then it was a friendly wave of the arm that told how much they had appreciated the hospitality of the

saddle boys.

"Well, anyhow, it doesn't seem quite so lonely out here, after all," said Frank, laughing, as he and his chum settled down again.

"Why, no," added Bob, "I thought we owned the whole coop; but I take it back. There are others abroad, it seems."

"I only hope those two fly-by-night birds don't take a notion to double on their trail, and come back to pay us a visit," Frank remarked; and of course Bob understood that he meant the bad men who were being rounded up by Sheriff Stanwix, aided by the official of Coconino County.

"Perhaps we'd better douse the glim, then?" Bob suggested.

"Let it burn out," Frank remarked; "I don't believe there's much chance of anybody else seeing it now; because it's pretty low. Our tent shows up about as plain, come to think of it; but I don't mean to do without shelter."

They sat there, chatting on various subjects, for some time. Of course their mission to the region of the greatest natural wonder in the world took a leading part in this conversation. But then they also spoke of their recent visitors; and as Bob showed signs of considerable interest, Frank told all he had ever heard about the valor of the Prescott sheriff.

"I don't know how you feel about it, Bob," he said, at length, with a yawn, "but I'm getting mighty sleepy."

"Same here; and I move we turn in," Bob immediately replied.

Accordingly, as the idea had received unanimous approval, they took a look at the horses, now staked out with the ropes, and, finding them comfortable, both boys crawled under the canvas.

Some hours later they were aroused suddenly by a shrill yell. As they sat up, and groped for their rifles, not realizing what manner of peril could be hanging over them, the loud snorting of the horses came to their ears.

"Come on!" exclaimed Frank, in considerable excitement. "Sounds like somebody might be bothering our mounts!"

Bob had not been so very long in the Western country; but he knew what that meant all right. Horses were supposed to be the most valuable possessions among men who spent their lives on the great plains and deserts of this region. In the old days it was deemed a capital crime to steal horses.

So Bob, shivering with excitement, but not fear, hastened to follow at the heels of his chum, as Frank hastily crawled out of the tent.

A rather battered looking moon was part way up in the Eastern heavens. Though the light she gave was none of the best, still, to the boys, coming from the interior of the tent, it seemed quite enough to enable them to see their way about, and even distinguish objects at a little distance.

Frank lost no time heading in the direction where he knew the horses had been staked out.

"Anyhow, they don't seem to have got them yet," remarked Bob, gleefully, as the sound of prancing

and snorting came to their ears louder than ever.

Frank stopped for a couple of seconds to listen.

"Buckskin is carrying on something fierce," he muttered. "He seems to be furiously mad, too. Perhaps, after all, it may be a bear sniffing around; though I'd never expect to find such a thing out here, so far away from the mountains."

He again started on, with Bob close at his elbow. The words of his chum had given the Kentucky lad new cause for other thrills. What if it should prove to be a grizzly bear? He had had one experience with such a monster, and was not particularly anxious for another, not being in the big game class.

Now they were approaching the spot where the two roped horses were jumping restlessly about, making queer sounds that could only indicate alarm.

Frank spoke to his animal immediately, thinking to reassure him.

"Easy now, Buckskin; what's making you act this way? I don't see any enemy. If you've given a false alarm, it'll sure be for the first time!"

"Frank!" ventured the other lad, just then.

"What is it, Bob?"

"I thought I heard a low groan!" continued the Kentucky boy, in awed tones.

"You did?" ejaculated Frank, quickly. "Have you any idea where it came from?"

As if to make it quite unnecessary for Bob to reply, there came just then a low but distinct grunt or

groan. Frank could not tell which.

"Over this way, Frank; he's in this direction!" exclaimed the impulsive Bob, as he started to move off.

"Wait a minute," said the practical and cautious Frank. "You never know what sort of game you're up against, around here. Some of these horse thieves can toll a fellow away from his camp to beat the band, while a mate gets off with the saddle band. I've been warned against that very sort of play. Go slow, Bob, and keep a finger on your trigger, I tell you."

They advanced slowly, looking all around in the dim moonlight. Twice more the strange sounds arose. Frank jumped to the conclusion that it was, after all, no attempt to draw them farther and farther away from the tent; because the groans seemed to come from the one spot, instead of gradually moving off in a tempting manner.

"Here he is, Bob!" he said, presently; and the other, looking, saw a huddled-up figure lying upon the ground in the midst of the low buffalo berry bushes.

Immediately they were bending over the form, which had moved at their approach.

"Why, it's an Indian, Frank!" cried Bob, in surprise.

"Yes, and unless I miss my guess, a Moqui Indian at that," Frank replied. "Three of them wandered down our way once, and gave us some interesting exhibitions of their customs. You know their home is up to the north. They are said to be the descendants of the old cliff dwellers who made all those holes high up in the rocks, to keep out of the reach of enemies."

He was bending down over the other even while saying this; and feeling to see if the Indian could have been wounded in any way.

"What seems to be the matter with him, Frank?" asked Bob, when this thing had been going on for a full minute, the stricken man grunting, and Frank appearing to continue his investigations.

"I tell you what," Frank remarked, presently; "I honestly believe he's been kicked by the heels of my sassy little Buckskin; perhaps he's badly hurt; and then again, he may only have had the wind knocked out of him. That horse is as bad as any mule you ever saw, when it comes to planting his heels."

"But what was he prowling around the camp for?" asked Bob, who had a hazy idea concerning the red men of the West, gained perhaps from early reading of the attacks on the wagon trains of the pioneers of the prairie.

"Oh! these Moqui Indians wouldn't do a white man any harm, unless they happened to take too much juice of the agave plant, in the shape of mescal," Frank hastened to say; "and I don't seem to get the smell of that stuff. So the chances are that he had something of an eye to our horses."

"And as he didn't know about Buckskin's ways he gave the little pony a chance to get in some dents. But he may be badly hurt, Frank," Bob went on, his natural kindness of heart cropping up above any feeling of animosity he might have experienced.

"I suppose, then, we'll just have to tote the beggar to the tent, and start up that fire again, while we look him over. If those hind feet came slap against his

ribs, the chances are we'll find a few of them broken."

Swinging their rifles into one hand they managed to take hold of the grunting Moqui, and in this primitive fashion began hauling him along. Buckskin continued to prance and snort as though demanding whether he had not amply fulfilled his duty as guardian to the camp; but no one paid the least attention to him just then. Arriving at the tent the boys proceeded to rekindle the fire.

"Why, he's coming to, Frank!" exclaimed Bob, as, having finished his task, he turned to see his chum bending over the victim of Buckskin's hoofs, and noted that the would-be horse thief was struggling to sit up.

"I don't believe he's hurt very bad," Frank declared. "I've felt all over his body, and don't seem to find any signs of broken bones."

"Listen to him gasp right now, as if the breath had been knocked out of him," remarked Bob. "He's going to speak, Frank, sure he is. I wonder can we understand what he says. Moqui wasn't included in my education at the Military Institution at Frankfort."

The Indian was indeed trying to get enough air in his lungs to enable him to say something.Contents

CHAPTER IX

"TALK ABOUT LUCK!"

"No hurt Havasupai!" was what he managed to say, hoarsely.

"We're not going to hurt you, old man," remarked Frank; for he had seen that the Indian was no stripling. "What we want to know is, how you came to get so close to the heels of my horse as to be kicked? Tell us that, Havasupai, if you please."

There was no answer, although twice the exhausted red man opened his lips as if to speak.

"That knocks the props out from under him, Frank," remarked Bob; "because he was bent on getting away with one or both mounts."

"How about that, Havasupai; weren't you thinking of stealing a horse, when that animal just keeled you over so neatly?" Frank demanded.

The Indian was sitting up now. His head was hanging low on his chest. Perhaps it was shame that caused this: or it might have been a desire to keep his face hidden from the searching eyes of the white boys.

Then, as though realizing the utter folly of denying what must appear so evident, he nodded his head slowly.

"It is true, white boy," he muttered, in fair English. "Havasupai meant to take a horse. He had looked

upon the man who beckons, and he was afraid, because he had trouble at his village. He believed every man's hand was against him. And so he would flee to the desert where the white man's big medicine would not find him. There he might die with the poison snakes and the whooping birds."

Bob was of course puzzled by some of the things the Indian said.

"What does he mean, Frank?" he asked.

"I take it the warrior has been in some sort of fuss at his village," the other replied. "Perhaps he even struck his chief in anger, and that made an offense punishable with death. These Moqui Indians are a queer lot, anyhow, I've heard. Then he must have skipped out, and by accident seeing our friend, Sheriff Stanwix, known to him as the 'man who beckons,' he just imagined they were looking for him."

"And that locoed him so much that he just couldn't stand it any longer," Bob said. "Discovering our camp he got the notion in his head that a horse might take him out of the danger zone. So he was in the act of jumping on one of our mounts when your clever little beast took a hand, or rather a hoof, in the matter. But do you know what he means by whooping birds?"

"Well, I can give a guess," replied Frank. "That must mean the little owl that lives with the prairie dogs in their holes, along with the poison snake, otherwise the rattler."

"Looks like we've just got our hands full to-night, Frank!"

"You're right, Bob. First we feed two hungry sheriffs, and pick up quite a little news about the bad men they're looking for. Next, along comes this Moqui, Havasupai he says his name is, and he gets in a bad fix by trying to run off our horses; and feeling sorry for the old chap we lug him to our tent, and look him over, ready to even bind up his wounds, if he has any."

"Getting to be a habit, isn't it, Frank?"

"Seems like it," returned the taller boy, as he once more turned toward the seated Indian. "Here, can you tell us where my horse kicked you?"

"It matters not much. Havasupai get what he needs because he try to steal horse from good white boys," came the humble reply.

"One thing sure," remarked Frank aside to his chum, "he's been in touch with the whites a heap, or he wouldn't know how to talk as he does. But then, that isn't so queer. You know that these Moquis pick up a lot of good coin from the travelers who come and go at the Grand Canyon."

"Why, yes," Bob went on to say, "I've always heard that one of the sights of this wonderland was the snake dance of the Moquis. I read an account of it in a magazine once. It said that hundreds of people gathered from many quarters to be on hand and see it, because it occurs only once a year. Some of them were big guns in science, too."

"They're getting more and more interested in these Indians of the Southwest," Frank continued; "and trying all the time to find out just where they fit in the long-ago past. That's what made old Uncle Felix,

who had already made a name for himself, give up his happy home, and hide all these months down here. He wants to learn the long-buried secrets of the past history of the Zunis, the Moquis, and other tribes that might have sprung from the old cliff builders."

"But what can we do with this fellow, Frank?"

"Oh! well, nothing much, I reckon," the other answered, carelessly. "He must have been plum locoed at seeing the sheriff, and hardly knew what he was doing when he set out to grab Buckskin. We'll just have to let him sleep here till morning, and then give him a bite of breakfast."

"Just as you say, Frank; you ought to know what's best," Bob hastened to declare. "Now I wonder what'll be the next thing on the programme? I hope we don't have the two men the sheriff is hunting, drop in to make us a call."

"Little danger of that now," Frank remarked reassuringly. "By this time they're well on their way to Flagstaff. Here, Havasupai, as you call yourself; we don't mean to do you any harm, even if you did play us a mean trick when you tried to steal a mount. Understand?"

The old Indian looked up at Frank through his masses of coarse black hair, just beginning to be streaked with gray.

"Not do any harm," he repeated, as though hardly able to grasp the meaning of the words Frank spoke; then his brown face lighted up with a grim smile. "White boys good; Havasupai glad him not take horse. Bad Indian! But not always that way; him

carry speaking paper tell how make good," and he thumped his breast as he said this.

Again did Bob's eyes seek the face of his chum in a questioning manner. Frank, having been raised amid such scenes, could more readily understand what the Moqui meant when he referred to certain things which Bob had never heard mentioned before.

"He means that he's got a letter of recommendation along with him, written by some tourist, I reckon. Perhaps this old fellow may have found a chance to do some one a good turn. He may have run across a greenhorn wandering on the desert; saved a fellow who had been stabbed by the fangs of a viper from the Gila; or helped him to camp when he broke a leg in climbing around the Grand Canyon."

"Oh! I see what you mean, Frank; that this party wrote out a recommendation to all concerned, stating that in his opinion Havasupai was a fine fellow, and worth trusting. But then that was before he got into this trouble at this village. If he's a fugitive from justice at the hands of his own tribe, such a paper isn't worth much, I guess."

"No more it isn't," agreed Frank.

"But all the same he means to stick us with it," chuckled Bob; "for you can see he's got his hand in his shirt right now, as if searching for something so valuable that he won't even carry it in his ditty bag."

"That's right, Bob."

"And now he's got in touch with that old letter," grunted Bob. "I suppose we'll just have to read it to please him."

"You can if you care to," remarked Frank. "As for me, I'm that sleepy I only want a chance to crawl back into the tent, and take up my interrupted nap where it broke off."

"But good gracious! do you really mean it?" exclaimed the puzzled Bob.

"Why not?" demanded his chum.

"And leave him loose here, with the horses close by?" Bob went on, aghast.

At that Frank laughed a little.

"Well," he said, drily; "so far as the horses are concerned, I reckon our old friend Havasupai will go a long way on foot before he ever tries to steal a promising looking pony again. As long as he lives he'll remember how it feels to get a pair of hoofs fairly planted against his back. So long, Bob. Tell the old fraud he can lie down anywhere he pleases, and share our breakfast in the morning."

"That's the way you rub it in, Frank; returning evil with good," the Kentucky boy remarked. "But since you want me to take him in hand, I'll be the victim, and read his letter of recommendation, though I can already guess what it will say."

The old Moqui had meanwhile succeeded in getting out the paper which he seemed to set so much store by. Looking up, and seeing that Frank had turned away, he offered it to Bob, who took it gravely, and proceeded to hold it so that the light of the little fire would fall upon the writing.

Frank was half way in the tent when he heard his chum give utterance to a shout. He backed out again,

and turning, looked hastily, half expecting to see Bob engaged in a tussle with the old Indian.

Nothing of the sort met his gaze. The Moqui was sitting there, staring at Bob, who had straightened up, and was starting to dance around, holding the paper in his extended hand.

"What ails you, Bob?" demanded the other. "Haven't been taken with a sudden pain, after all that venison you stowed away, I hope."

"Come out here, Frank!" called the lad by the fire. "Of all the luck! to think we'd strike such a piece as this! It's rich! It's the finest ever! We go to hunt for clues, and here they come straight to us. Talk to me about the favors of fortune, why, we're in it up to the neck!"

"You seem to be tickled about something, Bob; has that paper any connection with it?" demanded Frank.

"Well I should say, yes, by a big jugfull," replied the Kentucky boy. "And you'll agree with me when I tell you it's signed by Professor Felix Oswald, the very man we're going to search the Grand Canyon up and down to find!"Contents

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CHAPTER X

THE COPPER COLORED MESSENGER

"Do you really mean it, Bob?" asked Frank, with the bewildered air of one who suspects a joke.

"Take it yourself, and see," replied the other, holding out the discolored and wrinkled sheet on which the writing was still plainly to be read.

Frank bent over, the better to allow the firelight to fall upon the queer document. This was what he read in a rather crabbed hand, though the writing could be read fairly well:

"To Whom it May Concern; Greeting!

"This is to certify to the good character of the bearer, a Moqui Indian by the name of Havasupai, who has rendered me a very great service, which proves him to be the friend of the white man, and a believer in the pursuit of science. I cheerfully recommend him to all who may be in need of a trustworthy and capable guide to the Grand Canyon.

"PROFESSOR OSWALD."

Frank looked up to see the grinning face of his chum thrust close to him.

"Think it's genuine, Frank?" demanded the other.

"I can see no reason why it shouldn't be," answered the other, glancing down again at the crumpled paper he held, and which the old Moqui was regarding with the greatest of pride on his brown face.

"Looks like that paper Mr. Hinchman brought to my dad; yes, I'd stake my word on it, Bob, that the same

hand wrote both."

"But how d'ye suppose this greasy old Indian ever got the document?" asked the young Kentuckian.

"We'll have to put it up to him, and find out," came the reply. "He can speak United States all right; we've found that out already; and so you see, there's no reason under the sun why he shouldn't want to tell us."

He turned to the Moqui. It was not the same sleepy boy apparently who, but a minute before, had started to creep into the comfortable tent, where the blankets lay; but a wide-awake fellow, eager to ascertain under what conditions this fugitive brave could have secured such a letter of recommendation from the man of science, who was supposed to have utterly vanished from the haunts of men without leaving a single trace behind, up to the hour that message came to Colonel Haywood.

