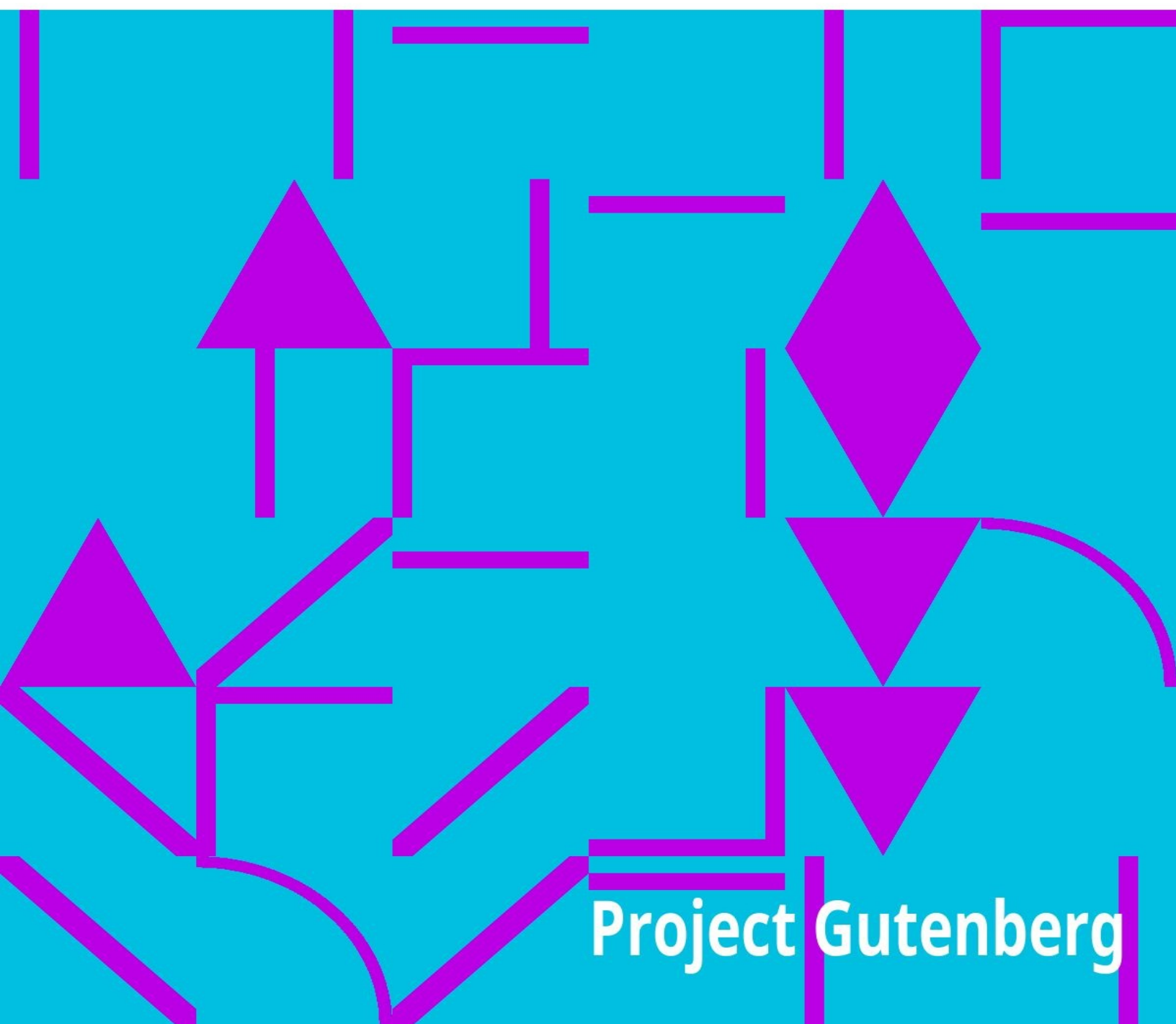


The Go Ahead Boys and Simon's Mine

Ross Kay



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THE GO AHEAD BOYS

AND

SIMON'S MINE

BY

ROSS KAY

Author of "Dodging the North Sea Mines," "With Joffre
on the Battle Line," "The Search for the Spy," "The
Go Ahead Boys on Smugglers' Island," "The Go
Ahead Boys and the Treasure Cave," "The
Go Ahead Boys and the Racing
Motor Boat," etc., etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

*I leave this rule for others when I'm dead:
Be always sure you're right—THEN GO AHEAD*

Davy Crockett's Motto

NEW YORK BARSE & HOPKINS PUBLISHERS



BOOKS FOR YOUNG MEN

THE GO AHEAD BOYS

By **Ross Kay**

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- 6 THE GO AHEAD BOYS AND SIMON'S MINE

(Other volumes in preparation)

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1917

The Go Ahead Boys and Simon's Mine

[In spite of their recent exertions and the loads they were carrying they all began to run. page 203](#)

In spite of their recent exertions and the loads they were carrying they all began

to run. page [203](#)



PREFACE

In this book the writer has endeavored to relate a story of stirring adventure and at the same time eliminate all sensationalism and improbable elements. The thread of the story was given him by a man who was familiar with the life and experiences of prospectors. Indeed, there is warrant for almost every event recorded in these pages.

The author has no desire to make his young heroes either preternaturally brilliant or possessed of too precocious brains. They are normal, healthy American boys fond of travel and adventure and naturally are meeting experiences such as come to men doing what they were doing in certain parts of our country. Self-reliance, determination, the ability to decide quickly and to act promptly, the strength of will which prevents one from abandoning too easily a course of action which has been decided upon,—all these are foundations upon which any successful life must rest. If these qualities can be acquired in the early years then life is just that much stronger and better.

The Go Ahead Boys, in spite of their many experiences are typical boys of America, and as such wish to express to the many friends they have made their hearty appreciation of the interest which has been expressed in their wanderings and adventures.

Ross Kay.



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THE GO AHEAD BOYS AND SIMON'S MINE



CHAPTER I

A GHASTLY DISCOVERY

"Look at that!"

Instantly Fred Button and his companion halted and the two boys stared at the sight to which their attention had been directed.

Even their guide, who at that time was several yards behind, hastened to join them and was almost as shocked by the sight as was his young companions.

"What is it? What is it?" whispered John.

"Can't you see?" retorted Fred. "It's a skeleton of a man. The skull is over there," he explained as he pointed to his right. "The other bones have been scattered. Probably some wolves or buzzards have been at work here."

For a brief time no one spoke. The bones before them were unquestionably those of a man. They had been bleached by the sun and their very whiteness increased the ghastly impression.

"What do you think has happened?" inquired John in a low voice.

Fred shook his head and turned questioningly to the guide.

Zeke, the name by which the guide was commonly called, also shook his head as if the mystery was not yet solved. Without speaking he approached the place where the skeleton had been discovered, and a moment later with his foot unearthed a sleeve of a coat which had been buried from sight by drifting sands of the desert.

Stooping, Zeke pulled hard and soon drew forth the coat. The garment itself was somewhat torn, but still was in a fair state of preservation.

Turning to his companions Zeke said abruptly, "Better look around, boys, and see if you can find something else. My impression is that you'll find a set of prospector's tools not far away."

In response to the suggestion the two boys at once busily began their search. A

shoe, worn and plainly torn by strong and savage teeth, was brought to Zeke. Later a pick ax, spade and hammer also were discovered and added to the pile.

Meanwhile Zeke had been searching the garment which he had discovered and in one pocket he had found a small book which evidently interested him greatly.

Thrusting his discovery into his pocket, Zeke turned to the boys and said. "What do you think? Shall we bury these bones or shall we try to take them back?"

"Back where?" inquired Fred. "To our camp or back to civilization?"

"I shouldn't do either," suggested John. "We can bury the bones here and mark the spot so that if we ever find out who the man was we can tell his friends where they will find what is left of him. What do you think?" he added, turning to the guide as he spoke.

"I think that's the best thing to do," replied Zeke quietly. "Personally I haven't any strong feeling about what happens to my carcass after I have left it."

"Have you any idea who or what this man was?" Fred asked.

"I found this in his pocket," responded Zeke, displaying the little book he had taken from the coat.

"What is it? What is it?" inquired Fred eagerly.

"It looks to me like it was a diary. Some of it is missing and some is faded, but it looks to me on the whole as if the man was keeping an account every day of what he was doing and where he went."

"Can't you find his name in there somewhere?" inquired John.

"I haven't yet. I have a suspicion that these bones belong to old Simon Moultrie. He was an odd stick and I guess was more than half crazy. He was prospecting most of his life, leastwise as soon as he came out to these regions. The funny part of it all was that he wouldn't go with anybody and wouldn't let anybody go with him. Once or twice he thought he had struck it rich, but I never heard that anything panned out."

"What makes you think the dead man was Simon Moultrie?"

"Mostly because he hasn't been heard from of late. It must be seven or eight months since he has shown up. You see he used to come in twice a year for

supplies and then he would start out prospecting and not show up again for six months, or until his supplies ran low."

"How old a man was he?" inquired John.

"Sixty-three or sixty-six, I should reckon," replied Zeke glibly. "He was a bit off, same as I was telling you, and had just gone dippy on the subject of finding a mine."

"And you say he did find one or two?"

"He thought he did find one or two, but when he came to follow them up, why the stuff didn't assay worth a cent, or else it was just a little pocket he had happened to find. What do you think ought to be done with these bones?" again inquired the guide.

"The best thing to do is to bury them and mark the spot just as John said," said Fred.

The suggestion was speedily acted upon and taking the spade which had been found Zeke soon dug a grave in the soft soil. Then carefully and silently the bones of the unfortunate man were collected and covered. A bleached limb of a mesquite tree which had doubtless been torn away and been carried far from its location by one of the terrific wind storms that occasionally sweep over the region, was thrust into the ground at the head of the little grave. Next a piece of paper was taken from his pocket by John. Upon it he wrote, "The grave of an unknown man, supposedly Simon Moultrie. The bones were found July 13, 1914, by Fred Button, John Clemens and Zeke Rattray."

"Don't you think," inquired John, "that I had better put our addresses on this paper too?"

"Good scheme," replied Fred.

Accordingly the permanent address of each member of the party was added to the brief statement.

"Do you suppose we'll ever hear from anybody?" inquired John in a low voice.

"I don't know," answered Fred, shaking his head as he spoke. "It's one of those things you never can tell about."

Fred Button was one of the four boys who among their friends and themselves,

for the matter of that, were commonly known as the Go Ahead Boys. They were schoolmates and classmates and were nearly of the same age, John being the only one who was eighteen, while his three companions were each seventeen years old.

In various parts of their country they had been spending their recent vacations together. The list of books given at the beginning of this story will indicate the various parts of the country in which they had met their adventures.

At the present time, however, when this story opens, they were nearly two thousand miles from home.

Across the continent they had journeyed together and together also they had spent ten days viewing the wonders of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. The apparently perilous ride on the backs of donkeys down Bright Angel Trail had been greatly enjoyed, as well as certain other inspiring expeditions which the boys had made, sometimes in company with others and sometimes with a single guide for the quartet.

So enthusiastic had the young travelers become over their experiences that at last they had obtained the consent of their parents to make an expedition of their own. Two guides were secured who were familiar with the entire region and two strong skiffs were purchased. In these boats the boys had planned to follow a part of the dangerous Colorado River. They had no desire to incur the perils that belonged to many of its swirling rapids and tossing waters. In other places, however, the river was comparatively safe and there the boys planned to follow the course of the stream with their strong and heavy little boats.

Inasmuch as Fred's father was a prominent railway official he had obtained for the boys certain privileges which otherwise they might not have had. Fred himself was the most enthusiastic member of the party. Shorter than any of his comrades his weight was still nearly as great as any of the four. His solid, sturdy little frame was capable of great endurance and there were few experiences he enjoyed more than tiring his long, lanky comrade John, who as one of his friends brutally expressed it was as much too tall as Fred was too short.

Out of consideration for Fred's physique, among his friends he was known as Pigmy and Pee Wee, the former title sometimes being shortened into Pyg.

John, however, rejoiced in his name, or if he did not rejoice, at least was accustomed to respond to the appellation, String.

The remaining members of the little band were George Washington Sanders, one of the most popular boys in the school in which all four were students. Frequently he was referred to as Pop, a distinction by which his friends indirectly expressed their admiration for one who was laughingly referred to as the "Papa of his Land," just as the great man for whom he was named was the "Father of his Country."

Grant was the member of the Go Ahead Boys who easily led in whatever he attempted. In the hundred yards dash he had established the record of the school. His standing in scholarship was high, while his fund of general information was so extensive that he had received the appellation, Socrates. This nickname, however, recently had been shortened by the time-saving lads and Grant was more frequently called Soc than by the name which his parents had given him. His ability as an athlete was scarcely less than his success in the classroom. And yet Grant by no means was one who withdrew from out-of-door life, or enjoyed less than his friends the stirring adventures in which they all had shared.

Zeke Rattray, the guide, was a tall, bronzed, powerful young fellow about twenty-five years of age. For several years he had dwelt in the region, serving as guide for various exploring parties or prospectors. The Go Ahead Boys had smiled incredulously when Zeke had informed them that when he came originally to the state because he was expected to die "back east," (in Iowa) of tuberculosis. "I weighed just one hundred and nineteen pounds when I landed out here," he explained, and then as he stood erect and threw back his powerful shoulders his young companions laughed. It did not seem possible that the strapping young giant, who now weighed at least two hundred pounds, ever had been reduced to such a condition as he described.

The immense strength of Zeke had never impressed the Go Ahead Boys more than when he finished his simple task of interring the bones which had been discovered by Fred and John.

"If I should meet him on the street alone," whispered Fred to John, "I should kindly give him the whole sidewalk. I believe that he could do what Grant says he can. Just look at those hands."

"What does Grant say he can do?"

"Why he declares that Zeke can bend the barrel of a rifle."

CHAPTER II

A CLUE

The thoughts of the two boys speedily were withdrawn from the physical prowess of their guide. At that moment he had again taken the little book he had found in the pocket of the coat of the dead man, and, opening it, said, "I'm not sure, boys, whether this man was Simon Moultrie or not. It sounds just like him, but there's so little writing that I can't tell."

"What does it say?" inquired John eagerly.

"Why, it's a diary. Some days he didn't write anything and other days when he did write, the pages are torn and the writing is so blurred that no one can make out what he means."

"Let me see it," said Fred, extending his hand as he spoke.

Taking the little book Fred saw that it apparently was a diary as Zeke had suggested. It was for the year 1914. One entry was quite distinct wherein the unfortunate man had recorded the story of his journey to Tombstone for fresh supplies.

When he commented upon this fact, Zeke said, "That's what makes me think it might have been Simon. As I said to you he only came in twice each year and then stayed just long enough to get supplies to last him for the next six months. Of course he may have come in when I didn't know anything about it."

"When did he make his trips?" inquired Fred.

"Usually about October and April. He didn't like to lose much time from his prospecting so he would come in just about the time the snow was gone and get fitted out for his work that summer."

"If he went in last April," suggested John, "he must have lost some of his supplies."

"Nobody knows just where he made his head quarters. It's more'n likely though that the coyotes, if they could talk, might be able to tell you more about what

became of old Simon's bacon than any living man could."

"Here's something!" exclaimed Fred excitedly. "This is worth while," he added, after he had looked carefully through the various pages of the diary and in the back part of the book, distinct from the numbered pages, he had found the following entry:

"June 1st.

At last I have found it. It seems good after twenty-three years of disappointment to be able to say that I have found a good lead and that there is a sure enough vein here. I thought I was on the right trail when I was in the middle of Thorn's Gulch and I found pretty soon that I had struck it just right. I followed the lead four days and every day I was more convinced that I had found something at last worth while. The assay will be great. Soon I shall have all the money I need, and my poor old sister will no longer be broken hearted for me. I was determined to find a mine and now I have one that is worth all my long working and waiting."

"Any name signed to that?" inquired Zeke quickly when Fred ceased reading.

"No."

"Then you can't be sure it's Simon's."

"Yes, you can, if the book belonged to him, as you think it did. It's plain this Simon, if that was his name, was an educated man."

"How do you know that?" inquired John.

"Why, the words are all spelled as they ought to be and his penmanship is good. The only thing is that there isn't a name signed nor any sign that will show who wrote it. Hello!" he added quickly, "here's something on the next page that ought to interest us."

"What is it?" inquired John, approaching and looking over the shoulder of his friend.

"It looks to me like a map," said Fred thoughtfully. "Here's a place that is marked Thorn's Gulch and over here on one side is a spot marked Two Crow Tree, and a little further up on the same side is Tom's Thumb. Across the Gulch is a place

marked Split Rock. Not far away from it is another mark which he calls his stake. Then right opposite it are three other marks,— $\frac{1}{2}$ m N.E., $\frac{1}{4}$ m S.E., $\frac{1}{4}$ m N.N.E. Here's a picture of it," Fred added.

[Map](#)

"That's interesting," said Zeke thoughtfully. "I know where Thorn's Gulch is."

"How far is it from here?" inquired Fred.

"Oh, I should say it is a good forty miles."

"Is it hard to get there?"

"I haven't ever been this way," replied Zeke, "but I'm thinkin' we can make it."

"In which direction does the Gulch run?"

"It's a funny place," explained Zeke; "it runs mostly north and south. It takes a sharp turn at the lower end."

"Probably that was to let out the water that had been caught in there."

"Probably," said Zeke scornfully. The guide had slight confidence in the explanations which the boys had to give for the formation of the great chasms found near the Colorado River and its tributaries. "I'm thinkin' that the One who made that Canyon could just as well make it the way it is as the way you say."

"No doubt about that," Fred laughingly had conceded. "It isn't a question of ability, it is simply how it was done."

"According to what I can find out," said Zeke, "there seems to be styles in explainin' things, same as there is in clothes. My wife doesn't want to wear the dress she had two years ago even if it isn't worn out very much. When I ask her what's the matter with it she says it's out o' style. It's the same way with explaining how this great hole in the ground came here. There seems to be a sort of 'style' about it. Some people say it's erosion, others say it's the work of a big glacier. Then too I have heard some say as how it was neither and some said it was both. That doesn't make any difference though, but I know where Thorn's Gulch is and I can go there if you want to."

"If Simon found a mine what was it?"

"Can't say," replied Zeke sharply. "It might be gold, it might be zinc and more

likely might be copper. Most likely of all though is that he didn't find no mine 't all."

"There isn't anything more in the diary about it anyway," said Fred, who now had looked through all the pages without discovering any further description. "How long is Thorn's Gulch?"

"Somewhere between fifteen and twenty miles," answered Zeke.

"Whew!" whistled John. "If we're going to look up the lost mine we'll have some 'looking' to do I'm thinking."

"Right you are," said Fred soberly. "Do you think we had better try to find this place?"

"That's for you to say," said Zeke. "It's all one to me whether I help you find a copper mine or whether I keep you from, tipping over in the boat. I'm inclined to think the boat business is a good deal safer than the other."

"But we can't throw away a clue like this," protested Fred. "Here it is," he added, again looking at the map. "Two Crow Tree and Tom's Thumb and then across the Gulch about half way between the two places on the other side is Split Bock and then back of that is the stake. I don't know what these figures mean."

"I do," said John confidently, "it's a half-mile northeast, then you go a quarter of a mile southeast and then you turn and go a quarter of a mile north northeast. Why, it's just as simple as the multiplication table."

Zeke smiled and shook his head and although he did not speak it was plain that he did not accept John's explanation of the somewhat mysterious figures as correct.

"Did you ever hear of Two Crow Tree?" asked John.

"I never did," said Zeke solemnly.

"Well, did you ever hear of Tom's Thumb?"

"Can't say that I have."

"Then, it's plain," said John, winking at Fred as he spoke, "that we'll have to get somebody who is more familiar than you are, Zeke, with this part of the country."

"Huh!" snorted Zeke. "Don't you believe it. There ain't nobody in these diggin's that knows the country like I do."

"But you don't know where Two Crow Tree is or Tom's Thumb, to say nothing about Split Rock on the opposite side of the canyon."

"That doesn't mean that I can't find them," retorted Zeke. "You mustn't forget either that those names may be the ones that Simon gave the places. They may not be on the map at all and nobody else may ever have called them by those names."

"Well, shall we try to find the place? That's the question," said John somewhat impatiently.

"Not until the other boys and Pete come back here."

Pete was the name of the second guide and on most occasions Zeke professed to despise his judgment and belittle his information.

"Oh, Pete will do just what you say is the thing to be done," said Fred, winking at John as he spoke.

"That 's likely," assented Zeke. "All the same I'm not going to start off with you two boys and leave the other two here for Pete to look after. I'm afraid Pete couldn't keep off the coyotes, to say nothing of the buzzards."

"Zeke," said Fred abruptly, "how long do you think it took the coyotes and the buzzards to strip those bones that we found?"

"Not more than a half-hour."

"What?"

"That's right," said Zeke positively. "A job like that doesn't take a half-dozen coyotes any time at all. And I'm thinkin' they had to divide with the buzzards anyway."

John, who apparently for a few minutes had not been taking much interest in the conversation now looked up from the place where he was standing and said sharply, "I'm for looking for that lost mine."

"That's a good one," laughed Zeke.

"What is a good one?" demanded John tartly.

"Your lost mine. There wasn't any mine anyway. All there was to it was a prospect. Old Simon maybe thought he had found a lead, but unless 'twas a good deal surer than any other one he ever found, it wasn't worth much, but all the same I'm for tryin' to find it if the other boys and Pete agree to it."



CHAPTER III

TWO UNBIDDEN GUESTS

By this time the boys and their guide had returned to the place where they had left their companions. Their two companions already were there and the return of their friends was greeted by a shout from both Grant and George.

Other things, however, speedily were forgotten when Fred related the story of their gruesome discovery in the sheltered place or cave on the sloping side of the mountain.

Both George and Grant at once united in declaring that the decision which their friends already had made to seek for the lost mine was to be highly commended. Again and again the diary was inspected and the part wherein Simon Moultrie had recorded his discovery of the great lead was read aloud again and again.

Pete, the guide, a silent, bronzed man of thirty, openly scoffed at the idea that any discovery worth while would follow their attempts to find the spot indicated in the diary of the lost prospector.

"Nobody knows," declared Pete, "whether you found the bones of Simon Moultrie or not."

"That doesn't make any difference," declared Fred sturdily, "if we can only find the place he spoke of. Zeke says he knows where Thorn's Gulch is—"

"Huh!" interrupted Pete. "I guess ev'rybody in this part o' th' country knows where Thorn's Gulch is."

"But," continued Fred, winking at John as he spoke, "he doesn't know where Two Crow Tree is nor just where Tom's Thumb is located. Of course you know, so we came back to the camp."

"If I don't know I can find 'em, I guess," assented Pete sturdily.

"That's just what Zeke said," laughed Fred. "What we're looking for isn't somebody who can *find* them, but somebody who knows where they are."

"Don't you worry none about that," said Pete. "We'll find the spot if there's any such place."

The camp was located in a most attractive spot, high above the roaring river. It was on the sloping side of the towering border. A natural pathway lead to the plateau above, while a spring of clear water was conveniently near for their needs.

In spite of the July day the air was cool and the smoke of their camp-fire was carried swiftly down the canyon. The sublime sight of the Grand Canyon was before them, although from their camp they were unable to see the largest of all the great gulches.

The sides of the various canyons, which the swiftly flowing Colorado had made, were carved and fretted almost beyond belief. The various strata of rock and soil that had been exposed to view by the centuries of action of the mighty river were marvelously tinted. Indeed, George declared that the blues, the grays, and reds and mauves were only less impressive than the overwhelming size of the Grand Canyon itself. Grant, however, was positive that the sculptured sides of the vast hole were equal in interest to the coloring and the glory of the canyon itself.

With every changing angle of the sun the colors and shadings also changed. Again and again the boys had marked the shadows formed every morning and evening and they laughingly announced and described the various resemblances which they had traced.

The Grand Canyon itself is only a part of the long canyon, in places a mile deep and in certain places a score of miles from side to side, through which the mighty river has forced its way.

The Colorado River starting in Southern Utah is formed by the junction of the Green and the Grand Rivers. The former rising in Northern Utah, traverses also a part of Wyoming, while the latter river traces the western Rockies in Colorado.

Of this wonderful stream Major Powell, the first to descend the river, wrote, "Ten million cascade brooks unite to form a hundred rivers. Beside that, cataracts and a hundred roaring rivers unite to form the Colorado, a mad turbid stream."

One distinguished writer, describing the mighty canyon, said it is "most mysterious in its depth than the Himalayas in their height. It is true that the

Grand Canyon remains not the eighth but the first wonder of the world. There is nothing like it."

Our special interest, however, is in the four boys and their two guides, who now were assembled in the camp. Every boy was bronzed and toughened by his exposure and labors. Packs were to be seen which had been brought into camp on the backs of the various members of the party. Each pack contained about sixty pounds of food and materials necessary for the expedition. In addition, guns had been brought, fishing rods were visible and other implements, which were a part of the camp life were on every side.

Burros had been used to carry some of the burdens until the boys had entered within the canyon itself. Then the burros with the Indian boy who had accompanied them as far as the border, turned back to the place from which they had come. It was not believed that sufficient material would be left after the expedition was completed to require again the services of the donkeys.

After supper the boys stretched themselves on the ground near the fire which was still burning.

"We have kept together all the way as far as this," suggested Fred, "but I'm wondering now if we wouldn't do better if we divided into two parties."

"What for?" demanded Grant, sitting quickly erect.

"I've just been talking to Zeke and asking him whether he didn't think we would need more supplies than we have before we came back."

"Nonsense," said John. "We have all we want. It isn't going to take us more than a year to find that place Simon Moultrie told about. If we don't get some trace of it within a few days I'm not in favor of keeping up the search and for that reason I don't believe we'll want any more supplies."

"Nobly spoken!" laughed George. "It sounds like the supreme wisdom of Soc. What do you say about it?" he added, turning to Grant as he spoke.

