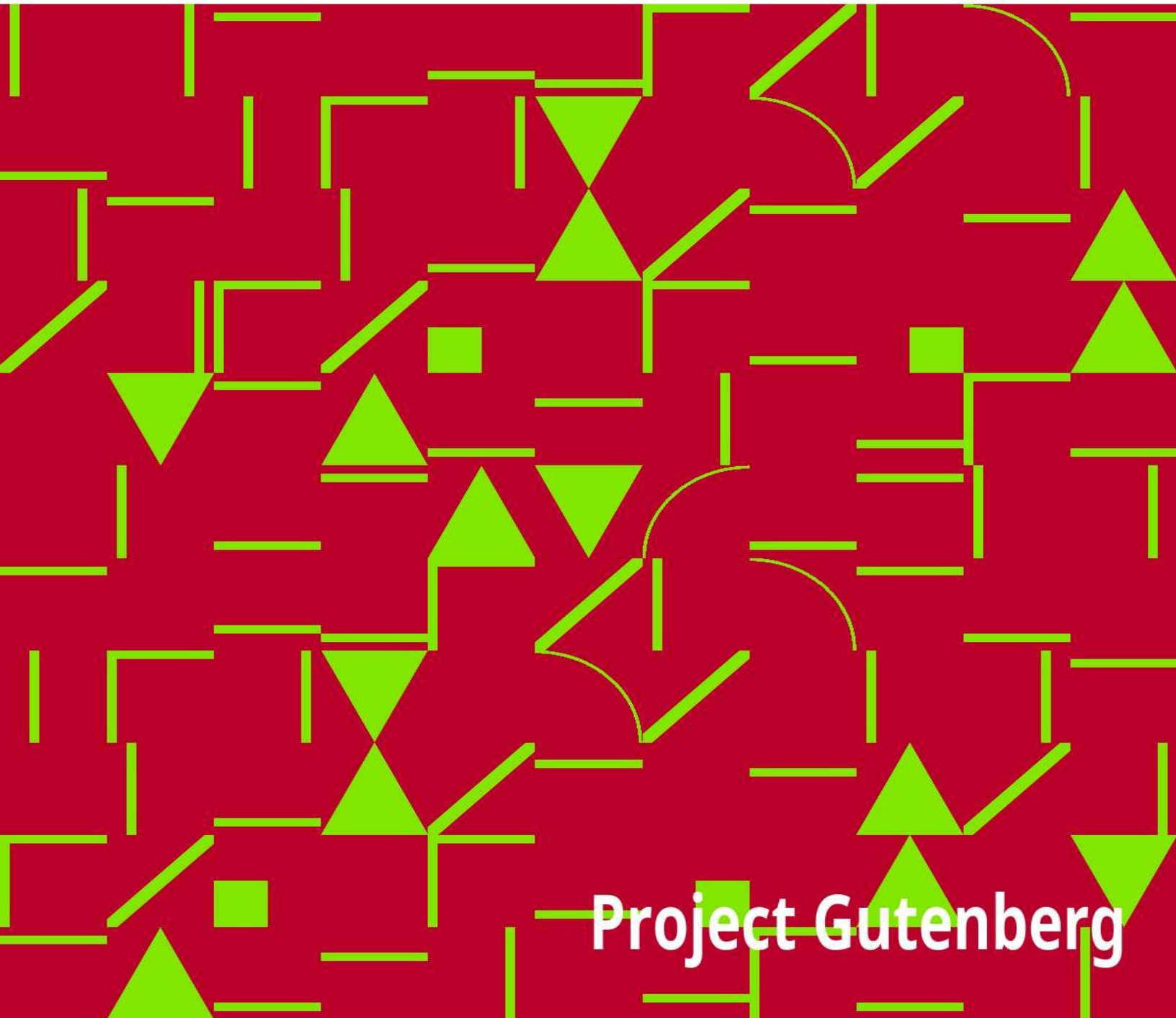
The Frontier Boys in the Grand Canyon; Or, A Search for Treasure

Wyn Roosevelt



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THE FRONTIER BOYS IN THE GRAND CANYON

OR, *A SEARCH FOR TREASURE*

BY CAPT. WYN ROOSEVELT

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FRONTIER BOYS IN THE GRAND CANYON

CHAPTER I

A RACE

"Your cayuse is quiet as a lamb now, isn't he, Jo," inquired Jim.

"He ought to be by this time," I replied. "You wouldn't expect him to buck all the way through New Mexico, I hope."

"It's funny how he began to act up," remarked Tom, "just as soon as we got out of Colorado."

"Maybe he doesn't like getting away from the country of his own tribe," I said; "He's a regular little Injun I can tell you that."

"I can't blame him for his dislike for the Apache range," interposed Captain Graves, "for a more undesirable lot of devils are not to be found in the Southwest."

"You ought to know, captain," remarked Jim, "for you have fought all of them."

"That's true," he replied, "but my fighting days are about over. I shall have to leave you boys in a few days and get back to my log cabin on the plateau in the Big Canyon."

"We all wish you did not have to," said Jim, "I do not know how we will get along without you."

"You boys can take care of yourselves," he replied. "I saw that in our expedition against the Indian encampment when you rescued Juarez's sister. Then if I go much further I will get the old fever in my blood and nothing will stop me."

"Well, we'll hang on to you then," laughed Jim.

Perhaps the reader is a stranger to Jim, Tom, myself and the captain, but not if you have read our adventures as recorded in The Frontier Boys on Overland Trail, in Colorado, and in the Rockies.

I relate therein how we located Captain Graves in his log cabin on a plateau in "The Big Canyon," and there we spent the winter.

That is to say, Jim and I did, while Tom went back to visit our folks in York State. Our father, Major George Darlington, lived in the town of Maysville. He had been in the war, and in the early days he had also lived on the frontier. I think he took a pride in our achievements. But our poor mother did not. Mothers are not much in favor of the adventurous life as a rule.

"Here's a good place for a race," cried Jim, "before we get into the foot hills."

"We had better be saving our ponies," growled Tom, "rather than racing them to death. We are a long way from 'The Grand Canyon of the Colorado' yet."

"That's all right, Tommy," replied Jim, "the ponies can rest long enough when we get to the Colorado River. The trouble with you is that you are afraid of being beaten. That's what's worrying you."

"I'll show you," replied Tom, belligerently.

"I will start you," suggested the captain, "where is the finish?"

"The Colorado River," I laughed.

"It's that big pine standing out there alone," said Jim.

"It looks to be a quarter of a mile," said Tom, "but we will probably reach it by evening; this clear air is very deceiving."

We now proceeded to get in line. Our bronchos were as restive as fleas. They were the ponies we had captured from the Indians. Mine was a buck-skin. Tough as rawhide and tireless as a jack rabbit.

Jim's was a light bay with a white face and wall eyed. Three of his feet were marked white. He was a vicious brute at times and only Jim could manage him. But he certainly could run.

Tom's animal was a sorrel with his forefeet white. He was the best looking among the three, but that was not saying much. However for real work they were tireless, and could stand almost anything.

We finally got our ponies in line and the captain held his pistol high over his head.

"Are you ready?"

"Ready," we replied in unison, grasping tight the lines.

Then he fired and our ponies scampered away across the level plain. I got the jump on the bunch but Jim's bay came up with a rush until his nose was even with my horse's shoulder. The ponies entered into the spirit of the occasion all right.

"Go it, Piute," yelled Jim.

Then he put his spurs into Piute's flank and with his own fierce energy he carried him ahead of me.

"Wow! Wow! Coyote!" I yelled, "catch him!"

Coyote certainly went after Piute for fair. Tom was at my heels. The scant prairie dust flew back from the scampering heels of our flying ponies.

It was fun! Wild fun for us and how we enjoyed the speed and the rivalry. I was determined that Coyote should win. The finish was only a hundred yards away.