Holding the paper up, and shaking it slightly, Frank started to put the Moqui warrior on the rack.

"This belong to you, Havasupai?" he demanded, trying to assume a stern manner, such as he believed would affect the other more or less, and be apt to bring out straight answers to his leading questions.

"The white boy has said," answered the other, for an Indian seldom answers in a direct way.

"Where did you get it?" Frank continued, slowly, as if feeling his way; for he did not wish to alarm the Indian, knowing how obstinate a Moqui may prove if he once suspects that he is being coaxed into betraying some secret or a friend.

The black, bead-like eyes were on the face of Frank as he put these questions. Doubtless the old Moqui balanced every one well before venturing a reply.

"He gave it," nodding in the direction of the paper Frank held.

"Do you mean the man who signed his name here, Professor Oswald?"

A nod of the head in the affirmative settled that question.

"Was he a small man with a bald head, no hair on top, and wearing glasses over his eyes, big, staring glasses?"

Frank aided comprehension by touching the top of his own head when speaking about the loss of hair on the part of the noted scientist; and then made rings with his fingers and thumbs which he clapped to his eyes as though looking through a pair of spectacles.

Evidently the Moqui understood. Reading signs was a part of his early education. In fact it comprised nearly four-fifths of all the Indian knew.

"White boy heap wise; he know that the man give Havasupai talking paper. Much great man; know all. Tell Havasupai about cliff men. Find much good cook pot, heap more stuff in cave. Find out how cave men live. Write all down in book. Send Havasupai one, promise. It is well!"

"But where did you meet him?" asked Frank; and he saw at once that this was getting very near the danger line, judging from the manner in which the Moqui acted; for he seemed to draw back, just as the

alarmed tortoise will hide its head in its shell at the first sign of peril.

"In canyon where picture rocks laugh at sun," the Indian slowly said.

"That ought to stand for the Grand Canyon," remarked the boy.

The keen ears of the Moqui caught the words, although they were almost spoken in whispers, and only intended for Bob.

He nodded violently, and Frank somehow found himself wondering whether, after all, the shrewd Indian might not be wanting to deceive him. He may have conceived the idea that these two white boys were the enemies of the queer old professor; and for that reason would be careful how he betrayed the man who trusted him.

"Listen, Moqui," said Frank, putting on a serious manner, so as to impress the other; "we are the friends of the little-old-man who has no hair on top of his head. We want to see him, talk with him! It means much good to him. He will be glad if you help us find him. Do you understand that?"

The Indian's black eyes roved from one to the other of those bright young faces. Apparently he would be foolish to suspect even for a minute that the two lads could have any evil design in their minds.

Still, the crafty look on his brown face grew more intense.

"He has some good reason for refusing to accommodate us, I'm afraid," Bob said just then, as if he too had read the signs of that set countenance.

"Why don't you answer me, Moqui?" Frank insisted, bent on knowing the worst. "We are on the way now to find the man who gave you this letter that talks. We have some good news for him. And you can help us if you will only tell in what part of the Grand Canyon Echo Cave lies."

The Indian seemed to ponder. Evidently his mind worked slowly, when it tried to grapple with secrets. But one thing he knew, and this must be some solemn promise he had made the man of science, never under any conditions to betray his hiding-place to a living soul.

"No can say; in canyon where picture rocks lie; that all," he finally declared, and Frank knew Indians well enough to feel sure that no torture could be painful enough to induce Havasupai to betray one he believed his friend, and whose magic talking paper he carried inside his shirt, to prove his good character.

"That settles it, Bob, I'm afraid," he remarked to his chum, who had been listening eagerly to all that was being said. "You might try all sorts of terrible things and he wouldn't whisper a word, even if he believed all we told him."

"That's tough," observed Bob; "but anyhow, we've got something out of it all, because we know now that the silly old professor must be hiding in one of those cliff caves, trying to read up the whole life history of the queer people who dug their homes out of the solid rock, tier after tier, away up the face of the cliffs."

"True for you, Bob, and I'm glad to see how you take it. I had hoped the Moqui might make our job easier, as he could do, all right, if only he wanted to tell us a few things. But we're no worse off than we were before, in all things, and some better in a few."

"I wish I could talk Moqui," declared Bob; "and perhaps then I'd be able to make the old fellow understand. Perhaps, Frank, if you gave him a little

note to Uncle Felix, he might promise to take it to him later on!"

"Hello! that's a good idea, I declare," exclaimed Frank; "and I'll just do that same while I think of it."

He immediately drew out a pad of paper, and a fountain pen which he often carried for business purposes, since there were times when he had to sign documents as a witness for his father.

The old Moqui watched him closely. Evidently the spider-like handwriting was a deep mystery to him, and he must always feel a certain amount of respect for any white person who could communicate with another by means of the "talking paper."

"There," said Frank, presently, "that ought to do the business, I reckon."

"What did you say?" asked his comrade, who was busy at the fire just then, drawing some of the partly-burned wood aside, so that their supply might hold out in the morning.

"Oh!" Frank went on, "I told him dad had his note, sent in that bottle. Then I mentioned the important fact that the mine paper he carried had increased in value thousands of dollars. And I wound up by telling him how much we wanted to see and talk with him. I signed my name, and yours, to the note."

"And now to see whether the Moqui will promise to carry it to your great-uncle."

Frank held the note up.

"You will not tell us where we can find the little man without any hair on his head, Havasupai," he said.

"But surely you will not say no when I ask you to carry this talking paper to him. It will please him very much. He will shake your hand, and many times thank you. How?"

The cautious old Moqui seemed to be weighing chances in his suspicious mind.

"Three to one he thinks we mean to spy on him, and find it all out that way," was Bob's quick opinion.

"Just what was in my mind; I could read it in his sly old face. But all the same he's going to consent, Bob."

The Kentucky boy wondered how Frank could tell this. He was even more surprised when the Indian stretched out a hand for the note, as he said solemnly:

"Havasupai will carry the talking paper to the man who has no hair on his head. But no eye must see him do it. The white boys must say to Havasupai that they will not try to follow him."

Frank looked at his chum, and nodded.

"We'll just have to do it, I guess, to satisfy the suspicious old fraud, Bob," he remarked; and then raising his hand, while his chum did likewise Frank went on, addressing the Moqui, who watched every action with glittering black eyes: "We promise not to follow, Havasupai, and will hope that this talking paper may cause the man-who-hides to send you for us to take us to him. You understand all that I am saying, don't you?"

The Moqui said something in his native language, which of course neither of them comprehended. But at the same time he reached out his hand and

deliberately took the note intended for Uncle Felix.

"Hurrah! he's going to act as our messenger!" exclaimed Bob, filled with anticipations of success. "Say, that was a pretty smart dodge on our part, after all. But it makes me hold my breath every time I think of our good luck in running across this chap the way we did. And Buckskin deserves all the credit. He did it with his wonderful little tap."

"All right," said Frank; "me for the land of sleep now! Havasupai, you can lie down where you will. In the morning we promise you a share of our meat. How?"

"It is well, white boy," replied the old Moqui, as he dropped in a heap, and evidently meant to sleep just as he was without any further preparations.

Bob also crawled into the tent, although he had some misgivings, and wondered whether his chum were really doing a wise thing to trust one who had just confessed to a desire to raid their horses.

But as Bob, too, was tired and sleepy, he soon forgot all his suspicions in slumber. When he awoke he could see the daylight peeping under the canvas. Without disturbing his companion, Bob immediately started to crawl out. He had suddenly remembered the old Moqui; and it seemed as though his fears must have returned two-fold, and nothing would do but that he must hasten to make sure all was well.

Frank was just opening his eyes a little while later when he saw Bob's head thrust in at the opening of the tent.

"Better get up, Frank," the other said. "I've started the fire, and after we've had breakfast we'll be on our way. It was just as you said, though; he had the good

sense to keep clear of the heels of the horses."

"Who are you talking about, the Moqui?" asked Frank, sitting up suddenly, as he caught a peculiar strain in the other's voice.

"Yes, our friend, Havasupai; who vamoosed in the night!" laughed Bob.Contents

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CHAPTER XI

AT THE GRAND CANYON

"Do you mean it?" asked Frank.

"Come out, and see for yourself," Bob returned. "I've looked all around, and not a sign of the old fellow can I find."

"And both horses are there?" Frank continued, making a break for the exit.

"As fine as you please. Our friend didn't want a second try from those clever heels of Buckskin. He gave them a wide berth when he cleared out, I warrant. Oh! you can look everywhere, and you won't see a whiff of Havasupai. He's skipped by the light of the moon, all right."

Bob backed off, as his chum walked this way and that. He grinned as though he really enjoyed the whole thing. In his mind he had figured that it would turn out something this way, so he was not very much surprised.

"What d'ye think, Frank," he exclaimed, presently; "don't you remember promising to share our venison at breakfast with the Moqui?"

"Why yes, to be sure I do; but what of that, Bob?"

"Only that he didn't forget," laughed the other.

Frank immediately glanced toward the carcase of the little antelope.

"Ginger! he did go and cut himself a piece from it, sure enough," he admitted.

"While he thought our company not as nice as our room, still, he didn't object to sharing our meat. And, Frank, he wasn't at all stingy about the amount he took, either," Bob complained.

"Oh! well, I reckon there's still enough for us, and to spare. Besides, we've got heaps of other things along in our packs, for an emergency, you know. Suppose we make a pot of coffee, and start things."

"That's all right, Frank; I'll attend to it," declared Bob; "but why under the sun do you suppose now, that sly old Moqui dodged out like that?"

"Well, for one thing, he may have suspected us," replied Frank.

"What! after all we did for him, took him in, and forgave his sins, even to offering to mend any broken

ribs, if he'd had any, through that horse kick? I can't just understand that," Bob ventured, while he measured out enough ground coffee to make a pot of the tempting hot beverage.

"He took the alarm, it seems," Frank went on, indifferently. "Knew we wanted to find the man who had given him the talking paper; and was afraid we might try to make him tell; or, that failing, stalk him when he went to deliver my note. And on the whole I can't much blame the old Indian. Suspicion is a part of their nature. He believed he was on the safe side in slipping away as he did. Forget it, Bob. We've learned a heap by his just dropping in on us, I think."

"Sure we have," replied the other, being busily employed over the fire just then. "And I was thinking what he could have meant when he pointed off in the direction I calculate the Grand Canyon lies, and said in answer to one of your questions: 'Seek there! When the sun is red it shines in Echo Cave!'"

"I've guessed that riddle, and it was easy," Frank remarked.

"Then let me hear about it, because I'm pretty dull when it comes to understanding all this lovely sign language of the Indians," Bob remarked.

"Listen, then. The sun is said to be red when its setting; that's plain enough; isn't it, Bob?"

"All O.K. so far, Frank. I won't forget that in a hurry, either."

"Then, when he said it looked into the cave at sunset, it was another way of telling us the cave faced the west!" Frank continued.

"Well, what a silly chap I was not to guess that," chuckled the other.

"And from what I know about the bigness of that canyon, Bob, I think that this unknown Echo Cave must be pretty high up on the face of a big cliff to the east of the river."

"Why high up? I don't get on to any reason for your saying that?" inquired Bob.

"You'll see it just as soon as I mention why," remarked his companion. "When the sun is going down in the west, far beyond the horizon, don't you see that it can only shine along the very upper part of the cliffs? The lower part is already lost in the shadows that drop late in the afternoon in all canyons."

"Of course, and it's as plain to me now as the nose on my face," agreed Bob. "Queer, how easy we see these things after they've been explained."

It did not take long to prepare breakfast, and still less time to eat it once the coffee and venison were ready. Just as Frank had said, there was plenty of the meat for the meal.

"That was a mighty juicy little antelope, all right," remarked Bob, as he finished his last bite, and prepared to get up from the ground where he had been enjoying his ease during the meal.

"And for one I don't care how soon you repeat the dose," remarked Frank; "only it will be a long day before you get one of the timid little beasts as easy as that accommodating chap fell to your gun. Why, he was just a gift, that's all you could call it, Bob."

"That's what I've been thinking myself, though of course I don't know as much about them as you do, by a long shot," Bob admitted. "I suppose it's us to hit the saddle again now?"

"We're going to try and make Flagstaff by night," Frank announced, as he picked up his saddle and bridle, and walked toward the spot where Buckskin was staked out.

The horses had been able to drink all they wanted during the night, for the ropes by means of which they were tethered allowed of a range that took them to the little spring hole from which the water gushed, to run away, and, in the end, possibly unite with the wonderful Colorado.

In ten minutes more the boys were off at a round gallop. There was no intention of pushing their mounts so soon in the day. Like most persons who have spent much time on horseback both lads knew the poor policy of urging an animal to its best speed in the early part of a journey, especially one that is to be prolonged for ten or twelve hours.

At noon they were far enough advanced for Frank to declare he had no doubt about being able to make Flagstaff before sunset.

"When we get there, and spend a night at the hotel, we must remember and ask if our friend Mr. Stanwix and his partner arrived in good time, and went on," Bob suggested.

Just as Frank had expected, they made the town on the railroad before the sun had dropped out of sight; and the horses were in fair condition at that.

Flagstaff only boasts of a normal population of

between one and two thousand; but there are times, with the influx of tourists bound for the Grand Canyon, when it is a lively little place.

The two boys only desired shelter and rest for themselves and their horses during the night. It was their intention to push on early the following day, keeping along the old wagon trail that at one time was the sole means of reaching the then little known Wonderland along the deeply sunk Colorado.

After a fairly pleasant night, they had an early breakfast. The horses proved to be in fine fettle, and eager for the long gallop. So the two saddle boys once more started forth.

The day promised to be still warmer than the preceding one; and the first part of the journey presented some rather difficult problems. They managed to put the San Francisco Mountains behind them, however, and from that on the dash was for the most part over a fairly level plateau.

Now and then they were threading the trail through great pine forests, and again it was a mesa that opened up before them.

Bob was especially delighted.

"Think we'll make it, Frank?" he asked, about the middle of the afternoon, as they cantered along, side by side, the horses by this time having had pretty much all their "ginger" as Bob called it taken out of them, though still able to respond to a sudden emergency, had one arisen.

"I reckon so," replied the other. "According to my map we're within striking distance right now. Given two more hours, and we'll possibly sight the border

of the big hole. That was Red Horse Tank we just passed, you know," and he pointed out their position on the little chart to Bob.

It was half an hour to sundown when the well known Grand View Hotel stood out in plain sight before them; and before the shades of night commenced to fall, the tired boys had thrown themselves from their saddles, seen to the comfort of the faithful steeds, and mounted to the porch of the hotel for a flitting view of the amazing spectacle that spread itself before them, ere darkness hid its wonderful and majestic beauty.Contents

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CHAPTER XII

HOW THE LITTLE TRAP WORKED

"What do you think of it?" asked Frank, after they had stood there a short time, taking in the picture as seen in the late afternoon.

"It's hard to tell," Bob replied slowly. "It's so terribly big, that a fellow ought to take his time letting the thing soak in. That further wall looks as if you could throw a stone over to it; and yet they say it's more than a mile from here."

"Yes," Frank went on, "and all along in the Grand Canyon there are what seem to be little hills, every one of which is a mountain in itself. They only look small in comparison with the tremendous size of the biggest gap in the whole world."

"And how far does this thing run—is it fifty miles in length?" Bob asked.

"I understand that the river runs through this canyon over two hundred miles," the other replied. "And all the way there are scores, if not hundreds, of smaller canyons and 'washes,' reaching out like the fingers of a whopping big hand; or the feelers of a centipede."

"That's what I read about it away back; but I had forgotten," Bob remarked. "And they say that it would be a year's trip to try and follow the Grand Canyon all the way down from beginning to end, only on one side."

"I reckon it would, for you'd have to trace every one of these lateral gashes up to its source, so as to cross over. And that would mean thousands of miles to be covered."

"Gee!" exclaimed Bob, throwing up his hands as he spoke; "when you say that, it makes a fellow have some little idea of the size of this hole. And to think it's come just by the river eating away the soil!"

"They call that erosion," remarked Frank, who had of course posted himself on many of these facts, during his previous visit to the canyons of the Little Colorado. "It's been going on for untold thousands of years; and as the river with its tributaries has gradually eaten away the soil and rocks, it has left the grandest pictured and colored walls ever seen in

any part of this old earth."

"When that afternoon sun shines on the red rocks it makes them look almost like blood," declared Bob. "And already I'm glad we came. I think just now I could be happy spending months prowling around here, finding new pictures every day."