"I know just enough to know that I don't know anything about it," answered Grant.

"But what do you think?" protested Fred.

"I think we may need more than we have. What does Zeke say about it?" replied

Grant.

"Zeke doesn't think we had better divide again. He says that if we need supplies we can go in for them, but the probabilities are that we shall be back long before any such lack comes. He thinks we had better all keep together. There's safety in numbers sometimes, you know."

"I agree," said Grant, "if that is Zeke's opinion. Still when we get on the ground where our real search begins I'm of the opinion that we'll get along better and faster if we make two parties instead of one."

"There will be time enough to talk about that when we have to," laughed Fred. "Look yonder," he abruptly added, pointing as he spoke to two men who could be seen coming down the natural approach to the camp. "Where did they come from? Who are they? What do you suppose they want? You don't suppose it is somebody coming in with a message of bad news for us, do you?"

No one replied to the questions of the startled boy, but every member of the party at once turned and keenly watched the approaching men. Both were walking, although Zeke explained in a low voice that doubtless they had burros somewhere not far away.

In a brief time the two strangers approached the camp and immediately made themselves known.

"I've seen both those men before," whispered Fred excitedly.

"Where?" inquired John.

"They were on the train when we came. They sat right across the aisle from us. I'm sure they are the same men for I never shall forget the scar on the left cheek of that short one."

The two approaching strangers were now so near that it was possible for John to confirm the statement of his friend. A long livid scar, extending almost entirely across his left cheek, was visible on the face of the younger man. His companion was taller, evidently at least ten years older and had a face which was not altogether prepossessing at first sight.

"Yes, sir," repeated Fred. "I saw both those fellows on the car the day before we left the train."

"Evenin'," called the man with the scar.

"Same to you," retorted Zeke.

"We're doin' a bit o' prospecting or at least we expect to do some and got caught up here in a gully which we can't very well get across where we are. We saw the smoke of your fire and thought we might come down and perhaps you would invite us to spend the night with you."

"You're entirely welcome," said Zeke. The guide's manner was quiet and there was nothing to belie the apparent cordiality of the statement he had just made.

The young campers, however, were by no means convinced that their unbidden visitors were parties whom they could welcome.

Already the sun was below the western cliffs, although its beams in certain places still flashed between the mountains and tinged the sides of the adjacent canyon with myriad dancing and delicate colors.

Hospitality, however, was a part of the life on the plains and seldom was any unexpected guest turned away from a human habitation or company. Suspicious though the boys certainly were they did not offer any protest and in response to their invitation to share in the remnants of their evening meal, the two strangers at once accepted and seated themselves not far from the camp-fire.

It was not until they had eaten that they explained more in detail who and what they were. Not long before this time they had come from Tombstone to search for a mine of whose existence they declared they had received information from certain somewhat vague reports.

"The trouble is, Mr. Stranger," one of them explained, "that we don't know just where this mine is. There was a report in Tombstone that an old prospector up here had struck it rich, but that he died or at least hadn't been heard from since the report started. The Indians say that he was looking for his mine in a part of the country where the Great Spirit has forbidden the children o' men to come. They declare that this prospector didn't die a natural death."

"What did he die of?" inquired Zeke.

"Why they say that no man ever goes into that region and comes out alive, or if he does happen to succeed in that, he can't dodge the bad luck which is sure to catch him."

"And do you want to find the place?" inquired Fred quizzically.

"We do and if there is any such place we're going to find it."

The four boys meanwhile had glanced apprehensively at one another when they heard the reference to the discovery of a mine which soon had been lost. The statement too that the original prospector was dead increased the mystery as well as the interest of the Go Ahead Boys.

What would these strangers say if they knew that already in the possession of the Go Ahead Boys was the statement of an old prospector who very likely was the very one to whom the unwelcome guests had frequently referred?



CHAPTER IV

TWO THIEVES IN THE NIGHT

The question was speedily answered when, to the dismay of his companions, John said abruptly, "That must be something like the man whose body we found to-day."

Instantly both strangers were staring at the boy who had spoken. Even in the dim light their intense interest was plainly manifest. Zeke was doing his utmost by absurd motions to impress upon the mind of John the fact that he must say nothing more.

The two visitors at the camp, however, were too deeply interested to lose the opportunity. Speaking slowly and as if he was not especially interested, the man with the scar on his face said in a drawling manner, "Where was that, sonny?"

"I don't know just where it was," replied John. "We found the body or rather the bones of a man to-day."

"What did you do with them?"

"Buried them, of course." John was aware now that his friends were angry at his uncalled-for statements. His obstinacy, however, had been aroused and he was ignoring all the signs and motions that were given him from every side.

"Wasn't there anything besides the bones?" inquired the visitor.

"They had been picked clean. Zeke here thought that the coyotes and buzzards had been at work."

"Probably had. You didn't find any clothes?"

"I believe we did get a coat and a pair of shoes."

"Would you mind letting me look at them?"

John turned to the guide and said, "Let them see that coat, Zeke. There's no harm in that," he said loudly as he turned to his companions.

Reluctantly the guide displayed the coat which he had dug from the sand and eagerly both visitors inspected it.

For a moment no one spoke and then the man with the scar said abruptly, "I'm sure that's old Sime Moultrie's coat."

Again there was a brief silence before the man continued, "He was a strange duffer. I have seen him off an' on the last fifteen year. He never gave up his search for a mine and I guess he never found one. Strange how a man will keep on as if he was all possessed when he has once got started prospecting."

"What do you suppose happened to him?" inquired Fred.

"There's no tellin' as long as I didn't see the skeleton. Zeke here ought to know."

"I don't know anything 'bout it," said Zeke gruffly.

"Well, the possibilities are," said the man with the scar, "that he took sick an' died. He must have been all alone and nobody can tell how long he may have been sick. As I rec'lect, he used to come in about ev'ry Spring and Fall for fresh supplies. He wouldn't 'low any one to go with him and he didn't have much to say to any one when he came in to the town."

"Did you find any papers in the coat?" inquired the second stranger, who up to this time had seldom spoken.

"Not very much. We couldn't find anything with his name on it," explained Zeke, "so we couldn't be sure whose bones they were."

"You didn't find any papers at all?" again inquired the man.

"We didn't find anything that showed who he was," said Zeke slowly, "same as I told you."

"The coat then is the only thing you have got to identify him with?"

"We found a pick-axe and spade and hammer," explained Zeke.

"Have you got them here?"

"Yes, they're somewhere about the camp. I don't know just where we did put them."

"Better let us have a look at them."

"It's too dark to see them now. Wait 'till mornin'."

"We aren't going to wait until morning," laughed the man with the scar. "We've got a long hike and we thought we would make part of it before sun-up. It's a good deal cooler travelin' at night, and especially when there's a good moon, than it is to crawl across those tablelands when the thermometer is about a hundred and ten in the shade; and there isn't any shade."

"Better wait until mornin'," said Zeke abruptly.

"No, we're goin' now. Come on, Jim," the man added, as he turned to his companion. "It's time for us to be movin'."

Without further words the two strange visitors departed from the camp and soon disappeared along the winding way that lead to the summit.

"That's a nice thing you did, Jack!" exclaimed Fred angrily as soon as the two men were gone.

"What's the harm?" retorted John. "I didn't tell them anything about any lost mine."

"You didn't have to," retorted Fred, "after what they said. They had heard about a man dying, though how they ever knew beats me. And they believed that he was the man who was reported to have found a great lead."

"What of it?"

"A good deal of it," joined in Grant. "You have given them an idea and they won't forget it."

"What good is an idea?" demanded John. "They haven't any paper and they can't find the place without it."

"All the same," said Fred, "I'm sorry you said anything about Simon Moultrie."

"But I didn't say anything about him," protested John. "They were the ones that did most of the talking. I thought if I told them about the bones we found this afternoon that perhaps they would talk some more and say something that would help us."

"Great! Great!" laughed George scornfully. "You 'done noble,' Jack. If those men don't find the place, you may rest easy that they will keep track of us for a

while."

"Why will they?"

"Because they'll want to see if we found anything in the pocket of Simon Moultrie's coat that would give us any clue to the place where he had made his great discovery. They'll watch us for a while anyway and if we don't do anything, they may make up their minds that we haven't found anything; but if we begin to do anything like making a search among the mountains, you mark my words those two fellows will show up again just as sure as you're born."

"We'll know about that later," said John.

For an hour the boys remained seated about their camp-fire, talking over the unexpected visit of the two strangers and the marked interest they had manifested in John's story. Conversation gradually ceased and for a time the Go Ahead Boys were chiefly interested in the fantastic figures cast by the flames and in the marvelous tints of the clouds as the moonlight was shining through them. Nearby was the bottomless gulf. They were unable to see the mighty chasm, but the knowledge that they were near its brink produced a feeling all its own.

At last however, Fred declared it was time for the Go Ahead Boys to turn in. His own example was speedily followed and in a brief time silence rested over the camp.

The motionless figures on the blankets, with every boy sleeping with his feet turned toward the fire, which now had died down, presented a sight which would have appealed strongly to their distant friends in the east had they been able to see it. Seldom did any figure stir and the weird silence was unbroken save by an occasional sigh of the wind as it swept past the dwarfed trees on the mountain side.

How much time had elapsed Fred did not know when he was suddenly aroused and quickly sat erect. For a moment he was unable to determine just where he was but the sight of his sleeping companions soon recalled the events of the preceding day, and, satisfied, he was about to resume his place on his blanket when he was startled by the sight of two crouching figures approaching the camp. They came from behind the buttress of rock about thirty feet from the fire. Both figures were crouching low and moving slowly and with extreme caution.

Hastily Fred resumed his place on the blanket, having instantly decided not yet to awaken his comrades. He was eager to discover what the purpose of the men in visiting the camp was.

His heart was beating rapidly as he peered intently at the men. They had now drawn close to the camp and again had stopped to make certain that their approach had not been discovered.

Still moving silently they began to circle the place, moving in opposite directions. Several times each stopped to examine what he had discovered in the pockets of a coat he had found. Apparently, however, the search was not altogether satisfactory. After they had completely circled the camp, noiselessly as they had approached the two men withdrew.

It was evident that they had taken nothing of value and Fred indeed was almost ready to conclude that he had been dreaming or that his eyes had deceived him. The silence was still unbroken save by the occasional sigh of some heavy sleeper. The passing clouds were still reflecting the light of the moon and in the dim light Fred again thought he perceived the approach of the two crouching men.

In a moment, however, he was convinced that he was mistaken. Had he made the same mistake before? Had he thought he had seen, without actually seeing, two men creep into the camp? Almost convinced that he had been dreaming, Fred did not awaken any of his comrades, thereby escaping any ridicule that might be heaped upon him for disturbing their slumbers and in a few minutes was himself again soundly asleep.



CHAPTER V

A START AND A LOSS

When morning came Fred was still uncertain whether his experience of the preceding night had been a dream or a reality. As he glanced at the enthusiastic countenances of his friends he was almost convinced that what he had seen had been the shadowy figures of a dream. Besides he was fearful of the bantering which the Go Ahead Boys might bestow upon him if it was discovered that there was no basis for his statement.

However, as Fred deemed the matter too important to be entirely ignored, he said while the boys were seated about the improvised table, "Were any of you fellows up last night?"

"Not guilty," laughed George. "I was asleep almost before I had stretched out."

The other two boys also declared that their slumbers had not been disturbed and that neither had wandered about the camp.

"What's the trouble, Freddie?" laughed Grant. "You act either as if you don't believe us or something happened."

"Well, I'm not sure, but something did happen," said Fred slowly.

"What was it? Tell us your story," demanded John.

"Either I dreamed or else I surely saw two men moving about the camp. There was a moon and the place was almost as light as day."

"Who were the men?" demanded Grant.

"Perhaps they weren't 'men' at all," replied Fred, who was certain now that he was safe from ridicule.

"Do you think they were our visitors?"

"Yes," replied Fred promptly, "that's exactly what I do think."

"What were they doing?" asked John.

All the Go Ahead Boys were now deeply interested in Fred's statement and eager to hear what more he might say.

"I saw the two figures moving about the camp and at first I thought they were some of you. Pretty soon, however, I made up my mind that they weren't. I turned over on my side and pretended to be asleep, though I was watching these men all the time."

"Why didn't you wake us up?" demanded John.

"Because I wasn't sure that I myself didn't need waking up."

"You're a great lad," said John scornfully. "Zeke," he called, turning to the guide, "Fred thinks he saw those two men that were in our camp last night come back."

The guide looked keenly at Fred, and it was plain he instantly was interested and perhaps alarmed.

"What were they doin'?" he asked slowly.

"Why, they were moving about the camp," replied Fred. "It didn't seem to me they were here more than five or ten minutes but just as I was about to call you or the boys they disappeared."

Zeke said no more as he turned at once to the place where the garments and implements of Simon Moultrie had been placed.

The four boys were aware now that the guide was somewhat alarmed and instantly all four ran to join him.

"You see it is gone," said Zeke blankly as he displayed the empty pockets in the coat of the dead prospector.

"Gone!" exclaimed the Go Ahead Boys together.

"It isn't here anyway."

"You mean his diary?" demanded Fred.

"That's exactly what I mean. Your dream was a nightmare and it's likely to be a still bigger one for us."

"Do you think those men took that diary?" asked Grant.

"You can see for yourself," retorted Zeke gruffly.

"Maybe you put it somewhere else," suggested George.

"Huh!" snapped the guide. "I left it right in the pocket. Eight in that there pocket," he added as he again displayed the coat.

"What did they want of it?" inquired John.

"They wanted what you told them about."

"I didn't tell them anything about anything," said John angrily.

"The trouble with you, Jack, is that you can't read between the lines. You see, those men were not born yesterday and they could put two and two together."

"But I didn't give them anything to put together," protested John.

"If I recollect aright," suggested Grant, "there was something said about the coat and the tools that the prospector had with him. If I'm correct it seems to me that the men wanted to see the coat and the axe and the spade and the hammer."

"What of it?" demanded John.

"Everything," retorted Grant. "They probably suspected that if there was a coat there were pockets in it. And if there were pockets then there was something in them."

"They guessed right, all right," laughed George.

"Never you mind," said John. "I remember exactly what the diary said and I can draw another picture of that Gulch with just exactly the places marked on it that the prospector had marked."

"Try it," suggested Fred.

"That's just what I'll do," said John as he turned to the tent from which he speedily returned with a pad and pencil.

For a moment no one spoke while John busily made his drawing.

"There," he said as he held it forth to view. "That's just as good as the original."

"It's a mighty pretty picture," scoffed George. "The only trouble with it is that no one knows whether it is correct or not."

"Zeke, isn't that drawing all right?" demanded John as he held forth the paper to the guide.

"It isn't so far wrong," acknowledged Zeke cautiously, "but I guess we'll be able to do something whether we have any paper or not. I'm more afraid of those two men than I am that we shan't be able to draw th' picture that old Sime had in his diary."

All four boys looked keenly into the face of the guide but no one inquired concerning the meaning of his words.

"Well, the little book is gone, anyway," continued Zeke. "We've got to decide what we'll do without it. When do you boys want to start?"

"What do you mean? For the lost mine?" demanded Fred.

"That's what I thought you wanted to do."

"Well, we do all right," said Fred quickly. "Are we ready to start?"

"We can be in a few minutes," said Zeke. "I think we can drop down the river in the two boats. That will be easier than climbing up the cliffs."

"Great!" exclaimed Fred enthusiastically. "How far can we go with the boats?"

"Ten or twelve miles," answered Zeke. "And when we stop we'll be more than half way to Thorn's Gulch. It's so much quicker to go by the river than over land."

"That will be fine," repeated Fred. "Let's get started."

"It's going to be hot in the middle of the day," suggested Zeke warningly.

"All the more reason then for starting right away," said Grant.

"All right," assented Zeke. "We'll put things to rights here in the camp and then we'll go down to start on our voyage."

The light tent was folded and concealed under the projecting rock nearby. Most of the cooking utensils also were hidden or at least placed where they would not attract the attention of any chance visitor. It was extremely unlikely that any one would come to the place, although among the parties visiting the Grand Canyon there might be some who would be attracted by the safe landing place, just as the Go Ahead Boys and their guides already had been.

"We had better plan to be gone about four days!" spoke up Pete who up to this time had taken no part in the morning conversation.

"I should think we ought to have supplies for more than that," said Fred.

Pete, however, insisted that the time he had named would be ample for their first attempt. "If we don't strike anything," he explained, "we shan't need to stay any longer and if we do we can mark the spot or leave someone there on guard and the rest can come back for more supplies."

"What do you think, Zeke?" asked Fred.

"I think Pete is all right," replied the guide. "We want to leave our supplies here pretty well protected and we don't want to take enough with us to tire us out carrying them. We'll have to measure it down pretty fine. We want just enough but not an ounce more than we ought to have."

Zeke's word carried the day and in a brief time the Go Ahead Boys were busily engaged in packing the few belongings they planned to take with them on their expedition. These were conveniently arranged so that they might be carried upon the backs of the boys, making a burden that did not exceed twenty-five pounds in weight for each boy when the arrangement was at last completed.

"Everything all ready now?" inquired Zeke when at last the packages, implements and knapsacks had all been prepared.

"How is the river right below us?" asked John.

"It's a bit rough and pretty swift for a spell," replied Zeke.

"Any danger of capsizing?" asked Fred nervously.

"There's always that danger," replied Zeke solemnly. "Nobody knows when the boat may turn squarely over. If you think you would rather walk across country we can try it that way," he added, winking solemnly at Fred's companions as he spoke.

Cautiously the party made their way down the canyon and at last after several exciting experiences arrived on the shore of the rushing Colorado.

Zeke's statement that the river here was rough was speedily confirmed. The tossing waves seemed to be rushing at break-neck speed past the little point.

There was a bend in the channel a half-mile below and a projecting point there was plainly seen.

"I don't like the look of that," muttered Fred as he first saw the rushing stream.

"There's something I like still less," said Grant.

"What do you mean?" demanded Fred.

"Why there's only one boat there."

"What!" exclaimed George and Fred together.

"That's right," repeated Grant. "One of the boats is gone."



CHAPTER VI

DIVIDED

For a moment the boys stood and stared blankly at the one boat and at the place on the shore where the other had been drawn from the water. There was no question now as to their loss. Every member of their party was present and yet only one boat was to be seen.

Certain of their supplies also were missing and the discovery served to increase the feeling of dismay.

"Do you suppose that boat got loose?" inquired Fred, who was the first to speak.

"I don't 'suppose it got loose,'" retorted Grant somewhat gruffly.

"Do you think somebody took it?" again Fred asked.

"If it didn't get loose, please tell me why it's gone? There's only one way the boat could get into the river. One was for it to get loose and the other for somebody to work it loose."

"Then the question is," said George, "who took it?"

"And there isn't much question about that," said Fred confidently.

"Do you think those two men stole the boat? I mean the two that were in our camp last night?"

"I don't know who else could take it," said John. "And it's my fault too, isn't it?"

"In a way it is your fault, all right," said Grant. "You started those men on the trail. If you had kept still no one would have known anything about it."

"That's right," said John, closing his eyes and doing his utmost to assume the expression of a martyr. "If anything goes wrong, put the blame on little Johnnie. Cock Robin wasn't in the same class with little Johnnie—"

"You've talked enough," broke in Zeke. "All your talkin' isn't goin' to bring back our boat. The question is what are we goin' to do, now that one of the boats is

gone."

"Can't we all get into one boat?" inquired George.

"You can," snapped Zeke, "but you won't stay in very long. She would never carry six."

"What shall we do, then?" asked Fred.

"I think the first thing for us to do is to look around and see if we can find anything that will give us a clue to the takin' o' the boat."

Acting upon the suggestion the boys at once began a search along the shore, Fred and John steadily moving back from the river.

Not one of them, however, was able to discover any signs of the presence of the men whom they suspected. The plain fact was that the heavy boat was gone and with it had gone many of their supplies.

It was true that one boat was still left, but the guide's statement that it could not carry six left only one way out of the present difficulty.

"We can do one of two things," suggested Pete when the members of the party assembled again. "We can leave some o' you here and the rest o' us can strike out across the country for more supplies. It won't be so hard comin' back as it will be goin'. We'll get some burros to carry the stuff back for us and then they can go back with the drivers."

"If we don't do that what else can we do?" inquired Grant.

"Some of us can go down the river in the boat and then strike out for Thorn's Gulch while the others are coming overland."

"It will take two days to do that," said Fred ruefully.

"And the other will take four and maybe five," retorted Zeke.

A marked difference of opinion appeared in the company, but at last it was decided that Pete and John should go for additional supplies while all the other members of the party were to remain where they then were.

Sharp directions were given by the departing Pete that no one should leave the camp during his absence.

The Go Ahead Boys promised faithfully to follow his suggestion and within an hour Pete, who was nearly as tall as John, and his companion had disappeared from sight.

A renewed search for evidences of the men who had taken the boats was made, and Zeke and Fred even went down the stream a mile vainly hoping that they might find the boat stranded somewhere in the region. Their search was unavailing and when they returned to the camp it was with a fixed opinion that the sole solution of their difficulties was to be found in patiently remaining in camp until Pete and John had made their long journey across the desert.

That evening while they were seated about the campfire conversation turned upon the mighty river near which they had found their resting place.

"Yes, air," Zeke was saying, "the first man an' about the only man that ever went the whole length of the Colorado was Major Powell."

"Did he go in a little boat?" inquired Fred.

"Yes, he had four boats?" replied Zeke. "They were all small, but every one was built for the voyage."

"Did he go alone?" inquired George.

"No. Nine men went with him."

"When was it?" asked Grant.

"In 1869. It took a lot of nerve to start on that trip too, let me tell you. Even the Indians were afraid of the river and every one of them said he didn't know really what the river was."

"What do you mean?" asked Fred.

"Why the redskins had all sorts of stories about the Colorado from the place where the Grand and the Green join to make it. And they had a lot to make them afraid, too. You see no one ever knew, when his boat got caught in the currents or whirlpools, whether there might be ahead o' him some great underground passage where the river had cut its way and the boat might be carried in there and never get out. Then too when they started on a swift current no one could tell when the water got rougher and swifter whether they were goin' head on for some great, roarin' cataract. Yes, sir, it was a very ticklish trip that Major Powell

took, and what made it still worse for him was the fact that he had only one arm."

"What did he do with the other one?" inquired Fred.

"Had it shot away in the Civil War. I tell you he had more nerve than any man that ever came out to these parts. Unless p'raps it was Bill Williams, whose grave is away over yonder more than fifty miles beyond the Grand Canyon."

"Did the men who were with Major Powell come through all right?" asked Fred.

"All those that stayed with him did. There were four that got discouraged, and cleared out and left the very day when Major Powell floated clear of the Grand Canyon. It's strange about that. The exploring party came out all right, but not one of the four men that deserted was ever afterwards heard of. Probably they tried to make their way up some o' these cliffs and tumbled and fell."

"Did you say that the Indians knew all about the Grand Canyon?" asked Grant.

"No, I didn't say no sech thing," said Zeke sharply. "What I said was that the Indians were afraid of the place. They had any number of stories about the region."

"What were they?" asked Fred eagerly.

"Oh, I don't know," answered Zeke, "There was one, I understand, about the Indians believin' or at least reportin' that the Grand Canyon was the road to heaven. They had a story that one time one of their big chiefs lost his wife. He was very fond of her and when she died it seemed to take the heart right out o' him. He spent most o' his time mournin' for her and pretty soon the life o' the tribe was beginnin' to suffer.

"At last, at least so the Indians say, the god, Tavwoats, offered to prove to the big chief that his wife was happier than she had been even when she was livin' 'long with him. The chief took him at his word and Tavwoats started right away to take the chief where he could look on the happiness of his wife. It seems the trail he made to the Happy Land was what we now call the Grand Canyon. They say that there were more bright colors and pretty places to be seen there than one can find now.

"When Tavwoats and the big chief came back through the trail among the mountains, the god rolled a wild and roaring river into it to keep out those who

did not deserve to go to the Happy Land. That's the way the Colorado River was formed, at least accordin' to th' Indian story. Of course they didn't know what we know now that the Grand and Green joined forces to make up the big stream."

"That's a very pretty story," said Grant, rising as he spoke. "The Indians must have had a lot of poetry in them to make up so many wonderful legends."

"You would have thought they had poetry in them," said Zeke, "if you ever happened to be out here when there was a Navajo or Apache uprising. I tell you the air is full of poetry then, the same as it is full of rows and yells and shouts, and you can see the redskins full of poetry,—some people out here call the stuff they drink by another name,—ridin' like mad 'round the desert shooting every man, woman and child they can find. Oh, yes," he added, "it's a whole lot o' poetry."

The hour, however, had arrived when the Go Ahead Boys were ready to retire for the night. Fred was the first to set an example but in a brief time the other Go Ahead Boys had followed, the fire had been extinguished and silence rested over the region.



CHAPTER VII

TWO NAVAJOS

Early the following morning, while the boys were preparing breakfast, they were startled by the approach of two men.

"Look yonder!" exclaimed Fred, who naturally was the first to discover the approach of the strangers. "Are those the two men that were in the camp the other day?"

"No," replied Zeke quickly after he had gazed long and earnestly at the men who could be seen coming down the pathway from the top of the cliff. "They're Indians."

"Is that so?" demanded George who was instantly excited. "What are they?"

"Navajoes," replied Zeke after another inspection.

"What do you suppose they want?" asked Grant.

"Everything you have got and some things besides," answered Zeke, his affection for the redmen being not very strong. "The first thing they'll ask us for will be the breakfast."

"We'll give them some breakfast," said Fred promptly.

"I didn't say nothin' about *some* breakfast," spoke up Zeke. "I said the breakfast. They'll want it all and some besides."

"Then the only thing for us to do," laughed Fred, "is to begin right away."