With all of the energy that I would have put into a foot race I urged Coyote along. It was neck and neck between Jim and me. Tom was out of it, a length behind.

"Whoop la!" I yelled, as I drove my spurs into Coyote's flanks. He responded and with a tremendous scamper of speed he beat Piute to the tree by a neck. We put as much energy into it as though there had been a thousand dollars at stake.

"Well run, boys," said the captain, "who won?"

"I did of course," I replied, modestly.

"Nothing but luck," growled Jim, "in another fifty feet I would have beaten you."

Piute's attainments and qualifications were the one subject on which Jim was tender, in all other directions, he was care free and cheerful.

"You may call it luck if it will do your feelings any good," I said, "but Coyote is the horse if you want to get over the ground."

"Or go up in the air," said Tom.

"Well yes," I admitted, "he is kind of high-spirited, but I would much rather have that sort than one after the rocking horse style."

All that day we rode along the edge of the foothills and to the east of us was the great sweep of plains. We kept a sharp lookout for any signs of Indians, for we were now in the land of the Apaches and they are the most remorseless and cruel of all the Indian tribes. Keen-sighted as the eagle, crafty as the coyote, and bloodthirsty as the tiger.

"Here will be a good place to camp," suggested Tom.

It was the mouth of a small canyon with a growth of pines and cottonwoods intermingled, and a clear stream tinkling down over the rocks.

"No," said the captain, shaking his grey head. "It looks pretty and would be very comfortable, but it isn't safe to make an open camp like that in this county. We will look higher up."

So we rode up the canyon for several miles until we found a more lonely and sheltered place.

"This appears all right, captain," said Jim. "At least for to-night."

"Yes, it will do nicely," he replied, "and there won't be much chance for a surprise."

So we spurred our horses up the rocky side of the canyon over granite boulders until we came to a comparatively level place, where was a growth of pines.

Back of us was the sheer wall of the canyon and below us for two hundred feet or more the steep slope covered with granite boulders, large and small.

It did not take us long to make camp, for we were experienced mountaineers by this time.

We soon had the stuff off from our two Indian pack horses and the fire was started for supper.

"Time to turn in," called the captain soon after the evening meal was finished, and in a short time we were sound asleep in our blankets under the pines. We felt perfectly safe in our cozy canyon. The captain's big wolf hound was the only one of the party left on guard.

He lay a little in front of us, his nose to the ground, near the edge of the rise, looking down the canyon. I was suddenly awakened by the hound. He was standing erect, growling fiercely through his white fangs, and looking below in

the canyon. The captain had gotten up while Jim and Tom were still sleeping soundly.

"Do you think it is the Apaches?" I said, in a whisper.

"Hardly," replied the captain. "Santa Anna wouldn't act that way if it was a case of Indians. He would lie low. It may be a coyote."

We stood by Santa, who was quivering all over, his every hair bristling. We could see nothing distinctly as we peered down into the darkness.

"After 'em," ordered the captain, "shake 'em up, Santa!"

At the word the hound sprang down the rocky slope as if he had just been unleashed. The captain and I followed as quickly as we could. I had only my knife in my belt.

When we reached the foot of the hill we heard the sound of a terrible snarling struggle down the canyon a ways.

I ran in the direction as fast as I could go, leaving the captain quite a distance behind. Almost before I knew it I was upon them. A tremendous wolf, to my eyes he seemed almost as big as a horse, had Santa by the throat shaking him like a cat does a mouse.

Giving a yell I sprang to the rescue of the dog. Then in a fury the beast jumped for me with his great snarling teeth. I dodged like a flash and his impetus carried him past me, but in a second he had turned and charged again.

This time I was not quite quick enough and was knocked down and he was standing over me. I could feel his hot, fetid breath. Instinctively I thrust my elbow up as he shot his jaws down for my throat and I struck at him with the knife, bringing the blood.

Nothing could have saved me if Santa had not returned to the attack. He came in like a flash and the wolf had to turn. For a few seconds they fought over me and I was pretty well trampled. The feet of the wolf were nearly the size of a bear's.

I struggled out and now thoroughly infuriated I attacked the wolf with my knife. Again he shook Santa off and came for me. Only a minute had elapsed in all this struggle. As he sprang, I dodged low and to one side.

CHAPTER II

AFTER ANTELOPE

The wolf went over me and before he could turn, a shot rang out. The captain had arrived on the scene.

The wolf threw himself in the air and fell with a thud upon the ground.

"I hope you will go a little slower next time," said the captain, severely. "It's a wonder that you did not have your throat torn out."

It took me about a minute before I recovered so that I could say anything, and then I had nothing to say, for it was a foolish and dangerous performance.

"Why, don't you know that these wolves are about as dangerous customers as you can find in the mountains?" he remonstrated. "This is certainly a fine specimen, the king of the pack."

With some difficulty we got the wolf to the camp.

"Let's fool the boys if they are asleep," I said. They were sleeping the sleep of the just and making a considerable racket about it too. I leaned his wolfship in position against a rock and propped up his head. Then I laid down for a moment. "Gracious, Tom!" I whispered, "what's that over by that rock?"

"Where?" he cried, sitting up alarmed by my tone.

"There," I said, "don't you see?"

"Heavens, it's a wolf! Where's my rifle?" he cried.

"I'm going to catch it," I said, springing up.

"Wake up, Jim," yelled Tom, "Jo's gone crazy. He's going to catch a live wolf."

Jim sat up and looked around. "You lumax," he said, "that wolf is dead. You don't suppose a live wolf would stand for all this racket."

He went over to examine our prize. "Where did you capture him?" asked Jim.

"Down the canyon," I said, "Santa and he had a mix up."

"In which Jo joined," remarked the captain, "a foolhardy affair, but I can understand how Jo was carried away for the moment. As we get older we become more cautious."

"I see where you landed on him a couple of times with your knife," said Jim. "Why didn't you wake me up?"

"If you are waking call me early, mother dear," I quoted.

"Never mind your poetry, the next time Brer Wolf calls, I'm going to answer," said Jim.

"It will be a nice thing to add to our collection, along with the bear skin," I remarked.

We found that Santa Anna was pretty well chewed up about the neck, and the captain had to doctor him up and also do some surgical work.

As we sat around the campfire in the morning eating our breakfast, the captain made a suggestion.

"I was thinking, Jim," he said, "that we might put in a day or two hunting before we go on. If I remember rightly this is a pretty fair section for game."

"It's a fine idea," said Jim, "let's start out to-day."

"I have done my share of hunting," I said, "and I think I will take a rest."

"You have certainly earned it," replied the captain.

"The next time you cry 'wolf' to me, I won't pay any attention," said Tom.

"All right, Tommy," I replied, "then I will have to think up something new."

"Would it not be a good idea to split our party?" suggested the captain.

"I think it would," replied Jim.

"Then I and Tom will go back into the mountains," continued the captain.

"Jo and I for the plains," cried Jim.

"We will look for the mountain sheep," remarked the captain.

"Jo and I will look for antelope," said Jim.

"And look out for Apaches," said the captain. "Keep a sharp lookout for any signs of smoke," he continued, "don't rush into an ambush. Keep in the open, watch the ridges and the gullies."

"We will remember," promised Jim.

So we proceeded to saddle our mustangs. We had the heavy, easy riding saddles called Mexican, with high pommels and also a high back of carved leather; above the stirrups were also broad bands of carved leather.

Though heavy they were not in any manner hard on our tough little ponies. The weight was also offset by the fact that we were light, and compared to the stalwart Indians we must have seemed like mosquitoes to our ponies.

We likewise took along a good quantity of jerked beef, enough to last us several days and also some ground corn, for we were old campaigners enough to prepare for an emergency even if everything appeared safe.