"Then you don't blame old Uncle Felix for staying, do you?" laughed Frank.

"Sure I don't," returned the other lad, with vehemence. "And besides, you must remember that he had another string to his bow."

"Meaning his craze to be the fortunate man of science to unravel the mystery that has always hung over the homes of those cliff dwellers?" Frank went on.

"I can understand how it must appeal to a man living as Professor Felix has all these years," mused Bob. "And think of those queer old fellows picking out this one place of all the wide country to build their homes."

"That was because there could be no place that offered them a tenth of the advantages this did," Frank remarked, pointing across the wide chasm to the towering heights that could be seen. "Think of hundreds of miles of such cliffs to choose from! And as the softer rock was washed out by the action of floods countless ages ago, leaving the harder in the shape of astonishing shelves and buttes, these people took a lesson from nature, and carved their roomy homes by following the pliable stone."

"Say," Bob exclaimed, "that makes me think of what I

read about the catacombs of Rome; how, for hundreds of miles, they run in every direction, following the course of veins of earth in the rock, that were selected by those who dug 'em."

"Of course," said Frank, "these people built their homes up in the cliffs in order to be safe. Nobody seems to know what they were afraid of, whether savage tribes, or great beasts that may have roamed this part of the country a thousand and more years ago."

"And that's the bait that has drawn the old scientist here, to study it all out, and write up the history of the people who looked on this very picture so many hundreds of years back. Why, Frank, some of the cliffs they say are about a mile high! That's hard to believe, for a fact."

"But it's been proved true," the other asserted. "The trouble is, that everything here is on such an awful big scale that a fellow fools himself. Actual measurement is the only way to prove things. The eye goes back on you. Why, I've looked out on a clear day in Colorado, and believed I could walk to a mountain in an hour. They told me it's base was fifty miles away; and there you are."

"Well, we'll have to put off looking till morning," said Bob, regretfully; "because the sun's dropped out of sight, and it's getting pretty thick down there in the hole. And to think that to-morrow we'll be pushing along through that place, with the walls shutting us in on both sides."

"Not only to-morrow, but for many days, perhaps," Frank added; for more than ever did he begin to

realize the enormous task that confronted them; it was almost like looking for a needle in a haystack; but if one possesses a powerful magnet, even then the bit of steel may be recovered in time.

Did they happen to know of any such magnet?

Almost unconsciously Frank's thoughts went out toward that old Moqui brave, Havasupai, who had fled from his village because of some act which he had committed; but who was now determined to return, and take his punishment with the stoicism Indians have always shown.

The Moqui might be the connecting link! He alone knew where the hermit had his lodging, possibly in one of those quaint series of cliff dwellers' homes, which for some reason he called Echo Cave.

"We must ask if our friend Sheriff Stanwix has been here," Bob suggested, as they went to their room to prepare for supper.

"Oh!" replied his chum, "I did that when I spoke with the clerk at the desk. You were looking after the ponies at the time, so as to make sure they'd be well taken care of for a week, or a month if necessary."

"And what did he tell you, Frank?"

"They got here, all right," came the reply. "If you'd looked sharp when you were out there in the hotel stables, you might have recognized both their mounts; for they left them here at noon to-day."

"Noon!" echoed Bob; "then they made mighty good work of it, to get ahead of us all that time. I reckon you're going to tell me they've gone down into the canyon, and put in several hours looking for their

birds, the two fellows who've given 'em the merry laugh more'n a few times."

"Guessed right the first shot," Frank went on, "but all that doesn't concern us one half as much as some other information I struck."

"And you've been keeping it back from me, while we stood there on the piazza, admiring the wonderful view," Bob remarked, with a touch of reproach in his voice.

"There were people passing us, all the time," his chum explained; "and besides, I wanted to keep it until we were alone, so we could talk it over."

"Is it about that scheming cousin of your father's—what did you say his name was—Eugene Warringford?"

"You got it straight enough," Frank admitted; "and what I learned, was about him. I saw his name on the register, and he's somewhere about the hotel right now. I had a suspicion that I saw some one trying to get near us while we stood there, drinking in that picture; and Bob, while I couldn't just hold up my hand and say for sure, I think it was that tricky Abajo."

"The half-breed cowboy who left Circle Ranch because he had some news for this Eugene that the fellow would be apt to consider mighty valuable, because it meant a stake of a million or two dollars; is that right, Frank?"

"The same Abajo," his chum continued; "which proves that those two are bound up in a plot to win this game. If Eugene can only find Uncle Felix he intends to get that paper in his possession, by fair

means or foul."

"Then it's up to us to put a stopper in his little bottle!" declared Bob.

"I'm wondering," Frank proceeded, "whether they've got any idea where to look for the man who has hidden himself away for three years. Perhaps they mean to keep tabs on us, and if we are lucky enough to discover Uncle Felix, they hope to jump in, and snatch away the prize before we can warn him."

"Say, this is getting to be a pretty mix-up all around," laughed the Kentucky lad. "Here we are, meaning to try and follow the old Moqui; or failing that, wait for him to fetch us a message from the hermit of Echo Cave. Then Eugene, and his shadow, Abajo, are hanging around with the idea of beating us at our game. Havasupai on his part will be heading for the cave that lies in an unknown part of the Grand Canyon, and all the while dodging about for fear that he is followed."

"Yes," added Frank, falling in with the idea; "and perhaps there are the Moquis from his village who may have had word somehow of his return, searching for Havasupai, and bent on bringing him to the bar of their tribal law. To finish the game, think of our friends, the two sheriffs, loose in the big gash, and hunting for the men who have snapped their fingers in their faces so often across the line!"

"Well, it sure looks like there might be some warm times coming," remarked Bob. "I suppose we take our guns along with us when we're going the rounds of the sights?"

"Wouldn't think of doing anything else," was Frank's

reply. "No telling when we might need 'em. Suppose, now, those two rascals the sheriffs are after should learn in some way about the value of the paper Uncle Felix has with him, wouldn't they just make it the game of their lives to try and capture him? And I reckon Eugene, too, will be so dead in earnest that he won't stop at little things, backed up by such a reckless character as the Mexican. Yes, the repeating rifles go along, Bob!"

"This water feels fine after that long, dusty and tiresome ride, eh?" remarked the young Kentuckian, as he splashed in the deep basin, and then proceeded to use the towel vigorously.

"It certainly does," Frank admitted, as he did likewise.

Shortly afterward the two boys went down to supper. The hotel had its usual number of guests, this being a favorite point for parties to start on the tour.

"Don't look just now," said Frank, as they sat at a table; "but Abajo has taken his seat right back of you. And it wasn't accident, either, that made him do it; I believe he has been set to watch us!"

From time to time, as they ate, Frank would report as to what the half-breed was doing; and while nothing occurred to actually prove the fact, still he saw no reason to change his mind.

"And I'm going to find out if he's keeping an eye on us, so as to report to his employer, Eugene Warringford," Frank announced, as they were drawing near the end of the meal.

"That sounds good to me," Bob remarked; "but how

will you do it?"

For answer Frank drew out a paper from an inner pocket.

"You see this document," he observed, with a solemn look. "Well, it's only what you might call a dummy, being just an invitation I received a little while back to invest in some worthless mines over in the Hualpai Mountains of Mohave County. I kept it, meaning to figure out how these sharpers work their game. Now, when I hand you this, look deeply interested, as though it might be connected with the finding of Uncle Felix."

"Oh! I see your move, and go you one better, Frank."

For some little time they seemed to be conversing intently. Frank would occasionally tap the document, which he had sealed up in its envelope, as though he laid great stress on it. Finally he placed it on the table alongside his plate, and kept on talking.

Shortly afterward the boys left the table in apparently such a hurry that they both forgot the envelope that lay there, half hidden by a napkin.

Passing out of the room, they dodged back, and peered around the corner of the doorway.

"There's the waiter at the table," said Bob. "Now he's found the fine tip you left there, and is putting it in his pocket, with a grin. If everybody treated him as well as that, he'd soon be owning one of these hotels himself, Frank."

"Watch!" remarked his chum, in a low whisper. "Now he's discovered the document lying there where I left it. He takes it up. Perhaps he sees another dollar

coming to him when he runs after us to return it."

"But there's somebody at his elbow," Bob went on to say; "and it's Abajo, as sure as you live. He's saying something, and I reckon telling the waiter that you asked him to get the packet. There, he slips some money in the fellow's hand; and the waiter lets him take the envelope. And we'd better slip behind this coat rack here, for Abajo will be heading this way in a hurry."

And hardly had they carried out that programme ere the half-breed glided past, one hand held in the pocket where he had thrust the "valuable" document!
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CHAPTER XIII

GOING DOWN THE CANYON TRAIL

"Was I right?" asked Frank, after the half-breed had disappeared.

"I should say yes," replied his chum, who had followed the vanishing figure of Abajo with staring eyes.

"He got the precious paper, all right, eh?" Frank went on, chuckling.

"He sure did, and bribed our friend the waiter to let him carry it off. Shows how you can trust anybody in the tourist country, where they are nearly all out for the money," Bob declared, indignation struggling hard with a sense of humor.

"But just stop and think how easy Abajo, sharp rascal that he is, rose to my little bait?" laughed Frank. "Just as I expected, he was watching us all the time we examined that wonderful paper, and of course he believed it to be something for which his employer would reward him heavily, if he could only lay hands on it."

Bob himself was laughing now, as the full sense of the ridiculous character of Frank's little joke broke upon him.

"Oh! my, think what will happen when Mr. Warringford tears open that envelope, and sees how his spy has been fooled!" he exclaimed.

"There's only one bad thing about it, Bob!"

"What is that?" inquired the other.

"Eugene is, I take it, a clever fellow," said Frank, seriously; "and he'll understand that this was done with a purpose. It will make him suspect that we're onto the game, and that we know he has the half-breed watching our every move."

"Well, what of that, Frank?"

"Nothing, only after this we may expect they'll change their tactics more or less, and play on another string of the fiddle," the other saddle boy replied.

"All right," Bob remarked. "Forewarned is forearmed,

they say; and if we know Eugene is laying low for us, we can be on our guard."

"Yes, that's all very good," Frank went on, shaking his head; "but once we get into the big canyon it may pay us to keep an eye out for overhanging rocks."

"Say, you don't mean to tell me you think Eugene would go that far?" demanded Bob, startled at the very idea of such a thing.

"I don't like to think he would; but you never can tell," Frank replied. "When a man like Eugene Warringford sells his soul, and with a chance of getting a big stake, he is generally ready to shut his eyes, and go the limit."

"But, Frank, that would be terrible! One of those rocks, coming down from the face of a high cliff, would seriously injure us!"

"Sure it would, and on that account we must keep on the watch all the time," Frank continued. "But I don't see Abajo anywhere about the piazza of the hotel; do you?"

"He's gone, and I reckon to carry that wonderful find of his to the man who employs him," Bob remarked. "Wouldn't I give a dollar to be hiding close by when he runs across Eugene, and they open the envelope you sealed! Wow! it will be a regular circus! Can't you imagine that yellow face of the half-breed turning more like saffron then ever when he learns that we played him for a softy?"

"Well, if you were near by, Bob, I wouldn't be surprised if you just had to stick your fingers in your ears," chuckled Frank.

"I reckon they will have a heap to say about it; and Abajo, after this, won't take us for easy marks, will he?" Bob remarked, in a satisfied tone.

A short time later they were in their room.

"You don't suppose now, Frank, that we'll be bothered to-night?" Bob observed, as he stood there by the window looking out toward the Grand Canyon.

At that the other laughed quite merrily.

"Don't give yourself any uneasiness about that, Bob," he remarked. "In the first place nobody would bother trying to get up here, even if they could, when so many better chances of reaching us will crop up after we start into the canyon to-morrow. Then again, we haven't anything to be stolen but our rifles, and what little cash we brought along for expenses."

"Oh! I suppose I am silly thinking about it," admitted Bob, "but some way that half-breed seems to be on my nerves. His face is so sly, and his black eyes just glitter as I've seen those of a snake do when he's going to strike. But, just as you say, it's foolish to borrow trouble, and I must get those notions out of my head."

"That's the talk, Bob," his chum declared, heartily. "Morning will find us in fine trim to make a start into this big ditch. And before another night you'll be so filled with wonder over what you see that these other things will take a back seat."

"But do you think we ever can find the hermit of Echo Cave?" asked Bob.

"I think we've got a pretty good chance, if we're left

alone," came the ready reply.

"Meaning if this Eugene Warringford keeps his hands off; and nothing else turns up to balk us?" Bob asked.

"Yes, all of that, and more," Frank admitted.

"But already I find myself wishing we had somebody along with us, like Old Hank Coombs for instance, Frank."

"Well, who knows what may happen?" said the other, a little mysteriously. "D'ye know, Bob, I saw my dad winking at Hank when he thought I wasn't looking; and on that account I've got half an idea he meant to send the old man, perhaps with a second cowboy, along on our trail. We may run across friends here when we least expect it."

"I hope it turns out that way," declared the Kentucky boy; "because Hank is just what you might call a tower of strength when he's along. Remember how fortunate it was he turned up when he did, at the time we wanted to follow that plague of the cattle ranges, the wolf, Sallie? I reckon we'd have had a much harder time bagging our game if Hank hadn't been along."

"Well, get to bed now," Frank counseled; "and let to-morrow look out for itself."

"All right, I'll be with you in three shakes of a lamb's tail," declared Bob.

But before he left the window Frank noticed that he thrust his head out, as if desirous of making sure that no one could climb up the face of the wall, and find entrance there while they slept.

Bob was not a timid boy as a rule; in fact he was deemed rather bold; but just as he said, that dark face of Abajo had impressed him unfavorably; and he felt that the young half-breed would be furious when he learned how neatly he had been sold.

Nor did anything happen during that night as they slept upon the border of the Wonderland. Both lads enjoyed a peaceful sleep, and awoke feeling as "fresh as fish," as Bob quaintly expressed it.

Breakfast not being ready they walked about, viewing the astonishing features of the canyon as seen from the bluff on which the hotel stood. Down in the tremendous gap mists were curling up like little clouds, to vanish as they reached the line where the sunlight fell. It was a sight that appalled Bob, who declared that he felt as though looking into the crater of some vast volcano.

"Well," remarked Frank, "they did have volcanos around here, after this canyon was pretty well formed, though perhaps thousands of years ago. Great beds of lava have been found down in the bottom of the hole, so my little guide book tells me. But look away off there, Bob, and see that peak standing up like the rim of a cloud. Do you know what that is?"

"I heard one man say," Bob replied, quickly, "Navajo Peak could be seen on a clear morning, and perhaps that's the one; but Frank, just think, it's about a hundred and twenty miles off. Whew! they do things on a big scale around here; don't they? I'd call it the playground of giants."

"And you'd about hit the bulls eye," his chum observed; "but there goes the call for breakfast."

"I feel as if I could stow away enough for a crowd, this mountain air is so fresh and invigorating," Bob remarked, as they headed for the dining room.

Half an hour later they were once more in front of the hotel, and interviewing a guide who had been recommended by the manager as an experienced canyon man. It ended in their making terms with John Henry, as the fellow gave his name; though of course Frank was too wise to tell him what their real object was in exploring the tremendous gap. That could come later on.

At about nine o'clock they started down the trail that led from Grand View into the depths of the fearful dip. And as they descended, following their guide, Bob found himself realizing the colossal size of everything connected with the rainbow-hued canyon walls.

Nor was his mind made any easier when Frank took occasion, half an hour later, to bend toward him, and say in the most natural manner possible, though in low tones:

"They're on the job again, Bob—Abajo and Eugene—because I happened to see them watching us start down the trail; and they had some one along with them, perhaps a guide; so we'll have to take it for granted that they mean to dog us all the time, hoping to steal our thunder, if we make any lucky find!"Contents

CHAPTER XIV

THE HOME OF THE CLIFF DWELLERS

Although Bob had anticipated such a thing, still the knowledge that it was actually coming to pass gave him a thrill. For some little time he did not say anything; but Frank could see him look uneasily up at the walls that now arose sheer above their heads some hundreds of feet.

Frank had studied the situation as well as he could, both from a map of the canyon which he found in the little guide book, and his own observations. All the while he kept before him that admission on the part of the old Moqui whom they had befriended, to the effect that the Westering sun shone full in Echo Cave. So he expected to find the home of the hermit-scientist high up in the wall on the Eastern side of the Grand Canyon.