Fred's example was speedily followed by his friends, who quickly took pieces of the sputtering bacon on sharpened sticks which they held in their right hands while with their left they grasped pieces of the cooked cereal which Zeke had been frying for breakfast.

All were busily engaged in this pleasing occupation when the two Indians approached the camp. The redmen were the first to speak and to the surprise of the Go Ahead Boys they addressed them in excellent English, at least the one

who appeared to be the leader was able to express himself clearly and in correct form.

"We would like some breakfast," said the spokesman, who was a young Indian perhaps twenty-one years of age.

"All right, sir," spoke up Fred before any one else could respond to the request. "We'll fix you some in a minute."

Fortunately the supply was ample for the present meal at least, and both Navajos, seating themselves upon a projecting rock, almost devoured the food which was given them.

The Go Ahead Boys were eager to talk with the redmen, but silence rested over the camp. Zeke was particularly gruff in his manner and apparently ignored the presence of the strangers.

At last the Indian who had been chief spokesman said, "We have come to ask if two white men have come to your camp within a few days."

"What do you want to know for?" asked Zeke quickly.

Whatever his reasons may have been for inquiring the Navajo did not offer any explanations.

"Yes, there were two men here but they have gone," said Zeke slowly.

"Did one of them have a scar across his cheek that reached almost from his nose to his ear?"

"Yes."

"Was the other man larger and heavier?"

"That's right," said Fred, aware that both his companions were as deeply interested as he in the conversation.

"Where did they go?"

"We do not know," spoke up Zeke. "We didn't invite them to come here and they didn't stop to say good-by when they left."

"Do you know their names?"

"I can't say that we do," replied Zeke. "Was there anything special that you wanted o' them?"

The Navajo glanced quickly at his companion, who plainly understood the question and then said, "Yes, we want very much to see them."

"Well, I'm afraid then that you'll have to go where they are."

"Did they go down the river or did they go up the cliffs?"

"The last we saw of them they were headed for the sky," said Zeke glumly.

"Did they have ponies?"

"We didn't see any. They may have left them up yonder, but they didn't bring any into the camp."

The Navajo again turned to his companion and carried on a conversation in a low voice, apparently ignoring the presence of the others.

"If there was any message you wanted left," suggested Zeke, "we might take it and tell them that two Navajoes are waiting for them."

"No," replied the Indian abruptly. "Say nothing. Do you know whether they are coming back to your camp or not?"

"I hope not," said Zeke.

"Have you any reason to think they were bad men?"

"I don't know nothin' about them, just as I told you," responded Zeke gruffly. "As I said, the only way you can find that out is to go where they are."

"And do you know whether they started toward Thorn's Gulch?"

"Where?" demanded Fred quickly.

"Thorn's Gulch."

"What makes you think they were headed for Thorn's Gulch?" demanded Zeke.

"I didn't say we knew," said the Indian solemnly. "I asked you if you knew."

"Well, we don't," said Zeke. "What is there about Thorn's Gulch that makes you think they might want to go there?"

Instead of replying to the question the Navajo again turned to his companion and carried on another conversation with him in still lower tones than before. Then abruptly rising, the Indian, who had been acting as chief spokesman, said, "I don't think we need to trouble you any more."

"Hold on a minute," said Fred. "What's your hurry?"

Both Indians had turned as if they were about to retrace their way along the steep incline by which they had approached the camp. Halting abruptly at the question, before either could speak Fred continued, "You talk a good deal like a man who has not been trained as most of the Indians I have seen around here have been."

"Yes," said the Indian, a broad smile appearing on his face as he spoke, "My name is Thomas Jefferson, in the white man's language."

"Thomas Jefferson?" demanded Grant. "Where in the world did you get that name?"

"When I went to the white man's school they gave me a white man's name."

"Where were you in school?"

"Pennsylvania."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Grant, who was especially interested in such matters.

"Yes," explained the Indian, "I was sent east by some missionaries to be educated. As I told you they gave me a white man's name and I was there three years in the school."

"So that is where you learned to speak such good English is it?" said George.

"Yes."

"Do you find that your education helps you a good deal out here in your life among the Navajos?"

For a moment the young Indian stared blankly at the inquirer and then without replying to the question, once more turned to his companion and after a brief conversation he again faced the boys and said, "We thank you for the breakfast you have given us. We must go now."

"Shall I tell those men if they come back," spoke up Zeke, "that Thomas Jefferson and another Navajo have been here to see them?"

There was a gleam in the eyes of the namesake of the great statesman when he answered, "Say nothing."

"Yes," said Zeke, "but I would like to know if they are looking for you."

"We are looking for them," retorted the Navajo.

"Well, all I can say," said Zeke, "is that I hope you'll find them. Maybe you'll find them too before they find the claim staked by old Sime Moultrie."

Plainly the Navajo was startled by the guide's suggestion for he stopped abruptly and said, "Is Simon Moultrie dead?"

"Yes, and his bones have been buried," answered Zeke.

"Where?"

"Not far from where he died."

"When did he die?"

"That I can't say."

"And did he stake a claim?"

"Did I say he did? Did you know him?"

"Everybody knew Simon Moultrie," said the Indian. "He came to Tombstone many times for supplies."

"That's right, he did," acknowledged Zeke. "He was a great old prospector. He kept it up all his life but I never knew of his finding anything worth staking."

"He did not stake any claim?"

"I can't say."

The Indian looked keenly at the guide and then turning looked with equal keenness at the boys who were greatly enjoying the conversation. He did not say any more, however, and in company with the other Navajo at once departed from the camp.

Silently the Go Ahead Boys watched the departing redmen until their forms had been hidden from sight by one of the numerous projecting cliffs. Then the

tension was somewhat relieved and Fred turned to Zeke and said, "What do you think those Indians wanted?"

"My opinion is that they have gotten wind somehow that those two men are looking for the claim that old Sime Moultrie may have staked."

"What will happen," inquired Grant, "if the Navajos begin to look for the claim and come upon those two white men there?"

"It will depend on which party can draw his gun first," replied Zeke dryly.

"Do you think it's as bad as that?" demanded Fred excitedly.

"I don't think nothin' about it. I haven't much use for those white men, and when it comes to a Navajo—why you have heard what the only kind of a good Indian is, haven't you?"

"A dead Indian," answer Grant with a laugh.

"Well, I didn't say it. You said it. Did I ever tell you about the Navajo squaw that some of the women up here, stopping over at Albuquerque, fitted out for her wedding?"

"No," replied the boys together. "What did they do?"

"Why they gave her six dresses and a lot of other things they thought she would need as soon as she was in her own house. Some of them stopped there a year or two afterward and looked her up. The squaw was wearing one of the dresses that the white women had given her, but they found out that when one dress had become so old and torn that the squaw couldn't wear it much longer she would just put another dress right on over it and wear that until it was worn out, and then she put on number three and then number four. She was wearing six altogether when this white woman found her."

"That's a fine story, Zeke," laughed Fred.

"It's almost good enough to be true."

"No, sir, it's too good to be true," spoke up George.

"That doesn't make any difference," said Zeke sturdily. "I'm telling you what was told me. That's all I know about it."

"Zeke," said Grant, who up to this time had taken little part in the conversation,

"if you really think those Indians are after those two white men and that something may happen if they happen to meet, don't you think we ought to get word to them somehow?"

A grin appeared on the face of the guide as he replied, "That's a good 'un! That's a good 'un! The chances are ten to one that if you interfered with them in their little game you would have all four o' 'em turn against you. But that hasn't anything to do with what's facin' us. We've got to make up our minds pretty quick what we'll do."



CHAPTER VIII

WAITING

"What do you mean?" inquired Fred.

"Why, I mean that if we're goin' to be fools enough to try to find old Sime Moultrie's stake then we'll have to take whatever comes to us."

"And you think we're likely to have trouble with the Indians or the two white men if we begin to look up the place?"

"We may not see either of 'em," replied Zeke evasively.

"Yes, but if we do see them," said Fred persistently. "Do you think we're going to have any trouble?"

"That remains to be seen."

"But do you think we will?" persisted Fred.

"A good deal will depend on which party strikes what he thinks is the claim first. If we get it I don't believe they will bother us and if they get it I'm mighty sure we shan't bother them. But there," he added, "I think I'm takin' a good deal more trouble than I need to. The chances are one hundred to one that there isn't any such thing as Moultrie's stake, and if there isn't, why then of course we're all safe anyway." Zeke threw back his head and laughed noisily, a recreation which he seldom permitted himself to enjoy. The joke, however, which he had just perpetrated was such a rarity that even the boys were compelled to join in his mirth.

Meanwhile there was a long and weary waiting before they could expect the return of their companions. There were times when the boys worked their way along the shore, or, with Zeke in supreme command, used the one skiff that remained. They did not, however, venture far in the little boat because they were compelled to tow it back one or two of the boys remaining in the boat, while their companions dragged it along the rocky or projecting shore. It was easier when they first dragged the boat up the stream and then descended at a speed which in places outdid that of the swiftest horse.

There were expeditions also to be made along the sides of the cliff, but these were cautiously undertaken for Zeke was unduly fearful for his young charges.

Fred most of all the members he specifically watched. He declared that Fred "usually acted and then did his thinking afterward."

When night fell the boys assembled about the camp fire and occasionally prevailed upon their gruff guide to relate some of his own experiences on the desert or among the mountains.

"Yes," said Zeke one night in reply to a question by Fred, "I've had some troubles with bad men. Over in Nevada there was a time when a gang of robbers tried to waylay everybody that set out from Reno. It happened that I was at Reno with my mother one time and I had to drive about forty miles to my aunt's where she was going to visit. The houses out there aren't so thick that anybody gets over-afraid of being crowded out or bein' bothered by the neighbors. On the stretch where I was goin' there were three or four shacks but I didn't find many choosin' that part of the country for a dwellin' place."

"Did they have a good road?" inquired George.

"Fairly good. It was the only one that led over the mountains in that part of the world. Well, I had my mother along, as I was sayin', and when we had gone about eighteen miles from Reno, right in a narrow little gorge I saw two men comin' toward us. They were in a buggy and I knew right away from the looks of their horses that they could make good time. Besides, when I saw the men I knew they were both strangers and, to tell the truth I didn't like the way either one o' 'em acted.

"When they came pretty close to where we were I turned out to give them most of the road for I didn't want any trouble as long as I had my mother along. Perhaps I told you she was with me.

"Well, the first thing I knew the men all of a sudden swung over toward me and before I knew what was going on they had locked their buggy wheel with mine. They pretended to be mad, but I knew right away that this was a part o' their game. It was worse than two to one for I not only had to fight for myself, but for my mother. However, she is pretty game and she saw what was up so she turned to me and said, said she, 'Zeke, you hand me the reins and I'll look after the horses and you get out and help untangle those wheels.' When I got out of the buggy both the men laughed and that rather stirred me. 'You seem to be mighty

easy to please,' I said. You see I was younger then than I am now, and didn't have so much sense."

"Where did you get the new sense?" inquired Grant solemnly.

"Oh, once in a long time I run up against a fellow that come from the East. He usually gave me all the advice I needed and never charged me a cent for it either."

The boys laughed at Grant's confusion, but ignoring the interruption Zeke continued with his tale, "I tried to appear unconcerned like and I said to one of the men, 'Take hold here and give me a lift, I'm 'most afraid to back down any further for fear I'll tip my mother out.' They didn't either of 'em offer to help me, in fact neither one of them got out of the buggy and when I took hold of my horse's head and tried to back away they just moved up their horses so that the wheels kept locked just as they had been before. I looked at the wheels and pretty quick I made up my mind that mine were a good deal stronger than theirs. I had told my mother when I took the reins that she had better get out while we were tryin' to break loose there. Of course she did what I told her. I was afraid the men might draw their guns, but still I thought maybe the fact that I had my mother along with me might make 'em hesitate a little. There are mighty few men even in the mines that will do anything to frighten a good woman, and nobody had to look very long into my mother's face to make up his mind that that was what she was, sure enough good.

"Well, we backed and filled for a spell and I see that things were gettin' worse so I waited until we worked out away a few yards up a little rise on the side of the mountain. The men all the while pretended that they thought it was a joke, and then when I got just to the right place, quick as a wink I jumped up and yelled at my horse in the loudest tones I could muster, and when little Zeke really tries hard to make himself heard there isn't usually much trouble in hearing him. I struck my horses with my whip at the same time and all together we had considerable of a ruction, but it turned out just as I thought it would. Their horses were scared worse than mine and when they all four jumped ahead going in opposite directions, of course something had to give way and it wasn't my wheels either, let me tell you. I didn't wait to investigate how much damage I really had done, but I put my horses into their best licks and stopped just long enough to take in my poor, old, frightened mother, and then I didn't stop, let me tell you, until I was out o' sight of those men."

"Did they try to chase you?"

"No, they didn't. I'm thinkin' they were having troubles enough of their own just then. At all events I never see any more of them."

"Do you really believe they meant to rob you?" asked George.

"Sure, as you're born!" replied Zeke. "That was just what they were there for. The only thing that saved me was my havin' my mother along. 'Twasn't long afterward before I heard of a man being held up just as I was. Two men came along in a buggy and locked wheels with him and while he was trying to help himself out of the fix one of them dropped him with the butt of his gun and went through his pockets and all his belongings. That's one reason why I have always remembered Jump Off Joe Creek."

"Remembered what?" laughed Fred.

"Jump Off Joe Creek," repeated Zeke. "That was the name of the mountain brook right near where I had my fight with the robbers."

"But I didn't see that you had any fight," persisted Fred.

"Not exactly a fight, but it's where I would have had a tough fight if it hadn't been for me havin' my mother 'long with me. Perhaps I told you she was in the buggy with me when those wheels locked."

"I believe you did remark something about that," said Fred so drolly that his companions laughed.

"And you think," inquired Grant, "that we're likely to have trouble with these two men the same way?"

"No, I didn't say 'the same way,'" replied Zeke. "I'm just tellin' you what's going on 'round here so that you'll be a bit prepared for it when the proper time comes."

"Do you really think we'll have any trouble with those two men?" inquired George anxiously.

"I've given you my opinion," replied Zeke. "You won't have no trouble if you don't find no claim, and if there ain't no claim then you won't have no trouble. So it's just as broad as it is long, you see, and I'm hopeful we'll get out again with our lives."

"Yes, I hope so too," said George so solemnly that his friends laughed aloud.

Zeke's stories were as numerous as they were quaint after he had once begun to relate them. To beguile the slowly moving hours the boys insisted upon his recounting many of his adventures, some of which were exceedingly thrilling, so thrilling indeed that none of the boys accepted them as true.

But all things at last come to an end and the waiting of the Go Ahead Boys was drawn to a close late one afternoon when Pete and John entered the valley. They were heavily laden with packs and explained that up on the cliff other possessions which they had secured had been left with the Indian boy who had come with them and was to take back the burros after they had been relieved of their burdens.

Speedily all the Go Ahead Boys were engaged in the task of bringing in the supplies. Twice the difficult climb had to be made and even the return to the camp, although the trail led down the steep incline at times, was even more difficult than the ascent had been.

The same night after all the supplies had been brought to the camp and the boys had begun to make up their packs, for they planned to start on their expedition early the following morning, they were startled by the return of the two Navajos who had visited the camp soon after the departure of Pete and John. It was quickly manifest that both Indians in spite of their quiet manner were keenly excited and when they had related a discovery they had made that very day, the excitement of the Go Ahead Boys was only less than their own.



CHAPTER IX

DOWN THE RUSHING RIVER

"We saw where the two white men camped last night," explained Thomas Jefferson. "They are working' their way into Thorn's Gulch."

"And do you think they are looking for Simon Moultrie's claim the same as we are?" demanded John, who was not fully aware of the events which had occurred during his absence.

The Navajo smiled slightly and replied, "Yes, they both are trying to find the place."

"Do you know where it is? Have you anything to show where he found the new mine?"

"Not very much," replied the Indian.

His manner, however, impressed the Go Ahead Boys strongly that Thomas Jefferson possessed information concerning the object of their search which he was not willing to communicate.

The mystery surrounding the place had deepened. The fact that two white men as well as two Indians, in addition to the Go Ahead Boys and their guides, were convinced at the same time that the dead Simon Moultrie had discovered a lead of great promise, increased their interest. Already Fred and John had discussed what they would do with the fortune which they were convinced soon would be theirs as soon as the claim of the dead prospector had been located.

John and Pete, thoroughly wearied by their long journey for supplies, were soon ready for bed. Their example was contagious and in view of the long and difficult journey awaiting them on the morrow all the Go Ahead Boys speedily followed their example.

Daylight had appeared, though the light of the rising sun had not yet shone above the towering cliffs, when the guides were busily preparing breakfast the next morning.

In spite of the prospect awaiting them the appetites of the Go Ahead Boys were all keen and a hearty breakfast was disposed of before any one suggested that the hour for their departure had arrived.

A few of their belongings were left behind, after they had been carefully stowed away among the various cliffs and hidden from the sight of any chance passerby. It was seven o'clock when at last Zeke declared the party was ready to depart.

Every boy had his kit strapped upon his back in addition to the rifle which he carried while Zeke led the way and Pete served as a rear guard.

Since the missing boat had not been recovered it had been decided to try to make the journey overland. However, just as the party left the camp Pete said decidedly, "I think this is all fool business."

"What do you mean?" demanded Fred, who was next before him.

"I think it's foolishness for all six of us to go overland when we have a boat that will bring us within a few miles of Thorn's Gulch. Some of our heaviest supplies can be taken that way, and, if we have to, Zeke and I can make two trips from the place where we can land to the opening to Thorn's Gulch. Hold on," he called to Zeke.

The little party abruptly halted and after Pete had warmly urged his views Zeke reluctantly consented to a change in their plans. Pete, accompanied by Fred and John were to return and use the boat as far as they were able to make their way safely toward Thorn's Gulch. They would then land, draw the boat up on the shore, where it would be safe from storms, and at once start for the entrance of Thorn's Gulch where they were to await the coming of their companions. Naturally it was expected that the party led by Pete would arrive at the Gulch before the others. In that event Pete was to select a camp and make such provisions as were in his power for spending the second night.

Zeke had explained that he was not planning to rush his party across the desert. Rather he explained he would move leisurely, finding some place for rest and refuge in the middle of the day. In no place would he depart far from the rim of the Grand Canyon. He was confident that even with these expected delays he would easily arrive at their destination by sunset of the second day.

The two Navajos had not been included in either party; the truth of the matter being that neither Zeke nor Pete wanted the young Indians among his followers.

The feeling of the boys, however, was markedly different, but they did not make any objections, relying upon the need of assistance later to warrant them in inviting Thomas Jefferson and his friend to become members of their party at that time. Indeed Fred had expressed himself in this manner to the Navajos, and Thomas Jefferson, indicating that he understood fully the conditions, promised to report later after the party had entered Thorn's Gulch.

There was no further delay and George and Grant following Zeke soon disappeared from the sight of their companions.

Meanwhile Fred and John assisted Pete in packing in their boat the supplies which they were to carry down the Colorado.

Both George and Grant had protested against their companions attempting the passage of the river. They were aware of the perils that awaited them and were fearful that they would not be able to land all their cargo safely.

"That's the way of it," said Fred in mock solemnity when he had responded to George's protest. "You don't care anything about us, but you're mightily afraid that some of the things we have on board may be lost in the river."

"We don't want to lose either the crew or the cargo," retorted George.

"There's no more danger going down the stream where we are than there is in trying to climb the cliffs and strike out overland," declared Pete.

No further protest had been made and not long after the departure of the division which was to climb the rugged pathway that led to the table-land the sailors were ready to embark.

Fred and John were both skillful in handling the boat, a form of knowledge in which even Grant was proficient. It was for this reason largely that Pete had selected Fred and John to accompany him.

Before he stepped on board, John, who was to push at the stern, looked out over the broad river. The current made in toward the shore where he was standing and was clearly defined. The swift waters bore around a bend not more than fifty yards below them. It is true that the passage here had already been made and the boat hauled back, but the very fact that a previous voyage had been tried although it allayed certain fears nevertheless made both Go Ahead Boys aware of the places where peril would confront them.

Pete was in the bow holding a long pole in his hands, while Fred was to take his friend's place whenever the latter desired him to.

In a brief time the strong heavy skiff was caught in the sweep of the channel and was borne swiftly down the rushing Colorado.

There was an excitement in the attempt that manifested itself clearly in the faces of all three. At one place where for a brief time the waters were stiller Pete turned to his fellow voyagers and shouted, "My, I must say you're the two nerviest boys I ever see."

John and Fred stared blankly at each other at the compliment, neither in fact having been unduly alarmed or suspecting that they were passing through any unusual peril.

Twice the boat had been swept in close to a projecting ledge but fortunately had escaped without any serious crash.

At the end of ten minutes the boys were aware that they were approaching the place which they dreaded most of all in their descent. The river became somewhat narrower here and the waters consequently were much deeper. A shoal or some huge hidden ledge rose in mid-stream and the swift current, divided by the obstacle, roared and sang as it rushed forward on its way on either side. One hundred yards below the projecting rock the divided channel was reunited. There was a great peril, however, that the little boat, as it was driven forward by one part of the stream, might be caught in the eddies that were formed when the waters united.

For a time the rocky shores seemed to be flying past the advancing boat. Occasional glimpses of the sky far above them added to the picture. Before them extended a long, narrow defile through which the deep water seethed and boiled as it sped forward. The grave peril here was that the boat might strike some of the projecting rocks or be grounded on one of the hidden projections. It was impossible for any one to use his pole here and Fred had passed the paddle to John while he himself insisted upon taking his place in the bow and ordering Pete to seat himself amidship.

The boat was moving at least ten miles an hour. Two-thirds of the passage had been safely made. The expression on Fred's face was tense as occasionally he caught a glimpse behind him of his long friend working desperately with his paddle.

Every ounce of strength each boy possessed was required for the effort. Occasionally the guide shouted his direction first to one boy and then to another and then to both alike. Neither Fred nor John, however gave much heed to their advisor nor indeed was it possible for them to hear what he said. The sound of the noisy water filled their ears, the peril of the projecting rocks continued to face them and a glance at the dark colored stream below was sufficient to warn them of dangers to be avoided there.

Fred, who, as has been said, was paddling from the bow turned for a moment to glance back at John. At that moment, however, the heavy boat suddenly struck an unseen rock. The force of the current was sufficient to drive the boat safely over the place of peril, but Fred as he had nearly lost his balance glanced again behind and to his horror he saw the long legs of John disappearing over the side of the boat.



CHAPTER X

A RATTLER

Meanwhile the other party which had started for Thorn's Gulch was also having its own experiences no less thrilling than the mishap which had befallen John. Zeke was the leader of the trio while George had taken Pete's place as rear guard.

Steadily climbing the way which previously they had used as a path, stopping frequently for rest, for their breathing was somewhat more difficult in the high altitude than on the lower levels, they at last succeeded in gaining the crest of the canyon.

Zeke then led the way across the table-land, at times moving far from the border and then again approaching almost within sight of the great canyon. The Canyon of Arizona extends for hundreds of miles, becoming vast and wide in what is commonly known as the Grand Canyon. It winds through the country at times visible and sometimes concealed from sight by intervening cliffs or trees.

Before the noon-hour arrived the party halted, seeking the shelter of a small cleft in the rim where they were able to start a fire and cook some of the food they had brought with them.

The heat was so intense that Zeke commanded the expedition to wait until late in the afternoon before the journey was resumed. Although neither George nor Grant acknowledged that he was tired, both Go Ahead Boys were entirely willing to heed the advice that was given them.

Late in the afternoon the three explorers again resumed their journey. A brief halt for supper was made, but soon afterward the boys once more were following Zeke as he led the way in the moonlight. The air was cool now and although the altitude was still high the boys found less difficulty in breathing.

In a sheltered spot well known to Zeke a camp was pitched for the night and soon after they had cast themselves upon their blankets all three were soundly sleeping.

It was long before sunrise when Zeke's stentorian call summoned the boys to the

task of the coming day. It was with some difficulty that both young prospectors responded. As soon, however, as breakfast had been prepared and eaten, although it was still an hour before sunrise, they started once more on their journey to Thorn's Gulch.

Steadily, monotonously they kept on their way, walking in single file and in the same way which had been observed the preceding day.

It was not long after sunrise when Zeke suddenly jumped to one side shouting to the boys as he did so to keep away.

Before either of them was aware of any peril Zeke drew his revolver and fired several shots at an object in front of him, which as yet was unseen by the boys.

"There!" shouted Zeke. "I guess that'll get you, you rascally varmint!" As he spoke he seized his long knife and hurled it savagely. "How do you like that?" he shouted, "I guess you won't do any more harm to anybody."

The curiosity of George and Grant had been so thoroughly aroused by the strange calls and actions of their guide that in spite of his warning both crept forward to see what had aroused his anger.

And both soon were aware of the cause. A few feet before them was a huge rattlesnake still twisting and turning in its last agonies.

Zeke secured his knife, and again and again hurled the weapon at the snake although now they were safe from any attack by the reptile. Its skin was glossy and the dark folds had a certain beauty of their own. Both boys, however, were unaware of the colors of the great snake. At last Zeke succeeded in severing the body. In a moment he grasped the tail and flung the part to which it was attached several yards away.

"Better count the rattles," he said.

"I don't want to touch the thing," said George with a shudder.

"The tail can't bite you," suggested Grant as he advanced boldly and grasped the part of the body to which the rattles were attached and held it up to view. It was still squirming somewhat and George turned away in disgust. "I don't like snakes," he explained.

"I can't say that I'm very fond of them," said Grant, "but I think if you don't want

them, Pop, I'll take these rattles home with me."

"Did you count them?" demanded Zeke, who now approached the spot where the boys were standing.

"Not yet," replied Grant. "I'll do it now."

There were thirteen rattles found in the snake and when Grant held them up and shook them George was unable to repress the shudder that crept over him.

"How was it, Zeke," he asked, turning to the guide, "did the fellow strike at you?"

"No, I happened to see him moving across the rock. He's a big fellow. He must be eight feet long," answered the guide.