We also took our canteens with us. Being thus ready we swung into our saddles.

"Good-bye and luck to you," waved the captain, as we started.

"Good-bye," we returned, and Jim laughingly added, "Take good care of Tommy."

Down the rocky slope we went and then trotted slowly down the canyon, sitting loosely in our saddles and moving to the gait of our ponies like the cowboys, and not sitting straight like Uncle Sam's cavalry.

We found this the easiest way and it was not ungraceful; sometimes when we were tired we rode sideways on the saddle, or with one leg over the pommel.

We were in high spirits as we jogged down the canyon. We were feeling fine and fit. Our constant life out of doors had enured us to hardships and made us impervious to fatigue.

Our muscles were supple and tireless and we were also much better able to endure thirst, cold, and hunger than we had been at first.

In a short time we reached the end of the canyon where grew the pine and cottonwood trees.

"Let's fill our canteens here," advised Jim, "because when we leave the canyon there is no telling when we will strike water again."

"All right," I said, and I swung off my horse and filled my canteen as well as Jim's.

In a short time we left the canyon and rode out on the plains.

"It looks to me as if we might have rain to-day," said Jim.

"It would be a pity if we got wet," I laughed, "might spoil our fine clothes and new sombreros. What makes you think it is going to rain?"

"You can generally count on that mackerel sky furnishing a rain," he said.

"It looks pretty anyway," I said.

It certainly did, the blue morning sky being dappled with numberless little clouds that gave a softness to the sunlight without dimming it to a shadow.

"Let's keep near the foot hills," I said, "because the brush and rocks give us some shelter and the antelope will not be so apt to see us."

"It's a good scheme," assented Jim.

So we rode southward through the broken country, crossing ravines, riding through the scrub oaks and keeping a wary eye on the plains below.

We had gone about five miles, when I called a halt.

"What are those specks way off there on the plain?" I enquired.

Jim took a long look in the direction that I had indicated.

"I can see them move," he announced, "they are antelope, all right."

"How far do you think they are?" I asked.

"About four miles, I reckon," said Jim. "It looks perfectly level, how in the mischief are we going to get within range?"

Jim studied the situation for a while carefully.

"There is a ravine that runs into a gully," he said, "that appears to be a half a mile south of them, though it may be further."

"We'll try it," I said.

So we made our way carefully, keeping ourselves screened as much as possible by the brush and rocks. Finally we struck the ravine without being observed by the antelope.

We rode down this, until it became a deep, narrow gully. In some places the way was difficult, especially where the gully had been terraced into water falls.

Occasionally our horses seemed to be standing on their heads as they jumped their way down, nimble as goats. We had to tighten the back cinches to keep the saddles from sliding forward.

"Talk about circus riding," I cried after I had come near falling off when Coyote had jumped down five feet, "this is plenty exciting enough for me."

After a while the gully became less broken and broader, the bottom covered with sand, and tall grasses growing wherever there was a foothold.

It was hot in the gully as the breeze was shut off and the sun looked down directly upon us. It was "snug" too, because we felt secure from being seen by any wandering parties of Apaches.

After we had been riding for about a half hour, Jim stopped his horse and dismounted, throwing the bridle over Piute's head. "I am going to reconnoiter," he said.

I watched him as he cautiously climbed up the wall of the gully and looked over the edge through a screen of grass. Almost instantly he dropped down again.

He motioned for me to dismount and I swung off, throwing the bridle over Coyote's head, the ends just trailing on the ground. This is the only kind of hitching post that a broncho needs.

CHAPTER III

THE SURPRISE

"We are almost opposite them now," Jim announced.

We went down the gulch until we came to a little bench just below the edge. We crawled upon this, and looked cautiously through a fringe of grass.

I could see a bunch of half a dozen antelope gently feeding on the level plain. "Pick your antelope," whispered Jim to me.

"I'll take the young buck," I said. "You can have the rest."

Cautiously we shoved our rifles through the grass and kneeling on one leg we drew a careful aim. "Now," exclaimed Jim.

There came two simultaneous reports and a couple of antelope dropped flat and flaccid. We fired at the remainder as they jumped into the distance. Our shots only made them go faster.

"Well," cried Jim, as we stood up, "two isn't so bad."

We got on our ponies and were obliged to ride down the gully for half a mile before we could get out where there was a narrow wash down the side.

We rode over, to where the two huddled heaps of grey laid on the plain. I had got my young buck all right, while Jim had killed a good sized doe.

"I tell you, Jim, let's take the two of them into the gully, where we will be safe from the Apaches seeing us. Cut off the best parts, then hunt back towards the camp."

"All right," Jim acquiesced, rather to my surprise.

He was likely to disregard any ordinary caution, but since his training with the captain, he was more apt to be careful and to take fewer chances.

So we flung the antelopes across the back of our saddles, tying them securely with the long leather strings and started back for the arroyo.

We kept a sharp lookout in all directions over the plains, but saw no indications of Indians, and reached our destination in safety.

"I believe that we are going to have a thunderstorm," Jim remarked.

"It certainly looks it," I replied.

Back of the range heavy thunder clouds were rolling, bringing the higher peaks out with marked distinctness and the shadow was spreading over the plains.

"It will be cooler for us, anyway," said Jim.

It certainly was a relief to have the sun obscured, and we set to work with a will. In a little over a half hour we had the antelopes divided off and securely fastened to the saddles. It did not increase the weight we had to carry much.

"I am going to take a look around," said Jim, "before we ride out into the open."

He crawled up the edge of the gully, barely raising his eyes above the level. In a moment I knew that he had seen something of interest. There was something about his figure as he crouched even lower than at first with his gaze riveted in one direction that spoke louder than words.

Then he drew slowly back and down. Reaching the bottom, he came quickly towards me; there was a smile on his face that I knew well enough.

"Indians?" I said, breathlessly.

"Yes," he replied, "there is a hunting party coming out of a small canyon above the ravine we are in."

"How many?" I asked.

"Twenty or more," he replied.

"What shall we do?" I inquired, anxiously.

"That depends on them," he replied, coolly. "We will stay where we are for the present."

"Perhaps they will pass to the north of us," I said, "and thus miss our trail."

"Maybe," he replied. "I am going to take another look."

"Me too," I said.

With extreme caution we climbed to the edge of the gully and looked over. They were still some distance off, and so far were riding parallel to the ravine we had come down.

It was the first time that I had had a good view of mounted Indians and I could not help feeling impressed. From the wild and stormy background of the thunder clad mountains they rode out upon the shadowed plains.

The ponies seemed small compared with the tall, gaunt forms of the Indians that rode them. The leader, a gigantic brave, was gesticulating freely with his long snaky arms.

I have noticed that Indians are apt to be much less stolid when mounted than on foot. With his feathered crest he seemed like a great bird of prey as he scanned the plains. There was something uncannily cruel and treacherous about them that sent a chill all over me. It was the first time that I had seen the dread Apaches, the most to be feared among all the tribes of the plains or mountains. If only the dead settlers and their families, those whom the Apaches had murdered, could speak, their stories would recall to memory horrors innumerable.

"Had we not better fight them here?" I asked, "where we have cover?"

Jim shook his head.

"No," he replied, "we might stand them off, but the country hereabouts is alive with Indians."

"Yes, I see," I replied, "and I suppose if they did not overwhelm us, they would starve us out."

"There is nothing for us to do but to make a running fight of it," said Jim, "if they should cut our trail."

"We will stand no show on the plains," I said, "it is too open."

"I believe that we can outrun them," he said, "our ponies are apt to be in better condition than theirs and then too we are light riders. We will make for the mountains and when we reach them we ought to be safe."

"They are not going to cross the gulch," I said, in a relieved tone, "perhaps they will miss our trail after all."

"It looks to me though as if they were going to strike that place where we killed

the antelope," said Jim.