First he intended heading toward the East, and going just as far as they could. Days, and perhaps weeks, might be spent in the search for the strange cave that had once been the home of those mysterious cliff people, which cavern Professor Oswald was occupying while studying the lives and customs of the long departed people who had dug these dwellings out of the rock.

At noon they had made good progress; but when the tremendous size of that two hundred mile canyon was taken into consideration, with its myriad of side "washes," and minor canyons, the distance that they

had covered was, as Bob aptly declared, but a "flea-bite" compared with the whole.

And Frank declared time and again it had been a lucky thought that caused his chum to suggest that they bring the field glasses along. They were in almost constant use. Far distant scenes were brought close, and high walls could be examined in a way that must have been impossible with the naked eye.

Of course Frank was particularly anxious to scrutinize every colored wall that faced the West. The rainbow tints so plainly marked, tier above tier, called out expressions of deep admiration from the two lads; but all the while they were on the watch for something besides.

When Frank ranged that powerful glass along the ragged face of a towering cliff he was looking eagerly for signs of openings such as marked the windows of the homes fashioned by the strange people of a past age.

During the afternoon they actually discovered such small slits in the rock—at least they looked like pencil markings to them when the guide first pointed out the village of the ancient cliff dwellers; though on closer acquaintance they found that the openings were of generous size.

"Shall we climb up that straggly path along the face of the wall, and see what the old things look like?" asked Bob, as the guide made motions upward.

"Yes, we ought to have our first sight of such places," Frank replied, in a cautious tone. "Not that I expect we're going to find our hermit there, or in any other village that's known to tourist travel. But we ought to

get an idea of what these places are like, you see. Then we'll know better what to expect. And perhaps the conditions will teach us how to discover *his* hiding place."

Accordingly they started to climb upward, just as many other tourists had been doing for years. There were even places, "aisles of safety," Bob called them, where one who was ascending, upon happening to meet a descending investigator, could squeeze into a hole in the rock until the other had slipped by.

Of course it was a risky climb, and no lightheaded person could ever dream of taking it. But the two saddle boys were possessed of good nerves and able to look downward toward the bottom of the canyon, even when several hundred feet up in the air.

Then they entered the first hole. It seemed to be a fair-sized apartment, and was connected with a string of others, all running along the face of the cliff; so that those who occupied them in the long ago might have air and light.

The boys observed everything with the ordinary curiosity expected of newcomers. Frank even investigated to see if there were any signs to indicate that those old dwellers in the canyon knew about the use of fire; and soon decided that it was so.

"Well, what do you think about this?" Bob asked, after they had roamed from one room to another. "For my part I think I'd fancy living in one of those three story adobe houses of the Hopi Indians, we saw pictures of at the hotel; or even a Navajo hogan. But one thing sure, these people never had to worry about leaking roofs."

"No," added Frank, laughing; "and floods couldn't bother them, because the Colorado never rose three hundred feet since it began cutting out this canyon."

"And think of the grand view they had before their doors, with the canyon in places as much as thirteen miles across, and mountains in their dooryard, looking like anthills," Bob went on impressively.

"Makes a fellow feel mighty small; doesn't it?" Frank remarked, as he stepped to a window to look out again.

"Makes me feel that I want to get down again to the trail," admitted Bob. "I'm wondering whether it's going to be much harder getting back than it was coming up."

"That's always the case," Frank declared, "as I've found out myself when climbing up a steep cliff. But the guide is ready for you, Bob, if you show signs of getting dizzy. You have seen that he carries a rope along, just like the Swiss guides do."

"Oh! come, Frank! Go easy with me; can't you?" the other exclaimed. "I hope I'm not quite so bad as that."

"All the same, Bob, don't take any chances; and if you feel the least bit giddy, let me know. This is a case where an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. And a stout rope is a mighty good thing to feel when your foot slips."

It turned out, however, that the Kentucky lad was as sure-footed as a mountain goat. He descended the trail, with its several ladders, placed there of course by modern investigators, without the least show of timidity.

They continued along the bed of the wide canyon. At times they followed the ordinary trail. Then again Frank would express a desire to have a closer look at some high granite wall that hovered, for possibly a thousand feet, above the very river itself; and this meant that they must negotiate a passage for themselves.

No doubt John Henry, the guide, must have thought them the queerest pair of tourists he had ever led through the mysteries of the Grand Canyon. But as yet Frank had not thought fit to enlighten him. He was not altogether pleased with the appearance of the guide, and wished to wait until he knew a little more about his ways, before entrusting him with their secret.

More than a few times during that day Frank believed he had positive evidence that they were being watched. Of course they met frequent parties of pilgrims wandering this way and that, as they drank in the tremendous glories of the canyon; but occasionally the boy believed he had seen a head thrust out from behind some rock in their rear, and then hastily withdrawn again as he looked.

Of course he could make a guess as to who was taking such a interest in the progress of his chum and himself. No one, save Eugene Warringford, would bother for even a minute about what they were doing, since richer quarry by far than a couple of boys would catch the eye of any lawless desperado, like those the two sheriffs were following, bent on making a haul.

"Frank," said Bob, when the afternoon was drawing to a close, and they had begun to think of picking out the spot where they would spend the night; "tell

me why you chose to head toward the East instead of the other way, where Bright Angel trail attracts so many tourists?"

Frank cast one glance toward the guide, as if to make sure that John Henry was far enough in advance not to be able to catch what was said.

"I had a reason, Bob," he remarked, seriously. "Before we got down into the canyon, so as to choose which way we would go, I talked with several men who were coming up. And Bob, I learned that an old Moqui Indian had been seen heading toward the East late last night!"

"And you think it may have been our friend, Havasupai?" asked Bob.

"I'm pretty sure of it, from the descriptions they gave me," came the answer.

"But Frank, think how impossible it seems that he could have reached here almost as soon as we did; unless the old warrior was able to fly I don't see how it could be done."

"I'm just as much up a tree as you are, Bob," laughed the other; "but, all the same, I believe the Moqui has arrived, and is on his way right now to where Echo Cave lies."

"Then he must have an aeroplane to help him out, for I don't see how else he could make it," Bob insisted.

"Think for a minute, and you'll see it isn't actually impossible," Frank continued. "He could have made Flagstaff that night, just as we did."

"Yes," admitted Bob, "that's a fact; for while he said

he was tired, and wanted a mount to fly from his people, who were looking for him, still I understand that these Moquis are wonderful runners, and game to the last drop of the hat. Oh! I grant you that he could have made Flagstaff that night sometime."

"Well, Flagstaff is on the railroad, you know," Frank remarked.

"Sure! I see now what you are hitting at," Bob observed; "the old Indian must have had money, as all his kind have, what with the tips given by tourists day after day. He could have come to Grand View on the train. Frank, once more I knuckle down to your superior wisdom. That's what Havasupai must have done, sure pop!"

"Anyhow," the other continued, "it pleases me to believe so; and that the Moqui is even now hurrying to make connections with the hermit in this mysterious Echo Cave. There's still another reason, though, why I picked out this course up the river, instead of going down. It is connected with the fact that the Moquis have their homes in this quarter."

"Oh!" exclaimed Bob, "I catch on now to what you mean. The chances are that the Moqui would be prowling around within fifty miles of his own shack when he ran across the man-with-the-shining-spot-in-his-head, otherwise the bald Professor Oswald."

"That's the point, Bob."

"It sure beats everything how you can get on to these things, Frank. Here I'm going to be a lawyer some day, so they tell me; and yet I don't seem to grab the fine points of this game of hide-and-seek as you do."

"Oh! well," Frank remarked, consolingly; "a lawyer

isn't supposed to know much about trails, and all such things. That comes to a fellow who has spent years outdoors, studying things around him, and keeping his wits on edge all the while."

"I hope to keep on learning more and more right along," said Bob.

"Here comes John Henry back, to tell us he has found a good place for camping to-night; so no more at present, Bob."

It proved just as Frank had said. The guide declared that as the sun was low down, the canyon would soon be darkening; and they ought to make a halt while the chance was still good to see what lay around them.

Accordingly they made a camp, and not a great distance away from the border of the swirling river that rolled on to pass through all the balance of that wonderful gulch, the greatest in the known world.

They had come prepared for this, carrying quite a number of things along that would prove welcome at supper time. A cheery fire was soon blazing, and the guide busied himself in preparations for a meal; while the two boys wandered down to the edge of the river, to throw a few rocks into the current, and talk undisturbed.

"There are several other camps not far away," remarked Frank. "I could see the smoke rising in two places further on."

"Yes," added Bob, "and there's one behind us too, for I saw smoke rising soon after we halted. Perhaps that may be Eugene's stopping place; eh, Frank?"

"I wouldn't be surprised one little bit. Just look at the river, how silently it pushes along right here. It's deep too; and yet below a mile or so it frets and foams among the boulders that have dropped into its great bed from the high cliffs."

"And they do say some bold explorers have gone all the way through the canyon in a boat; but I reckon it must be a terrible trip," Bob ventured to say.

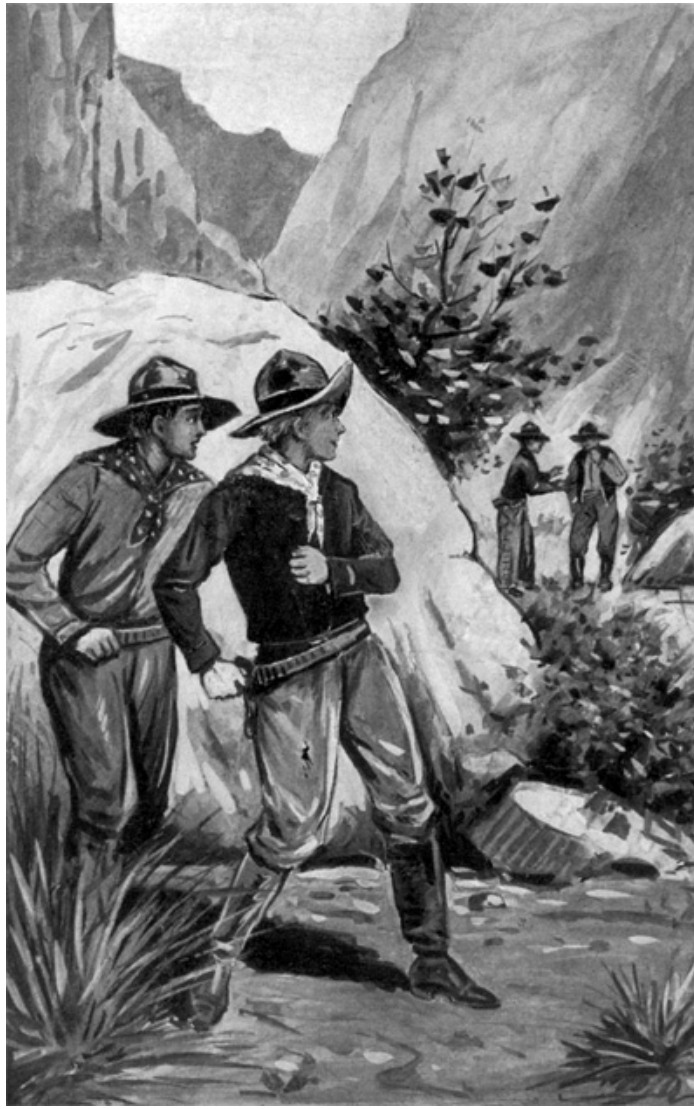
"Excuse us from trying to make it," laughed Frank; "by the time we'd reach Mohave City, where that bottle was picked up, there wouldn't be much left of us. But let's go back to camp now. John Henry must have grub ready."

Three minutes later he suddenly caught Bob's sleeve.

"Wait up!" he whispered. "There's somebody talking to our guide right now; and say, Bob, don't you recognize the fellow?"

"If I didn't think it was silly I'd say it was old Spanish Joe, the cowboy we had so much trouble with on Thunder Mountain," Bob declared, crouching down.

"Well, think again," said Frank; "and you'll remember that Abajo is his nephew!"Contents



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"THERE'S SOMEBODY TALKING TO OUR GUIDE RIGHT NOW."
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CHAPTER XV

THE TREACHEROUS GUIDE

"Why, of course he is," declared Bob; "and it looks as if our old enemies had cropped up again, to join forces with the new ones. That will make three against us; won't it, Frank?"

"The more the merrier," replied the other, but Bob could see that he was inwardly worried over the new phase of the situation.

"Look at the way Spanish Joe is arguing with John Henry!" said Bob. "The guide keeps pointing this way, as if he might be afraid we'd come back, and see him talking with Old Joe. Now they shake hands, Frank. Do you think any bargain has been struck between them?"

"I'm afraid it has," replied his comrade, gritting his teeth with displeasure. "John Henry has sold us out, and gone over to the enemy for cash. I saw him hide something in his pocket."

"Then what will we do about him?" asked Bob, clenching his fist, as if it might give him considerable pleasure to take the treacherous guide personally in hand, and teach him the needed lesson.

"That's easy," chuckled Frank. "We'll keep on guard to-night, and when he sees how we hang to our guns he won't try any tricks, you may be sure."

"And in the morning?" Bob went on.

"Why," declared Frank, firmly; "there's only one thing to be done—we must fire John Henry, even if we have to pay him the whole sum agreed on for the week."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Frank; because I'd hate to have him along. Why, he might take a notion to step on my fingers when I was climbing up after him, and claim it was only an accident, but if I had a broken leg, or a cracked skull, that wouldn't do me any good, I take it."

"There, Joe is moving off, and we can head for camp," Frank remarked, as they still hovered behind the spur of rocks that had concealed them, though allowing a view of the little camp.

"But you don't want to tell John Henry that we saw him making a bargain with Spanish Joe, I take it?" Bob questioned.

"That's right, we don't; and try to keep from looking as if you suspected him. Now his back is turned, come along," and Frank, rising, led the way.

The preparations for supper went on apace. The guide was unusually talkative, Bob thought, and he wondered whether it was not the result of a disturbed conscience. Perhaps John Henry might not be wholly bad, and was worried over having entered into an arrangement to betray his generous young employers.

"What are we going to do for a guide when we let him go?" asked Bob, later on, after they had eaten supper, and John Henry had wandered down to the river for a dip, as he said.

"We'll have to trust to luck to pick up another," Frank declared. "And if it comes to the worst, we can go it alone, I reckon. I've never been up against such a big job as this, but I think I'd tackle it, if I had to. But wait and see what another day brings out."

When it came time for them to retire they began talking about their ranch habit of standing guard. The guide laughed at the idea of any harm coming to pass while they were there in the canyon.

"Lots of other tourists are camping inside of three mile from here," he said; "and I heard the sheriff of the county himself is somewhere down in the canyon; so it don't look as how there could anything happen. But just as you says, boys; if it makes you feel better to stand guard, I ain't got a thing agin it."

The night passed without any sort of attack. Either Frank or Bob sat up all the time, with a trusty rifle ready; but there was no occasion to make use of the weapon.

With the coming of morning they made ready to eat a hasty breakfast. After this was over Frank found himself compelled to discharge the guide.

"We've concluded to do without your services, John Henry," he said, as the man stood ready to start forth on the way along the canyon, heading East.

"Me? Let me go? What for?" stammered the fellow; turning red and then white as a consciousness of his

guilt broke upon him.

"Here's what we promised to pay you for the week," continued Frank. "We want no hard feelings about it. Never mind why we let you go. You can think what you like. But next time you hire out to a party, John Henry, be careful how you let anybody hand you over a few dollars to make you turn against your friends."

The man tried to speak, and his voice failed him. They left him standing there, holding the bills Frank had thrust into his hand, and looking "too cheap for anything," as Bob said. Perhaps he feared that the boys might tell what they knew about him, and in this way destroy his usefulness as a canyon guide ever afterwards.

"Good riddance to bad rubbish!" declared Bob, after they had gone on half a mile, and on looking back saw John Henry still standing there as if hardly knowing whether to be sorry, or glad over having received full pay for a week after only working a single day.

"And here we are cut loose from everybody, and going it on our own hook," laughed Frank. "But it would be foolish for us to think of doing without a guide if so be we can find one. We'll ask every party we meet, and perhaps in that way we can strike the right man."

During the morning they came upon several parties making the rounds of the Wonderland along the beaten channels. Sometimes women were in the company, for the strange sights that awaited the bold spirit capable of enduring ordinary fatigue tempted others besides men to undertake one of the trips.

Just at noon the two boys came upon a lone Chinaman sitting at a little fire he had kindled, cooking a fish, evidently pulled from the river by means of a hook and line.