"Aren't you afraid of them?" inquired George, shuddering again as he spoke.

"Afraid? No. Why should I be afraid? They give you warning before they strike and that's what the rattles are for."

"I wonder if that is what they are for," said Grant thoughtfully. "I don't see why nature should have provided a snake with a means of scaring off the animals he wants to get for his breakfast."

"That's what it is," said Zeke. "It can't be for nothin' else."

"I've heard it said that shaking the rattles had a strange effect on certain animals. A canary bird sings and a rattler rattles. Perhaps they both think they are improving the music of the spheres."

"Fine music!" snorted Zeke.

"I have heard it said that the snakes and owls and prairie dogs are great friends," suggested Grant. "They all live together in the same hole."

"I don't know nothin' about their being friends," retorted Zeke. "I'm thinkin' the prairie dog does most of the work any way you fix it. He's the one that digs the hole, then along comes the snake and makes his home in it, and then the owl creeps in and there you have it."

"I should think they would eat one another," laughed George.

"Maybe they do for all I know," said Zeke. "Now if you've had enough to satisfy

you with this rattler we'll start ahead again."

"But I don't see," persisted Grant, "why he didn't bite you."

"Huh!" snapped Zeke. "He didn't get a chance to coil himself. They are just like a hair-spring. They have to get a little purchase before they can do anything, then they do a good deal too, if they try real hard. I don't like them, but I never do what a good many guides out here do."

"What's that?" asked Grant.

"Why, they're so afraid of rattlesnake bites that they keep loaded up with whisky all the time. That's the best antidote for the snake bite and these fellows must have been bitten about three times a day, most of them."

Zeke said no more and in a brief time all three were moving steadily across the table-land.

Late in the afternoon Zeke stopped and pointed to a place far in the distance, "Yonder is right near Thorn's Gulch," he explained. "We ought to get there in about three hours."

"Three hours!" exclaimed George. "Why how far is it from here?"

"About eleven miles."

It was almost impossible for either of the boys to believe that the spot to which Zeke had pointed was so far distant. The air was so clear that the place appeared to be much nearer than it really was and if they had been asked each boy would have stated his opinion that the intervening distance could be covered within an hour.

"There are two ways now which we can take," explained Zeke.

"You mean we can take them both, or either of them?" laughed George.

Ignoring the question which the guide gruffly referred to as "smart," Zeke explained that they could go down into the canyon a short distance in advance of them and follow the course until they came to the entrance to Thorn's Gulch.

"That will be about where John and Fred will come in, won't it?" inquired Grant.

"I guess that's so," admitted Zeke. "Perhaps it will be better for us to go down the slope and strike Thorn's Gulch from that side."

Accordingly the direction was changed and advancing toward a slope that led to the valley below, the boys prepared to follow the lower course and meet their friends at the opening where it had been agreed the meeting should take place.

Each boy still carried upon his back the pack which had been placed there when they had broken camp. The descent was consequently hampered somewhat by the weight which rested upon their shoulders. Much of the way was difficult and the three members of the party no longer were able to keep closely together.

George, who still was the rear guard, steadily dropped behind his companions until he was no longer able to discern them before him.

The way by which Zeke was leading now led along a side of the canyon where the walking was increasingly difficult. The broken stone crumbled beneath their feet and they were in constant danger of slipping or falling.

Aware that he had lost sight of his companions and was steadily falling behind, George increased his pace, hoping to overtake his companions within a few minutes.

In his zeal he approached nearer the edge of a ledge than he was aware. Suddenly the broken stone gave way beneath his feet and in spite of his efforts George was thrown from the ledge and began a swift descent on the side of the cliff.

Fortunately the cliff-side was not as steep as in certain other places, but the desperate boy was unable to check his flight.

He had given one wild call to his friends when first he had slipped over the border. After that all his strength was required to prevent himself from falling headlong.

In spite of his utmost endeavors his foothold soon became more insecure and suddenly as the ground beneath him gave way George was thrown forward on his face.

The heavy pack on his shoulders prevented him from rising or recovering the ground he had lost. Rolling, slipping, sliding, the terrified boy continued on his way down the side of the cliff.



CHAPTER XI

A PERILOUS FALL

Fortunately the side of the cliff down which George was slipping was not sheer all the way. It was steep; indeed, so steep that it was impossible for the frightened boy in spite of his desperate attempts to check his flight, to gain a foothold. In his descent some of the loose ground gave way and whenever he tried to seize a small projecting point that too fell before him.

George was aware that far below him was the valley or bottom of the gulch. There were possibilities that at any moment he might slide over some cliff beneath which there was nothing to interfere with his fall to the ground far below, a descent of at least two hundred feet.

George was amazed at the coolness with which his mind was working. Fully aware of the peril confronting him, nevertheless he thought calmly of his companions and the surprise they would experience when his absence was discovered. If he fell to the bottom of the gulch doubtless they would never learn the fate which had befallen him.

When he had gone about sixty feet down the cliff-side his progress abruptly was halted when he came to a heavy projection of rock. Upon this a stunted tree was growing close to the side of the mountain. Almost instinctively George grasped this tree and his heart almost ceased to beat when he found that his progress was effectively stopped. His first fear was that the projection might give way under the force with which he had struck it. For a moment he simply clung to the trunk of the tree and closed his eyes waiting for the crash to come.

When several moments had elapsed and he found that he was still safe he opened his eyes and looked all about him. Above him he could see the marks that indicated the trail he had followed in his descent. It was, however, almost impossible for him to retrace his way. He was now painfully aware that he had severely bruised his left leg in his fall. Otherwise he was not seriously hurt as far as he was able to ascertain. It would be difficult, if not entirely impossible for him, in the condition in which he now found himself, to make his way up the sloping side of the cliff, while to slip or fall would be fatal.

Rejoicing at his narrow escape George seated himself with his back against the side of the mountain as far as it was possible for him to move along the edge of the rocky shelf. His first feeling of rejoicing at his narrow escape soon gave way to anxiety. He had been so far behind Zeke when he had fallen that he was doubtful now that his absence would be discovered until Grant and the guide had gone a considerable distance ahead. And when his disappearance should be discovered his companions would have no knowledge where to begin their search.

Keenly excited, he shouted in his loudest tones, "Grant! Grant!"

Not even an echo greeted his prolonged appeal. He shouted again and again, but it soon was plain to him that he had not made himself heard.

Thoroughly alarmed now he was almost ready to attempt the perilous ascent, having decided that it was better for him to do so while he was still strong and before his leg should become helpless.

A glance toward the border of the cliff, however, was terrifying. So high was it above the gulch below that his peril was great.

Almost in an agony of fear he renewed his shouts and though he waited anxiously after every appeal there was no answer to his calls.

It was impossible for him to estimate the time that was passing. The slowly moving minutes seemed to the Go Ahead Boy almost like hours. There were moments when it seemed to the terrified boy that he must let go his hold upon his insecure protection. He had passed his left arm around the trunk of the small tree and it was not difficult for him to maintain his position.

Again he renewed his frantic appeals, the thought having come to him that Grant and the guide might retrace their way and at some place hear his calls for help.

As a matter of fact less than an hour had elapsed when at last George was startled by the sound of a voice directly above him. Peering over the border was a face which he soon discovered was that of Thomas Jefferson, the young Navajo Indian who with his companion had previously come to their camp. Plainly the young Indian had heard the cry and was striving to discover the source from which it had come.

Once more George shouted, this time almost hoarse from his efforts. An answering call, however, revealed the fact that the Navajo had discovered him.

Indeed it was possible now for him to hear the words of the Indian.

"Stay right where you are," called Thomas Jefferson. "Don't try to do anything for yourself."

The face disappeared from the border of the cliff and anxiously George waited to discover what means would be used for his rescue. That he would be left in his predicament he was convinced was not to be thought of.

Nevertheless the anxious boy became troubled when a time that seemed to him inordinately long passed and still no word was heard from above him. Almost frantic he was about to renew his shouts when he discovered the Navajo crawling over the edge and slowly and cautiously descending the sloping side of the cliff.

Almost fascinated by the sight George watched every movement. The moccasin-clad feet of the Navajo did not once fail to find a secure hold. Almost like the rattler which had been killed that morning he crawled and squirmed, steadily making his way toward the place where George was awaiting his coming.

Abruptly a new fear seized upon the Go Ahead Boy. If Thomas Jefferson should succeed in gaining the place where he was awaiting his coming, would the shelf be sufficiently strong to support the weight of both? The suggestion was alarming and the perspiration stood out on George's forehead as he thought of the new danger.

He was aware now that under the shoulders of the Navajo there was a lariat made fast and that this was being paid out from above as he slowly descended.

It was evident now that Thomas Jefferson's companion was above the gulch and that he was assisting in the descent of his companion.

In the nervous condition in which George now found himself a thousand new fears possessed him. Perhaps the lariat would not be long enough. As Thomas Jefferson proceeded, his foot might slip and his entire weight be thrown upon the slender rope or strap. Even if the Indian should succeed in attaining the shelf where George was standing, would the slender strip of leather be strong enough to support the weight of both?

Meanwhile, as if he were devoid of all fear, the young Navajo slowly and steadily continued his descent. He was not more than fifteen feet from the boy whom he was seeking to rescue, when, with his foot braced against a small

projection and the lariat clasped tightly in his hands, he paused as he said, "Don't be scared. Just keep hold of that tree and you'll be all right."

As soon as he had spoken, the descent was renewed and in a brief time the Navajo had taken his place beside George.

"Look out!" warned George, his voice trembling as he spoke. "I'm afraid this tree isn't strong enough to hold both of us. I don't think the shelf is, either."

The peril was so great and the fear of George so keen that for a moment he trembled violently. The Navajo, however, quickly passed his arm under that of the trembling boy and said soothingly, "There's no need to be scared. This place is plenty strong to hold us both. Just be careful and do what I say."

As he spoke Thomas Jefferson removed the noose from beneath his arms and placed it under the arms of the frightened boy.

"You get hold," he explained.

"I'm afraid I can't help very much," said George. "I've hurt my leg."

The Indian made a hasty examination and then shaking his head said, "Not much hurt. You can climb all right."

"When shall we start?" demanded George.

"As soon as you're ready."

"I'm more ready now than I shall be later, I suspect," said George ruefully. "It's the only thing to be done, and, if it is, why, the sooner I begin it the better."

Carefully George turned and lying against the ground looked up at the border of the cliff. "Is the rope strong enough to hold us both?" he asked, turning again to the Indian.

"Plenty strong," replied Thomas Jefferson. "I shall not take hold. You'll have it all."

"How then will you get up there?" demanded George, aghast at the suggestion.

"I shall climb. It's not new work for me. I shall be close behind you so that if you fall I may help."

"If I fall or the lariat breaks," declared George, "there will be no stopping me."

Both of us will go straight to the bottom of the gulch."

"Look up all the time," suggested the Indian. "Don't once look behind you. You need not fear for me for I have no fear for myself. Besides Kitoni is very strong. He has taken a purchase around a tree and the rope cannot slip. You are perfectly safe."

"Shall I try to climb by using the rope or shall I dig in my fingers and toes and try that way?"

"Don't pull on the rope too much," answered the Navajo. "There will be places where you may have to do that. It will be safe to do so for Kitoni will take in all slack, but it will be better if you try to climb."

"Here goes then," said George in a low voice as he turned and began the perilous ascent.



CHAPTER XII

A WRECK

John was an expert swimmer but his skill was not of much avail when he plunged headlong into the rushing waters of the Colorado. The boat was moving swiftly when he met with his accident and it was impossible for the Go Ahead Boy to retrace his course and swim directly toward the shore.

The horror of Fred and Pete when they saw the long legs of John just disappearing beneath the surface of the river may well be imagined. It was impossible for them to check the speed of the boat and equally impossible to change its course. Almost as helpless as if it had been a chip it was carried forward by the swift current.

"He's going faster than we are," said Fred in a low voice as he discovered the head of his friend several yards in advance of the skiff.

"Then he must be swimming," said Pete. "Is he a good swimmer?"

"I never saw a better," replied Fred, not once turning away his eyes from the sight of John. "He has the Australian crawl and all the fancy strokes."

"I don't know nothin' about them crawls," answered Pete, "but he's swimmin' like a duck. He'll reach that point below us long before we get there."

The guide's surmise was correct for John was exerting himself strongly to gain a low point which he had seen in the distance and around which the swift waters of the current were swept forward.

Before the conversation in the boat was renewed both the guide and Fred were aware that John had succeeded in his attempt.

He had gained the low lying shore, but in his efforts to rise, although the water where he was standing did not come above his waist, he several times was thrown back into the stream and once nearly lost his foothold.

However, at last the sturdy lad succeeded in gaining the shore. As soon as he had shaken the water from his head he turned to look in the direction from which the

skiff was coming. The boat now was not more than one hundred feet away.

"Come in here! Stop here!" shouted John in his loudest tones.

Whether or not his words were heard he saw that his friends were doing their utmost to follow his directions. Still borne onward by the rushing current they nevertheless succeeded in gaining the outer edge and when the sharp bend around the point was made they came sufficiently near the shore to enable Pete with the painter in his hand to leap into the shallow water.

Although the guide braced himself strongly and exerted all his strength, his attempt would have failed, if John, instantly aware of the predicament of his companion, had not leaped to his aid. While Pete was struggling and striving to regain a firm standing John seized the painter and as he was braced for the sudden strain he succeeded in checking the speed of the boat and drawing it within the more sheltered waters of the little bay.

Meanwhile Pete had succeeded in grasping the gunwale of the skiff and promptly shouted, "Run her up on the beach, boys! One, two, three! Now then, all together!"

By their united efforts they succeeded in bringing the boat up on the shore to a place where it was not in danger of being swept away by the swiftly flowing river.

"That's what I call a close call," exclaimed Fred with a sigh of relief, when at last he was certain not only that his friend was safe but that all the cargo and the skiff itself had been landed. "What happened to you?" he inquired of John.

"I didn't have time to find out very much," replied John demurely. "I lost my balance and the first thing I knew I was making as graceful a dive as ever you saw. I went up like a rocket."

"You looked very much like a rocket," sniffed Pete. "We saw your long legs hanging down and thought that something must have pulled you out of the boat."

"Something did," replied John dryly.

"What was it?" demanded Pete.

"The force of gravitation. I had all I could do to make this shore, let me tell you. I had on sneakers and I put in my best work, for I wanted to get on this side of

the channel. At first I thought I was not going to make it but I did at last and here I am."

"Are you hurt any?" asked Fred.

"Hurt? No. I'm as sound as I was when we started."

"You may be as sound," laughed Fred, relieved now by the assurance that John was not injured, "but you're a woe-be-gone looking specimen. I think even you would laugh, String, if you could see yourself. You're like the definition of a line that Mr. Strong gave us in mathematics. You're the shortest distance between two points, a length without breadth or thickness."

"I've heard those words before," said John sharply. "I wish somebody could get up something new if he wants to make remarks concerning my physique. I'm not the one to blame if it doesn't suit you."

"Nobody blames you, Johnnie," laughed Fred. "We're just trying to face the cold facts."

"That's what I'm trying to do too," said John demurely. "I had in my pocket a copy we made, or at least what we thought was a copy, of the records from old Simon Moultrie's diary and they are gone now."

"Are you sure?" asked Fred, startled by the unexpected statement.

"Yes, I'm sure," replied John, turning the pockets inside out as he spoke. "I put them right in here," he explained as he placed his hand upon one pocket.

"I guess there won't be a great deal of harm done," spoke up Pete. "It was all done from memory anyway, at least that's what I understood you to say."

"That's right, it was," said John, "but if you have a piece of paper in your pocket, Fred let me have it and I'll write it out again. I'll do it now. It will be easier and safer to fix it up before we start than it will to let it all get dim in our minds."

Accordingly John took the diary which Fred handed him and tearing a leaf from the back of it at once proceeded to draw from memory an outline of the picture in Simon Moultrie's diary. To this he added the puzzling directions which they had found indicated near the stake. "I think we're all right," he said with satisfaction as he glanced at the drawing he had made.

"There's one thing about it," said Pete, "it won't do no harm. Now then, if you're

rested, I think we'd better start on, only I think I'll chain your long legs to the boat so that if you decide to leave us the way you did before, we can haul you in the same as we would an anchor."

"You won't have to haul me in," retorted John. "I'm going to stay by you this time."

"See that you do," said Pete sharply.

In a brief time the boat had been pushed out once more into the stream and again the three passengers with their poles had taken their stations and were prepared to do their utmost to guide the course down the river.

For a considerable distance the waters were not so turbulent as they had been farther up the stream. Occasional rocks were passed and several times the points rising almost to the surface of the river were discovered. However, the current was so strong that it carried the boat safely around the threatening danger, and almost with the speed of a race horse the little party again turned down the stream.

It was not long before the spot which Pete had declared was to be their landing-place was seen before them. Here there was no great difficulty in gaining the shore and in a brief time the three passengers and the skiff were safely on the bank.

"What shall we do with the skiff?" inquired John after the cargo had been unloaded.

"We'll leave it here and let some one else take it up the stream or use it if he goes down. I think it will carry clear to the Gulf of California if he wants to try it."

"How about that map, String?" demanded Fred as he turned again to his tall companion.

"Right in my pocket," declared John promptly, "and dry too. I told you I was not going overboard this time, and I kept my promise, didn't I?"

"You certainly did," laughed Fred. "Now, then, what are we to do next?" he added, turning to the guide as he spoke.

Pete, however, did not reply. He had advanced several yards up the shore and was drawing from the loose soil several pieces that evidently were parts of a boat

that had been wrecked.

"Do you see those?" he inquired, holding up some of the parts he had found.

"Yes," answered Fred. "It looks as if a boat had been wrecked down here, doesn't it?"

"It was 'wrecked' all right," answered Pete, "but I'm wondering if either of you boys knows what boat it was?"

"What boat was it?" inquired John, advancing to the place where the guide was standing.

"It's our lost skiff," replied Pete.

"What!"

"It's just as I'm tellin' you," Pete repeated. "That skiff we lost the other night didn't get loose. It was taken by somebody who knew what he was doing and brought down here. Here's where the party landed," he added, as he pointed to the shore. "But the boat wasn't 'wrecked,' unless you call smashing it wrecking it."

"What do you mean? How do you know?" demanded Fred in keen excitement.

"I know because I can see with both eyes," replied Pete sharply. "I don't have to have it all written out for me when I see what's happened to that boat."

"Why should anybody want to wreck it?" inquired Fred.

"It might be safer for some people if they started down the stream from here not to have any boats around that could follow."

"Do you think those two men who were in our camp took the boat?" Fred inquired abruptly.

"That's exactly what I think. And I think too," the guide added as he stopped to examine other parts of the boat, "that this skiff was wrecked as well as smashed. There's a hole stove in the bottom and then there are places that have been cut by an axe so I guess both parts of the story are true."

"Do you suppose they went up Thorn's Gulch from here?" asked Fred in a low voice.

"That's just what I think they did," replied Pete.

"Do you think we may meet them somewhere in the Gulch?"

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised."

"Then we may have pretty serious trouble before we're done."

"Right you are," assented Pete. "But it's time for us to be moving, boys," he added. "Here, I'll help each of you with his pack and we'll start out. If those two men are ahead of us we'll know it before they know that we're following them."



CHAPTER XIII

ALONE IN THE CANYON

For a considerable distance the way along which the guide was leading was not difficult. The footing was fairly strong and there were not many obstacles to be met.

Both boys in spite of the exciting experiences of the morning were deeply interested in the marvelous sights which greeted them as they advanced into the gulch.

On the sides of the canyon layers of rock and earth of different colors were plainly to be seen. Occasionally there were strange formations that extended from the rim of the cliff to the bottom of the valley that were like huge buttresses fashioned by the hands of men.

"Look at that!" exclaimed Fred, calling the attention of John to one of these peculiar formations. "That looks exactly as if it had been cut out by a mason."

"It certainly does," acknowledged John, stopping and gazing at the interesting sight. "Indeed, if we had this place back east," he continued, "it would not be difficult to make some people believe that it had been especially designed so that they could charge a dime a head to come in to see it. What do you suppose Coney Island would do with the Grand Canyon?"

"I guess Coney Island, if it had the Grand Canyon, would hide in some little corner. You wouldn't see much of the Island in a place like that."

Pete was not leading his young charges at a rapid pace. In spite of the fact that they were at the bottom of the gulch the altitude was still so high that breathing was somewhat difficult.

They steadily continued on their way for two hours, making only occasional stops. Then they halted for the midday rest and the preparation of the luncheon which Pete at once began to get ready.

The fire was kindled under the lee of a projecting shelf of rock and soon the odor of broiling bacon appealed strongly to the Go Ahead Boys, whose appetites

already needed no stimulant.

"This is the life!" exclaimed John a few minutes later when he and Fred were seated on rocks under the shade of the over-hanging cliffs.

John was holding a strip of broiled bacon on the end of the stick which he grasped in one hand, while with the other he was holding a huge piece of johnny-cake, in the making of which Pete was an expert.

"We couldn't find anything better than this," responded Fred, "even after we have dug out our mine. I wonder what we'll do with all the money we'll get."

"I know what I shall do with mine," laughed John.

"What?"

"Spend it in carfare coming out to the Colorado River. I would like nothing better than to start in where the Green and Grand Rivers join and try to do what Major Powell did. Indeed, I would like to go clear through to the lower part of the Gulf of California."

"You don't want very much, do you?" laughed Fred.

"Not very much," retorted John. "This simple life appeals to me all right."

"You certainly looked simple this morning when you disappeared in the river."

"You mean I looked simple *before* I disappeared," retorted John. "I don't know what I can do to make you more careful in your use of the English language. You certainly did not see me *after* I disappeared."

"We certainly did," retorted Fred. "I saw your head away down the stream though your feet weren't very far in front of the boat. You were going like mad."

"I don't deserve any credit for that," laughed John as he extended his stick for more bacon.

"Did you notice how many branches there are to this gulch?" inquired John as he resumed his repast. "I've counted four or five canyons that open into the right side of this gulch and I guess there are as many on the other side although I can't see."

"Yes, it's all broken up," acknowledged Fred as he looked in the direction indicated by his companion. "It's a mighty interesting place."

"That's no news," laughed John. "Where are you going?"

Fred had arisen and throwing his gun over his shoulder he had started toward one of the canyons that opened on the opposite side of the great gulch.

"Where are you going?" called out Pete sharply as he discovered the action of the Go Ahead Boy.

"Not very far," replied Fred.

"You had better not," warned Pete. "Look out for snakes."

Fred stopped abruptly at the reference to the reptiles, but as John laughed loudly he decided to continue on his way. "Come along, Jack," Fred called.

"Nay verily, not so. I've had all the hike I want to-day."

Fred laughed and made no further response. Without waiting for his friend to join him he turned into the canyon and in a few minutes was unable to see the camping place which he had left behind him.

Fred, who had a keen eye for color, was examining the marvelous shades that were to be seen along the sides of the canyon. Rock and soil were clearly distinguished and the comparison which John had made the preceding day, when he had said that the sides of the canyon looked like a great piece of layer-cake, caused Fred to smile at the recollection.

He stopped abruptly when for a moment he fancied he saw a huge living creature behind a sage bush a few yards before him. Pete had related many stories of the savage mountain lion and the peril of encounters which he had with the savage beasts. Since he had started, the fiercest animal Fred had seen had been the noisy little coyote. After night fall the sly, little beasts often came within sound of the camp and their weird barks or cries made the silence of the night appear even more intense. Of bears Fred had not seen one. Pete had related the story of the fate which had befallen a friend of his who, making his way through the forest one day had jumped upon a log which appeared in his pathway and without any delay then had leaped down upon the ground before him. The "ground" however, had proved to be a she-bear with her two cubs nearby. "They found only the bones of poor Jim Hyde," Pete had remarked at the end of the story.

"I don't see how you know that Jim jumped upon a log," suggested John when

the guide's story had been told.

"That was easy," declared Pete. "We saw the prints of his feet leading right up to the log and marks where he stood on the top and then over on the other side there was nothing but the bones of the poor fellow."

Fred recalled the somewhat gruesome tale as he entered further within the shades of the canyon.

The sight, however, was so fascinating that he still continued on his way. The vivid coloring of the sides seemed to be more marked most of the way just a little in advance. Led on by the continued hope of discovering some place of special beauty, Fred was astonished when at last he looked at his watch and saw that more than an hour had elapsed since he had left his friends.

The Go Ahead Boy was less interested in the sights which greeted him on his return than when he at first entered the canyon. Occasionally he stopped before some sight that was unusually impressive, but he was eager to retrace his way for he was aware that the guide would soon want to resume their journey.

When he came nearer the place he was seeking, Fred's thoughts were turned once more to the mine for which the search was to be made. At the thought his eagerness again increased and he began to walk more rapidly.

It was strange that he did not discover the place before him where his friends were awaiting his coming. He steadily continued on his way, walking occasionally with increased speed.

At last really puzzled by his failure to discover the camp he stopped and looked keenly about him in all directions. Why was it that he had not found the place where they had stopped for their noonday meal? Indeed, as he now looked about him on all sides he failed to recognize the region.

There was a sinking of Fred's heart and yet the boy refused to believe that he had lost his way or that he was really in peril. There were many small canyons or gulches, as has been said, which opened into the larger gulch. Into several of these Fred entered, hoping to discover something that would convince him that he was moving in the right direction.

His alarm increased, however, when he soon discovered that he was moving through a region that was entirely unknown. Not a familiar object was to be seen.

The fear in his heart deepened and again the troubled boy stopped to look keenly about him.

As Fred tried to obtain his bearings his confusion apparently increased. The stream in the bottom of the gulch was wider than the one he had seen in the first part of his journey. He peered in one direction in his search for landmarks only to fail and then turn and try the same experiment in another gulch. All his efforts were alike unavailing and a great fear now welled up in the heart of the troubled boy.