He gave another look at the advancing braves, then he backed down into the gulch.

"Come, Jo," he said, decisively, "we will have to run for it, in a few minutes they will cut our trail. We will only lose by waiting."

Here is where Jim showed his qualities as a leader. I would have waited, hoping to escape detection, and leaving the enemy to make the first move and thus losing seconds that were more valuable than hours under ordinary circumstances.

Our ponies were very restless, with ears pricked forward and shifting their front feet, first one and then the other. They knew even though they could not see. We swung silently into the saddles. Our ready rifles lay just in front of us.

"We are going to start now, Jo," said Jim, in a low, confident voice, "the south side of the gully is low, a hundred feet below us. That's where we show up; it will be a surprise for those beggars. When they see us, pick your Indian and fire. Remember to throw yourself to the side of your pony when they fire and run for it."

I was trembling so that I could scarcely keep my teeth from chattering. Jim was naturally brave, but I was just the average as far as courage went. Still I was a boy of high spirit, and I struggled hard to throw off my fear as Jim was giving me his instructions.

Then I thought of what the captain had told us of the bravery of the American soldiers in the Mexican war. Of Grant who was so quiet and fearless. At least I was an American. I pulled myself together and was ready.

"All ready, Jo?" asked Jim.

"Yes," I replied.

I shall never forget the thrill of excitement that went through all my nerves as we started down the gully, Jim in the lead and my horse close on his hindquarters. The north bank was higher and still screened us, though we bent down to avoid any possibility of being seen.

Just as we turned out of the gully we heard a great powwow. The Apaches had

found the place where the antelope had been killed. We were now on the plain in full sight. It seemed to me that we loomed up twice as big as life. We were absolutely stripped naked now of the protection of the gully.

Our very daring helped us, and we rode directly up the bank of the gully. The Apaches were gathered around the place where the antelope had lain. They were examining the ground, then suddenly two of the braves caught sight of us. Never was there a more surprised crowd of Indians. Stealth they could understand, but not such open bravado. For a moment they seemed actually stunned.

Jim brought his rifle to his shoulder and fired and I promptly followed suit. An Indian and a pony fell. Two out at the first shot. It warmed our blood with confidence.

War was declared. With fierce yells they started in pursuit. Firing a volley that went wild, though there was a whistle of bullets over our heads and some spurted the dust on the plain short of us.

"Now let them go," yelled Jim.

Coyote and Piute seemed to fully realize the situation and away they flew, all their pent up energy going into a wild burst of speed that lasted for a half mile.

We gained on most of the Indians, but the big chief and two others kept nearly parallel with us on the other side of the gully, trying to cut us off from the mountains.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHASE

In the last mile, however, we pulled away from them, as their ponies did not have the well fed strength of ours. We exchanged shots as we rode, but the motion and speed made our aim uncertain, as fortunately too was theirs.

I found out later that the nearest call I had, or rather Coyote had, was where a bullet struck into the piece of antelope that was swung on my saddle.

With a last thrilling dash we charged into the shelter of the foothills among the rocks and pines. Here we swung off from our ponies and ran back to check our foremost pursuers. The three who were in the lead had absolutely disappeared.

But a half mile below were to be seen the rest of the Indians scampering like mad to overtake us.

"Where have those three gone?" I asked.

"They have taken to the ravine," replied Jim, "we can't stop here, they would surround us in a jiffy. We will have to go higher up the canyon."

There was no chance for us to make our home camp, for the Indians that were coming up the plain, would have headed us off.

So we sprang on our ponies again. They had recovered their wind in the brief rest we had given them. With the impetus of the great danger just behind us we started on a reckless dash up the canyon. We were determined to find some place we could defend, even if we could not escape.

We tore through the brush, jumped fallen logs, scrambled between rocks, zigzagged from this side to that of the ravine that was not precipitous enough for a canyon.

We urged our horses to the limit of their strength, and they were perfectly willing. Jim was in the lead and his unerring quickness of instinct guided him in finding the best trail.

The storm was darkening down the mountains before us and the thunder was rolling from height to height. The gray rain was sweeping down from the summits it seemed to us as if in a solid wall.

The ravine now broadened into a sort of a valley with high mountain sides partially clothed with pines, in some places very thick, and on the upper slopes were great granite boulders.

We saw above us now a conical hill, several hundred feet high, with a growth of pine upon the slopes and crowned with great rocks. It was half a mile distant and near the center of the valley.

"There is the place for us," said Jim, "if we are brought to bay."

"It looks to me as if we were going to stand these beggars off," I said, "until we can cross over the mountains to our camp."

"Yes, but you never can tell in this country what is going to happen," said Jim.

We caught occasional glimpses of our pursuers down the ravine but they had not gained much on us. We skirted the base of the conical hill and had gone on for a short distance; it was growing dusky under the shadow of the storm, when a zigzag flash of lightning revealed the slope above us with startling distinctness.

"See what's ahead," I cried, for Jim was looking over his shoulder at the Indians following us.

A party of braves were trailing down the upper slope.

One thing and only one thing was left for us to do. Instantly we turned our horses squarely around and made for the hill we had just passed.

We were not a second too soon, for the first party were coming up the ravine, running swiftly like hounds upon our trail. We fired one volley and then charged up the slope full tilt over rocks, dodging as best we could the trees.

It did not take us long to reach the summit. The Indians did not attempt to follow us, but spread out under shelter, satisfied apparently to have us surrounded. In a short time the upper party of braves had joined forces with our pursuers.

Before we had fairly reached the top the rain swept down the mountain valley, giving us protection from the marksmanship of the enemy.

"This place is all right," said Jim, "we could stand them off for a hundred years if we had food and water."

"Yes," I joined in, "it is like a regular fort only we can't get the horses up."

"We will see to that later," returned Jim, "let's examine these rocks."

We left our horses below and crawled up a narrow trail between two rocks and found on top a depression with stones surrounding it, in which grew some bushes and scattered tufts of grass.

"Here is a good place for shelter," suggested Jim.

"It certainly is," I acquiesced.

There was a big flat rock supported on two others and room for us to crawl under if we stooped down. Underneath was a large enough space for our camp, the ground covered with clean gravel.

"This will be our bedroom," I proposed.

"Yes," replied Jim, "if you don't mind the upper floor in case of fire."

"We must get the horses up," I said, "or the Indians will be stealing them."

"Don't you believe it," returned Jim, "those beggars are not going to risk their valuable lives. They think they have got us cold without taking any chances. All they will have to do is to squat around and wait for us to be starved out."

So we went down below where our ponies were patiently waiting, their heads drooping. They were just about played out. It had been a terrible chase and they had saved our lives by their speed and stamina.

We got them up the narrow path between the rocks. Only at one point were we exposed to the Indian fire and then we got it. An irregular succession of shots rang out and some of the bullets left their splotches on a rock above us, but most of them went very wild. The heavy rain was a veil of protection.

One thing we had learned was that the Indians were bad marksmen and were easily flurried. They were too anxious to save their own skins to take careful aim. Even when they had a good quiet chance they did not seem able to land a direct blow.

Then it is hard to shoot accurately at a steep angle; the wind too and the rain as

suggested, helped us, for the latter blurred everything. So we were not greatly worried by the shooting.

In a few seconds we had got the ponies on top. And we thought they were comparatively safe, but there was one side that was lower than the others and the Indians kept potting away.

"We will soon fix that," said Jim. "Make Coyote lie down out of range."

This I had no difficulty in doing. He seemed to know instinctively what was expected of him.

"Now," said Jim, "we will build up that side."

So we went to work and dragged up some small fallen trees from the slope below and with stones, large and small, built up a barricade.

It seemed to me that Jim exposed himself unnecessarily to the fire of the enemy. He seemed to be perfectly happy as the bullets hummed around him, as he put a rock in place on the parapet. In fact he seemed to mind them no more than the pouring rain.