"Well, what do you think!" exclaimed Frank, as he stared at the Oriental; "Bob, don't you recognize that cousin of our ranch cook, Ah Sin, the same fellow who was down at our place five months ago? Hello! Charley Moi, what are you doing in the big canyon, tell me?"

The Chinaman jumped up, and manifested more or less joy at the sight of Frank. He insisted on shaking hands with both the boys.

"How do? Glad see Flank, Blob! Me, I cook for plarties in Gland Canyon. Hear of chance gettee job up Gland View Hotel. Go there now. Alle samee like see boys from Circle Lanch. How Ah Sin? Him berry veil last time hear samee."

Frank had an idea.

"See here, Charley Moi," he said; "you say you've been about the big canyon a long time now, serving as a cook to parties who go up and down. Perhaps we might engage you to stay with us!"

"Me cook velly fine much all timee. You tly Charley Moi, you never say solly do samee!" declared the Oriental, his moon-like face illuminated with a childlike and bland smile.

"But we want you for a guide too, Charley; you ought to know a heap about the place by this time," Frank went on.

"Alle light, me do," replied the other, glibly. "No

matter, cookee or guide, alle samee. Lucky we meet. Tly flish. Just ketchee from water. Cook to turnee. Plentee for all. Then go like Flank, Blob say. Sabe?"

As it was nearly noon the boys were quite satisfied to make a little halt, and taste the fresh fish which the Chinaman had succeeded in coaxing from the rushing waters of the nearby Colorado.

Later on they once again made a start. Charley Moi did everything in his power to prove his fidelity and faithfulness. He seemed proud of the fact that the son of the big owner of Circle Ranch, where his cousin worked as cook for the mess, trusted him, and had employed him as a guide. Never before in the history of the Grand Canyon had a Chinaman held such an exalted office; and Charley believed he had cause to feel proud.

"Can we trust him?" Bob asked, as evening came on again. "I've always heard that Chinamen are treacherous fellows."

"Then you've heard what isn't true," Frank replied. "A Chinaman never breaks his word. Over in the Far East I've read that all the merchants of British cities are Chinese. The Japs are a different kind of people. Yes, we can trust Charley Moi. He would never betray us to our enemies."

Nevertheless, that night the boys also slept on their arms, so to speak. One of them remained on guard at different times, the entire night. Frank had learned caution on the range. He did not mean to be taken by surprise; though he really believed that nothing would be done to injure them until after they had found some trace of the hidden hermit of Echo Cave.

Before another twelve hours had passed he had occasion to change his opinion. The night did not bring any alarm in its train. Charley Moi was up several times, shuffling around, looking at the fire, and sitting there smoking his little pipe, as though in satisfaction over having struck such a profitable job so easily; but he gave no sign of holding any intercourse with outsiders.

With the coming of morning they were once more on the way. Frank noticed with considerable satisfaction that now they seemed to be beyond the ordinary limit of the various trails taken by the regular tourist parties.

They were walking along, about the middle of the morning, when they found themselves in a lonely region, where the dim trail led along the foot of rugged walls stretching up, red and apparently unscalable, to the height of hundreds of feet.

Frank was craning his neck as he looked up overhead, wondering if it could be possible that there was any sign of an abandoned cliff dwellers' village there, when he saw something move, and at the same instant he jumped forward to pull his chum violently back.Contents

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CHAPTER XVI

A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY

Bob opened his mouth to call out, and ask what was the matter, that his chum had seized upon him so fiercely. But he held his breath, for something came to pass just then that made words entirely unnecessary.

A huge rock seemed to slip from its notch up on the side of the cliff, and come crashing down, loosening others on the way, until finally the rush and roar almost partook of the nature of a small avalanche.

Charley Moi had skipped out in a lively manner, and thus managed to avoid being caught. Bob stared at the pile of broken rock, about which hung a little cloud of dust.

"Wow! that was as close a call as I ever hope to have, Frank!" he exclaimed, with a little quiver to his voice.

Frank himself was a bit white, and his hand trembled as he laid it on that of his chum.

"I just happened to be looking up, and saw it trembling on the break," he said. "Only for that we might have been underneath all that stuff."

"But did you notice the clever way Charley Moi avoided the deluge?" said Bob, trying to smile, though he found it hard work.

"Yes, it's hard to catch a Chinaman napping, they say," Frank went on. "Three times this very day I've heard the thunder of falling rocks, and that was what

kept me nervous; so I watched out above. And, Bob, it seemed as though I must have seen that big rock just trembling as it started to leave the face of the cliff."

"Well, all I can say then, is, that you jumped to the occasion mighty well. Some fellows would have been scared just stiff, and couldn't have thrown out a hand to save a chum. But look here, Frank, you don't imagine that thing was done on purpose, do you?"

Frank looked at his companion, with a wrinkle on his forehead.

"I don't want to think anybody could be so mean and low as to want to hurt boys who'd never done them any harm," he said; "but all the same I seem to have an idea that I got a glimpse of a man's arm when that rock started to drop."

"Whew! you give me a cold chill, Frank," muttered Bob, gazing helplessly upward toward the spot from which the descending rock had started on its riotous tumble.

"Yes, and I hope I was mistaken," Frank went on. "I don't see anything up there now; and perhaps it was only a delusion. All these bright colors affect the eyes, you see. Then, again, it might have been some goat jumping, that started that rock on its downward plunge."

"But you didn't see any goat, Frank, did you?" Bob asked, anxiously.

"No, I didn't," admitted the other; "but then there may be a shelf up there, and any animal on it would be hidden from the eyes of those right below."

They passed on; but more than once Bob craned his neck in the endeavor to look up to that spot, from whence the loose rock had plunged. He could not get it out of his head that foes were hovering about, who thought so little of human life that they would conspire to accomplish a death if possible.

The day passed without any further peril confronting them. Charley Moi seemed to fill the bill as a guide, very well. He also knew the different points of interest, and chattered away like a magpie or a monkey as they kept pushing on.

Bob became curious to know just how the Chinaman could tell about so many things when they were now above the trails used ordinarily by tourists, who gave two or three days to seeing the Grand Canyon, and then rushed away, thinking they had exhausted its wonders, when in fact they had barely seen them.

He put the question to Charley Moi, and when the smiling-faced Chinaman replied, Frank caught his breath.

"That easy, bloss," said Charley, nodding. "Happen this way. Long time black me 'gage with sahib, like one know out in Canton. Think have samee big joss some bit up here in canlon. Me to bling grub to certain place evly two month. Him give me list what buy, and put cash in hand. Know can trust Chinaman ebery time. Many time now me do this; so know how make trail up-river, much far past same tourist use. Sabe, Flank, Blob?"

The two boys stared at each other, unable to say a word at first. It was as if the same tremendous thought had come to each.

"Gee whiz! did you get on to that, Frank?" finally ejaculated Bob.

"I sure did," replied his chum, allowing his pent-up breath full play.

"Charley says he engaged himself to a gentleman long ago; perhaps it was as much as three years back, the time that the professor disappeared from the haunts of men. And, Frank, his part of the contract was to come to a certain point away up here in the Grand Canyon, once every two months, at a time agreed on, bringing a load of food, as per the list given him by this mysterious party."

"It must be Professor Oswald!" exclaimed Frank. "I've been wondering all the time how under the sun he could have supplied himself with food these long months if he'd cut loose from the world, as he said in that note he had. Now the puzzle begins to show an answer. Charley Moi is the missing link. He has kept the professor in grub all the time. Did you ever hear of such luck? First we run across that old Moqui, who has been in touch with the man we want to find; and now here's the one who comes up here every little while to deliver his goods, and get a new list, as well as money to pay for the same. It's just the limit, that's what!"

He turned to the Chinaman, and continued:

"Did you happen to notice, Charley, whether this party you are working for is a bald-headed man? Has he a shining top when he takes his hat off; and does he bend over, as if he might be hunting for diamonds all the time?"

The Chinese guide smirked, and bobbed his head in

the affirmative.

"That him, velly much, just same say. Shiny head, and blob this away alle time," with which he walked slowly forward, bending over as though trying to discover a rich vein of gold in the seamed rock under his feet.

"Shake hands, Bob," said Frank. "We're getting hot on the trail. Now we needn't have any doubt at all about the choice of the eastern route. It's the right one; and somewhere further on we're just bound to find Echo Cave."

"Then all we've got to fear, Frank, is the work of Eugene and his crowd. Let us keep clear of that bad lot, and we're going to succeed. Any time, now, we may glimpse our old Moqui, returning with a message from the professor, if he sees fit to reply to your appeal. He may, though, be so set and stubborn that nothing will move him from his game of hiding. Then we'll have to get that paper, with his signature, and save the mine for his family."

"That's what I mean to do," replied the other, with grim determination. "If he's so wrapped up in his scheme that he just won't come out, we're going to do the best we can to save his fortune in spite of him. There's his daughter Janice to think of. Above all, we mustn't let that schemer, Eugene Warringford, get his fingers on the document."

That night they made camp in a little cave that offered an asylum. The boys rather fancied the idea for a change. And they passed a very comfortable night without any alarm.

Once, Bob being on duty near the mouth of the

opening, heard a shuffling sound without. He could not make out whether it was caused by the passage of a human being, or a bear. Half believing that they were about to be attacked by some animal that fancied the cave as a den, he had drawn back the hammer of his rifle, and watched the round opening that was plainly seen at the time, as it was near morning, and the small remnant of a moon was shining without.

But he waited in vain, and, as the minutes passed without any further alarm, Bob heaved a sigh of relief. It was all very well to think of shooting big game; but under such conditions he did not much fancy a close battle.

When morning came, and he had told Frank about it, the other immediately went out to look for traces of the animal. As he came back Bob saw by the expression on his chum's face that Frank had made some sort of discovery.

"How about it?" he asked.

"It was no bear," replied the other, decidedly.

"But sure I heard something moving, Frank, and I was wide-awake at the time, too," Bob protested.

"I guess you were, all right," Frank admitted. "A man passed by, not far from the mouth of the cave. He even stooped down, and looked in, though careful not to let his head show against the bright background. Then he went off again up the canyon."

"Since you know so much, Frank, perhaps you could give a guess as to who he was," said Bob, eagerly.

"No guess about it," came the reply. "I've examined

his track before, and ought to know it like a book. It was Abajo, Bob!"

"Then ten to one, Spanish Joe and Eugene were close by!" declared Bob. "Say, do you really believe he knew we were in here?"

"Of course he did," Frank asserted. "Perhaps they saw us enter. But Abajo also knows that both of us are fair shots. He did not dare take the chance of trying to creep in. It would be more dangerous than our going into that wolf den."

"The plot seems to be thickening, Frank. It won't be long now before something is bound to happen. If we could only run across the old Moqui now, and hear that he carried a message in answer to your note, that would clear the air a heap, wouldn't it?"

"Well, we must live in hopes," replied Frank, cheerfully. "And now, after a bite which Charley Moi is getting ready for us, we'll be off again, and tackle the roughest traveling in the whole canyon, so he says. But he knows the way, because he was led up here by the old professor, and told to come back every two months."Contents

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CHAPTER XVII

THE WINDOWS IN THE ROCKY WALLS

"Well, here it's the fourth day we've been out, and nothing doing yet, Frank!"

Bob spoke gloomily, as though the unsuccessful search was beginning to pall upon him a little. Boys' natures differ so much; and while the young Kentuckian had many fine qualities that his chum admired, still he was not so persistent as Frank.

Nothing could ever daunt the boy from Circle Ranch. Difficulties, he believed, were only thrown in his way to bring out the better parts of his nature. The more a fellow found himself "up against it," as Frank called meeting trouble half-way, the stronger became his character.

"Oh! well, now, Bob, I wouldn't say that," he answered the complaint of his chum. "Just think what tremendous progress we've been making right along. And if the very worst comes, didn't Charley Moi say that it was only a week now before he must get another stock of things to eat, and won't he have to wait at the place of meeting, for the 'learned sahib' to appear, and take them from him, as he has done so often? Why, we can be in hiding nearby, and meet the professor, even against his will."

"That's so," Bob admitted, the argument proving a clincher; "and I reckon I'm a silly clown to think anything else."

"No, you're only tired, after a pretty tough day, that's all," Frank declared. "When you've had a rest you'll feel better. I'm more used to this sort of thing than you are, old fellow; but all the same we must admit that we're getting the greatest view ever of this old

canyon."

"That's so, Frank, and it's worth all the climbing and sliding, too. But every time we've discovered signs of any of those old deserted homes of the cliff dwellers, why, we find they've been visited time and again by curious folks hoping to discover some treasure, or keepsakes of the extinct people. No chance for the old professor to hide away there."

"But pretty soon we're going to discover a new batch of those caves in the face of the rock, something unknown to all other searchers. We'll find it by the aid of this same glass; and because we're looking for it, high up. In all these other cases you see, Bob, there were shelves of rock above shelves; and new ladders have been made by the guides, so that anybody with nerve could climb up and up. Now these ladders give the thing away. And I've somehow got the notion in my head that in the case of the rock dwellings where the professor is hiding himself, there is no outward sign in the shape of ladders."

"But in that case, Frank, how under the sun could the old fellows ever get up to their dens, which you said must be near the top of a high cliff?"

"Well, that's something we're going to find out later on, you see," replied the other, serenely. "Perhaps they had some way of lowering themselves from the top by means of a rope, or a stout, wide grape vine. Then, again, there may be some cleft in the rock farther away, that no one would notice; but which was used as a trail, running up into the cliff, and to the rock houses."

"It does take you to figure out these things," declared Bob, in admiration, as they trudged along, with

Charley Moi in advance.

"Then we haven't yet got to the place where the Chinese buyer meets his employer with the eatables?" Bob remarked after a little silence.

"The last time I asked him he kept saying it was only a little farther along," replied Frank.

"There, look at him stopping right now; and Frank, he's grinning at us in a way that can only mean one thing. That must be where he always waits for the queer old gentleman to show up."

"How about that, Charley; is this the place where you hang out?" asked Frank, as they hastened to join the guide.

"Allee samee place," replied Charley Moi, waving his yellow hand around him. "Not know where shaib come fromee, always turn roundee rock," and he pointed to a large outlying mass that had, ages ago, become detached from the towering cliff overhead, and fallen in such a fashion as to partly obstruct the canyon trail.

Frank looked around him eagerly.

"We must be getting warmer all the time," he remarked; "and if you just take a look at that river right now, you'll see that up yonder the rock rises up almost from its very flood. When the water is high it must sweep along against the face of that big cliff. And Bob, something seems to tell me that somewhere inside of a mile or so, we're going to find what we're looking for."

"Oh! I hope so!" echoed Bob, with a look of expectancy on his face; for he always put great

reliance on the common sense of his chum; and when Frank said a thing in that steady tone, the Kentucky boy believed it must be so.

Frank called a halt then and there.

"We're tired, anyway," he said, "and might as well spend the night here. Besides, I just want to find a place were I can take a good look through the glass up at that cliff near the top. It faces the West, all right, you see; and the indications are that somewhere or other I'll find signs of the queer windows belonging to some of those cave houses."

The camp was made, and Charley Moi busied himself with his fire. Bob had some things he wished to attend to; while Frank took the glass, and, settling down in a place where he believed he could get a fair view of the upper strata of colored rock, began carefully scrutinizing the cliff.

"The time is right, because the old Indian said the Westering sun shone in the mouth of Echo Cave," Frank mused, as he pursued his work, not disappointed because failure came in the beginning.

Frank had been at work possibly six or eight minutes when he gave utterance to a low exclamation. Then he fixed his field glasses upon a certain spot as though something had caught his attention there.

"Bob!" he called out.

"Want me?" asked his chum from the spot where the fire was burning.

"Yes, come here please," Frank continued.

Bob quickly complied with the request. He knew that although his camp-mate spoke in such a quiet tone,

he had evidently made a discovery. Frank could repress his feelings even in a moment of great excitement, which was something beyond the ability of the more impetuous Kentucky lad.

"What have you found, Frank?" he asked, as he reached the side of the other.

"Here, take the glass," said Frank. "Point it toward that little cone that seems to rise up like a chimney above the level of the cliff top. Got it now? Well, let your glass slowly drop straight down the face of the rock. Never mind the glint of the sun, and the fine rich color. I know it's just glorious, and all that; but we're after something more important now than pictures and color effects. What do you see, Bob?"

"Honest now, I believe you've hit the bulls-eye this time, Frank."

"Then you think they're windows, about after the same style as those holes in the rock where we climbed up the ladders to the deserted homes of the old time cliff dwellers?" asked the other.

"Sure they are; no mistake about it, either," replied Bob, and then he gave a low exclamation.