He looked up to the rim and saw the passing clouds that seemed to be close to the ground. There was no help to be found from that direction and suddenly he laughed aloud as he thought of his rifle. He would fire the gun and as soon as he heard the response of John he would know in which direction to move.

Accordingly he discharged his gun and then as there was no immediate response, he waited in suspense until he was convinced that no answering report had been given. Again he fired and once more he waited for the answering shot. No answer, however, was given and now thoroughly alarmed Fred again turned and retraced his way.



CHAPTER XIV

CLIMBING

After he had advanced several hundred yards Fred was by no means certain that he really was retracing his way. Either he was greatly confused or the places by which he was passing were strange.

By this time the Go Ahead Boy was thoroughly alarmed. The thought of being lost in Thorn's Gulch, or in some one of the myriad branches of the majestic chasm that extended for hundreds of miles in the course of the mighty Colorado, was alarming. Fred had a momentary glimpse of his home. He even pictured to himself what would occur there when the report was brought that he had been lost in one of the canyons. Doubtless his three friends would tell how they had searched for days and perhaps weeks, and with all their efforts had been unable to find any trace of his presence.

Finding almost a pleasure in his picture of misery, Fred nevertheless was aware that, unless he aroused himself at once, all the horrors of which he had dreamed might become a terrible reality.

Stepping within the shadow of a great cliff he did his utmost to be calm and try to think out what his problem was. He pictured to himself the sights of Thorn's Gulch through which he and John had been led several miles by the guide. Closing his eyes he endeavored to fix accurately in his mind the direction in which Thorn's Gulch extended.

Having satisfied himself as to this he next tried to think of the angles in which the various branches extended. As he recalled his own actions it seemed to him that he had gone in a half-dozen different directions. It was therefore now well nigh impossible to fix accurately the direction in which he ought to move.

Again he looked keenly all about him, trying to find his bearings.

At last he turned back over part of the way by which he had come. At times the frightened boy ran swiftly and then frequently stopped to glance at the sky far above the rim of the canyon. More and more his mind became confused and in his terror he increased the speed at which he was running.

Soon breathless from his endeavors, he was compelled to halt and once more he did his utmost to calm himself. He recalled the time which had elapsed since he had left his friends. Glancing at his watch he saw that more than two hours had passed and that now it was late in the afternoon.

Darkness would soon be at hand and would come suddenly when it arrived. Already Fred fancied he could feel the chill of the night air. He had no food anywhere about him and visions of hunger increased the suffering of the troubled boy. Besides he was afraid of what might occur in the hours of darkness.

When at last night came Fred had not found his way back to the spot where he had left his friends so many hours before. He was convinced now that he would be compelled to pass the night alone in the canyon. Whether or not he ever would be able to escape from the gulch was more than a question in his mind.

Chilled and hungry as well as alarmed, Fred did not dare look for a place where he might sleep. In the darkness it would be impossible for him to tell whether or not rattlesnakes were near or the eyes of some prowling beast might already be fixed upon him.

It was a night of agony. How the long and weary hours at last passed Fred had no conception. There were times when he felt numb as if all power of sensation had entirely left his body. Again he tried resolutely to assure himself that safety would come with the morning light and that soon either he would find his friends or they would discover him. Somehow he was convinced that neither Pete nor John would search together for him. It was likely also that one of them would remain in the spot from which Fred had started so that if the lost boy in some way should be able to make his way back he would not be tempted to depart again under the impression that his friends already were gone.

When at last the morning came, almost with the suddenness with which darkness had fallen upon the canyon, Fred's spirits revived in a measure.

Above the rim of the great gulch he saw a huge bird circling high in the air. He was unable to determine whether or not the bird was an eagle but it certainly reminded him of one.

The sight of the circling bird recalled the emblem of his country,—the majestic eagle. With what powerful wings the great birds had been endowed. What wonderful and graceful sweeps they took in their encircling flights. For a

moment he almost envied the great bird he saw above him. If he too had wings he might be able to escape from the place in which he was practically imprisoned.

A moment later he was almost ashamed of his complaint. If the bird was able to make its way not only up the canyon but also far above it why should not a man be able at least to gain the rim?

The very fact that there were difficulties to be solved was what made the work of a man worth while. The difference between a man and a lump of earth was that one was living and was able to use his will and brain, while the other was a clod always to remain a diminishing bit of the surface of the earth.

"I'll be a man!" declared Fred resolutely. As he spoke he sprang to his feet and drew his belt more closely about him. He recalled stories of Zeke in which that worthy guide had explained that the feeling of hunger was greatly assuaged by drawing one's belt more tightly.

Convinced that he had been helped already, Fred raised his rifle to his shoulder and fired. He was eager to give some token to his friends if they were nearby that he was not far away and in good condition.

He fired three shots, but no answering shot was heard.

For a moment he thought of the anxiety of John and the guide. The picture of the distress of his friend was not inspiring and almost in desperation Fred again raised his rifle and fired.

Still no response was made and the troubled boy was convinced that he was indeed lost.

He was aware too that the lack of food and loss of sleep had combined to make him weaker. He was still following the course of the stream but his halts were longer and more frequent. Whenever he came to a steep place the difficulty of climbing became more manifest.

And yet the determined boy did not abandon hope. Resolutely he continued in his efforts and at times was surprised to find how rapidly he was moving.

It was long since he had taken any thought of his surroundings. His sole purpose now was to keep on until he should come to some place that would enable him to gain the plateau above. Once there, he believed he would be able to discover

where he was and perhaps be able to find his friends.

He had no conception of distance or direction. He might be moving farther and farther all the time from his companions, but there was nothing else to be done and so he doggedly held to his purpose and continued on his way.

He was convinced that he was steadily climbing all the time. The rim appeared to be nearer and although the brook was not much below him its swifter current indicated that it was passing over ground much higher than it had been when Fred first had followed it.

Fred had been unable to obtain anything to eat. He had not seen any living creatures except a few hideous and huge lizards and the birds which had been flying far above the border of the canyon.

He now had approached a part of the canyon where the way appeared to be much more open than before. For some strange reason which he was unable to explain he had been able to follow what appeared to be almost a pathway. Seldom had he been compelled to climb from rock to rock or make many detours.

He was aware that far away was the steadily rising rim of the canyon from which he had made his ascent. He saw the sloping side of the hill before him which extended perhaps two hundred feet. On the opposite side of the canyon the colored rocks took on very vivid tints but whether or not there was a sheer fall on his side just beyond the portion he could see he was unable to determine.

Suddenly Fred stopped and stared in amazement before him. For a moment he was fearful that hunger and weariness had combined to make him see visions. He pinched his arm to assure himself that he was awake. There was no mistaking the object at which he was looking. At that very moment it turned and he saw a man rise from the rocky side of the canyon and peer eagerly down at the sloping border.

Fred's amazement increased when a moment later he discovered two objects in the distance apparently crawling up the hillside. He stared blankly at the sight but there was no escape from the impression he had first received.

Three men were plainly before him. It was also evident to the Go Ahead Boy a moment later that the one whom he had first discovered was assisting the other two. He saw the long lariat or leather rope several times rise and fall above the

ground and then he was convinced that an accident had occurred and that the two whom he saw slowly making their way up the side of the mountain had been the victims. He was unable to determine whether they were friends or foes, they were so far before him. He hesitated after he had raised his gun to his shoulder to proclaim his presence by a shot, and then lowered his rifle. A shot might startle the unsuspecting men who were struggling to gain the rim and the report of his rifle might increase their danger. At the same time, however, he began to advance more rapidly and in a brief time was able to recognize the men whose actions he had been so keenly watching.



CHAPTER XV

THE SEARCH

A strange feeling of excitement now possessed Fred. He already had recognized George and a moment later was certain that the two Indians who had entered their camp were the ones who now were assisting his friend.

Pushing forward as rapidly as he was able, Fred had not gone far before in his loudest tones he shouted, "I'm coming! I'm coming!"

At the sound instantly all three of the persons he had seen turned and looked blankly in the direction from which the unexpected hail had come. For a moment Fred was startled for fear that the surprise might harm George who might lose his grip on the steep and loose side of the gulch. His one thought, however, had been that by the announcement of his coming he might encourage all three to use their utmost endeavors until he should arrive at the place where he might help the Indian.

His alarm, however, was unfounded. Fred, desperately fighting his feeling of weariness and hunger, pushed forward rapidly on his way and was greatly relieved when he saw that George and both Indians also were renewing their efforts. Slowly and yet steadily George was making the ascent. Occasionally he stopped for rest, but not once had he looked behind him. The advice of Thomas Jefferson to look only above him when he was climbing had been strictly followed.

It was nearly at the same time when Fred and George arrived at the place on the brink of the canyon where Kitoni, the Indian, was standing. Each boy was aware of the emotions that filled the heart of his friend. For a moment they were both unable to speak and then Fred, whose tongue was seldom silent long, said eagerly, while his eyes filled with tears, "You must have had a close call, George."

"I did," replied George. "Somehow I slipped over the edge here and went sliding down that incline. I tried to stop myself but I couldn't get any brace or foothold until I came to the little shelf down there. That small tree saved my life."

"Were you alone?" inquired Fred.

"Yes," replied George foolishly. "I must have dropped behind Grant and Zeke. We were pretty well spread out here anyway."

"How long ago did it happen?"

"About fifty years, I should judge by my feelings," replied George dryly. "I fancy it really was about an hour or two."

"Why didn't Grant and Zeke come back and look for you?"

"Perhaps they did. They may have passed the place without knowing that I was anywhere near. But how is it that you are here alone? Where are String and Pete?"

"That's what I don't know," said Fred.

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say, I haven't the slightest idea where they are."

"Where did you leave them?"

"Way back near the entrance of Thorn's Gulch. We stopped in the middle of the day yesterday and after we had eaten our luncheon I began to make some investigations of my own. That's the last I've seen of either Pete or Jack and besides I haven't had a mouthful to eat since yesterday noon."

"You haven't?" exclaimed George. "I'm afraid we can't do anything for you until we find Grant and Zeke. They have most of the supplies. Let me get into my pack and see what I've got."

George's pack which Thomas Jefferson had insisted upon taking when he rescued the Go Ahead Boy was now opened but there was no food in it.

"There's nothing else to be done," said George, shaking his head.

"Yes, there is something to be done," said Fred tartly. "We've got to do something. You don't know where Soc and Zeke are and I don't know where String and Pete may be. We've got to find them."

"We'll find them," suggested Thomas Jefferson quickly.

Both young Indians had been silent during the conversation although they were intensely interested in the conversation of the two boys.

"I shall go to look up the two who went ahead of you—" began Thomas Jefferson.

"But they may have passed this place and gone in the other direction," interrupted George.

"I shall see," said the Navajo quietly. "I shall go in that direction and Kitoni will go in the other looking for the other two."

"But he may not find them," suggested George quickly. "They probably thought Fred was lost and they have been staying where they were when he left them."

"We shall see," was the laconic reply of Thomas Jefferson.

"But what makes you think they will be where Fred left them?" demanded George.

"I do not know," replied the Indian. "One may look and one may stay. If they think he is lost one may stay in the camp so that he will know where he is if he finds his way back to it. You must both stay right here where you are," he added. "Do not move even if no one comes for a day and a night. It is your only hope."

"Hi! Hi!" exclaimed George abruptly. "I've found something in my pack! It's good to eat."

George, greatly alarmed for his friend, had renewed his search among his belongings hoping to discover some food that might be prepared for the hungry lad. Strips of bacon quickly were cut and the boys, in spite of George's lameness and Fred's hunger, insisted upon making a fire and cooking the food. They were eager for the Indians to begin their search for their missing friends as speedily as possible.

It was not long before the two Navajos started on their expeditions, Thomas Jefferson moving in the direction in which Grant and Zeke had gone, while his companion retraced his way in the hope of discovering John and the other guide.

It had been agreed that neither should remain away longer than the following evening. If the Indians were not back in camp by that time it was agreed that the meeting place which previously had been selected for the two parties should be

the spot which all should seek when they returned with the lost members of the party.

It was also agreed that neither of the boys should try to withdraw from the place where they then were. The overhanging ledge protected them from the heat of the sun, and if they should be compelled to spend the night there they would be safer from the attacks of any prowling beasts than would likely be the case in a more open or exposed spot on the way they had followed.

"George," said Fred when the light had faded and the silence that rested over the great cliff was tense, "do you really think there's anything in what the Navajo said?"

"What did he say?"

"Why, don't you remember that he said that whoever tried to come in here to find the lost mine was certain to get into trouble? It seems to have worked pretty well with us so far. I lost my way and you fell and bruised your leg, to say nothing about trying to slide over the precipice and land in the valley below."

"I guess what Thomas Jefferson said didn't make you lose your way," replied George.

"I know," acknowledged Fred thoughtfully. "But how do you account for it that he should have said what he did and then before we get very far on our way into the Gulch something happens to both of us and something may have happened to John, to say nothing about Grant and Zeke."

"I guess you're tired and nervous, Pee Wee," said George, who was aware of the feeling in the heart of his friend.

"Well, all I can say," declared Fred, "is that I hope there won't be anything worse happen to us than has come already."

"Why should there be anything worse?"

"There shouldn't, that's just what I mean."

"Of course we've got a job ahead of us. It isn't any easy thing to locate a valuable claim. If it was there wouldn't be anything in the copper, or silver, or gold, or whatever the metal is that we want to get. That's why men use gold for money. It's so scarce and so hard to find and then after you have found it it's harder still

to mine it. Hark," he added abruptly, "it seems to me I heard somebody speak."

Both boys listened intently and a moment later Fred declared, "You're right, Pop, there is somebody coming."

The sound of voices was faintly heard coming from the direction in which Thomas Jefferson had gone in his search for Grant and Zeke.

The sound became steadily clearer and in a brief time the dim outlines of the three approaching men were seen not far away.

"Hello, there!" called George.

"Hello, yourself!" came back the reply which both boys recognized at once as the voice of their missing comrade, Grant. A few minutes later all three arrived at the place where George and Fred were awaiting their coming.

"You're a great fellow!" exclaimed Grant to George. "Why didn't you keep up with us?"

"Why didn't you come back and look for me?" retorted George. "It's a great idea that a man slips down the side of the canyon and almost falls over a precipice and nobody cares enough about it even to stop and say good-by to him."

"We did come back," explained Grant, "and then we decided that you must have gone on again, so we turned back, then we stopped for we didn't know what to do. That was just about the time when the Navajo caught up with us and told us that you and Fred were back here together. He told us too about Fred's wandering around the canyons trying to see if he too couldn't get lost. According to Thomas Jefferson he came mighty near succeeding too."

Fred did not reply although it was plain that his feeling of relief at the return of Grant was as great as that of his companion.

The conversation speedily turned upon the exciting experiences through which all three boys had passed that day. Zeke declared gruffly that there wasn't one of them fit to be in the canyon. "I'm tellin' you," he said, "this is no place for a kid or a tenderfoot. It's a man's job to work one's way up this gulch, let me tell you, and we ought not to have any infants along with us."

"We're not 'infants,'" spoke up Fred. "Except in the eyes of the law," he added. "We're able to do the job and there isn't any one of us that's trying to back out."

"No, I wish some of you would," growled Zeke. "What with your getting lost and trying to slide over the edge of the Gulch there isn't much time to look for any lost claim or find any prospect."

"How long do you think it will be before Jack and Pete come here?" inquired Fred.

"Nobody knows," replied Zeke. "Maybe an hour, maybe a day, and maybe a week and maybe never."



CHAPTER XVI

A STARTLING ARRIVAL

Whether the gruff words of the somewhat crusty guide cast a spell over the boys or they themselves shared in the dark vision presented by him no one knew. At all events silence soon rested over the little camp and in a brief time all were asleep.

Now that Fred and George had been cared for and the immediate peril into which they had fallen was gone a feeling of relief had come to the three Go Ahead Boys. They were still anxious concerning their missing companion, but their confidence in Pete and their knowledge that John was not likely to incur any unnecessary risks, to say nothing of the search which Kitoni was making, all combined to strengthen their hope that the missing Go Ahead Boys would soon be with them.

When the light of the following morning appeared the camp was astir and Zeke, who was awake before his young charges had opened their eyes, was already preparing a simple breakfast. It had been difficult for him to obtain wood with which to kindle the fire but after a diligent search in the barren region where they had halted he at last obtained a sufficient number of dead and dried branches that had fallen from the few trees on the side of the canyon.

When breakfast had been prepared and eaten, the courage of the boys promptly revived. Frequently each turned and looked far down the great gulch, hoping to obtain a view of John or the absent guide, but as yet nothing was seen to indicate that the young Navajo had found the missing member of the party.

Already in the sunlight the air was intensely warm. In the shade, however, it was so cool that Fred declared an overcoat would not be uncomfortable.

"I'm getting in a hurry," he said.

"It won't do you any good if you be," said Zeke solemnly. "You'll have to take things as they come."

"The trouble is they don't come," laughed Fred. "I want Pete and John here."

"I guess you'll have to put up with those of us that haven't got lost or tried to fall over the rocks," growled Zeke, his eyes twinkling as he spoke. "Here's Thomas Jefferson," he added, "he'll help you pass the time."

The Navajo had not passed the night near the spot which the boys had selected. No one was aware whether he had departed to rejoin his friend or had merely sought another resting place.

"They always show up about breakfast time," growled Zeke under his breath. Nevertheless the guide at once prepared some food for the Indian who now had rejoined the party.

"Did you see anything of our friends?" inquired Grant eagerly.

"I saw nothing," replied the Navajo. "I do not expect all people here to be safe."

"Why not?" demanded George.

"I have explained already," replied the Indian. "This is no place for white men. It belongs to the Indians, and the spirits of those who live here do not love to have white men come. I have never heard of one who tried to enter who did not have bad luck before long."

"Yes," laughed Fred, "but I have known people to have bad luck who never heard of Thorn's Gulch."

"They may have bad luck without coming here," said Thomas Jefferson, "but they are sure to have it if they do come."

"Why don't you go and help find your friend?" spoke up Zeke, addressing the Navajo as he spoke.

"Kitoni will come."

"Do you think he will find John and Pete?" inquired Fred eagerly.

"He will find them," answered the Navajo. "It may take two days, it may take more."

"Why I couldn't have been as many miles away as that," declared Fred.

"It's not the number of miles, it's the difficulty of finding the gulch into which they have gone while they were looking for you."

"Do you think they separated?" asked Fred.

The Navajo nodded affirmatively, but did not speak.

"In course they separated," spoke up Zeke. "One looked for you and the other stayed in camp so that you wouldn't be making any mistake when you came back and passed the place."

"Thomas Jefferson," spoke up Grant, "why do you think the spirits of the Indians live here in Thorn's Gulch?"

Whatever the opinion of the Navajo may have been he did not explain. Indeed he did not even reply to the question. It was manifest that he himself thoroughly believed in what he had said. Even his three years in the Eastern school had not been sufficient to deprive him entirely of the superstitions which he had inherited from his ancestors.

"Do you think we'll find that mining claim?" inquired George.

"I don't know," replied the Indian.

"But what do you think?" persisted George.

"I don't know," again said the red man.

Convinced that it was useless to attempt to obtain any opinion from the young Indian, the boy ceased to question him.

Striving to possess their souls in patience they waited while the sun climbed higher into the heavens and still its light did not betray any signs of the coming of their missing friends. By turning and leaning a few feet over the way, the three boys were able to see much farther into the gulch behind them.

Patiently they kept watch but the slow minutes moved on and still John did not come.

It was late in the afternoon when Grant suddenly sprang to his feet and after gazing long and earnestly in the direction in which the guide was looking, he said excitedly, "Zeke, isn't that two men coming up the trail?"

"Yes," replied the guide shortly.

Instantly the three Go Ahead Boys were standing and peering excitedly in the direction indicated by Grant.

"That can't be String and Pete," said George in a low voice. "They would come from the other direction, wouldn't they, Zeke?"

"Yes," replied the guide abruptly.

"Then who are these men?"

"Not knowing, I can't tell you. I can say though that I hope you'll be quiet and not forget that children are to be seen and not heard. In course I mean if those two men come here, as I think they will."

The unexpected discovery of two men in the gulch was of itself startling. Seldom had the foot of man trod these weary wastes. There was an air of complete desolation that rested over the entire region. The discovery therefore of two men coming along the side of the canyon and following the way over which Zeke had gone was doubly surprising.

Conversation lagged while all four carefully watched the actions of the approaching men.

Whoever the strangers might be it was evident that they were not entirely unfamiliar with the region. They picked their way with confidence and made surprisingly good time as they advanced.

When they had come within fifty yards of the place where the boys were standing, Fred excitedly seized George by his arm and said, "Do you see who those two men are?"

"Who are they?" asked George.

"They are the same two white men that came into our camp over on the canyon."

"Is that so, Zeke?" demanded George in surprise as he turned to the guide.

"Yes," answered Zeke sharply. "Now see if you can keep from talking too much."

In a brief time the two white men advanced to the camp. From their actions it was apparent that they had not been aware of the presence of the young prospectors. Their surprise consequently was as great as that of the Go Ahead Boys.

When they entered the camp the long, livid scar on the cheek of the smaller man

convinced the boys that their visitors were indeed the same men who previously had come to their camp and to whose actions they had attributed the loss of the diary of Simon Moultrie, as well as the strange disappearance of the second boat.

The visitors were the first to speak as the taller man said, "What are you folks doing here?"

"Just now we're doing nothin'," replied Zeke brusquely. "Can't you see?"

"That's about the same job we've got," laughed the man with the scar.

"We've been busy enough," growled Zeke.

"Doing what, may I ask?" inquired the larger of the visitors.

"Oh, looking for a lost boat—"

"Nice place to look for a boat," replied the man with the scar as he laughingly pointed to the desert wastes all about them.

"That makes no difference, we've found it just the same," declared Zeke.

For a moment the two white men stared blankly at him, and then both laughed as one said, "If you don't mind I wish you'd tell us where you found a boat up here."

"I didn't say it was up here," explained Zeke. "I said we'd found a boat where the men who took it had smashed."

"How do you know it was smashed?" inquired the man with the scar.

"Tell him," said Zeke abruptly, turning to Fred, "I wasn't myself in the party," he explained, "but this boy was and he knows all about it."

"Pete was the one who found the boat," exclaimed Fred, "but we all saw it."

"We likewise also are looking for a lost diary," broke in Zeke.

"It's a nice place to look for that, too," said the man with the scar.

For a moment the two visitors looked keenly at each other while neither spoke.

"I tell you," said Fred excitedly in a whisper to George, "they are both bad men and I wish we were out of this."



CHAPTER XVII

A DEPARTURE BY NIGHT

"If only John and Pete were here," said Fred in a low voice to his companions as they withdrew to the border of the camp.

"But they aren't here," laughed George, "and there isn't any use in wasting any time crying over their absence."

"That's right," joined in Grant. "We're doing everything we can do to find them, and if we don't find them it won't be our fault."

"Do you really think," demanded Fred, "that they won't be found?"

"No, I don't think anything of the kind," said Grant. "I'm very sure they will be found. All I'm saying is that it's foolish to waste your time lamenting over what can't be helped."

"I'm not crying," retorted Fred somewhat sharply.

"Yes, you are," rejoined his friend. "You're wailing over the fact that John and Pete aren't here."

"Well, they aren't here, and that's one fact."

"If you cry about it, that's another. My mother told me there are only two things a fellow never ought to worry about in this world."

"What are they?" inquired Fred interested at once.

"The things you can help and the things you can't. There isn't any use in worrying over things you can change, for if you're able to change them, stop worrying and get at them and make them different. If you can't possibly change them, then all the worrying in the world won't do you any good."

"I'm wondering," inquired Fred, turning as he spoke and glancing again at their uninvited visitors, "if those men are planning to stay here."

"They certainly look the part now," said George in a low voice.

"What can we do to get rid of them?" asked Fred.

Grant shook his head as he said, "I don't want the contract myself of getting rid of them. If you want to try it you're welcome."

"But I don't see," continued Fred, "why we're bound to take them in and treat them as if they were our long lost brothers. I would a good deal rather see John and Pete come marching into the camp."

"So would I," acknowledged Grant, "but they'll come when they're found and not before. These fellows are here now and Zeke says it's the law of the desert that a man who drops into your camp at nightfall is entitled to share everything you have,—supplies, tents, beds and everything."

"Then I suppose we shall have to put up with it," said George somewhat glumly. "I don't like the appearance of either one of them," he added as again he glanced at the men who now were seated at one side of the camp.

Zeke, apparently was not paying any undue attention to either of the visitors. He was busying himself in certain camp duties though it was plain to his young friends that throughout his task he was keenly observant of the actions of their unwelcome visitors.

Darkness now was creeping over the land and already outlines of the great gulch were becoming confused with the clouds and the trees. It was almost impossible to determine where the rim of the gulch was. The silence, too, that rested over the region was almost oppressive. It was a silence more intense than anything any of the Go Ahead Boys ever before had experienced. Their difficulties were multiplied too by the arrival of the two men whose bearing and actions certainly increased the probability that Fred's statement concerning them that they were "bad men" was true.

The two visitors had eagerly accepted the supper which was given them and then they did not indicate any desire to depart. They did not disturb conditions nor did they strive to enter into conversation with the campers. Occasionally Zeke or one of the boys had spoken to the men, but otherwise they had mostly been left to their own devices.

When time for retiring had come and John and Pete had not come back nor had any word been heard from the young Navajo who had gone in search of them, even Zeke became somewhat serious when the boys spoke to him concerning the

failure of the other members of their party to join them.

"I'm thinking" Zeke remarked, "that Kitoni will be able to find 'em, that is, if they're still in the land of the livin'."

"But don't you think they are?" demanded Fred, aghast.

"In course I think they are," said Zeke testily. "There wouldn't be no use in tryin' to find 'em if they weren't."

"But Thomas Jefferson says this valley is a place where the spirits of the dead Indians come and they don't like to be disturbed. He says that any one who tries to come into this valley is certain to have trouble."