It seemed like quite a little battle, with the rifle flashes from behind the brush or rocks and Jim's grey figure on the wall of the fort.

"That's all hunky dory," said Jim. "It beats old Fort Sumter."

"Get up Piute, Coyote," I urged. "They are safe here now as in the old cow pastures at home."

The ponies seemed to recognize that they were well protected, for they began to graze around as comfortably as you please in the little hollow with its surrounding rock, yanking at the bunches of tall grass and biting the leaves of the scrub bushes. Everything is fodder to a broncho.

"Let's get the saddles under shelter," said Jim.

So we dragged them down and put them in our camp under the big rock. Next we built a fire in the dry shelter and made coffee in a big tin cup we carried in our haversack.

Of course the grains were not as fine as though the original coffee had been run through a coffee mill, for we had pounded it up in a hollow cup-shaped rock

with another stone for pestle.

"Hold on, Jo," exclaimed Jim. "Don't waste our canteen water on that coffee, we may need it."

"You are not going down to the creek," I cried, in alarm.

I knew only too well what lengths Jim's bravado would carry him. For I had not forgotten the time that he went down to the creek in our first canyon in Colorado, on a moonlight night when we knew that there were Indians lurking near. So I was prepared for the worst.

"No," he replied, to my intense relief, "I am going to look around here."

"You won't find any on top of a hill like this," I said, "the water all runs off."

"All right, my boy, but I'm going to look. You can stay in the kitchen and cook the venison."

Then Jim stooped out of the front door and disappeared. In a short time I heard his low, peculiar whistle and I ran out. I found Jim between two large rocks.

"Here you are," he said.

I hastened to satisfy my curiosity. I saw quite a little water in a pocket between the rocks.

"Quite a lake, isn't it?" asked Jim.

"Yes, it is a good deal when you don't expect anything," I replied.

"It will help us out all right," remarked Jim. "We will have to be mighty careful of our water supply. We can manage for food even if we have to eat Coyote."

"Piute goes first," I retorted, "his name sounds more eatable anyway."

"Well, we won't quarrel about that now," replied Jim. "The next thing on the program is supper."

We were quite comfortable in our dry shelter with the rain beating outside and as an added luxury we were not even bothered with the smoke, for there was a crevice in the rock at one side near the end, which made a good chimney, and the smoke drew through that.

Even though we were comfortable we knew that our situation was desperate and as we sat eating we canvassed our prospects thoroughly.

CHAPTER V

ON GUARD

"The first thing," said Jim, "is to find out how long a siege we can stand."

"Why!" I exclaimed in alarm, "don't you think that the captain and Tom will locate us soon and get us out of this?"

"Perhaps," replied Jim, "but they may have troubles of their own. Anyhow there must be at least a hundred of these Apaches down below, and there is no telling how many more there will be in another day. They will probably have all their howling relatives here within the radius of two hundred miles to join in the picnic."

"I believe the captain will find some way out if he can only locate us," I said.

"Odds are odds," replied Jim, doggedly. "I don't want him to run any desperate chance on my account."

"What are we to do?" I inquired anxiously. "Don't you suppose that we could get through their lines to-night, it is so dark and stormy?"

Jim shook his head.

"I thought of that. We would stand a chance to make our escape on foot, but not with the horses."

"Leave them," I cried desperately.

"You idiot," exclaimed Jim, "what would we do in this country without horses? We would never reach the Colorado River."

"I don't care if we don't," I said irritably.

"Well, I do," Jim replied. "There isn't going to be anything that will stop me from taking that trip. It will take a bigger bunch of Apaches than are down there to do it."

"Well," I said, returning to the original question. "How long will our supply of

water last?"

"I have been figuring on that and I think it will keep us a going for a week, with what we can get from the water pocket. Of course if we have rain we can make out much longer."

"And the food?"

"Well, with Coyote to fall back on," laughed Jim, "we can hold out until Christmas. But without joking, we ought to be able to get along for a month. It was mighty lucky that we got those antelope."

"I suppose we will have to stand guard to-night," I said.

"Yes," replied Jim, "we don't dare to take a chance, even though Indians do not often make night attacks."

"I daresay that there is no danger of them crawling up the rocks. They are too steep, but we will have to watch the trail between the rocks," I remarked.

"How shall we divide the time?" Jim asked.

"It does not make much difference," I replied.

"Very well, then, you can take it up to midnight, and I will look after the balance."

So it was decided. It had now grown dark and we thought it best to look around together. As we came out of our rock shelter we saw our ponies standing with their backs to the storm and heads bent down, looking much dejected.

"They look like four-legged ghosts," I said.

"If it hadn't been for them we would have been ghosts by this time," remarked Jim pleasantly.

"What's the use of talking that way?" I said. "Perhaps we will be ghosts before we are through with this business."

"Don't you believe it," said Jim cheerily. "I don't know how we are going to get out of this scrape, but perhaps we will have some unusual luck."

"Here's wishing it," I replied.

It looked kind of cheery as we looked back and saw the warm glow from our fire in the rock room that was our temporary camp.

We made the rounds of our fort, but could see or hear nothing in the darkness below. No sound but the steady fall of the rain. The rock must have been seventy-five feet or more of sheer descent on all sides except by the narrow trail by which we had come up.

"It's time for you to go on guard now," said Jim.

"All right," I replied, "I'm ready."

"Be sure to keep awake," he cautioned.

We went back to the campfire and I made a careful examination of my rifle. It was all right, and with my faithful friend close at hand in my belt I was ready for what might come.

I crawled out in the darkness leaving Jim curled up cosily by the fire. I envied him because I did not have much heart to stand out there in the dark and in the rain alone, but there was nothing to do but to make the best of it.

I crawled down between the rocks at the upper end of the narrow trail with the rain beating down on me. I could see the horses back of me and their presence was a whole lot of company for me.

It is strange how much companionship there is in a horse or dog that you are fond of, especially if it has shared your trips and your dangers. I know that Coyote was glad to see me by the way he followed me with his head. The first part of my watch passed monotonously enough. Most of the time one would have thought there was nothing of danger or menace in the darkness below as far as sound went.

But I felt, though I could not see, the cruel presence of our enemies. Once I caught the light of a fire down the valley a ways, in a sheltered place and I could see occasionally the movement of a shadowy form. I brought my rifle up, intending to fire. Then thought better of it.

What was the use? I had better have my ammunition, and then it would simply arouse Jim up to no purpose. Sometime later I heard the guttural sounds of the Indians as they talked.

I imagined that it came from the slope just below, so I went cautiously down between the rocks. When I reached the lower end of the trail that ended abruptly with a step off of several feet, I stopped, listening intently, stooping down and peering into the rainy darkness of the slope below.

I could make out a few boulders and further down the dark mass of pines. As my eyes became accustomed to the contour of things, I was sure that I saw a dark, crouching form moving over and among the rocks stealthily as a snake.

It was not more than twenty-five yards off. I reached around among the rocks at my feet until I found a stone about the size of the baseball that I used to pitch in my old days at school.

As the object stopped and raised up in sudden suspicion I poised myself and fired it with all my strength. My old accuracy had not deserted me. I heard the thud distinctly and the Indian dropped like one dead, a mere black outline on the rock.

Then I saw him being drawn backward almost as it were by invisible hands. I decided not to fire, but crouched low in the rock trail. I did not want to waste a shot, and then I thought the very quietness and mystery of the fellow's injury might impress the superstitious minds of the Apaches and I believe that it did, for I heard no further sound or stir from them.

After a while I decided to go back to the head of the trail and I proceeded cautiously upwards. Just before I reached the top I became conscious that there was something waiting for me. Looking down I recognized the long, familiar face of Coyote.