"What did you see?" demanded Frank, as if suspecting the truth.

"I don't know," came the reply; "but something seemed to move just inside one of those openings. It may have been a garment fluttering in the breeze that must be blowing so far up the heights; and then, again, perhaps some hawk, or other bird, has its nest there, and just flew past. I couldn't say, Frank; but I saw *something,* and it moved!"

Frank took the glass, and looked long and earnestly.

"Whatever it was," he remarked, "it doesn't mean to repeat the act. But all the same, Bob, I've got a hunch we've found the place, and that Echo Cave lies far up yonder in that beetling cliff."

"It's a fierce reach up there," remarked Bob, as he scanned the height. "How under the sun d'ye suppose that old professor could ever get up and down? Too far for him to have a rope ladder; and even if he had, how could he reach the place at first? Frank, all the way up, I can't see the first sign of any rock shelves, where ladders might have rested long ago."

"That's so," replied the other, reflectively. "The face of the cliff is as even and smooth as a floor. Nobody would ever look to find a cluster of cliff dwellers' homes up there; that is, nobody but a man like Professor Oswald, who has made a life study of such things, and knows all the indications. But something tells me we're pretty near the end of our long trail. The only question now is, how can we get in touch with the hermit of Echo Cave?"

As night settled down the two boys returned to the fire, still perplexed.Contents

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CHAPTER XVIII

FINDING A WAY UP

That night they kept no fire going. Frank seemed to think it best that they remain quiet, so as not to announce their presence in the neighborhood. Though for that matter, it would seem that if any one were perched aloft in one of those slits in the face of the cliff, that represented the windows of the cave dwellings, the entire canyon below must be spread out like a book.

Nothing happened to disturb them. Once Frank thought he heard a distant shout, and this excited his curiosity not a little. According to what Charley Moi said they were now in a neighborhood where ordinary tourists never visited.

He thought of the two sheriffs and the lawless men they were pursuing. Could it be possible that they were destined to run across those desperate characters sooner or later?

The thought was a disquieting one. It served to make Frank wakeful, and his restlessness was communicated to Bob, although the latter did not know what caused it.

But if the fugitives from justice were loitering around in that particular part of the Grand Canyon, either hiding from the determined sheriffs, or looking for rich quarry, neither they or anyone else disturbed the camp of the saddle boys.

Again, in the morning, Charley Moi lighted a fire, and made ready to prepare a modest breakfast. As Bob had said, their supplies were running low, and

unless something happened very soon the Chinaman would have to be dispatched to the nearest store to replenish the food.

Still thinking of the sound he had heard during the night, and which he believed must have been a human voice, rather than the cry of some wild animal, Frank, while they sat cross-legged around the fire, eating the scanty meal, addressed himself to the Chinaman.

"How many times have you come up this far, Charley Moi?" he asked.

The other commenced to figure on his fingers. Having no counting board, used so frequently by his countrymen in laundries, until they get accustomed to the habits of the white man, he took this means of tabulating.

"Allee fingers and this much over," and he held up the first and second fingers of one hand.

"Ten and two, making twelve in all," declared Bob. "Well, you have served the man-with-the-bald-head faithfully and long, Charley."

"And in all these times I suppose you've never known anybody to be around here?" Frank went on.

Charley shook his head in the negative.

"White man, no. Sometime Moqui come 'long, make for stlore down canlon get glub. See same two, thlee times. Charley Moi see old Moqui last night," the Chinaman replied.

"What's that you say?" demanded Frank, hastily. "That you saw a Moqui last night, and after we had come to halt right here?"

"Thatee so," grinned the other, as though pleased to feel that he was able to interest Frank so readily.

"Just when did this happen, Charley Moi?" pursued the other.

"Flank, Blob, down by river, make muchee look-look in glass," answered Charley.

"Now, what d'ye think of that?" ejaculated Bob, in disgust. "While we were away from camp for ten minutes, something happened. Why couldn't it have come about when we were on deck? There's a fine chance lost to get track of Havasupai; for I reckon you believe the same as I do, Frank, and that the old Moqui whom Charley saw was *our* Indian?"

"Seems like it, Bob," replied the other, "but don't cry yet. Perhaps it may not be too late to remedy matters. See here, Charley Moi, could you show me just where you saw this Moqui last?"

The yellow-skinned guide smirked, and nodded his head until his pigtail bobbed up and down like a bell rope.

"Easy do," he observed, beginning to get upon his feet.

"Come along Bob," remarked Frank. "We'd all better be present. Three heads are better than one when it comes to a question of deciding what's to be done."

"Do you think you can track him, Frank?" questioned the Kentucky boy, eagerly.

"I'm going to try," was all Frank would say; for he was very modest with regard to his accomplishments as a son of the prairie.

Charley Moi was as good as his word. He seemed to remember just where he had happened to spy the passing Indian when looking up from the making of the fire. The Moqui had paid no attention to him; indeed, at the time he was creeping past as though taking advantage of the absence of the two boys in order to make a circuit of the camp near the big cliff.

"Find 'em Frank?" asked Bob, after he had seen his chum bending down over the ground for half a minute.

"Yes, and they are the tracks of an Indian too, for they toe in," Frank replied. "Besides, they are made by moccasins instead of shoes or boots with heels. And if I needed any further proof to tell me our friend Havasupai made these tracks, and not a strange Moqui, I have it in the queer patch across the toe of his right moccasin, which I noticed when he was with us before."

"That's just fine!" Bob exclaimed, filled with pride over the way in which his chum seemed able to fix the facts so that they could not be questioned. "And will you start after him right away, Frank?"

"Watch me; that's all," came the reply, as Frank began to move away, still bending low in order to follow the faint traces of footprints on the rock and scanty soil.

The others came close at his heels, Bob with a look of assurance on his face, because he felt positive that the game would now be tracked to its hiding place; and Charley Moi picturing his wonder on his moon-like countenance.

So the prairie lad led them in and out among the

rocks, and the scrub that grew close to the verge of the river. Several times he seemed a little in doubt, as the marks faded entirely away; but on such occasions his common-sense came to the rescue, and, after a look around, Frank was able to once more find the trail.

"Here's where it ends!"

When Frank made this remark Bob could not keep from expressing his surprise.

He gaped upward at the bare-faced wall that arose for hundreds of feet, without any particular ledge or outcropping where even a nimble Indian could find safe lodgment for his moccasined feet.

"But, Frank, however could the old Moqui get up there to see Uncle Felix?" he asked. "D'ye suppose he made some sort of signal, and the hermit lowered a long rope with a noose at the end, which would draw him up? Wow! excuse me from ever trying to fly in that way! It would make me so dizzy I'd be sure to drop, and get smashed."

"You're beating on the wrong track, Bob," remarked the other. "No rope could be lowered all that distance; and even if it could no one man would be able to pull another all the way up."

"But there must be some way of getting to the place where the slits in the face of the cliff tell of windows. However do you think he did it, Frank?"

"Just because you don't happen to see a ladder, Bob, is no evidence there isn't a way to mount upward. One thing about this great cliff I guess you didn't happen to notice. That shows you pass things by.

Look again, and you'll see that it seems to have been split by some volcanic smash, ages ago. There's a regular crevice running slantingly up the face of the rock. You see it now, don't you?"

"Sure I do; and I was blind not to take notice of the same before," Bob replied. "Fact is, I did see that uneven mark, but just thought it was a fault in the make of the cliff, as a miner would say."

"Well, that crack extends four-fifths of the way up to the top; and far enough to reach the place where we noticed all those dark marks, which we believed must be windows of the many rooms or houses of the cliff dwellers. Get that, Bob?"

"Sure I do, Frank, and after your explanation I can see what you're aiming at. But where does that ragged crevice start from down here, do you think?"

Frank stepped forward. Just as if he had it all figured out, he bent down, and with his hand drew aside the bushes that grew against the base of the cliff.

"Well, I declare, there it is for a fact!" exclaimed Bob, as he saw a rough opening before him, which came almost together five feet from the ground, leaving only a dark, uneven, slanting line that crawled up the face of the cliff like the photograph of a zigzag bolt of lightning taken with a snapshot camera.

"There you are," said Frank, with a broad smile. "Unless all signs fail, here's the entrance to the mysterious Echo Cave. We have been more than lucky to find it with so little trouble."

"Just to think of it," remarked Bob, as he bent over to look up into the gap as well as he was able; "here's where the queer old Professor has been hiding for all

this time, and no one any the wiser. But Frank, however in the wide world do you suppose he found out the way to get up there?"

"We would have found it sooner or later, even if Charley Moi had not seen the old Indian moving along," replied Frank, with the confidence of one who knows what he is talking about.

"Y—yes, I reckon we would, after you'd prowled around a little, and had some chance to look the ground over. Then you believe he must have found the presence of those windows looking out of the cliff just like we did; by using a powerful glass? And, thinking that here was the very place for him to hide and study, he set about looking for the road up, and found it, very likely."

"He did it by using common sense, and applying all he knew about the ways of these people of the long ago," replied Frank. "And you can see that if he chose, he could have thrown that bottle out of one of the openings up there, so that it would drop in the passing current of the Colorado, to be carried down-stream until somebody saw it; and finding the message to my father, sent or carried it to Circle Ranch."

"Well," observed Bob, with a gleam in his eye, "now that we've found a way to get up to Echo Cave, have we the nerve to start in?"Contents

CHAPTER XIX

FORTUNE STILL FAVORS THE BRAVE

Instead of replying at once to this question, as Bob undoubtedly thought his chum would do, Frank seemed to give a start. He dropped to his hands and knees, and seemed to be examining some marks on the ground.

If ever the fair knowledge of reading tracks which Frank possessed was called upon to do duty, it was now. Bob, of course, could not understand what possessed his comrade; but simply stood there and stared, wondering what Frank had found to cause him to exhibit such breathless interest, and all the signs of unusual excitement.

When finally the lad on his knees did look up, Bob saw a grave expression on his face.

"There's something wrong, Frank; tell me what it is?" he demanded.

"I've made an unpleasant discovery, Bob," replied the other. "Charley!" he added turning to the wondering Celestial, "go back to our camp, and bring our guns right away, both of them, see?"

"Yep, bloss, me unelstand. Charley Moi gettee gluns light away quick!" and as he said this the obliging Chinaman went on a run, his pigtail and blue blouse flying out behind him.

"Say, whatever does all this mystery mean, Frank?"

asked Bob, almost helplessly.

"Just what you might imagine; that there's danger hanging about us, Bob."

The eyes of the astonished Bob sought the ground at the point where his chum had been so deeply interested.

"Then it must be something you just discovered there, and that's a fact," he declared; "because you didn't act this way three minutes ago."

"I happened to discover footprints coming from another quarter," Frank went on, calmly; "and they headed into this crevice, just as those of the moccasined Moqui did from that side. And they came after old Havasupai had gone up, for I found where they wiped out a part of one of his tracks."

"Footprints, and were they made by the old professor, do you think?" asked Bob.

"Not any. Fact is," observed Frank, as though deciding to have the worst over, "they were the tracks of three persons, all men!"

"Oh! my! three, you said, Frank; and that would mean Eugene, Spanish Joe, and Abajo, wouldn't it?"

"Just the very ones I meant," replied Frank.

"Then they must have been hiding some place near here, and saw the Moqui pass in?" suggested Bob, fully aroused by now.

"That seems to be what happened," Frank observed. "But here comes Charley Moi with the guns. See how he dodges about, so as to keep hidden from the view

of anybody up in those windows above, which we can't glimpse from here."

When Bob eagerly took his repeating rifle from the hands of the Chinaman he exhibited all the evidence of great satisfaction; for he heaved a sigh of relief, and fondled his weapon in a way that caused his comrade to smile.

"I feel better now," Bob confessed; "because, to tell the honest truth, when you broke the news so suddenly it nearly gave me heart failure, Frank, to think that if those rascals sprang out at us we would be next door to helpless. Now let 'em be careful how they play their little game. But what does it all mean, do you suppose, Frank?"

"I can only make a guess, and that may be wide of the truth," the other admitted. "By some accident they managed to get on the track of the Moqui. Though Havasupai thought himself smart, he was no match for such a cunning rascal as Spanish Joe, who is said to be the best trailer along the Arizona border. And they followed him right here."

"That was last evening, just when you and I stood there down by the river, looking through the glasses up at the windows of the rock houses above," remarked Bob.

"Yes. Perhaps they didn't go up right then." Frank went on. "I admit that I can't just make out how long ago these tracks were made. A better trailer might, you see, Bob. If Old Hank Coombs were only here now I'd be glad to turn the whole business over to him, and play second fiddle."

"But some time between dark and morning these

three rascals went in here, and surprised the hermit of Echo Cave—is that it, Frank?"

"It covers the case all right," came the reply.

"Say, do you think they are up there yet?" asked the Kentucky lad, in an anxious tone.

"I think they must be, Bob, because all the tracks point one way, showing that the three men never came back. If they left the cave it must have been by some other way."

"No use asking why they would want to get in touch with Uncle Felix!" continued Bob, as if bent on finding out everything he could in connection with the case.

"We know what their reason was," Frank made answer. "When Abajo, hanging about the window of our ranch house, heard what we had to say about the message that came floating down the Colorado in that bottle, and carried the wonderful news to his employer, Eugene Warringford, he set the game going that must end right here. He has come with the intention of making Professor Oswald turn over that option to him; and he'll do it unless something we can offer prevents."

"But Frank, if the Moqui carried that note of yours to Uncle Felix, he would be on his guard, and absolutely refuse to sign away the papers?"

"I hope he will, but I fear that those three scamps are up there right now, trying to coax or bulldoze him into signing," Frank said, with a tightening of his lips, and a flash of his clear eyes.

"Then we go up, and put a spoke in their wheel, do

we?" asked Bob, looking as if he were ready to make the start instantly, if his comrade but gave the word.

Frank glanced around him a little uncertainly.

"I've got a good notion to try it," he muttered as if talking to himself.

"What's that you say, Frank?" asked his companion, who had caught the words, and did not know what to make of them.

"I didn't tell you, Bob," Frank remarked; "but during the night I thought I heard a voice calling far away yonder. And somehow it struck me at the time that there was a familiar cowboy yell about it."

"Old Hank Coombs, perhaps, Frank?" suggested the other lad, quickly.

"That was on my mind, Bob. You know history often repeats itself. Once before, just when we seemed to need Hank the worst way, he came riding along as if he had heard us call. And I was wondering whether he might not be somewhere around here right now."

"That would be just prime, if only we could get in touch with him," Bob declared. "And, as your father wouldn't send Hank alone, there'd be one more cowboy along. That would make a party of four. Why, those three rascals would just shrivel, and throw up the sponge, if they saw us break in on 'em. But Frank, how about making the old range call?"

"D'ye know, I was just thinking it might do to try it," remarked the other.

"Then start in and give the whoop," Bob observed. "No harm done anyhow; even if they hear it up there. And while you're doing all that, I'll just drop on one

knee here, and cover the crack in the wall. Suppose one of the lot should try and come out while we were off our guard. I'll make him surrender quicker than he can say 'Jack Robinson'!"

Presently there sounded upon the morning air the clear "cooee" of the range, particularly well known to every cowboy who had worked at Circle Ranch. Frank and Bob listened eagerly to learn whether there would come any response. If not, then they must take up the task of climbing that singular crevice by themselves; and finding out how affairs stood above.

Their suspense was short-lived, for quickly there floated to their waiting ears a responsive call. Turning toward the quarter from whence it seemed to come they saw a hat waving.

"It's Old Hank, sure it is!" exclaimed Bob, with a thrill of delight; for the burden of going up against three desperate characters was more than boy nature could stand without more or less uneasiness.

"That's Chesty with him," announced Frank, as two figures were discovered coming toward them. "Why, if we'd made all the arrangements ourselves we couldn't have done better, Bob. Here comes our reinforcements just in the nick of time. And if Eugene and his backers are still up yonder in the cliff dwellers' homes, they have stayed a little while too long, that's all."

In another three minutes the boys were shaking hands with Old Hank and Chesty; the latter with a cheerful grin on his face, as though he considered it quite a joke to break in on Frank's game at the

finishing point.

Of course they were ignorant as to how matters stood. And Frank took upon himself the task of explaining all that had happened.

"Ther up yonder yet, then," announced Hank, after he had carefully inspected the footprints, and noted that they all pointed one way; "that is to say, if they ain't got an airyplane along as would allow of them flying off. An' Frank, when ye sez the word we'uns are goin' t' walk up this rock ladder t' see what sorter place the ole perfessor keeps."