"I reckon we've had our share of trouble," growled Zeke, "and we haven't got very far into the Gulch yet either, but I don't believe no red-skin spirit has nothin' at all to do with it."

The guide's meaning, in spite of his failure to express himself, was clear to his young companions and they strove to be content, although all three were aware that Zeke was becoming increasingly uneasy over the continued absence of John and Pete.

True to Grant's opinion the two strangers remained for the night at the camp.

They had not expected to be invited nor had Zeke or any of the Go Ahead Boys bidden them go on. It was taken as a matter of course that they would be permitted to share the camp which they had found in the desert region.

"We've had a hard time," murmured Grant when at last the boys were preparing for the night. "It's been one thing after another. We've lost a boat, lost Simon Moultrie's diary, lost John and Pete, and I'm not sure that we haven't lost a good deal more by having these two tough-looking men come here and join the band as they have."

"Why don't you keep watch on them to-night?" suggested George.

"Because that's one of the two things I can't worry about," replied Grant demurely. "If they are going to shoot us I can't help it and if they aren't then there's no need of lying awake nights."

In spite of the anxiety of the Go Ahead Boys not many minutes had elapsed before all three were sleeping soundly.

Fred was utterly wearied by his efforts of the day and was the first to close his eyes. George's bruised leg was annoying though not especially painful, and it was not his suffering that caused him to lie awake long after his friends were sleeping.

His accident had made the boy somewhat home-sick. Again and again visions of his faraway home now arose before him and he was almost willing to blame his father for permitting him to take this trip to the Grand Canyon without older members of the family going with him. Indeed, the longer George thought over the matter the more he was inclined to pity himself and to blame some one else for his present misfortune.

He was well aware that there was nothing serious in the bruise he had received and that in all probability within two or three days he would be as well able to walk as ever he had been. But he was tired and anxious and under such conditions his feelings naturally were somewhat depressed. At last, however, George's eyes slowly closed and he too was asleep beside his companions.

It was not so with Zeke, the guide, however. Without betraying his fear he had been suspicious of the two men since they had first come to the camp. Unknown to them he was mindful of their every act and frequently while he was engaged in his tasks he listened and overheard parts of their conversation which he was desirous of hearing.

Zeke had stretched himself upon the dry, warm ground near the Go Ahead Boys, but it was long before sleep was to come to him. The slow moments passed and nothing was heard to break the tense silence of the wonderful region. Indeed, the silence itself was almost oppressive. It was George who had declared that "the silence was something you could hear." Strange as the expression is it is almost descriptive of the conditions under which the Go Ahead Boys now found themselves.

Zeke, however, had little sentiment and in no way had been governed by the feeling which had influenced the Go Ahead Boys. Although he was lying on the ground and his breathing was deep and regular his eyes all the time were sufficiently open to enable him to see what the men of whom he was suspicious were doing.

The hours passed slowly, but none of Zeke's fears were confirmed. Midnight came and the denseness of the silence became even more marked than before.

Now, however, the suspicions of the guide were to be confirmed and his fear proved not to be altogether groundless.

Zeke saw one of the white men suddenly and silently sit erect. While the man was looking about him, Zeke's position was unchanged, but his little eyes were peering out through half-opened eyelids and his right hand suddenly had clutched the pistol which he carried in his belt night and day.

The white man whom he was watching was the one whose face was scarred. For several minutes he sat erect and motionless, until he plainly was satisfied that all the other parties in the camp were asleep.

Then Zeke saw the man slowly rise. Even after he was standing erect he still remained motionless.

Then apparently satisfied that no one in the camp was aware of his action the man slowly and stealthily moved toward the border of the camp where the packs carried by the boys had been deposited.

Glancing behind him once, the man, still apparently convinced that he was not seen, stealthily drew one of the packs toward him and as soon as he had grasped it at once started from the camp over the way by which he had come.

Zeke now was fully awake. He too glanced keenly about him to satisfy himself that the others were not aware of his actions. Apparently satisfied that he had not been seen, he took his rifle and silently followed in the direction in which the unwelcome guest had departed.

For some strange reason Fred also was aroused directly after the departure of the guide, and somewhat startled, sat up. As he did so he saw the taller white man slowly rise from the ground where he had been lying and begin to move rapidly in the direction in which his comrade had disappeared.



CHAPTER XVIII

RESTORING THE MAP

Fred was not aware of the departure of Zeke nor that he had followed the first of the white men to leave the camp. As a consequence when he saw the stranger rise and slowly walk from the place, he had not been disturbed by any fear of mishaps. Indeed, he did not even look about the camp carefully to ascertain whether or not the other man was still there. Apparently too this man when he had gone had departed empty-handed.

For a brief time Fred hesitated, almost deciding to awaken his companions and inform them of his discovery, but at last, convinced that such action was unnecessary and still unaware that the guide also had gone, he once more stretched himself upon the dry ground and soon was soundly sleeping.

He was aroused the following morning by Grant who was shaking him as he shouted, "Wake up, Fred!"

"Is it time to get up?" yawned Fred sleepily.

"It's time for every one of us to be wide awake," declared Grant. "Do you know what has become of Zeke and the two men that were here last night?"

"Have they gone? Aren't they here now?" demanded Fred at once thoroughly awake.

"No, sir, there's not one of them here," replied Grant.

"That's strange," said Fred. "I waked up in the night and saw one of the white men leaving the camp."

"Didn't you see the others?"

"No."

"Did the man take anything with him?"

"I didn't see that he did."

"Well, one of the packs is gone anyway."

"Then the other man must have taken it," said Fred positively. "I'm sure the one I saw leaving didn't carry anything with him."

"He may have come back," suggested Grant.

"That's true," said Fred thoughtfully. "I hadn't thought of that. Thomas Jefferson," he added as the young Navajo now approached the place where the two Go Ahead Boys were standing, "what do you make of this?"

"All three gone," replied the Indian.

"We know that already," replied Fred sharply, "but we don't know where they have gone nor why nor who. What time was it," he demanded of Grant, "when you first found this out?"

"About ten minutes ago when I first waked up."

"I saw one of the men leaving," Fred explained, "but I haven't any idea what time it was. It was in the night sometime."

"Did he go alone?" inquired the Indian.

"Yes," Fred answered.

"In which direction did he go?" asked the Navajo.

Fred pointed to his right and without a word the young Navajo instantly ran to that side of the camp and began to inspect closely the footprints of the men who had gone.

In a brief time he returned and said simply, "No two of the men went together. The man with the scar went first. If the man you saw did not have any pack then it was the short man that took it."

"How do you know they didn't go together?" inquired Grant.

"I can see their footprints. If they had gone together they would have walked side by side or one would have been directly behind the other. That is not the way it is."

"But how do you know that the scarred man went first?"

"Because I find a place where Zeke crossed over from one side of the way to the other. He stepped in the footprint of the other man in one place. Zeke's foot is bigger so I'm sure it was his print. He could not step on the other's footprint unless he was behind him."

"But what makes you think that they both went before the man that Fred saw?"

"Because that man did not have a pack. The pack is gone."

"But I don't see how that proves they went before. They may have left after the other man."

The Navajo shook his head, however, and said, "They go first."

"What are we to do now?" demanded George as he joined his companions.

"The first thing we want is some breakfast and then we'll decide what next to do," said Grant, who in spite of Fred's greater readiness to talk, now naturally assumed the place of the leader of the three Go Ahead Boys.

At that moment, however, the Navajo again turned to the young campers and said, "I'll go to find out where Zeke and the two men went. If I go you three boys must stay here until I come back."

"But suppose you don't come back?" suggested Fred.

"I shall come," said the Navajo confidently.

"But suppose you don't?" said Fred again.

"If I do not come by to-morrow morning," explained Thomas Jefferson, "then you will know that something has happened to me and you will go back if you can find your way."

"Not much!" declared Fred. "If you don't come we shall try to find out what has happened to you."

"No. No," said Thomas Jefferson abruptly. "But I shall come back."

"You're not going until after breakfast," suggested Grant quickly as the Indian apparently was about to depart.

"I will get breakfast when I come back," said Thomas Jefferson laconically.

Without any further conversation he at once departed, closely following the footprints of the three whom he believed had gone before him.

"Well, what's to be done now?" inquired George after the three Go Ahead Boys had remained silent while they watched the departing Navajo as long as he remained within sight.

"We'll get breakfast," replied Grant.

For a time conversation ceased while the boys were busily engaged in the preparation of their morning meal. In spite of the mystery surrounding them and the anxiety that more or less every one felt, they were all hungry. As a consequence the simple breakfast speedily was prepared and it was not until it had been eaten that the boys once more turned to the problem which now confronted them.

"I'm telling you," said Grant positively, "that Thomas Jefferson is all right. The only thing for us to do is to stay right here where we are until he comes back or John and Pete are brought here by Kitoni."

"I'm afraid something has happened to String," said Fred slowly.

"So you have said before," remarked Grant dryly. "Now the thing for you and for us all to do is just to hang on to ourselves and wait. We mustn't let this get on our nerves. If we do no one knows what we shall be up against."

Grant's companions did their utmost to carry out his suggestion, but there was little activity in which they could indulge and the time dragged heavily on their hands.

"How far do you think we've come into Thorn's Gulch?" asked Fred when several hours had elapsed.

"Six or eight miles," replied Grant promptly.

"Then we ought to be able to find our way out all right," said Fred.

"Of course we can," said Grant quietly, "though after we find our way out we haven't gotten to the end of our troubles."

For a time the suggestion made all three boys silent and serious. They were more than two thousand miles from home. One of their companions had not been seen for many hours and in spite of what he was willing to acknowledge every one of

the Go Ahead Boys was now anxious concerning the safety of the missing John.

Not even a guide was left them and the continued failure of Zeke to return increased their fears.

Fred, the most easily discouraged of the Go Ahead Boys had been the most eager of all to enter upon the expedition. It was plain to his comrades now that his spirits were sinking and both were fearful of what the effect would be if Fred entirely lost hope.

"I tell you what we'll do," suggested Grant at last. "We'll try to make a copy of the map that Simon Moultrie had of the place where he had staked his claim."

"We can't make any copy," said Fred disconsolately, "we haven't anything to copy."

"Then we'll make it from memory," said Grant quietly. "Let me see," he continued, as he took a note book from his pocket and at once began to draw on a blank page. "Here's Thorn's Gulch," he added as he drew lines to indicate the great canyon. "We have come about six miles so we'll put our camp about here," he explained as he marked the location. "Now as I remember, Simon Moultrie had marked Two Crow Tree on this side of the Gulch and about so far from the place where the Gulch runs into the Grand Canyon. Then about so much further on the same side of the Gulch was Tom's Thumb. About half way between Two Crow Tree and Tom's Thumb on the other side of the Gulch was Split Rock. Then a little to the right in back here was the place he marked as the stake. Now, let me see, what were the figures and the letters he had there?"

"The first one," said Fred interested now in what Grant was saying, "was $\frac{1}{2}$ m. n.e."

"That's right," said Grant, "and right below it was $\frac{1}{4}$ m. s.e."

"And the last one at the bottom," joined in George, "was $\frac{1}{4}$ m. n.n.e."

"There," Grant said with satisfaction as he held his drawing up for inspection. "I think we have reproduced Simon Moultrie's map closely enough to tell us about where we are and where we've got to go."

"Are we still going on?" inquired Fred.

"Of course we are going on," declared Grant. "We'll start just as soon as the

others join us. Look yonder!" he said, abruptly leaping to his feet as he spoke and pointing to a distant spot on the side of the Gulch. "There's something moving over there."



CHAPTER XIX

A JOYOUS RETURN

Keenly excited, the three boys instantly arose and advanced nearer the rim of the Gulch. Around the bend of the next great buttress or projection they saw two forms moving slowly which they instantly recognized as men.

"That's Zeke and Thomas Jefferson!" exclaimed Grant in a low voice.

"What has become of the other two men?" inquired George.

"You'll have to ask them,—or Zeke and T.J.; perhaps they will be able to tell you something after they get back here."

Grant's surmise proved to be correct. Within a half-hour both Zeke and the Indian returned to the camp.

Neither was willing to describe the details of very much of his effort to overtake the two white men who had gone from the camp. It was manifest, however, that both white men had disappeared and that along with them had gone one of the packs, now doubly valuable in the eyes of the boys.

"Didn't you see the men anywhere, Zeke?" inquired Fred.

"Not a sign."

"Did you find out where they went?"

"Not exactly."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why not seein' 'em, I'm not sure where they are nor where they went."

"But you think they went—"

"I'm not doin' very much 'thinkin' just now," replied Zeke as he at once began his preparations for the evening meal.

Fred however, was not to be turned aside so easily.

Approaching the place where Zeke was working he said, "Do you think those men have tried to go to the place where Simon Moultrie staked his claim?"

"I don't know nothin' 'bout it," replied Zeke, without looking up from his task. "My only 'pinion is that if there's any such claim and we don't get there pretty soon there won't be much for us to look for."

"Why do you suppose John and Pete don't come back?"

"Because they have not returned."

"Don't you think that Kitoni found them?"

"I don't know much about it. I'm thinkin', however, that if they are to be found, the Navajo will be as likely to find 'em as anybody."

"I wish I never had started on this trip!" exclaimed Fred manifestly downcast at the outlook.

"It doesn't make any difference what you 'wish'," said Zeke gruffly. "You have started and you're here. I don't know of any way of gettin' out of Thorn's Gulch outside of flyin' or walkin'."

"I guess you're right," replied Fred dolefully. "Hello, what's that?" he added abruptly. From far away had come a faint shout. Fred was positive that he had heard a call, but Zeke, ignoring the words of the Go Ahead boy, abruptly arose and ran to a place far to the left of the camp.

His startling action when it was seen by the Go Ahead boys at once caused every one to follow his example.

Again the faint call was heard and this time it was answered abruptly by Thomas Jefferson, whose voice carried far and was almost as sharp as the report of a pistol.

"Who is it? Who is it?" demanded Fred.

The Indian made no reply, but as the distant call was heard again he repeated his call, which this time was distinctly answered. As yet no one was able to see the place from which the cry had come.

"Do you think anyone is in trouble?" inquired Grant anxiously of the guide.

"No," replied Zeke.

"Do you think any one is in trouble?" inquired

"That's more than I can tell."

"Why don't you call Pete?"

"No use. Thomas Jefferson has answered the call and there isn't anything more to be done except to wait until they get here, then we'll see whether any one is missin' or not."

"Come on, fellows, let's go down and see!" shouted Fred to his companions, who at once prepared to obey the suggestion.

"Here, stop that!" ordered Zeke sternly. "You're not goin' to do anything of the kind. We've got one boy lost now and that's enough. My dad used to tell me that one boy was a boy and two boys was half a boy. I don't know just how much four would be," he added quizzically, as he glanced at his young companions. "We've got troubles enough now. Just hold your horses and wait, and we'll soon find out what we all of us want to know."

Striving to possess their souls in patience the Go Ahead Boys waited while the minutes slowly dragged on. Again and again Fred impatiently shouted, but for some reason there was no further answering cry. It might be that the little party had passed under some projecting shelf of rock which cut off all sounds from above.

Just as the sun set, however, to the great delight of the boys they discovered three men slowly climbing the side of the gulch almost directly below them.

Instantly the Go Ahead Boys cheered and shouted, although no replies were made to their hails.

From what they were able to see they concluded that not one of the three missing members of the party was disabled. They were all toiling slowly up the sloping side, and it was soon manifest that every one was able to make the effort for himself.

Twenty minutes later John, Pete and Kitoni gained the place where their friends were awaiting their coming.

"You never had any one so glad to see you in all your life," shouted Fred as he ran to John and tried to throw his arm around his neck. As Fred was the "pigmy"

of the party his efforts were ridiculous, but they nevertheless served to remove a part of the tension under which all were laboring.

"Are you all right, Jack?" demanded Grant. "I am now," replied the tall Go Ahead Boy somewhat ruefully.

"What happened to you?" asked Fred.

"I got lost too. We waited for you to come back and when you didn't come after a long time, I started out to look for you. Pete told me not to do it, but of course I knew better than he did and nothing would do but I must try it. It's lucky I'm here, let me tell you."

"Did you find your way back to the place where Pete left you?"

"I did not. He found me. Now then, what happened to you? We didn't know but that you might have fallen over some rim or been bitten by a rattlesnake or swallowed by a mountain lion. The first thing we knew was when Kitoni came along and told us."

"Did you go back to the place where you were when I left you?"

"What do you think we'd do? Of course we went back. We didn't know but by some kind of fool-luck you might have gone back there and if we weren't on hand we knew you wouldn't know the place and most likely would go on past it and then be lost on the other side. You see we were in a tight box."

"I'm sorry," said Fred ruefully. "All I can say is that from this time on I'm going to stick so close to the crowd that nobody can lose me."

"You'd better!" said John threateningly. "I thought I was done for, when I got lost too. I thought of Fremont and Kit Carson and the Forty-niners and all the old chaps that came out over the Santa Fe trail. I have heard my father tell what fights they had with the Indians and how their water and supplies ran low and all that, but if any of them had any harder time than I had then I'm sorry for him, that's all. There was just one thing that made me hang to it."

"What was that?" inquired Grant.

"Why it was what my father had told me. He said that the difference between men isn't very much,—I mean what makes one man succeed and another man fail. He says it's just that little difference though that counts. I remember he told

me about one of his classmates in college who was the brightest fellow in the class. He started in all right on any line of work, but just before the job was all ready to be clinched he usually gave up. My father says that is the way it is with men. They may be all right up to the last point, but that last point is the one that counts. That's the 'final punch' that counts most."

"Well, I'm glad you got out of it all right anyway," said Fred cordially. "Did you see any bears or mountain lions or snakes."

"Not one, but I saw some lizards which scared me almost as much as if they had been rattlers. They were ten or twelve inches long. They had a funny way of running and every few steps would turn around and look at me."

"I'm not surprised," said Grant soberly, breaking in upon the conversation. "I understand precisely the feeling of those lizards. There's only one of your kind in all the world."

"You're right for once in your life," retorted John. "Now tell me," he added, "what your plans are. What is the next thing to be done?"

"Now that little Johnnie has arrived," laughed Grant, "I think the best thing we can do, if Zeke and Pete agree, is to stay here to-night and start on early tomorrow morning."

"Start where?" demanded John.

"Why for Simon Moultrie's claim."

"I had almost forgotten about that," laughed John, "but I guess that's as good a trip as we can make."

By this time Zeke had supper prepared and the boys responded to his announcement with a zeal that caused the guide to say, "You boys must not forget that one of our packs is gone. We may have to go short on our rations."

The statement at once led to the story of the coming of the two white men and their strange departure. Grant explained how Zeke and Thomas Jefferson had each made a search, but the two men had disappeared. It was suspected, however, that they had gone farther into Thorn's Gulch and were determined to make their own search for the lost claim of Simon Moultrie.

"If they get there first," said Zeke dryly, "we may have our troubles staking any

claim when we come."

"Well, we shan't get there unless we start," declared Fred, whose mood now had changed completely. "I'm for starting as early as we can get John up to-morrow morning."

"Never you mind your Uncle John!" declared that worthy individual. "I shall be ready before you are."

Whether or not it was the rivalry of the boys that caused them to rise early the following morning is not known, but the sun had not yet appeared above the eastern horizon when after a breakfast, prepared by Zeke and Pete, the Go Ahead Boys, together with the guides and the two Navajos, who now by common consent had become members of the party, once more began their search for the claim which Simon Moultrie had staked.



CHAPTER XX

TWO CROW TREE

The party was compelled to move somewhat slowly as Fred and George had not yet entirely recovered from their recent experiences. Their spirits, however, were high, and in the bracing air of the early morning the troubles of the preceding night were forgotten.

Zeke and Thomas Jefferson led the way while Pete and the other Navajo formed a rear guard. The packs had been rearranged so that now the burdens were lighter for every one. Indeed, the loss of the pack which their white visitor had taken had made the guides somewhat anxious concerning the outlook for supplies. A journey of one hundred miles at least would be required to obtain fresh provisions and at least a week would be necessary if one of the guides should be sent to obtain them. There might be difficulty too in bringing in the supplies even if they should be obtained.

In a measure the boys reflected the feeling of their leaders, but their confidence in the speedy outcome of their quest was keen and as a consequence other things were ignored or forgotten.

As the morning waned the conversation lagged somewhat and the hour was near when they planned to stop for their noonday meal and rest. They were now walking along the rim of the great Gulch. Their pathway had led upward and indeed there were places immediately below them where it was more than doubtful if they would be able to proceed.

At a sudden sharp call from Zeke the remaining members of the party hastened forward to the place where the guide was standing.

"Look ahead of you," said Zeke. "Do you see anything?"

"I see rocks and the rim of the Gulch, plenty of sand and lots of sky," replied Fred glibly.

"Look along the rim," suggested Zeke, ignoring the flippant manner of the Go Ahead Boy. "What do you see about a mile ahead of us?"

"I don't see anything different from what I said," laughed Fred.

The other boys, however, were silent for a time while they peered intently in the direction indicated by the guide.

Suddenly Grant said in a low voice, "Zeke, do you mean that tree yonder?"

"That might be it," replied the guide.

As he spoke two large, black birds suddenly arose from a branch of the distant tree and flying lazily disappeared beneath the rim of the Gulch.

"That's it!" exclaimed John eagerly. "That's it! That's the tree Simon Moultrie marked out in his diary. Zeke," he added excitedly, "isn't that the Two Crow Tree?"

"It may be," replied Zeke.

"Then let's go ahead and not stop until we get there. It isn't more than a mile or two away, is it?"

"About that," replied Zeke.

The suggestion of the Go Ahead boy was at once adopted. The entire party increased their speed and rapidly moved forward.

Twenty minutes had elapsed when they stood beneath the tree which had been discovered by Zeke.

"What kind of a tree is it?" inquired Fred.

"It's a Two Crow Tree," retorted George glibly.

"I wish I was dead sure of that," spoke up Zeke.

"Don't you think it is?" demanded Grant.

"Yes, I think it is, but of course I can't be sure."

"What shall we do now?" demanded Fred.

"Cook our dinner here and decide what we'll do next."

As soon as the simple meal had been prepared the young prospectors were summoned to the repast. Their interest was so keen, however, in the tree under

whose branches they were seated that all the Go Ahead Boys were ready to declare that the first landmark indicated by Simon Moultrie had been found.

"The only thing for us to do," said Zeke after he had listened to all that the boys had to say, "is for Thomas Jefferson and myself to leave you here while we go ahead to see if we can find anything that looks like Tom's Thumb. If we find it then we may be pretty sure that we're on the right track."

"How will you know?" inquired John.

"Have to use our common sense," said the guide sharply.

"Did you ever see Tom's Thumb?"

"If I did I didn't know it by that name," said Zeke. "What do you boys think we had better look for?"

"I say a rock shaped like a man's thumb," said Fred.

"I don't," spoke up John. "What I would look for would be a place in the mountains ahead."

"I suggest a formation in the rim of the Gulch," said George.

"What do you say?" demanded Zeke as he turned to Grant.

For some reason the guide manifested greater confidence in the judgment of Grant than in the opinions of the other boys.

"It seems to me," said Grant slowly, "that I should be on the lookout for all of them. I'm inclined to think, however, that if you find it, it's likely to be something in the shape of the ground that makes one think of a man's thumb."

"Don't none of you boys stir from this tree," ordered Zeke abruptly. "Jeff and I will go ahead and—"

"For a time you'll be the Go Ahead Boys," laughed Fred.

"I don't care much 'bout what you call us, but if we can get there you'll hear from us before a great while."

The interest of the Go Ahead Boys was still keen after the departure of the guide and the Indian. Silently they watched the two men as they steadily proceeded on their way until at last they were lost to sight by an elevation around which they

were making their way.

"Soc," asked John, "why do you suppose there were two crows in that tree?"

"Because they had stopped for rest or observation," laughed Grant.

"That isn't what I mean," retorted John. "You know when crows alight they usually station one of their number as a guard on a tree or fence or some place of elevation, that is supposed to give warning. Now, I don't think I ever saw two on observation, did you?"

"I don't know that I ever did," said Grant. "Now that you speak of it, I'm not sure they were crows anyway."

"They were crows all right," declared Fred confidently.

"My, Pee Wee!" said John in mock admiration. "If I only knew just half as much as you think you know I would be a wise man."

"That's all right, String," retorted Fred glibly. "Don't you remember what I told you about that great Englishman who said that Nature never made any man seven stories high without leaving the top loft empty?"

"I believe I have heard you refer to that fact some three thousand, eight hundred and sixty-one times. In fact I have almost learned it by heart. I haven't any doubt the man who said it was a little runt not much bigger than you are."

Fred's face flushed as the Go Ahead Boys laughed and conversation ceased for a time.

The boys had given their word not to leave the region of the big tree. There was therefore nothing to be done except to endure the waiting until Zeke and the Navajo returned.

Occasionally the conversation turned on the subject of the claim which Simon Moultrie plainly had believed he had discovered.

Fred, who was the most enthusiastic of the Go Ahead Boys, was positive the lost claim would be found and that the future wealth of the four boys was therefore certain.

The others may have been as eager as Fred to find the place for which they were seeking, but they were more restrained in their manner and inclined to tease their

enthusiastic comrade.

"Zeke told me," suggested Grant soberly, "that really this Simon Moultrie was crazy."

"Is that so?" retorted Fred. "Then I suppose you're ready to say next that everything he saw was crazy too."

"Not quite as bad as that," laughed Grant, "but I do say that it's possible, if Simon Moultrie really was insane, he may have imagined he saw things or found them when he didn't see them at all."

Even Fred was somewhat sobered by the declaration of his companion and once more the party lapsed into silence.

It was now past mid-afternoon and the Go Ahead Boys were becoming impatient over the failure of the guide and the Indian to return.

"If they haven't found any thing," said Fred irritably, "then they ought to come back and tell us so. We don't want to stay here forever."