"Hey, old chap," I said, giving him a hearty slap on the shoulder, "so you thought you would start down to see what kept your old boss so long. Well, you can go back and go to sleep. It's all over."

This may have been reassuring to Coyote, but it was not the exact truth, but I could not foresee that. I took my post again at the top of the trail and waited for further developments. I began to think that it was about time for Jim to come forward. At least I knew that I would not have many more hours to wait.

The rain was now coming down less rapidly and there was promise of the storm lifting. If I had not been so wet I might have dropped off to sleep, but if I had done so I would have had a sudden awakening.

No sound came from the Indians below and I had relaxed my keen attention, when I heard a noise that aroused me again. Something was coming up the rock trail. It did not seem to be an Indian but some animal.

It was coming quickly, then it saw me and crouched low with that intense menace that shows in a wild beast before it springs. I raised my gun to fire and something held me back. Then I saw what it was.

"Here, Santa," I cried, "come, old dog."

He stalked up to me as soon as he heard my voice. But he showed no emotion. He was not one of those effusive dogs, who wag their tails and jump around in delight.

"Where did you come from?" I asked, "where's Captain?"

Santa then began to trail around on top of the hill, and before I could stop him he had jumped down and run under the rock where our camp was.

"Hello, what is this?" I heard Jim exclaim.

"It's Santa," I said.

"Where's the captain?" questioned Jim.

"He seemed to be looking for him," I replied. "Perhaps they are in trouble too, or the captain may have sent him out to trail us. Anyway, he adds one more to the garrison."

"Is my time up?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied, "I will stand guard now and have Santa to help me."

"All right," I said, "I wouldn't mind having a little sleep."

CHAPTER VI

WITHIN THE FORT

"Anything doing?" inquired Jim.

"I saw one Indian," I replied, "when I went down to the end of the rock trail and I hit him with a stone."

"Struck him out the first thing," grinned Jim.

"Sure."

"Well, no stones for me," said Jim, "if I see one of those red beggars I will give him the lead."

"How did you sleep?" I asked.

"Fine," he replied, "why not? That brush was soft and the fire kept me comfortable."

"I'll try it myself," I said and curled up in the nest that Jim had just vacated.

"Now don't be alarmed," said Jim, "if you hear an occasional shot. You won't need to show up unless you hear two or three in succession. Santa and I will defend the fort now, so you can take things easy."

"That suits me," I replied, "don't forget to take your umbrella and be sure and don't get your feet wet."

"You needn't worry, my boy, I will take care of myself."

Then Jim crawled out of the door and disappeared in the darkness, followed by Santa. I can not explain why, but I felt perfectly comfortable and entirely safe and was soon fast asleep.

The next thing I knew, Jim was standing over me.

"Were you going to sleep all day?" he inquired.

"Why, it is daylight," I exclaimed, sitting up, "and it has cleared too."

For I saw a patch of sunshine laid like a mat in front of the door of our camp.

"It's a fine day for hunting Apaches," remarked Jim.

"Anything happened while I was asleep?" I enquired.

"All quiet along the Potomac," replied Jim. "Santa Anna had one growling spell, but I guess it was the stomach ache. I skirmished around below the rock but I couldn't find anything."

"You idiot," I said, "didn't you know better than that. It's a wonder that they didn't get you."

"I guess you scared 'em so when you flung the rock at the dark brother that they haven't dared to peep since."

"I suppose that we might as well sit down to our frugal meal," I suggested.

It certainly was as I described it and it made me feel pretty gloomy when I thought how short we were for food and water, especially the latter. Just then we heard a deep growl from Santa, whom Jim had left at the head of the trail on guard.

In a second Jim and I had sprung out on deck to find out the cause of the disturbance. We found Santa barring the way so that Piute and Coyote could not go down the trail.

"Good dog," said Jim, patting him on the head. "The ponies are thirsty, I reckon, and thought that they would go for water. Lucky Santa stopped them."

"We will have to fix it so they can't escape," I said.

This we had no great difficulty in doing. It was the most exciting incident of the day. We found that the Apaches were on the alert, for whenever one of us showed himself, just the lift of the head, there came a quick shot or the unerring flight of an arrow.

"It's lucky for us," remarked Jim, "that this is a wide valley instead of a canyon, for if they could climb up anywhere and get the drop on us our goose would be cooked."

"Look a here," I said, when a lucky shot just grazed the top of my head, "we can improve on this situation by making some loopholes."

"Sure," replied Jim, "that's the idea. Why didn't we think of it before?"

After this was done we could carry on our observations safely.

"Hello, look a here, Jim," I called some time later. "There's some more Indians coming to the rendezvous."

Jim came over and took a squint through the loophole.

"That is a jolly looking crowd coming up the valley. Must be fifty of them and they have got on their spring paint too. Ain't they beauts?" said Jim.

To me they looked like demons with horrid creases of red and yellow paint on their faces that gave them a haggard ferociousness.

"We haven't had anything to say for a long time," remarked Jim, "it's just about time that we showed them that we are taking a little interest in these proceedings."

He brought his rifle up and laid his clinched cheek against it as he aimed at the foremost of the pack. One Indian whirled suddenly around and dropped, badly wounded. The rest of them disappeared in a flash.

There came a fierce volley from a hundred rifles and a white flight of arrows from the concealed Indians. They kept it up for awhile, too, in a burst of savage rage that sent a chill to my heart.

The rocks around and back of us were spattered with lead, but that was the extent of the damage.

"You got a salute that time for fair, Jim," I said.

"Yes," he replied, "and I got the Indian."

"Don't take another chance like that," I begged.

"Not till the next time," he replied.

So the day wore on, with occasional flurries like the above to keep things moving. If the day before had been stormy and rainy, this made up for it. The sun shone with the strong directness of the higher altitudes. All the moisture had been dried up on top of our rock.

The horses began to get restless for water. Jim moistened their tongues as best he

could, but we had to be saving of our little supply of water.

The night passed with even less of incident than the previous one. It was evident that the Indians were perfectly satisfied with their waiting game, as well they might. It looked a sure thing.

The next day things looked bad for us. There seemed a peculiar sultriness in the air that was unusual in the mountains. There was a smoky haze over everything.

"It looks like Indian summer," said Jim.

"Indeed, it ought to with that crowd down there," I said.

"That's a good one," grinned Jim, "I wonder if those guys wouldn't appreciate the joke. Come up here, big Injun, I want to tell you something."

But none of them accepted Jim's cordial invitation. A few of the more cultured and learned swore at us in bad English. But I guess all swearing is bad English.

As the day wore on I began to suffer acutely from thirst. I shall never forget that longing for water. It seemed as if I would be willing to sacrifice my life for a good, full, everlasting drink of the cool mountain stream that was gurgling only a few hundred feet away. But as far as getting to it was concerned, it might just as well have been in York State.

"I hope that Tom and the captain don't discover us and try to rescue us," said Jim, "for I very much fear it would be a great risk to no purpose."

"What do you expect to do?" I asked Jim. "We can't stand this many days."

"We will see to-night," remarked Jim, mysteriously.

I doubt if he really had any plan in mind. This was just to encourage me with the hope of some way of escape.

"Just look at the smoke rolling over the mountains, Jim!" I exclaimed.

It was about the middle of the afternoon and we had been so busy reconnoitering that we probably had not discovered it at first.

"It looks like a tremendous forest fire," said Jim, "and we will see it before night."

"What are we going to do if it comes our way?" I asked. "We will be perfectly

helpless."

CHAPTER VII

THE CAPTAIN'S RECORD

Captain Graves was a methodical man, and kept a minute record in the form of a diary of everything that occurred from day to day.

There were volumes in his cabin on the plateau that related the adventures and vicissitudes of his life from the time of the Mexican war down. They were wonderfully interesting.

Here is the account of his trip with Tom and likewise the opinion that he had formed of us three boys.