"Then I say it now," declared Frank, anxious to have the thing settled one way or the other without further delay.

"Foller arter me, all of ye!" called the old plainsman, as he plunged into the gap.Contents

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CHAPTER XX

ANOTHER SURPRISE

"One thing, we won't need torches this time, Hank!" remarked Bob as he prepared to follow after the leader.

"I reckons not, Bobby," chuckled the veteran cowman, who knew that something about the situation must have recalled their entering that cave that day where sly old Sallie and her half-grown whelps awaited their coming with bared teeth.

Just back of Hank came Chesty, who was a very ambitious young fellow, and always to be counted on with regard to obtaining his proper share in every little excitement that happened. Then Frank filed along; and at his heels Bob climbed; while Charley Moi brought up the rear, bent on seeing all that might come to pass.

The crevice immediately began to mount upward, just as Frank had anticipated it would. There were times when the climbing was pretty steep, and Frank began to wonder what sort of agile man this old and stubborn Professor Oswald could be, to overcome such difficulties so often, while in the pursuit of his hobby.

Bob was soon panting, but no less bent on "keeping up with the procession," as he himself put it. They had been going back from the face of the cliff pretty much all the time, so that there was really no chance to take an observation, in order to tell just how far up they had come.

Frank felt sure, however, after this labor had kept up for quite a long time, that they must now be getting near the top of the break, or where the crooked crack in the face of the rock ended.

He tried to picture what they would find. If Eugene and his reckless backers had been in possession of the place for some hours now, they must have tried all sorts of expedients in order to compel the

professor to reveal the secret hiding place of the valuable document, and make it over to them. Nor would such heartless men hesitate long about adopting torture in order to force a confession from the unwilling victim.

Then Frank wondered if the three rascals would attempt any tactics looking to holding the attacking force at bay. They were well armed, no doubt, and having such a rich treasure hanging in the scales, it might be expected that they would hate to let it slip from their covetous grasp without putting up some sort of fight.

But all that could be left to Old Hank. For many years he had been the leading figure in all the affairs that centered around Circle Ranch. Did the rustlers run off part of the herd, the veteran was put in charge of the pursuing force. Sometimes the sly marauders got off scot free; but more often they paid dearly for their audacity in picking out Colonel Haywood's ranch as the scene of their foray.

Frank really had no fears as to the result, now that Hank had arrived on the scene to direct operations. The three schemers might give them some trouble, but they could not carry the day.

"Please let a fellow rest up a little, Hank!" came from Bob, finally.

The old cow puncher understood that the pace had been too warm for the tenderfoot; and he considerately halted. Perhaps none of the climbers were averse to a breathing spell before the final round. It would put them in better condition for the wind-up, whatever that might prove to be.

"Frank," whispered Bob, as he pulled at the trouser leg of his chum so as to induce him to bend down closer.

"What's the row?" asked the other, in somewhat the same guarded tone, as he managed to double over, and bring his face close to that of his friend.

"Charley Moi has just told me something," Bob went on. "You know we found out before now that he's got the greatest pair of ears ever for hearing things? Well, he says there's something or some one following us up this old crack!"

"Whew! that's nice, now. A regular procession, it seems," remarked Frank.

"Who d'ye think it can be; and would a bear or a mountain lion pick up our tracks this way?" continued Bob, who was trying to work his rifle around, so as to cover the rear.

"Wait! Let's all listen, after I send the word along to Hank and Chesty," remarked Frank.

When this had been done even the old cowman thought well enough of the idea to wait until they could find out the nature of the sounds that had reached the keen hearing of the wide-awake Chinaman.

It was only half light in the break of the rock, and the passage they had been following thus far was so very crooked that no one could see more than twenty feet down the trail.

Still every eye was fastened on that point where the advancing man or animal would first appear. Frank, too, had his rifle bearing on the spot; and taken as a

whole the appearance of the little company, flattened out against the break in the mighty rock wall, was rather threatening.

All of them could catch the sounds below now. Whoever came up the rock ladder must be unused to negotiating such a stairway, for they rattled small bits of loose shale down at times; and Frank felt sure he could hear a panting sound, very much like that which tired Bob had been making a minute ago.

And, as he listened, Frank made a discovery that caused him to tighten his grip on that reliable repeating rifle. There were two of the pursuers! And he anticipated that the leader must come in sight ere another dozen seconds passed!

There was some sort of movement now, down in the region of the little twist where the steep stairway of the old cliff dwellers made a turn. Then a head and shoulders came into view.

Frank chuckled aloud. Just in almost that last second of time he had suddenly guessed the truth, when, in this clinging figure that was staring upward, as though filled with genuine surprise, he recognized an old friend.

It was Mr. Stanwix, the sheriff of the county!

He and his mate from the adjoining division of Coconino must have just had a glimpse of Charley Moi disappearing in the dark hole at the base of the cliff; and, being in pursuit of two shrewd law breakers, who had been known to appear in other dress than that of cowmen, perhaps the officers had concluded that here was something that ought to be investigated.

Frank immediately made a friendly gesture with one hand. He did not want to risk the chances of being fired upon by the officers of the law, who might take the little party for bad men. Then he beckoned in a fashion that the sheriff must readily understand to mean caution, and silence.

They saw Mr. Stanwix bend down as though he might be explaining to his fellow officer what an astonishing thing had happened. After that he came on, climbing the steep rock ladder as an exhausted person might. Yet his nature was like that of the bulldog; and once he had started to do a thing, nothing could make him stop.

When he arrived at a point where he could make his way alongside Frank, squeezing past Charley Moi and Bob, the sheriff of Yavapai County turned an inquiring look upon his young friend.

Whereupon Frank started in to tell him just who the other three in the party happened to be; and that they were bent upon foiling the lawless game of three rascals plotting for a big stake.

In return Mr. Stanwix intimated that they had suspected something wrong when they saw from a little distance two persons, and one of them a Chinaman, disappearing in a cleft of the rocks. Further explanations must await a better opportunity, however. They were now too near the series of chambers connecting with one another to hesitate longer.

Besides, who could say what might not be going on up there a little further, in those holes in the wall where, ages ago, the singular people whom Professor Oswald loved to study about, had their homes, and

lived on from year to year?

Old Hank, when he once more started upward, seemed to have become much more cautious. Frank could easily guess the reason. There was a strong possibility that the three schemers might have learned of their presence in the vicinity ere now. And of course Eugene knew full well why Frank and Bob had come to the Grand Canyon from their ranch home.

Suspecting that sooner or later the two boys might discover the way up to the cliff house, they would be apt to lay a trap of some sort, thinking to catch them napping when they ascended.

Old Hank could not be taken unawares any easier than might the wary weasel that has never been seen asleep by mortal eyes.

Frank, keeping well up by the heels of the little cowboy's boots, was ready to draw himself upward at the first sign of trouble. He knew when Hank had reached the top of the singular stairway fashioned by Nature for the benefit of those who built their habitations near the top of the cliff, far beyond the reach of enemies in the valley below.

A few seconds of suspense followed, while Chesty was following the veteran into the first hollowed-out apartment. Nothing followed where Frank had been expecting all manner of evil things.

"Perhaps they're asleep," was the new thought that flashed through his brain. He did not know what manner of man Uncle Felix was.

Now they were all gathered there in that outer chamber that might be called an ante-room of the

various apartments running along the face of the cliff for some distance.

Even Charley Moi was there, full of curiosity, and willing to lend a hand after a fashion. Bob looked around; just as his chum had done as soon as he entered. He saw that some one had certainly been there recently. There were plenty of evidences to that effect.

Old Hank raised his hand with the forefinger elevated. It was recognized as a signal for absolute silence by all the others. Even Bob restrained his desire to ask questions; and every one listened, as if expecting to catch sounds.

Was that a human voice?

Frank started a trifle as the idea came to him. Still, it might only have been an additionally strong movement of the breeze; turning some angle that caused it to give forth a sound.

He turned to see if any of the others had heard, and judged from the way old Hank had his head raised that he, too, had caught the sound; also that it appealed to him as full of significance.

Again the veteran waved his hand. This time it meant not only caution, but an invitation to advance. Hank was about to pass into the next apartment, and wished the others to keep close at his heels.

Bob was quivering all over with the fever of suspense, as well as pent-up eagerness. He did not know just how much longer he could hold in; for he wanted to yell. Still, he did not do it. Since coming to this wonderland country of the Southwest he had learned many lessons in the way of self control; and

every day he was gaining more and more of a mastery over himself.

Now Hank was in the second room, and still heading onward toward another hole in the wall, evidently the only means of communication between the various houses forming the little community.

When he reached this, voices were plainly heard beyond. Hank kept right on, heading for yet a third doorway; and whoever was doing the talking, he or they must be in that further apartment; so that in another minute Frank expected to have his curiosity fully satisfied.Contents

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CHAPTER XXI

THE LITTLE OLD MAN OF ECHO CAVE

"You admit you have carried the document with you, and that it's only a question of refusing to produce it, Professor?"

Frank recognized that drawling voice. He had heard his father's cousin, Eugene Warringford, speak many times, and generally in this slow way. But Frank also knew that back of his apparently careless manner there was more or less venom. Eugene could hate,

and hide his feelings in a masterly manner. He could smile, and then strike behind the back of the one with whom he was dealing. And somehow his very drawling voice always made Frank quiver with instinctive dislike.

"I admit nothing, sir," came another voice, quick and nervous, yet with a firmness that told of considerable spirit. "You come upon me in my retreat without an invitation, and at first claim to be a warm admirer of my work, which you seem to have studied fairly well. But now you are taking the mask off, sir; and I can recognize the wolf under the sheep's clothing."

Frank had heard that the old scientist, though a small man, was full of grit; and he could well believe it after hearing him speak.

And Bob, who crouched close at the side of his chum, gave Frank a nudge as if to say: "What do you think of that for nerve; isn't he the limit, though?"

Eugene laughed in his lazy way at being accused of evil intentions. Apparently he had about made up his mind that there was no use in longer beating about the bush. He had the old gentleman cooped up in this isolated place, where no assistance could possibly reach him. And backed up himself by a couple of reckless rascals, no doubt Eugene considered himself in a position to demand obedience.

"Well, my dear old gentleman," he remarked, and by the sound Frank imagined the fellow must be lighting a fresh cigarette, for he seemed to puff between the words; "just as you say, what's the use of carrying the joke on any longer. Let's be brutally

frank with each other from now on."

"Very well," replied the other, quickly. "Here's the situation then, in a nutshell. You suddenly appear before me, with a couple of men you claim are guides, but whom I have every reason to believe are low minions who are simply in your pay."

"Careful, Professor," Eugene broke in. "I'd advise you to go a bit slow. These men talk English, if they do look like Mexicans; and they may resent being called rascals."

"Let that pass," continued the hermit of Echo Cave, as though waving the matter aside contemptuously. "At any rate, you come suddenly into my habitation here, where I have spent many happy months in solitude, wrapped up in my studies of the people of the cliffs, who spent their lives in this very place, and who have left many traces of their customs behind. My work is almost finished, and in another week I expected leaving here for civilization, with a masterly book on the subject that has mystified the world for a century."

"Come to the point, Professor," broke in the man with the drawl; "and keep all this about your studies for those of your kind, who may appreciate them. We are concerned only about one thing; and that is a certain paper which you will presently take from its hiding-place, sign over to me, and then finish your labors here in peace. Understand that?"

"By good luck I was forewarned," the sharp voice went on; "and hence I made sure not to carry that document on my person. You have taken the liberty of searching every inch of these cliff houses since you arrived here, but without success. And allow me

to inform you, sir, that you might hunt until the day of doom without the slightest chance of finding that paper. It will never be yours!"

"Oh! I am not worrying in the least, Professor," Eugene remarked, coolly. "You will see a great light presently, I imagine."

"I have already done so, sir," came the snappy reply. "I am awakening to the fact that too long have I been neglecting my daughter; and that since this investment of mine has turned out so happily, it must become her property."

"Very nice and thoughtful of you, Professor," sneered Eugene; "and while I dislike to spoil such delightful plans, I fear I must do so. It is my nature to persist in anything I undertake. And I have made up my mind to possess that document; or make you pay dearly for my disappointment."

"Now you begin to descend to low threats, sir," cried the scientist, who did not seem to be a particle afraid; which proved the truth of the old saying that courage does not necessarily need a big tenement.

"We have hunted high and low through this series of ratholes, and without any success," observed Eugene, beginning to bite off his words, as though unable to much longer keep up the pretense of being calm. "What have you done with that old Moqui who came up here ahead of us?"

"Ah! you saw him enter the hidden stairway, then, and that was how you learned the way to reach these cliff dwellings?" exclaimed the other, as though one thing that had bothered him was now explained.

"Yes, that was how it came about," answered Eugene. "We have followed him like his own shadow for days, and yet he knew it not. Age must have dimmed the sight and hearing of the warrior. After we saw him pass upward, on investigating, we found the stone ladder in the crevice, and we waited several hours for him to come down, for we wanted to make sure of him first. As he did not appear, we finally could stand it no longer, and began to creep up here, inches at a time. Then we surprised you, and announced our intention of stopping with you."

"Yes," declared the scientist, bitterly. "First you pretended that you were sent out by a magazine to search for me, and get some points as to my great work here among the Zunis, the Hopis and the Moquis. But I soon discovered that you had another motive in trying to find Professor Oswald. You began to hint about your desire to possess stock in certain mines, and especially in one, the ownership of which I had carried in my hand for some years. Besides, I had been warned of your real intentions, and was on my guard."

"What became of that old Moqui Indian?" went on Eugene. "He climbed up, but he did not come down. We guarded that stairway closely every minute of the time. We have searched every room in this rabbit burrow that we could discover; but still he does not show up. Have you put him away in some place, the

entrance to which is hidden from our eyes?"

The only reply to this question was a scornful laugh. As Bob would say, it was as if the defiant little professor had flashed out.

"Don't you wish you knew?"

"Well, as the document and the Moqui have both vanished mysteriously, there's only one thing I can conclude," went on Eugene, between his teeth; "and that is they must be together at this very moment. Produce the one, and the other will be found not far away."

"What a wise man you are, sir!" remarked the little scientist, with a sneer.

"Perhaps I may prove a more successful one than you imagine," returned Eugene, between furious puffs. "Now, all the time I have been turning this old lot of rabbit burrows upside down I've been thinking a whole lot, Professor."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the other clapping his hands vigorously; "it will certainly do you a great amount of good, sir, for I imagine you seldom treat yourself to such a luxury as a good hard think. And may I inquire concerning the result of your labors in that line?"

"First of all, I sized you up as a mighty stubborn little bit of humanity."

"Oh! thank you, sir. Really, I am disposed to accept that as a compliment; for you see, a man of my profession could never succeed unless he had mastered his inclination for an easy life, and had become a stoic. And what else did you happen to

decide after this wonderful fit of thinking, may I ask, sir?"

"This: I made up my mind that once you declined to produce that document, to secure which I have come a great distance, and undergone considerable fatigue, that no threat of bodily harm would induce you to alter your decision!"

"It is really very interesting to hear you say this, sir," remarked the one who had lived in that lofty cave for many months, poring over the queer things that he unearthed from time to time in the ruins of the cliff dwellers' homes. "And after reaching such a conclusion as that, how comes it you persisted in trying to carry out your original intention?"

"Because I had another arrow in my quiver, Professor!" remarked Eugene, in a penetrating voice, that had a ring of anticipated triumph in it.

"H'm! torture, perhaps?" suggested the other; "but my dear sir, nothing of that nature could make me open my lips. I would die rather than submit to your proposals."

"But wait a bit, my old friend," chuckled Eugene; "there are two kinds of torture, that of the body, and of the mind!"

"I suppose you are right, sir," the little scientist remarked; "but honestly, now, I fail to understand the drift of your remarks."

"Then it shall be my pleasure to enlighten you, Professor," Eugene continued. "Pay attention to me now, and you will quickly have the cataract removed from your eyes. Is there anything in the world that you value above that document which you know by

this time has suddenly increased in value many times over?"

"I can think of but one thing—my daughter Janice!" replied the other, quickly. "And she is far beyond your reach in the East."

"Ah yes, quite true, Professor," the schemer went on; "more's the pity. But I think you make a mistake when you say that your daughter is the only thing on earth you value above the million that has suddenly dropped at your feet. How about this, Professor?"

He evidently held something up, for the other immediately uttered a startled cry.