"Nay, verily, we do not," said George, shaking his head soberly. "I agree with Pyg. If Zeke doesn't come back within an hour I say we start after him."

"You want your turn in being lost in the canyon, do you?" said John grimly. "Well, all I can say is that if you do, you can try it, but as for little Johnnie he stays right here where he is. I've had all I want of lost Go Ahead Boys in Thorn's Gulch or any other canyon."

Although they did not share in John's fear nevertheless the boys all remained in their camp.

It was about four o'clock when Kitoni called their attention to two tiny figures in the distance.

The glasses revealed that they were men and that they apparently were coming across the Gulch. How they would be able to make their way up the steep side no one could explain.

"That must be Zeke and Thomas Jefferson," suggested Fred at once ready to form and express an opinion.

The Navajo, however, shook his head as he said, "It is not Zeke and it is not

Thomas Jefferson."

"Then who is it?" demanded Fred. "It seems to me we're all the while having two or three men come into our camp when we've been told that there wasn't a human being in these parts. They told us in Tombstone that we wouldn't see a strange face in this part of the world."

"I see one now," declared John, turning and staring at his diminutive friend.

The Go Ahead Boys laughed but their interest was too keen in the men who now in the distance could be seen more distinctly.

"You don't suppose those two strange white men can be coming back here, do you?" inquired Grant in a whisper.

"Yes, that is just who they are," replied Kitoni. "Look yonder!" he added as he pointed in the direction in which Zeke and the Navajo had departed.

Two other men also were seen coming from that direction and no effort was required to induce the Go Ahead Boys to believe that Zeke and his companion were returning to the camp.



CHAPTER XXI

THE RETURN OF THE STRANGERS

The excitement among the Go Ahead Boys at once became intense. Convinced now that the two men, whose presence whenever they had visited the camp had created trouble, were now returning and the fact that the belligerent Zeke and the Navajo were also likely to arrive at about the same time, convinced the boys that some exciting scenes were to be witnessed.

As yet it was manifest that neither party of approaching men had become aware of the coming of the others.

"There they go!" exclaimed George excitedly when Zeke and his companion disappeared from sight. "Maybe they won't be back here until after the other fellows have left."

"Don't you worry," spoke up Fred. "The other fellows aren't going to leave and that's the worst of it. What shall we do?"

"We shan't do anything until we have to," said Grant. "It will be money in our pockets to keep silent in seven languages."

"There they are now!" exclaimed Fred in a low voice as the two white men approached the camping place.

"We're hungry," explained the man with the scar. "Give us something to eat."

"You haven't eaten all there was in that pack already, have you?" demanded Fred.

"What are you talking about? What pack do you mean? We haven't got any pack," replied the visitor.

"You haven't now. What did you do with it?"

"You'll have to explain what you mean. You 're talking in riddles, as the poet says," sneered the stranger. "All we want is something to eat and I'm thinking you'll cook it for us pretty quick."

"I understand it's the law of the desert," spoke up Grant, "that any one who comes into your camp has to be fed."

"Sure it is," said the man glibly.

"But there isn't anything in that law," continued Grant, "which says what kind of stuff we've got to feed you. My advice to you is to keep right on your way and not stop here."

"That's just what we're not going to do," laughed the other man loudly. "We're hungry and you're going to feed us."

"Is that so?" retorted Fred. "Perhaps you'll tell us when we're going to get the meal."

"You 're going to get it now and there isn't going to be any fooling about it either."

"Do you want your ice cream before your dinner or after?" inquired Fred mockingly. "How about your coffee?" he added. "Will you have a demitasse or a bowl?"

For a moment the man stared blankly at Fred and then apparently convinced that his demand was not to be complied with he advanced savagely upon the Go Ahead Boy as he said, "We don't want no more fooling. You get us something to eat."

At that moment Grant nodded positively to Fred, an action which was not seen by their visitors. Puzzled by the direction of Grant, Fred hesitated a moment and then without a further word began hasty preparations for a meal.

A fire was kindled, although all the wood in the camp was required for the purpose and in a brief time he poured into the boiling water the remaining contents of a broken box of cereal.

It was plain that the visitors both were as hungry as they declared themselves to be. They were watching the actions of the boys so keenly that they were neither of them aware of the approach of Zeke or Thomas Jefferson.

Grant, however, already had discovered the approach of the guide and the Navajo, who now were not more than forty yards distant from the place where the boys were standing.

"I wonder if these men are hungry too," said Grant dryly. As he spoke he turned toward the approaching guide, an action which was immediately followed by all the camp.

For a moment the two unwelcome visitors appeared to be about to flee from the place. They turned toward the Gulch, but soon their courage apparently returned and they came back to the place near the fire.

By this time Zeke and Thomas Jefferson had arrived at the camp and in his most surly manner the guide turned to the two uninvited guests and said, "What are you two fellows doing here?"

"We stopped to get something to eat," explained the man with the scar, who, as usual, was the spokesman.

"Well, you aren't going to get it here," said Zeke sharply. "The thing for you to do is to vamoose. Get out of here and get out right away! None of that," added Zeke in a low voice as he saw one of the men reach toward his hip pocket. "There's going to be no shootin' done here exceptin' I am th' one to do it."

Zeke, who was a powerful man, now grasped the hands of the man with the scar and in spite of his efforts twisted his wrists until he compelled him to drop the weapon which he had drawn from his pocket.

"Leave it there," said Zeke quietly. "It won't do any harm. Now you two get and don't you wait for me to say it again!"

There was something in Zeke's manner that convinced the two men that it might be dangerous for them to delay. Glancing hastily at each other they at once turned from the camp.

When they had gone fifty feet, the smaller man stopped and turned about so that he once more faced the camp, as he shouted, "You think the game is in your hands, don't you? Well, you'll have another think. All I can say to you is that you've got a big surprise coming."

As no one responded to his threat the stranger quickly turned about and soon overtook his companion.

Silently the Go Ahead Boys watched the departing men until they had disappeared below the rim of the great Gulch. Then Fred said, "Zeke, what do you suppose that fellow meant?"

"There's no tellin'," replied Zeke in his most non-committal manner.

"But what do you think?"

"I'm not thinkin' very much. I'm watchin' this stuff to see that it doesn't burn."

"That's all right, Zeke," said Fred impatiently. "But what I want to know is whether or not you think those two men are going to be waiting for us when we find the claim which Simon Moultrie staked."

"I'll have to tell you later about that."

"Look there! They are coming back!" abruptly exclaimed Fred.

The Go Ahead Boy's words were true for the two men were seen clambering upon the rim and once more approaching the camp.

"Will you give me my pistol?" demanded the man with the scar. "There's no knowing what we may run up against and I don't like to go down into the Gulch without anything to protect me."

"No, sir, I won't," said Zeke. "That pistol is as dangerous in your hands as it would be in the hands of an Apache. There's just one thing we'll do for you."

"What's that?"

"I'll take back what I said and we'll give you something to eat if you'll agree to leave and never come back."

"In course we'll do it," laughed the man. "I didn't believe that you'd turn us away without giving us even a spoonful of that stuff you're cooking."

Other articles of food had been prepared by Zeke, who was desirous of economizing in the fire. Wood was scarce and so difficult to obtain that the guide was unwilling to waste a fire just for the sake of their uninvited guests.

As soon as he was convinced that the men were busy in their repast Zeke solemnly winked at Grant and in a manner which was seen by all who were in the camp motioned for him to follow.

Grant at once obeyed the suggestion and as soon as they had withdrawn to one side Zeke in a low voice said, "Did those two fellows come across the Gulch?"

"Yes," replied Grant.

"Then it looks likely to me that they have been looking for that claim."

"What makes you think so?"

"They have been gone 'bout long enough to cover the distance."

"Do you think they have found it?"

"I can't say."

"But do you think they have?"

"It looks a bit like it, judging from the fact that they have come back here so soon. Now I want you to see which way they go when they leave."

"Are you sure they're going to leave?"

"Perfectly sure," remarked Zeke as a slight grin appeared for a moment upon his face, "and they're goin' to be in a hurry when they go, too. Have you got plenty of soap in the camp?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, then I want you to take some of it and go down there at the head of the path they follow when they leave us and grease those rocks. Don't cover them all, but put enough on them so that the rocks will be slippery."

"But you don't want to hurt them, do you?" protested Grant.

"Don't you worry none about hurtin'. All I'm goin' to do is to 'accelerate their departure,' as the poet says."

"What poet says that?" inquired Grant laughingly.

"I don't just remember his name," said the guide demurely. "He said it though and that's enough."

"I'll do what you say," said Grant, as they both turned back to rejoin their companions.

Beckoning to Fred, after he had secured a bar of soap and taking with him a small pan of water, Grant led the way to the spot which the guide had indicated.

There, unseen by the others they thoroughly carried out the directions which Zeke had given them and in a brief time turned back to the camp.

"I guess we'll be goin' on, as we agreed," said the man with the scar when their simple repast had been eaten.

No one interposed any objections, and the two men, after Zeke had once more refused to restore the pistol which he had taken from them, arose and started toward the path which before they had followed when they had returned to the camp.



CHAPTER XXII

SPLIT ROCK

"Well, boys," said Zeke when the men had departed, "my advice to you is to watch out for those two fellows. I told 'em they would go in a hurry when they left camp. You watch 'em! There they are now!"

As he spoke the feet of each of their recent visitors suddenly flew out from under him and both men slid rapidly forward on their backs.

"Haw! Haw!" roared Zeke, who was seldom heard to laugh. "That's a good 'un! Come back here," he shouted, "and I'll pick you up!"

The Go Ahead Boys, however, did not wait for the men to rise. Running swiftly to the place where they had disappeared from sight they peered down the sloping side of the Gulch and saw both men still moving rapidly in their descent.

Apparently neither was in any special difficulty, although both were moving swiftly in their descent. They had gone down the shelving and soft side of the Gulch a hundred feet or more before either of them regained his footing. The man with the scar, who was in advance of his companion, first attempted to rise, but his effort was intercepted by his larger companion who slid against him with full force, again sending both men rolling down the cliff side.

Inasmuch as there was no special danger connected with their descent, for the ground was soft, the amusement of the Go Ahead Boys became keen. They laughed and shouted their words of approval, and Zeke's words were the loudest of all.

The two men, when at last they succeeded in regaining an upright position, turned and savagely shook their fists at the laughing party on the rim of the Gulch and then resuming their descent, continued on their way until both disappeared from sight.

"I'm thinkin'," said Zeke as the party returned to the camp, "that those fellows won't come back here again, at least in the daytime."

"If they come at night," suggested Fred, "it won't do us any good, I'm afraid."

"No more it won't," acknowledged the guide, "but if my plans work out, when they come back here we shall be gone."

"Did you find Tom's Thumb?" asked Grant

"We did," answered the guide quietly.

"You did?" exclaimed Grant. "If you had never seen it before how did you know it was the place for which you were looking?"

"You couldn't miss it," explained Zeke. "There's a stretch of rock there almost as big as a house that is shaped exac'ly like a man's fist, only the thumb stands straight up."

"Did it really look like a thumb?" inquired Fred excitedly.

"It did. We both saw it about the same time and there wasn't any mistaking it either."

"That's all right then," said Grant. "If we've found Two Crow Tree and Tom's Thumb then it ought not to be very hard for us to find Split Rock. We know just about where it is placed, according to the map that Simon Moultrie drew."

"It's on the other side of the Gulch though," suggested George.

"You don't mean it?" exclaimed Fred laughingly. "What a wise chap you are." As Fred spoke Grant drew from his pocket the paper on which he had retraced the outlines of the map drawn by Simon Moultrie.

"In course we're not sure," said Zeke, "but we can get an idea about where to look."

"When shall we start?" asked Grant.

"First thing in the morning" replied the guide. "We wouldn't take any chances starting by night, though now that I've got that chap's revolver I'm thinkin' we wouldn't have anything very much to fear from him."

"But the other man may have a pistol," suggested George.

"That's right," acknowledged Zeke. "All the more reason for waitin' until mornin' afore we start."

"Well, there's one thing," laughed Grant, "and that is that we shan't try to go

down the Gulch the same way those two men started."

"They did sit down hard, didn't they?" chuckled Zeke.

Again the Go Ahead Boys laughed at the recollection of the ludicrous sight presented by the two white men when they had unexpectedly started swiftly on their descent of the Gulch.

When the following morning dawned, the guides and the two Navajos were the first to be stirring in the camp. Before breakfast had been prepared, however, the Go Ahead Boys were awake and preparing for their expedition.

The packs were to be restrapped and all their various belongings secured. This task was completed by the time breakfast was ready and when the boys seated themselves on the ground they were thoroughly ready to receive the food which Zeke and Pete now served them.

"Zeke," inquired Grant, "do you really think those two men found the claim which Simon Moultrie staked?"

"I don't really think so," answered the guide slowly, "but I shouldn't be surprised if they did."

"If they have got it," said Grant, "what can we do?"

"Nothin'."

"Do you mean to say that we can't claim it?"

"That's just what I mean. You can take up some other claims right close by if you want to, but first come first served."

"But that isn't their claim. It belonged to Simon Moultrie."

"Well, if it did," said Zeke dryly, "then I reckon they have as much right to it as we have."

"I hadn't thought of that," said Grant blankly. "However, I haven't much idea that old Sime ever filed his claim. If he didn't, why we stand as good a chance as any one. I do say," he added, "that the sooner we get started and the faster we go the less trouble we're likely to have."

"Then why don't we start right away?" demanded Fred as he leaped to his feet.

In a brief time the party with their packs on their backs started toward the Gulch. As has been said, the sides of the canyon at this place were not unduly steep, and, though the descent in places was difficult, none of the Go Ahead Boys had met with any mishap when at last they all safely arrived in the valley below.

There they halted for a rest and before they resumed their journey Zeke said, "It's so warm here in the middle of the day that I feel as if I was suffocated. I guess we'd better stay here where we be 'till we've cooked our dinner."

The descent had required so much effort on the part of every one of the Go Ahead Boys that they were all willing to accede to the guide's suggestion.

"Zeke, how far do you think we'll have to go before we begin our search?" inquired Fred.

"We'll have to go until we come to the claim," replied the guide dryly.

"But when shall we begin to look?"

"Keep lookin' all the while. I'm thinkin', though," Zeke added, "that we shan't have to go more than three or four miles from the rim."

"You don't suppose he has staked his claim right on the top of the ground, do you?" inquired George.

"What put that notion into your head?" laughed the guide.

"Why it looks so on Simon's map."

"That's all right," acknowledged Zeke. "That map doesn't show many gulches, does it? But I'm not lookin' for a claim right on the flat part of the rim."

"You'll tell us when to begin to look for the stakes, won't you?" asked Fred who was deeply interested in the project which now was distinctly before him.

"Don't you worry none about that," replied Zeke. "When you boys are ready to start you say the word and we'll leave."

"I guess we're all ready to go now," suggested Grant.

"Off we go then," said Zeke, as he promptly arose and swung his pack to his back.

The party by this time was moving in single file, Zeke still leading the way and

Pete following as the rear guard.

The two young Navajos had not remained in the line for any continued length of time. They were moving back and forth, the expression of their shining eyes betraying their keen interest. Indeed, the possibility of discovering a mine had so aroused every member of the party that even the guide who was leading could not entirely conceal his excitement by his manner.

For nearly three hours the little expedition continued on its way. Climbing proved to be more difficult than the descent had been, but at last the party was near the rim.

There they halted once more while Zeke directed the Navajoes to move along the side of the gulch beneath the rim while the others continued on their way across the plateau.

"Yonder is Split Rock, I'm thinkin'," abruptly said Zeke as he stopped and pointed to a huge rock unlike any others which the boys had seen in the region. The stone had been cut almost as if by some huge knife. Several inches of the space between the halves had been filled in by the dust which the winds had deposited.

In the midst of the soil thus obtained a tree was growing which now had shot up at least twenty feet above the top of the great rock.

"What do you suppose that is?" inquired George lightly. "Is the tree trying to keep those rocks apart or are the rocks trying to keep the tree in between them?"

No one replied to the query of the Go Ahead Boy, for all were keenly aroused, now that they had found the third object which Simon Moultrie had indicated on his map.

So eager were all the members of the party that in spite of their recent exertions and the loads they were carrying they all began to run. In a brief time they arrived at the destination they were seeking and as they swung their packs from their shoulders Grant hastily drew again from his pocket the map which he had made in his attempt to recall the one which Simon Moultrie had drawn in the diary that the Go Ahead Boys had found.



CHAPTER XXIII

ON THE RIM

The little assembly crowded closely about Grant and looked with eager interest at the drawings he had made.

"What does it mean?" inquired Fred, "when it says you have to go a half-mile northeast?"

"I'm not sure that it says that," replied Grant. "There's simply a mark here, ½ m. N.E."

"Well, any lubber knows that that means a half-mile northeast."

"Not being a 'lubber,'" retorted Grant, "of course I'm not sure. I'm not very much impressed by a 'lubber's' knowledge anyway."

The Go Ahead Boys laughed at the retort, but their interest in their immediate problem was too keen to permit other matters to enter their thoughts.

"Now how do we know that those letters don't refer to the stake itself?" asked George.

"A brilliant remark," said Grant scornfully. "All you have to do is to locate the claim that Simon Moultrie staked and then prove that it is a half-mile northeast, a quarter-mile southeast, and a quarter of a mile north northeast from some place that you don't care anything about."

"That's not it," said Zeke, shaking his head as he spoke. "It's the claim itself. My opinion is that you go a half-mile northeast from Split Rock. Then turn and go one-quarter of a mile southeast and then a quarter of a mile north northeast."

Both the Navajos were present, standing on the border of the assembly and their shining eyes betrayed their keen interest in the discussion.

"If I recollect aright," said John, "in that diary of Simon Moultrie's he wrote that he was in the middle of Thorn's Gulch when he struck the vein just right."

"That's so," spoke up Grant quickly, "I do remember that."

"Yea!" continued John, elated by the response which had greeted his words, "and that isn't all. He says he followed it up and found the place he was looking for. Didn't he say too that he had already had an assay made and that it was great?"

"Wonderful, String!" said Fred. "You have proved yourself to be a great man. That's exactly what was in the diary as I recall it. The only thing then for us to do is to follow along the middle of Thorn's Gulch until we strike the vein."

"Huh!" retorted Zeke, "you had better make arrangements to have breakfast with the man in the moon than try any such plan as that."

"What shall we do then?" demanded John.

"We've got to decide first of all," explained Zeke, "about this claim that old Sime staked."

"That's what we're trying to do," interrupted Fred glibly.

"Be patient with the child, Zeke," said Grant dryly. "He rides on a half-fare ticket yet."

"Quit your fooling," spoke up John. "We want to find out about this."

"Well," said Zeke, "I've got a compass here, of course, but I haven't any chain. How are we going to tell when we have covered the distance!"

"The only way," responded Grant, "will be for us to pace the distance until we come to what we think is about the spot which Simon found."

"That will take a month of Sundays," spoke up George.

"It will take some time," acknowledged Grant, "but I don't know any other way. Do you, Zeke?" he inquired, turning to the guide.

"Where are you going to start with your measurements?" demanded Zeke.

"Why, at Split Rock, of course," said Grant promptly.

"From the middle of the Rock, or the edge? From the near side or the far side? From the top of it or—"

"I say," broke in Fred, "that we start from the edge of the Rock where it touches the sand. Then we can follow the compass and we know just how many paces there will be in a half-mile."

"It will depend on who does the pacing, I guess," said John drolly. "My legs are longer than Fred's and I guess my steps wouldn't be more than half as many as his."

"The best thing for us to do," said Grant confidently, "is to measure off as nearly as we can do it just what a yard is. Then John, who can cover any distance from two inches to two yards, can try to take steps just the required length."

"We can try that," assented Zeke dubiously, "though I'm inclined to think the better plan will be for us to get a stick that will measure a yard as nearly as we can make it. Then we had better measure it off. We can follow the compass all the way and needn't go very far aside even if we don't come to the exact spot."

"It's a long job," remarked Fred dolefully. "You see we've got to turn. We've got to make the half-mile, then stop and change our directions and go a quarter-mile southeast and then stop again and go a quarter of a mile north northeast. I wonder why old Sime didn't make it a straight line anyway."

"We may find out," said Grant, "that he had to go this way. What shall we do, Zeke?" he added, turning to the guide.

"Whichever you say," replied Zeke.

"Then, I say we try first to let John pace a half-mile. We'll all go along with him and when he comes to the end of his eight hundred and eighty yards why all there is for us to do is to stop and change the direction according to the compass and start out again."

"We haven't anything to measure with," said John dolefully.

"We can strike it pretty close," said Zeke.

"I'll tell you what we can do, boys," said Fred. "The first joint in my thumb is just three-quarters of an inch. We can measure it with that."

Securing a piece of string Grant carefully measured according to the rule suggested by the diminutive Go Ahead Boy and soon he held up his string saying, as he did so, "If Fred is right that is exactly a yard."

"Let me see it," said Zeke, taking the string. Making his own measurements he soon declared that Grant was almost correct in his statement. "We can't get within a half-inch of it anyway," he said.

"A half-inch on a yard would mean four hundred and forty-four inches for a half-mile," said Grant. "Now four hundred and forty inches is thirty-six and three-quarter feet. If we get as far as that out of our way it will take us from now until Christmas to find old Simon Moultrie's lost mine."

"It doesn't make any difference," said John, "that's the best we can do and that's all we've got to work on."

The elongated Go Ahead Boy already had measured twenty yards of the ground and after every yard had been indicated he was walking over the distance trying to see how closely he could adjust his footsteps to the measurements which had been made.

"We'll try it anyway," said Grant. "There's nothing else to be done, but it won't be safe to start until to-morrow morning, will it, Zeke?"

"That's what it won't," said the guide quietly. "We'll stay here at Split Rock until sunrise to-morrow morning."

In accordance with the directions of the guide preparations were at once made for passing the night at the place where they had halted. Thoroughly tired by their exertions the Go Ahead Boys were ready for bed soon after their supper had been prepared and eaten. Indeed, it was not long after dark before silence rested over the entire camp and apparently every member of the party was sleeping soundly.

Some time later Fred suddenly sat erect and looked keenly all about him. He was unable to decide what had awakened him so abruptly for the silence which rested over the place was unbroken.

Uneasy over his sudden awakening, Fred, after delaying a few minutes, silently arose and doing his utmost not to disturb his other comrades moved cautiously toward the rim of the Gulch.

The stars in the sky above him were shining so brightly and appeared to be so near that to the boy it seemed almost possible that they might be plucked from their setting. Not a cloud was visible in the sky. The silence that rested over the entire region was so tense that Fred's nerves were tingling as he stopped for a moment to look about him and listen. What a marvelous experience it was. Alone with a few of his friends on the limitless plains, thoughts of the busy scenes in the great city in which he had his home were almost impossible under

such conditions. The whole world seemed to be barren, while over all were the shining stars whose lights were visible thousands of miles away.

Suddenly Fred's thoughts were diverted from the sublimity of the sight which had claimed his attention. At that moment he saw the form of some one peering just above the rim of the great Gulch.

Startled by the sight Fred dropped upon the ground and excitedly waited for events to develop.

The man before him turned for a moment and apparently was speaking to some one who was hidden from Fred's sight. The boy was confident that he overheard several words although he was not able to distinguish anything that was said.

Fred saw the man whose approach he had discovered now turn again and silently approach the camp.

Greatly surprised Fred speedily was aware that the approaching man was Thomas Jefferson. It was not possible to deny that he had left the camp and in all probability had been talking to some one in the Gulch. Who or what the man was, it was impossible for Fred to conjecture. Troubled and perplexed by the strange occurrence he started swiftly toward the camp. As he drew near, abruptly the Indian arose and advanced.

"Is that you, Thomas Jefferson?" whispered Fred.

"What you do?" replied the Indian. The Navajo spoke in low tones, but his excitement was revealed in the trembling of his voice.

"Me? I haven't done anything. What have you been doing?"

"What you see?" inquired the Indian.

Ignoring the question, Fred said, "Who was talking to you?"

"Where? What you see? What you hear?" demanded the Navajo now plainly aroused by the question of the Go Ahead Boy.

"I have told you," replied Fred. "What were you doing out there with that fellow below the rim of the canyon?"

Before Thomas Jefferson could reply a thought flashed into Fred's mind which nearly staggered him. Was it possible that the Navajo had been meeting the two

white men who had made so much trouble? And if he had met them what had he told them? Was he revealing what every one in the camp now was expected to keep secret? And why were the two white men still following the party if they had already discovered the location of Simon Moultrie's claim?

The questions were so troublesome that Fred decided that it was necessary for him to consult Zeke at once and tell him about the exciting experience through which he had just passed.



CHAPTER XXIV

A SMALL CLOUD

Fred was relieved when he discovered that Thomas Jefferson was eager to go back to the camp and avoid all further questioning.

The actions of the Navajo, however, increased Fred's feeling of anxiety. He watched the Indian until he was convinced that he was trying to avoid any further interview. Then the Go Ahead Boy moved silently around the camp to the place where the guide was sleeping.

Fred's hand placed lightly upon the face of Zeke at once aroused the guide who quickly sat erect. Fred meanwhile had dropped on the ground by his side and as he did so he said, "Don't move, Zeke. Don't get up. I've got something I want to tell you."

"What is it, lad?" whispered Zeke, at once complying with the suggestion.

Thus bidden Fred related his discovery of Thomas Jefferson returning from the rim of the Gulch. He also gave his reasons for believing that the Navajo had been having an interview with some one on the sloping side of the Gulch. He expressed fully his suspicions that the unseen man was one of the two unwelcome white men who had visited the camp several times.

In low voices Fred and the guide conversed for several minutes. When the conversation at last was ended and all of Zeke's questions had been answered the guide said to Fred, "Now see that you keep this to yourself. I'm hopin' that we shan't have any serious trouble, but I don't like the way it looks. Don't tell any of your pals about it."

Fred promised to carry out the suggestion although he had expected to tell John at least of the discovery he had made.