"It has been a real pleasure for me to have the three boys, Jim, Jo and Tom, with me. One sometimes grows tired of being always alone, even when surrounded by all the beauties of nature and even one's books fail to interest at times.

"So it has meant a good deal to me to have the boys as my companions for the past months, to see them through their various adventures and to instruct them in the few things that I know well, such as woodcraft and mountaineering.

"I have had Tom with me of late, because he seems somewhat isolated from the other two boys by his nature, and though no younger than Jo he is smaller and this makes me regard him more carefully.

"He is an exceedingly bright lad, though cursed with a rather sharp tongue. The other two, like to stir him up, and since his return from the east they make life interesting for him by joking him about being a tenderfoot.

"Jo is an interesting boy, and though he is fond of books, I predict that he will be a soldier. He is obedient to orders, and will gain self-reliance as he goes along. Physically, he is quick, and has great endurance.

"Jim is the oldest and the leader. He has in him the making of an ideal scout. He is resourceful, cool headed and has great audacity, which will be tempered by experience as he goes along. Jim has also uncommon physical strength, superior to that of most men.

"The West is fine training ground for these three, and it will make men of them. Sometime they may be of real service to their country and if I can teach them anything from my experience I will consider it a privilege.

"Now, I must chronicle something of Tom's and my hunting trip and the subsequent adventures that befell us.

"Jo and Jim took their cayuses and went down the canyon, where we had made camp, to the plains, looking for antelope, while Tom and I went back in the mountains to see if we could not locate some mountain sheep.

"I remembered hunting through this region in the old days, some years after the Mexican War, and at that time it was a splendid section for big game, but now I did not expect to find a great deal, for the Apaches were hunting this region continually.

"We worked our way slowly back into the range, but saw no game until near the middle of the afternoon when Tom discovered three goats high up on a cliff. Tom's eyes are remarkably keen. In this he excels his two brothers, and mine are beginning to show the effect of the years.

"The goats saw us coming and jumped up the side of that apparently precipitous rock, nimble as fleas. I knew perfectly well how they would make tracks, so we took a wide detour and came into a high valley on the other side.

"We could just make out two white specks among some rocks at the top of the valley and we approached them under cover, but they were wary and I was finally forced to risk a chance shot.

"Two of them had disappeared over the ridge of the valley to the west, but the old Billie stood for a moment poised on a rock looking our way. He was slantways to me. Without dismounting I took aim and fired.

"To my surprise he slid from that rock in a hurry. Tom was jubilant and I was not displeased, for it was one of the prettiest shots that it has been my good fortune to make.

"The goat was a very good specimen and as the boys cannot take him along with them on their trip, I shall have his curly horned head in my cabin on the wall, facing the elk's head.

"It was too late for us to get back that night to the camp, as we were about a

day's trip distant. So we decided to make camp in the valley. I was not worried about Jim and Jo, for I felt sure that they could take care of themselves, and I did not really expect them to make the canyon camp either.

"The next day, we hunted slowly down. About noon we started a bunch of goats and they led us a merry chase. At one time I thought we had them cornered. But they were wiser than the hunters, for just as we were in range, they disappeared into a cave in the precipitous wall of rock.

"I decided that we had best be satisfied with our luck, and push on to the camp. It did not take us more than a couple of hours to reach the canyon, but no sooner did we come to the slight trail leading down it, than I made a discovery.

"I jumped hastily off from my horse and examined a footprint in a bit of shelving gravel. A little further on I caught it again.

"'Tom,' I whispered, 'I shall have to scout a little. Here's a live Apache track only a few minutes old. You stay here and keep watch up the canyon, and I will see what this beggar is up to.'

"Silently and stealthily I made my way down the canyon. When I came in sight of the camp the two pack horses were nowhere to be seen. Then I knew what had happened.

"I lost no time in following the Indian, who was was driving off our animals. I hoped to catch him before he got out on the plains, and I caught sight of him after I had gone a half a mile.

"He was a rather short, squat Indian, but powerfully built. I could have shot him in the back, but I hated to do that even to an Apache thief. So I followed quickly on his trail. Once he turned suspiciously, but I dropped instantly to cover.

"With a silent rush I came up behind him and when I was about ten feet away, he turned, and before he had recovered from his instantaneous surprise, I had smashed him down with the butt of my rifle.

"My next move was to tie him up good and fast, and then gag him. Then I went back for Tom, who was much relieved to see me.

"'Where are the boys?' he inquired anxiously.

"'They evidently haven't returned,' I replied, 'but I am sure they are all right.'

"But I, too, was worried, though I did not wish to alarm Tom. So I put the best face on it that was possible.

"'Did you see the Apache?' asked Tom.

"'Yes, and fortunately before he saw me,' I replied.

"'Did you get him?'

"'Just in time,' I replied, 'he was helping himself to our pack animals, when I arrested him with my rifle.'

"'Where is he now?' Tom inquired.

"'Oh, he is down the canyon a ways snugly tied up in a bundle.'

"I determined to get some idea of where the missing boys were. So I left Tom to guard the pack animals and I rode down to the mouth of the canyon and found the trail easily, where they had ridden south in the search for antelope.

"I was by this time thoroughly alarmed, and the conviction forced itself on me that they had been killed by the Apaches, but I shook the thought off. I would not have it so.

"That Jim and Jo were in difficulties of some kind was certain, and it was up to me to get them out of it. But what should I do, and where should I look? Then suddenly the problem was solved for me. I had ridden to a place where I could see the whole sweep of plains to the south, but keeping under cover of the growth of oaks that fringed the base of the foot hills, when I saw a war party of Apaches at a distance of several miles, making straight for the mountain.

"Instinctively I recognized their object and I likewise knew that so large a party would not be going back into the mountains so late in the day unless upon some special quest.

"In a short time the whole party of braves had disappeared into a canyon whose location I marked exactly. They have got those boys corraled in there, I said to myself, there is no question about that. I bet they are making a brave fight, those two, but they will have reinforcements pretty soon, or my name is not Captain Graves.

"'Did you see any signs of them?' inquired Tom eagerly, as I came up to him.

"'I have them located,' I replied.

"'Where?'

"'Only in a general way, but I suspect that the Apaches have them located specifically.'

"'But not staked out,' said Tom.

"A shudder went through me, for Tom did not realize the significance of the phrase with its suggestion of Indian torture.

"'No,' I said, 'they won't be staked out if the captain is active enough to get around this section of the country.'

"I did not like the canyon, where we had made our camp previously, as it seemed to be a thorough-fare for the Apaches, so I decided to make a move even if it was now growing dusk.

"'We will make a start this evening, Tom,' I said, 'this is a pretty situation, but there are some things I don't like about it.'

"'All right, captain,' he replied, 'whatever you say.'

"So we started driving our pack horses before us."

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAPTAIN'S SCHEME

"Dusk had fallen as we made our way out of the canyon, and we proceeded slowly along a rather bare and rounding ridge, under the light of the stars.

"From this ridge ran several canyons downwards towards the plains. We passed the heads of two of them, and at the third I stopped. This was the one which I had seen the Indians entering from the plain.

"'Can you make out anything down there in the darkness, Tom?' I asked.

"Tom peered keenly into the gloom below us.

"'I believe I can catch a glimpse of a fire down there,' he answered.

"But I did not have to depend on Tom's eye-sight altogether, for my hearing was acute, even if my sight had become somewhat defective and I was positive that I heard the Apache war cry.

"I determined, however, to make a closer investigation to see exactly how the land lay. There was a possibility that I might be able to reach the boys in the darkness, if they were besieged in the canyon below, as I now felt positive they were.

"The first thing, however, was to find some suitable place for a camp, where I could leave Tom with the horses, while I made my reconnaissance.