"The manuscript of my forthcoming book on the mysteries of the cliff dwellers of the Grand Canyon! The hard work of three long years of exile! A labor of love that I expected will place my name among the front ranks of scientists!"

"Exactly!" sneered Eugene. "Just keep back, Professor, please. My men are not in any too pleasant a mood, and I would not answer for what they might do to you if you made the first effort to snatch this thing from my hands. Sit down again, and let us reason together."

"You wretch! Now I begin to see your game. You would threaten to destroy all my precious work of years, in order to obtain a miserable paper."

At that Eugene laughed loudly.

"It may be all you say, Professor," he remarked; "but it represents a snug little fortune that I'd like to possess. The future would be mighty pleasant, once I made that fine hit. And if it appears like so much

trash in your eyes, my dear man, there should no longer be any hesitation about giving it up to me. Think of the work you have done. It couldn't be replaced, Professor, I imagine? If now I should deliberately take a match out of my pocket like this, strike the same, and apply the busy little flame to these papers, the history of the Zunis, the Hopis, the Moquis, and their ancestors the cliff dwellers, would be forever lost to the world, wouldn't it?"

"Stop, you wretch!" cried the excited hermit, who was apparently greatly alarmed at seeing his precious manuscript in peril.

"Ah! do you then consent to open your mouth, and tell what I want to know?" demanded his tormentor.

"Is there no other way out?" asked the prisoner of the cave, hopelessly.

"None," replied Eugene, harshly. "My men are watching for the Moqui to show up every second, and with orders to shoot him on sight. So don't indulge in any hope that he can save you. There, the match has burned itself out; but remember, Professor, there are others, plenty of them, where that came from. I will give you one minute to produce that paper."

The scientist uttered a sigh that was plainly heard.

"I suppose I must yield to fate then," he said, dismally. "But you promise to return my papers to me after I have complied with your outrageous demands?"

"To be sure I will, and only too gladly," replied the other, eagerly. "I don't want to make the terms too hard on you, old man. Only you must choose now

between losing either the fortune, or your work of years. And perhaps we'd find the document after all, too. Speak up; where is it?"

"Examine that rock stool on which you are seated, and you will find that it can be moved," the voice of the hermit went on, steadily. "There, now that you have over-turned the seat, you discover something in the cavity. Keep your word, and place in my hands my precious packet of manuscript. Threats of taking my life might not move me; but when you place in peril that on which my reputation as a scientist must be based, it is too much. Thank you, sir; I see you are a man of your word. And I will sign the papers just as you may wish to have done."Contents

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CHAPTER XXII

TURNING THE TABLES—CONCLUSION

"Come on in, boys!"

Old Hank Coombs had stood all the while this intensely interesting dialogue was going on, as though glued to the spot. Indeed, not one of the party in the adjoining apartment of the cliff dwellers' cave but who had kept drinking in the conversation as though it fairly fascinated them.

But when the old cow puncher realized that to all appearances the outrageous scheme of Eugene had worked only too well, and that the precious document was even then in the hands of the smooth-tongued plotter, he suddenly awoke to the fact that perhaps they had waited a little too long.

Through the opening that served as a doorway between the apartments he jumped, followed immediately by Chesty, the two sheriffs, and finally the saddle boys, with Charley Moi bringing up the rear.

Of course their unexpected coming created quite a breeze among those whom they thus surprised. The little man who wore the goggles seemed delighted, and immediately started to place himself, and his precious manuscript, in a position where he might be covered by these welcome allies.

Spanish Joe and Abajo had started to draw their weapons; but when they discovered that they had already been covered, and recognized several among the newcomers as old companions on Circle Ranch, they promptly elevated their hands.

Eugene looked just as ugly as he felt. The prize had apparently been about to fall into his hands, like a ripe apple, when this change of front had to occur.

He kept his wits about him, however, and like the shrewd fox that he was, played the game to the limit for his own safety.

"Keep your friends back, Professor Oswald!" he shouted, as he managed to interpose what looked like a stone table between himself and the two sheriffs, who had their hungry eyes on him. "See

here, unless you promise on your word of honor not to proceed against me for this little game that didn't work, I'll tear this paper that's worth a million into little bits, no matter what happens to me afterwards! Do you hear, Professor?"

Frank caught his breath. After all the hard work which he and Bob had put in to save that precious document for Janice, was it to be lost?

He wanted to fly at the man, and snatch it from his hands; but did not dare; for only too well did he know that at the first hostile move Eugene would proceed to put his threat into execution.

To his intense surprise the little man with the big glasses seemed to be shaking as with a convulsion of laughter. It did not seem as though he worried about the fate of the document Eugene held so rigidly, while awaiting an answer to his demand.

"Do just as you please about that, my friend," chuckled the scientist. "If it would afford you any enjoyment to destroy the paper you are holding, I wouldn't cheat you out of it for the world."

"But—" stammered the defeated plotter, "it would render void all your right to taking possession of the San Bernardino mine, if this document were destroyed!"

"Oh! dear no, not at all," exclaimed the other, cheerily. "The fact is, that paper is even now on the way to the nearest post office, addressed to my friend and relative, Colonel Haywood, and is to go by registered mail."

"That Moqui Indian—" gasped Eugene, falling back helplessly.

"Exactly, he carries the packet, with orders to let nothing divert him from his one purpose," observed the scientist; while Bob nudged his chum in the side, unable to restrain his delight over the wonderful outcome of the knotty problem.

"How did he get out of here?" asked Eugene. "We watched the stone stairway every minute of the time, and he didn't go down that way."

"Oh! well, in my prowling around here, month after month," explained the hermit, "I managed to find a way the old cliff dwellers had for reaching the summit of the rocks, in case of necessity. The Moqui possessed the nerve required to crawl along the face of the cliff on a narrow ledge, and make the exit. He is miles away by now, and my daughter's inheritance is safe!"

"But—this paper here," asked Eugene, faintly; yet with curiosity governing his actions; "it seems to be a legal document, transferring a majority of the shares of the San Bernardino mine over to you if the further conditions are fulfilled within a certain time?"

"To be sure," laughed the other, "that was the first copy, you might say. There was some little defect about it, which we discovered after it was signed; so a second copy was made. If you had examined that one closer you would have found that the stamp necessary to make it legal was lacking. Somehow I happened to keep both copies, never dreaming how valuable this bogus one might prove."

Eugene threw the paper angrily to the floor.

"I'm done!" he cried, shaking his head. "Come on, Mr. Stanwix, if you are after me, and put the irons on;

though I don't think you've got any show of convicting me of any unlawful game. I claim to have come here to interview this famous old gentleman about the wonderful discoveries he has made connected with these people of the cliffs. I expected to make a big sum in selling the article to a magazine. Perhaps you might give me more or less trouble if you cared; but then it's another thing to show proof. And the professor wouldn't like to stay out here long months, waiting for the case to come on."

"That's where you're right, my tall friend," chirped the little scientist; "and as my work is almost finished I do not mean to let anything detain me from getting my book in the hands of the printers."

"Hear that, Mr. Stanwix; he says we're going to get off easy, and you might as well wish us good day right now?" exclaimed Eugene, nodding to the Yavapai sheriff, whom he appeared to know.

"Well, there's no hurry," remarked that official, pleasantly. "On the whole, my opinion is that it would be good policy to keep you locked up until we know that the document has reached the hands of the one to whom it was sent, and who is, I believe, the father of our friend, Frank, here."

"I agree with you, Mr. Sheriff!" declared the old hermit of the cave. "Because if he were set free I fear he would chase after the United States mail, if a single hope remained of stealing my property. Yes, kindly keep him by you until I come around with news."

Then he turned to the two cow punchers, who had stood moodily by, listening to all that was being said.

"I have no use for either of you men," he remarked, shaking a finger at them; "so the sooner you get down out of this place, the better. And while I continue to remain here a few days, I'm going to ask these brave lads to keep me company as a guard of honor. I've many things to show that may interest them. And I want to accompany Frank to his home a little later, if possible."

And so it was arranged. Old Hank and Chesty declared that their orders had been to stay as long as Frank and Bob did; so they also took up their quarters in the apartments that went to make up what the little old gentleman had called Echo Cave.

The two sheriffs took their prisoner away, to place him in some secure nook while they continued their search for the pair of scoundrels whom they had hunted so long, and were determined to get this time.

As they will not be seen again in this story it may only be right to say that Frank afterwards read an account in a paper of how the sheriffs finally rounded up the Arizona Kid and Big Bill Guffey, arresting them after a warm resistance in which all of the participants were wounded. And in due time doubtless the bad men who had so long defied the law, paid the penalty for their various crimes.

The saddle boys certainly did enjoy the few days they spent with the queer little hermit, while he completed his odd business in the rock dwellings of the ancient cliff men.

They found the echo which had caused him to give the place its name, and spent many an hour amusing themselves with its astonishing power to send back

sounds.

Finally Havasupai made his appearance, bearing with him a receipt, which proved that the precious packet had been sent by registered mail to Circle Ranch.

And then the professor announced himself as ready to take his departure from the scene of his two years' labors as a hermit, working in the interests of science.

"It's a wonderful old place," Bob declared as they took their last look at the Grand Canyon from the bluff in front of the hotel, ere mounting their horses and starting back home across the many miles that lay to the south and east before Circle Ranch might be reached.

"Yes, and we'll never forget what we've seen here," added Frank.

"Not to speak of the adventures that have come our way," remarked Bob. "Tell you the truth, Frank, I'll be mighty sorry when our trip is over, because I reckon it'll be a long time before we have another chance for such a great gallop."

But although of course he did not know it just then, Bob was very much mistaken when he made this prophecy. It happened that events were shaping themselves at that very hour in a way calculated to call upon the saddle boys to make another venture into the realms of chance, and mounted upon their prized horses too. What these events were, and how well Frank and Bob acquitted themselves when brought face to face with new adventures, will be found set forth in the next volume of this series,

under the title of, "The Saddle Boys on the Plains; Or, After a Treasure of Gold."

Old Hank and Chesty accompanied Professor Oswald by way of the railroad to a point nearest the ranch, where a vehicle would be awaiting them. He had been greatly interested in hearing how one of the bottles that he had thrown into the swift current of the Colorado had been eventually picked up in far distant Mohave City; and thus his note came into the hands of his relatives.

Of course Frank and his chum enjoyed the return gallop even more than when on the way to the Grand Canyon. They no longer had anything weighing on their minds, since the plans of Eugene Warringford had been broken up. And besides, the recollection of the astounding wonders they had gazed upon in that great canyon were bound to haunt them forever.

The little professor was waiting to see them at the ranch, before starting East to join his daughter, and get his wonderful book under way.

"I owe you boys more than I can tell," he declared, when he was saying good-bye; "and you needn't be at all surprised if a nice little bunch of gold mine stock comes this way for each of you, just as soon as my deal goes through, which will be in one more week."

He was as good as his word, and when the mine came under his authority he did send both Frank and Bob some stock, on which they could collect dividends four times a year.

Frank looked in vain for the coming of the old Moqui. Charley Moi did indeed turn up a little later, anxious to again meet the boys whom he had served

in the Grand Canyon. But Havasupai came not to Circle Ranch; and remembering how he had apparently been fleeing from the wrath of his people at the time they first met him, Frank and Bob could not but wonder whether the old warrior had gone back to his native village only to meet his fate at the hands of his people, according to Moqui law.

Here we may leave our two young friends, the saddle boys, for a short time, enjoying a well earned rest. But the lure of the great outdoors was so strongly rooted in their natures that it may be readily understood they could not remain inactive long; but would soon be galloping over the wide reaches, following the cowboys as they rounded up the herds, branded mavericks and young cattle, and picked out those intended for shipment to the great marts at Kansas City.

But while new scenes would likely interest Frank and Bob from time to time, they could never forget the magnificent views that had been stamped upon their memories forever while in the Grand Canyon of the mighty Colorado.Contents

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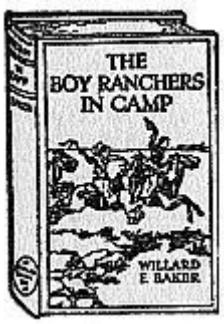
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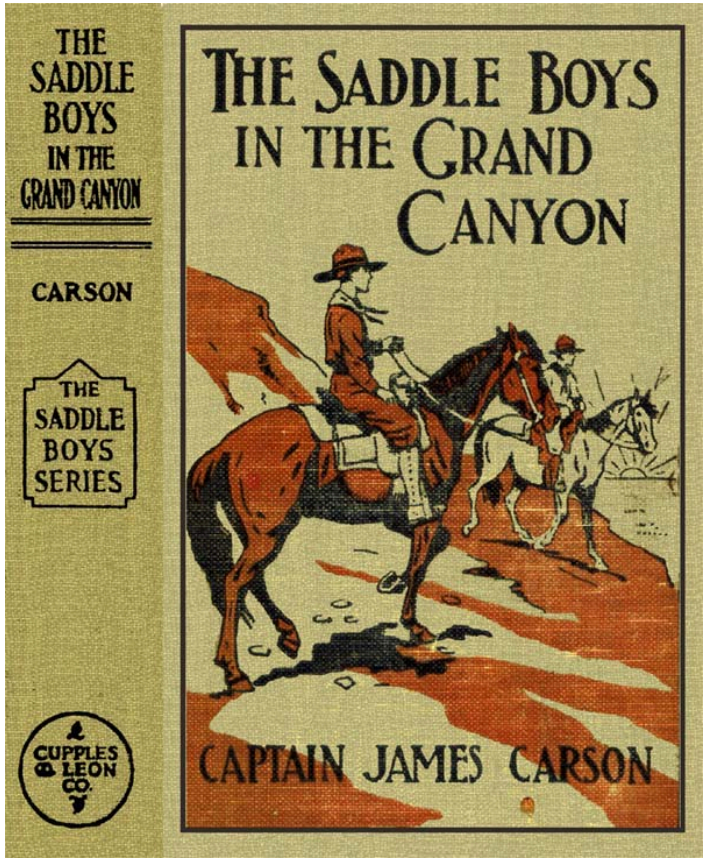
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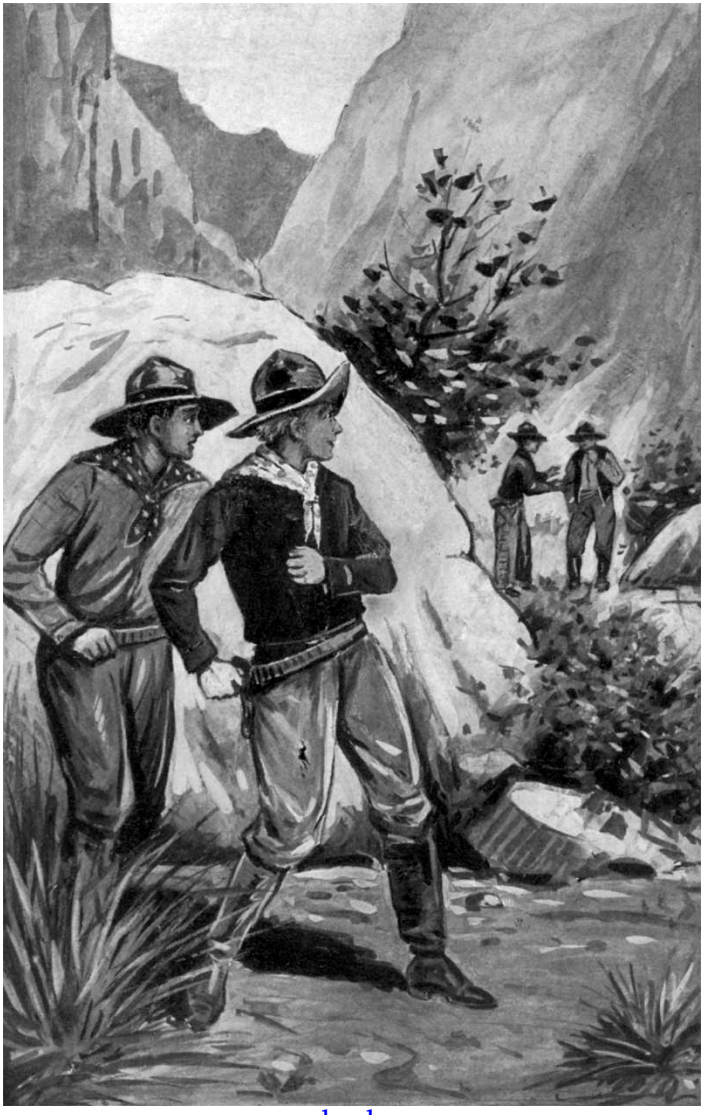
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