It was long before the excited boy was able to sleep, but when at last his eyelids closed they did not open until the party was already astir.

When breakfast had been eaten Zeke approached the place where Fred was working on his pack and said in a low voice, "I want you to come with me."

"Where?" inquired Fred.

The guide did not reply to the query, but without any delay Fred arose and followed him as he led the way to a place below the rim. There to his surprise Fred saw Thomas Jefferson, evidently awaiting their coming.

As soon as the guide and the Go Ahead boy arrived, Zeke said to the Indian, "Now then, Thomas Jefferson, I want you to tell us what you were doing last night. I don't want any nonsense about it either. You answer my questions straight or there'll be trouble for both of you Navajoes."

Fred was certain there was a sharp gleam in the eyes of the Indian but he did not respond to the suggestion of the guide. Quietly seating himself he faced them both and evidently was waiting for Zeke to begin his cross examination.

"Thomas Jefferson," said Zeke sternly, "weren't you sent east to be educated in the schools?"

"Yes," replied the Indian simply.

"And weren't all your expenses paid?"

"Yes."

"Didn't they treat you white?"

"They thought they did."

"Don't you *know* they did? They paid all your traveling expenses. They paid for your board and your clothes. There wasn't anything that cost you a cent. What do you mean then by saying 'they thought they did'?"

"It was hard for me when I come back to the Navajo people. They laugh at my clothes. They think what I have learned is no good and pretty soon I am ready to give up all I have learned so that the Navajo shan't laugh at me some more."

"That isn't it, Thomas Jefferson," said Zeke tartly. "You're expected to come back to your tribe and show them how to live. That's the way a good many do. I never saw an Indian who had been educated and then came back to his tribe and give up because he was afraid some silly girl was going to laugh at him for his clothes or his new education, that, if he let go, he did not swing twice as far in the other direction. There's no Indian like a bad Indian. And no bad Indian is as bad as the one I'm telling you about."

The Navajo did not respond though his manner betrayed that his anger was steadily rising.

"Now, then, I want to know, Thomas Jefferson, what you were doing with those men down on the side of the Gulch last night," continued Zeke.

"I did not see men."

"Well, *man*, then. Have it your own way. Perhaps there was only one of them. Was it that fellow with the scar on his face?"

"I did not say."

"Well, that's what you must do. You've got to tell us who he was."

"If I do not tell what will you do?"

"Drive you out of camp the same as I would drive a rat out of his hole."

The Indian laughed but made no other response.

"Now, then, Thomas Jefferson," said Zeke, angered by the apparent indifference of the young Indian, "did you see that white man or didn't you?"

"I did not see him."

"Are you talking straight?"

"I am."

"It is 'good talk' you're giving me, is it?"

"I did not see the man."

"Well, then, who was there?"

"I did not see any one."

"But Fred here says you were talking to somebody."

"Let him say."

"All right, T.J.," said Zeke abruptly. "We'll stop here for a while. I'm not done with you yet. Now, what I want you to do is to take Kitoni with you and go along the side of the Gulch keeping your eyes open for any sign of a vein. If you find it

you let me know right away."

"What you do?" inquired the Navajo.

"We shall keep up above the rim and try to find out what is there. Now mark you, T.J., don't try any of your tricks on us. If you do, the first thing you know you'll be thrown out and there'll be no cure for it."

The guide now rejoined the other members of the party and plans were soon made for the day.

It finally was decided that while the two Indians were making their way along the side of the Gulch, all the others should be divided into two parties. Each of these two parties was to spread out in such a manner that at least ten feet intervened between any two men.

It was decided also that the Indians should precede the others by at least an hour.

Meanwhile it was agreed that the center of the rock should be made the starting place for the new expedition. Slow progress was certain, but all were more eager now to avoid mistakes than they were to make haste.

John, who declared he had now acquired an accurate stride which covered exactly a yard, led the way. Directly behind him was Zeke, while the boys were scattered on either side. Pete again formed the rear guard, although no danger now was feared unless the actions of Thomas Jefferson implied that they were being watched by others. Zeke had declared positively to Fred that he thought the Indian was not telling him the truth. "There's all the more reason," he explained, "why we must keep our eyes open. I'm sure that the Navajo is being paid for his work and I shouldn't be surprised if that man with the scar was the treasurer of the fund."

Even Fred now ignored any peril that might arise from the supposed interview of Thomas Jefferson with other enemies, for the excitement of the last part of their investigations was strong upon him.

Slowly the little band advanced over the broken surface. There were gullies so deep that at first it seemed impossible to gain the opposite side. Most of these, however, were narrow and consequently the difficulties of John in measuring the distance were not greatly increased.

Grant had explained that if they did start from the wrong place they would

steadily swing more and more away from the spot they were seeking. However, there was nothing to be done except to try and the eagerness of the boys clearly showed how willing they were to make the attempt.

As the distance covered by John steadily increased, the boys became more silent though they were steadily watching for some object that might indicate the end of the first part of their search. No object, however, was seen and when at last John halted, declaring that he had covered exactly the distance required, he was standing on an elevation so slight that no one believed it was a landmark.

"Now, from here," said Grant, "we turn and go southeast a quarter of a mile."

"From where?" demanded Zeke.

"From where String is standing."

"Might as well start from there as anywhere," growled Zeke. "It's a kind of fool's journey anyway."

The sun was now pouring its beams directly upon the heads of the young explorers and there was no relief to be had. Across the desert stretch not a place of refuge was within sight.

"There's nothing else to be done," said Grant resolutely. "Jack will have to keep on and follow the compass just as closely as he did on the way here."

The declaration of the Go Ahead Boy was so evidently true that without a protest from any one the entire party resumed its march.

They were now at least a half-mile from the rim of the great Gulch. In changing the direction in which they were moving they still were following the line made by the huge chasm.

They had gone only half the distance of the second stage of their journey, when they all halted abruptly as Zeke said in a low voice, pointing as he spoke toward the canyon, "Is that smoke off there?"

For a moment all in the party were silent, but Pete and Grant were strong in their opinion that a thin line of smoke was visible just above the border of Thorn's Gulch.

"Huh," muttered Zeke, "that's more or less what I expected."

"What was it you were expecting?" demanded Fred.

"Just what I see."

"Yes, but what do you see?"

"The same as you do," said the guide sharply.

"I don't see anything but a little smoke. It may not be anything but a cloud," said Fred.

"Well, you see the same thing that I do and you're as free as I am to explain what it means. I'm very free to say that I don't like it."

"Here I am," exclaimed John, who had closely been following the compass.

"Where is that?" laughed George.

"Right here where I am is the end of that quarter-mile that we were to follow to the southeast."

"Stay where you are then," said Grant quickly. "We've got to measure from that spot to find anything like the stake we're looking for. We're now going a quarter-mile north northeast from here."

Again at the second halt John was standing on another small elevation, although it too was so slight that it would not have called attention to itself from any chance passer-by.

"We're on our last lap, now," said Fred gleefully. "In a few minutes we'll know whether we've struck oil or gold. Come on, fellows!" he shouted in his excitement.

The little band at once renewed their journey and their excitement steadily increased as John's pace led them, as they believed, in the direction which had been indicated in the diary of Simon Moultrie.



CHAPTER XXV

CIRCLES

The determination of the Go Ahead Boys now was more manifest than at any time since they had left the Grand Canyon. The different ways in, which this feeling expressed itself was marked, for Fred's face was flushed and John's was eager as they pressed steadily forward. George was sometimes hopeful and sometimes in despair, while Grant was the only one whose countenance was unmoved.

Conversation did not thrive now for several reasons. The face of every one was turned toward the distance and as they pressed forward John's pace unconsciously became swifter. Indeed, the tall Go Ahead Boy was so interested now in arriving at the end of his journey that unconsciously he was giving less heed to the paces he was making.

Abruptly John stopped, declaring that he had come to the end. He had carefully followed the direction of the compass and had covered the last quarter-mile.

Blankly the Go Ahead Boys looked all about them. They now found themselves on the side of a low hill which itself seemed to be part of a mountain. At their left were ledges and great rocks that had been worn away by storms or the action of the air and sun. In whichever direction they looked, however, they were unable to discover anything that seemed to indicate a claim.

"I tell you we've come to the wrong place," said George, easily the most discouraged of the band. "There isn't anything here and I knew there wasn't all the while."

"Why did you come then?" demanded John irritably.

"I didn't want to break up the party," responded George.

"What shall we do now?" asked Fred, whose distress of mind was manifest in the tones of his voice.

"There's nothing to do but quit," said George. "It's a wise man that knows when he has had enough and I've had all I want."

"Q.E.D.," said Grant dryly.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded George.

"You know what it stands for," answered Grant. "All I meant was that you proved what you started out to prove."

"What is that?" demanded George.

"Why that you're a wise man and know when to quit."

"But honestly, Soc, isn't that the way you feel about it, too?" demanded Fred disconsolately.

"'Honestly,' Fred," retorted Grant mockingly, "it's *not* the way I feel about it. I'm not going to give up. Did you ever hear the story of Bruce and the spider?"

"Only a few times," laughed John. "I think you have told us about how he was hiding in a cave and how he watched a spider that kept on trying to swing himself across a corner. I believe that he failed a good many times but finally succeeded."

"Good for you, String," laughed Grant. "I wasn't quite sure that you got the point."

"I get the point, all right," retorted John, "when you're able to make it plain. All the same," he added, "what are we going to do next?"

"I'm not so sure," said Grant slowly. "Probably we'll have to stay here a few weeks and keep on trying to find the right spot."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Fred blankly. "I wouldn't stay here a few weeks for all the money there is in every mine in Arizona!"

"This is the time and this is the place when the majority have got to rule," said Grant quietly.

"If the majority want to stay here and look a little longer for Simon Moultrie's claim then I guess the others will have to stay too. There's going to be no journeying across the desert or back up the gulch and the canyon by any party of one or two. We've had enough Go Ahead Boys get lost."

"Don't be so proud," retorted Fred. "*You* haven't been lost, but it wasn't any fault of yours. It was simply your good luck."

"I'm not denying that," said Grant. "I am quite sure I should have been lost if I had been where you were. All I'm saying is that we aren't going to lose any more."

"Well, what *are* we going to do?" asked George.

"We've got to decide what we'll do first," said Grant. "What do you think?" he added, turning to the guide as he spoke.

Zeke had been silent throughout the conversation. It was plain that he was perplexed and perhaps downcast at the outcome of their first attempt. However, the expression of his face was unchanged when he said, "I've decided one thing and that is that you boys are going to stay right here and watch a little while."

"Watch'?" repeated Grant. "What do you mean? What are we going to watch?"

"You're going to be on the lookout," was all that Zeke was willing to explain. "There's going to be some things goin' on around here worth seein', in my opinion," he added, "but I don't know just what and I'm not sure just where. I do know though the first thing that's going to be done."

"What's that?" inquired Grant.

"I'm going to get under the shadow of that big rock yonder and then I'm going to cook some dinner."

"But it isn't more than eleven o'clock," protested Fred.

"I don't care what time it is. I'm going to cook the dinner if it's seventeen o'clock to-morrow mornin'."

"And after dinner what?" asked Grant.

"What I told you," said Zeke. "I'm going to leave you boys here on the lookout while I go down over the rim."

"What are you going for?" asked Fred.

"Two things," replied Zeke. "I'm going to look first for those two pesky Navajos and then I'm going to have an eye on that ledge that Simon Moultrie referred to in his diary."

"If you have one eye in one direction and the other in another, Zeke," laughed

Fred, "you'll be getting cross-eyed the first thing you know."

Fred's laugh relieved the tension somewhat and when dinner had been prepared by the guides the spirits of all had risen once more.

"I'm suggesting," said Grant before the boys arose from their seats, "that we form five big circles here, about twenty-five feet apart. We'll have a common center and then from there we will start out, every one covering the part that has been given him. In this way we'll be able to cover a good deal of this ground and find out whether there's anything here to show that Simon Moultrie ever struck a claim."

"Better not try that until I come back," suggested Zeke. "I will be back along about supper time and I may have somethin' to report when I come. If I do, it may change all your plans."

"What do you expect to report, Zeke?" asked George.

"Just exactly what I find," answered the guide solemnly, whereat the Go Ahead Boys all laughed loudly.

"Now, you mind what I say," said Zeke a few minutes later. "Don't none of you go more'n a hundred yards from this spot. It may be I shall need the help of every one of you and need it in a hurry too. If I do, I want you on hand. Besides, there isn't any use in any more of you wanderin' off into the gullies trying to lose yourselves."

Zeke arose and after he had carefully looked to his person to assure himself that his revolver was in his hip pocket and that the pole he had taken would stand a severe test, quickly started toward the rim. Not once did he glance behind him and in a brief time he stepped lightly over the rim of the Gulch and disappeared from the sight of the Go Ahead Boys.

For a few minutes after the departure of the guide the boys remained in the camp, obedient to the suggestion of Zeke, and perhaps all alike fearful of being lost if they ventured far from the locality. Their restlessness, however, returned in a brief time and Grant said to his companions, "Boys, why don't we try out my plan?"

"What plan is that?" asked Fred.

"Why, that we use this place where we have camped as a center and that every

one of us, as I told you, a few feet from the others try to make a big circle about it."

"I think that's a good scheme," said John excitedly. "It will give us something to do and it will help us in finding what we're after."

"That's right," joined in George.

As a consequence the boys speedily began their new task.

Fred was stationed about twenty-five feet from the camp, George was fifteen feet beyond him, John was stationed an equal distance beyond George, while Grant, who was about sixty feet from the camp, made the outer circle.

At a given signal the boys began their search. They did their utmost to retain the same relative positions, although such action required greater exertion on the part of Grant than of the other Go Ahead Boys.

When at last the circles had been completed the Go Ahead Boys decided to repeat the experiment, following a similar plan and at equal distances beyond the circles already made.

"We must look out," suggested Fred as the boys lined up the second time, "not to go too far away. You know Zeke told us not to leave this place."

"I guess we shan't have any trouble," declared John. "We shan't be beyond hailing distance from one another anyway."

The second attempt when it was completed had met with no better success than had crowned their former efforts. No one had found a trace or indication of any spot that had been staked out as a claim.

The third time the strange wheels revolved about the camping place, although by this time the distance that had to be covered was greatly increased.

When the boys at last assembled once more and the reports were made they were all plainly disheartened. Perhaps the fact that they were tired also had much to do with their feeling. Even Fred, however, did not suggest that they should abandon their main purpose, for the excitement of the search in spite of his disappointment was still strong upon him.

"I'm not just sure," said George when the boys stretched themselves upon the ground, "that I'm looking for the right thing anyway."

"What do you expect?" demanded Fred.

"I'm looking for Simon Moultrie's claim, that's all," remarked George simply.

"Yes, and probably you expected to stumble over a mine with the men all at work. You expected to find a shaft and mules and men on every side. How about it, Pop?"

"I'm not quite as bad as that," replied George, joining in the laugh that greeted Fred's words, "but I'll have to own up I don't know exactly what I was looking for."

"You're hopeless," laughed his friend, but for some reason silence soon rested over the little group.

The afternoon was waning and the night would soon be at hand. Already shadows were creeping over the gulches and canyons and the reflections were weird and in places fantastic. In the fading light the vivid colors of the sides of the canyons became softer. The coming of the night seemed to cast its spell over all.

The Go Ahead Boys had become quiet. Even the stories of Pete, who a few minutes before had joined the band, seemed to be as unreal as the empty shells. Few questions were asked and it was not plain that all the boys were listening.

Suddenly John arose and exclaimed, "There comes Zeke! I wonder what he has to report."

In a moment John's companions had joined him and all four were advancing to meet the guide who was returning from the rim of the Gulch.



CHAPTER XXVI

CONCLUSION

"Where have you been, Zeke?" called John.

"Down, 'n the Gulch," replied the guide gruffly.

"What did you find? Did you see any one?"

"Nothing to speak of," retorted Zeke, who plainly was not disposed to recount the story of his recent adventures.

Without halting, the guide said, "The Navajos will be coming soon."

"What do you mean?" demanded John excitedly.

"Just what I say," said Zeke.

"Do you mean the whole Navajo tribe or just the two that we've seen?"

"You certainly be the most innocent chap I've ever seen," remarked Zeke irritably, as for a moment he halted and looked sternly at the two boys. "Of course I mean Thomas Jefferson and Kitoni."

"What are they coming up for?" demanded Fred.

"Children should be seen and not heard," retorted Zeke.

John laughed, but the face of his diminutive friend flushed angrily though he did not reply to the statement of the leader.

Plainly Zeke was not inclined to talk. In silence he led the way back to the camp without referring again to his visit or explaining what his future plans were to be.

Neither would he talk after he had arrived, except to remark that it would be time enough to talk when the Navajos came.

Two hours later Thomas Jefferson arrived in camp. The time had been hanging heavily upon the hands of the Go Ahead Boys and the coming of the Indian provided a sharp relief.

"Where's Kitoni?" demanded George as Thomas Jefferson alone entered the camp.

"I cannot say."

"Are you expecting him pretty soon?"

"I expect him to be here when he shall come."

"That's quite a remarkable statement, isn't it?" said John lightly, as the Indian turned away and approached the place where Zeke was lying on his back.

An extensive conversation between the Navajo and the guide followed but the Go Ahead Boys were unable to hear anything that was said.

At last, however, Zeke arose and approaching the place where the Go Ahead Boys were standing, he said, "I hear you boys didn't do what I told you?"

"What was that?" inquired Grant.

"I told you not to leave this camp."

"We didn't go very far away," laughed Grant. "Every one of us got busy and we made some circles around the place here where we're stopping. We tried it three times, but we didn't find any signs of the claim which Simon Moultrie had staked."

"What did you expect to find?" demanded Zeke, a broad grin appearing on his face for a moment.

"The claim," reported Grant sharply.

"Did you think there was a big sign up there stating that this was old Simon Moultrie's property and warning everybody to keep off?"

Without waiting for a reply Zeke turned away, nor were the Go Ahead Boys able to induce him to renew his conversation. No reference was made to the plans for the following day and all four boys were greatly mystified when at last they retired for the night.

The failure of the guide to be interested in the attempts the boys had made to discover the claim for which they were searching was somewhat mortifying. Indeed, Fred was inclined to break out in open rebellion. It was Grant, however, who soothed his feelings and prevailed upon his friend not to speak again to

Zeke concerning the efforts they had made.

Early the following morning the missing Navajo and the white man whose face was scarred, who had been an occasional unwelcome visitor in the camp, together approached the place where the boys were awaiting their coming.

"Do you see who that is?" demanded Fred in a low voice.

"Not being aged and infirm and my memory not having failed me as yet," said Grant solemnly, "I do recollect our distinguished visitor."

No more was said although with deep interest the boys watched the approach of the two men, wondering all the time what the coming of the white man implied.

Their curiosity was still further increased when Zeke without waiting for the men to enter the camp met them thirty feet away and at once entered into a low and earnest conversation.

"What's the meaning of all this?" demanded Fred again. "I don't see what that fellow is doing back here and I don't understand why Zeke appears to be so friendly with him. You don't suppose," he added cautiously, "that the guide has decided to go in with the other fellows, do you?"

"Don't you remember what Zeke told you a good many times?" spoke up Grant sharply. "He said that children should be seen and not heard."

Fred's face was expressive of his anger, but he wisely did not respond to the suggestion of his friend.

It was not long before Zeke and the two newcomers entered the camp where breakfast was hastily prepared for the Indian and his companion.

"Zeke," spoke up John, "we don't understand what's going on. What does all this mean?"

"What does all what mean?" retorted Zeke blankly.

"You know just as well as I do. What is this man doing here in our camp again?"

"You'll have to ask him."

"Well, I don't want to ask him. I don't want anything to do with him. He stole Simon Moultrie's diary, he smashed one of our boats, he took one of our packs and no one knows how much more damage he has done. I don't think he ought to

be here."

"You might tell him so," suggested Zeke, smiling slightly as he spoke.

"I'm not going to tell him," retorted John. "I'm telling you and you are responsible for this party."

"That's right, so I be," spoke up Zeke as if it was the first time he had heard the statement. "There isn't much use," he continued, "in my looking after you when I find that you don't pay any 'tention to what I tell you. I left word for not one o' you boys to leave the camp while I was gone and when I come back I find that all four of you have been up to all sorts of tricks."

"What are those men waiting for?" demanded Fred, glancing as he spoke at the Navajo and the white man, who were frequently looking toward the rim of the Gulch.

"I think you'll have to ask them," said Zeke as he at once withdrew and joined the men whose actions had caused Fred to ask his question.

Fred's confusion returned when he found that Zeke and the white man apparently were on the best of terms. His anger increased as he became convinced that he was the topic of their conversation, for each frequently glanced in his direction and both laughed as if the reference to the Go Ahead Boy was highly amusing.

Fred's conviction that they were awaiting the coming of some one was strengthened when he joined his friends.

"I'm telling you, fellows, there's something strange about all this," he said positively. "Nobody knows what those men have in mind. I'm getting worried."

"What are you afraid of, Pee Wee?" laughed George, who thus far apparently was unmoved by the anxiety of his friend.

"I'm afraid something will happen that won't do us any good," said Fred.

The fears of the Go Ahead Boy were not expressed, however, for at that moment above the rim of the Gulch appeared the tall form of the white man who had been the companion of the man with the scar.

Blankly the Go Ahead Boys stared at this latest addition to their party, but not one of them was able to offer any explanation of his coming. It was plain, however, that the arrival of this man had been expected, for both the Indians and

the man with the scar at once advanced to meet him and the long conversation that followed indicated that his approach was not a surprise.

The confusion in the minds of the Go Ahead Boys increased when a few minutes later Zeke conducted the two white visitors to the place where the boys were standing. As he drew near he doffed his hat and said, "Boys, I want to make you acquainted with Mr. Moultrie. This is the man," he added, as he slapped the tall stranger on his shoulder.

The boys somehow murmured their appreciation of the introduction though the blank manner in which they stared at the visitor indicated that they were more mystified than before.

A moment later Zeke beckoned to the man with the scar to approach. As he came near the place, again Zeke doffed his hat and making a low bow said to the boys, "I want to make you 'quainted with Mr. Pratt. We have been waiting for Moultrie to come," he explained, "and I'm thinking we're about ready to start."

"Where?" demanded Grant.

"You come along and you'll see," was all the explanation Zeke gave.

Dubious as the Go Ahead Boys were they nevertheless decided to follow the suggestion of their guide and in a brief time the entire party, including the two Navajos, set forth from the camp.

The tall stranger was the leader now and silently and swiftly he led the way. Apparently he was fully aware of the destination he was seeking and the most direct method of approaching it. Across the little plateau over which they were moving he led his followers until at last they came to a deep gulch or gully that had been worn into the side of the mountain. Doubtless the torrents which had swept down the hill-side had worn their way into the mountain-side, leaving this deep gulch as the evidence of their power.

The excitement of the boys increased when Mr. Moultrie entered the gully. It was manifest that he was no stranger here and as he swiftly advanced, his followers found difficulty in keeping up with the pace that he set.

For fifteen minutes not a word was spoken although the excitement increased with every passing minute. Indeed, it was manifest that the interest of Zeke and the Navajoes was steadily increasing as they moved farther into the gulch.

Fifteen minutes later the man who had been introduced to the boys as Moultrie abruptly halted and said, "It is right here."

"What is here?" demanded Grant, who was now the spokesman for the Go Ahead Boys.

"Simon Moultrie's claim," said the man simply.

"What!" demanded Grant. "Where is it? I don't see it. What have you to do with it?"

"It's right before you," said the tall man, smiling as he spoke, "and the reason why I am here is because that claim belongs to me. I am James Moultrie, Simon's younger brother. After he found this place and filed his claim he wrote me what he had done and said that he had made his will, leaving the whole thing to me."

"And who is this man?" demanded Grant, turning to Moultrie's companion.

"His name is Pratt. Didn't Zeke introduce him?"

"Yes," answered Grant. "I know who he is but what is he?"

"He's a prospector who has been working around here not far from my brother more or less for five years. My brother was almost insane and Pratt knew it. He tried to keep a little watch over him, but Sime wouldn't have him around. He was about here, however, when my brother died and he helped me locate the claim."

"Were you the man who took our diary?" spoke up John.

"Your' diary is good," laughed Mr. Moultrie. "Do you think it really was yours?"

"We found it," said John doggedly.

"By the same rule," said Mr. Moultrie, "the man that found this boy when he was lost in the gulch ought to own him. We took the diary all right, but it belonged to us anyway. We were only appropriating what was ours."

"What about that boat that was stove in?"

"That was an accident. We took one of the boats fully expecting to give it back to you within a day or two. We struck a rock and that's all there is to the story."

"But what about that pack?"

"Our supplies were all gone so we took the pack," laughed the man.

"Did Zeke know about it?" suddenly inquired Fred.

"I reckon he wasn't altogether lacking in information," laughed Moultrie.

"Then, why did you bring us all here?" demanded Fred, turning angrily upon the guide.

"I thought you wanted to come here," responded Zeke solemnly.

"We wanted to find the claim," retorted Fred.

"Well, you have found it, haven't you?" inquired Zeke as most of the party laughed loudly.

"We have found what you *say* is the claim," acknowledged Fred, "but—"

"We have found what *is* the claim," said Mr. Moultrie quietly. "Now, I appreciate the zeal of the Go Ahead Boys and I don't intend to forget it. This claim may be worth a hundred million dollars and it may not be worth one red cent. I'm going to give one hundred shares, if a company is organized and we put out the stock, to every one of the Go Ahead Boys."

"How much does Zeke get?" laughed Grant.

"He doesn't get anything," said Mr. Moultrie, "unless we develop a mine here and that means a lot of work and a long wait. Then, if the prospect looks good, we may organize a development company, and if the development shows up well, then we'll organize a mining company. But no one knows now whether he's rich man, poor man, beggar man or thief until all that has been done."

THE END



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