"It was somewhat difficult to do in the darkness, but at last I located a camp on the south side of the south ridge of the canyon. There were some great boulders with a semi-circle of trees or brush shutting in one side of the rocks.

"When I had Tom safely ensconced in our new camp, I gave him his orders and started to see what I could discover. I was armed with my revolver and a knife in my belt, as I wanted to be free to move quickly, and to fire instantly.

"I made no noise as I slipped over the ground in my moccasined feet. I could, from long experience, make myself as stealthy and invisible as any Indian and I

moved noiselessly down the side of a broad valley, for such it was, rather than a canyon.

"I was approaching a high hill that rose in the center of the valley, and was making my way down a narrow hunting trail through some brush, when I became aware that there was someone coming down the trail behind me.

"I pressed close into some bushes and waited perfectly silent, as though turned to stone. In a minute I saw a dark figure coming down the trail. It was a gigantic brave and he passed so close to me that he almost stepped on my feet.

"It was fortunate he did not, for I must acknowledge a corn on one of my toes. It would have been as much as his life was worth for him to have trod on it.

"After he had gone I took up the trail again, but more cautiously. In a short time I had approached within a few hundred yards of the big hill and found myself in a regular nest of Indians. They seemed to spring up all around me. All that I could do was to lie still between two rocks.

"At any moment I might be stepped on and discovered. I could see the hill rising above me in the darkness, with its great crown of white rock. It was very quiet up there, but once I thought I heard a horse whinny.

"I was not sure that the boys were the ones that the Apaches had surrounded, as some soldiers or hunters might be the unfortunate object of all this attention from the Apaches.

"I was beginning to wonder how I was to get out of my predicament, when there seemed to be something preparing on the east side of the hill. I could see dark figures creeping up that side, keeping under the cover of the rocks as much as they could.

"I wanted to give the defenders of the fort some signal of warning, but I was perfectly helpless, but I soon found that whoever was on guard was not to be caught napping.

"For a succession of shots came from the top of the rock fort.

"'No, you don't,' I heard a familiar voice. 'You boys can go right home and go to sleep.' It was Jim and it was all that I could do to keep from giving him a cheer.

"But if I was going to be of any help to them, I must get out of the situation with

a whole scalp. So I took advantage of this diversion to get out of the vicinity of the Apaches.

"In a few minutes I was free of their lines and was making my way back through the valley, and crossing over the bridge, I approached the place where I had left Tom.

"My mind was so engrossed with my plans for the morrow that I did not realize that I was so close to the camp until I heard, 'Halt, who's that?' From the tone I judged Tom was alarmed.

"'It's the captain,' I replied promptly.

"'I thought it was you, but I wasn't sure,' said Tom. 'I'm mighty glad to see you back again.'

"'It's a privilege to be here safely,' I admitted. 'I have discovered where Jim and Jo are.'

"'Where?' exclaimed Tom.

"'They are on a high hill in the middle of the valley on the other side of the ridge, surrounded by Apaches.'

"'Can they hold out?' inquired Tom anxiously.

"'As far as I can judge they can stand them off as long as the water and food hold out. I guess they haven't lost their spunk either. I heard Jim yell for them to go home and go to sleep after they had made a demonstration on one side and he had given them a salute of three shots, driving them to cover.'

"'That's just like Jim,' exclaimed Tom in admiration. 'He's the lad with the nerve all right. But what are you going to do to rescue them, captain?'

"'We will have to study the situation by daylight to-morrow, and then we will know better what to do.'

"'How many Apaches were they, captain?' asked Tom.

"'There was enough to go round, but don't you worry, Tom. Get a good night's sleep and then you will be ready for whatever comes.'

"I guess Tom took my advice to heart, for in a few minutes I heard a heavy breathing from his roll of blankets. It was very comfortable in our sheltered

camp with the big granite boulders back of us and the screen of trees and bushes in front.

"There is something mysterious and wonderful about night in the mountains and though I have lived for years in their presence, this has never become common to me. There is the dim bulk of the mountains all around, the moaning and moving of the mysterious winds through pines and aspens, and overhead the wondrous clearness of the innumerable stars.

"I did not pretend to sleep as I lay there in my blankets, but kept turning over in my mind different plans for the morrow. It would do no good to try and join forces, for if by a determined rush we could break through their lines and get into the fort, there would be just two more to feed.

"Was there any way in which I could get food and water to them? This was the first idea that I wrestled with. Perhaps with my craft I might be able to get through on an overcast night with provisions and water.

"Another idea came to me. I might get the help of the U. S. soldiers from the nearest fort in New Mexico, but that was one hundred and fifty miles distant and time was precious. There was no assurance that the boys could hold out until assistance should come. Finally, about midnight, I, too, fell asleep, but not soundly, as the situation was always half consciously before me.

"I woke up in the early dawn, and it did not take Tom and me long to get through our breakfast. After we had watered our horses at a stream in the bottom of a ravine, about a half mile distant, we proceeded to reconnoiter the situation.

"I felt that something must be done this day and it was certainly a perplexing condition of affairs, and in many ways it was desperate. The responsibility for the two beleaguered boys weighed on me.

"One thing gave me assurance and that was Jim Darlington's resource and pluck. At least he and Jo knew enough not to be taken alive by those fiendish Apaches. However, it must not come to that.

"We went along below the south side of the ridge until opposite the hill fort, but I was not able to take any observation on account of the thick covering of trees, so I left Tom there and worked my way down the valley slope of the mountain until I was within a half mile of the hill.

"Then I came to a great pine that towered like a commanding general above the

rank and file of common trees. I drove my knife deep into its trunk, and this gave me a foothold from which I was able to reach a lower branch.

"Quickly I clambered up until I was high enough to look over the surrounding trees. Cautiously I gazed down from behind the trunk. Everything was spread out before me. I could see the two ponies standing on the top of the hill.

"Jo and Jim were moving about inside their defences, apparently indifferent. I could see how cleverly they had built up their fort. If there was only some way in which I could let them know that I was near.

"But what appalled me was the number of the Apaches. I could see that there were hundreds of them moving like stealthy, cruel snakes through the undergrowth.

"My jaw gripped itself and my resolution hardened. Something must be done. I descended swiftly from the tree, and as I went back up the slope, my mind was working at high tension. Then, when I reached the top of the ridge my plan came to me. And I struck my leg with my clenched hand. 'I have it! I have it!' I exclaimed.

"It was a broad, desperate scheme, but it would work, it must work. I took careful note of the weather, not a cloud was to be seen anywhere. 'That's good,' I said, 'no rainstorms to-day. Now for a good wind and from the looks of things it's going to come,' and it did.

"Later it came on to blow, as it only can in the high altitudes.

"It was a wind from the New Mexican Desert, blowing through the canyons and roaring over the summits of the range. The fierce wind that blows from stark, clear horizons."

CHAPTER IX

A MOUNTAIN FIRE

It was the afternoon of the third day of our imprisonment that Jim and I had first discovered the forest fire.

"I suppose we will be like two beautiful browned potatoes with the jackets on," laughed Jim, who could not be disconcerted by any crisis. "Don't you worry, Jo, we will be pretty safe here I'm thinking."

We watched the rolling clouds of smoke with decided interest. The whole of the south side of the range seemed involved and no line of battle ever sent up more dense volumes of smoke.

"What do you suppose started it?" I asked.

"It could happen in several ways," replied Jim. "It might be by some wandering Indians or a trapper. Then again a stroke of lightning might have started it."

"They are not uncommon anyway," I remarked. "You can tell that by the thousands of dead trees that are fallen in the mountains."

"The new growth comes on quick, that's one good thing," said Jim.

We stood watching the rolling columns of smoke with fascinated interest. It seemed as if the whole south range had burst into a dozen eruptive volcanoes.

"Is that roaring sound the fire?" I asked.

"No, that must be the wind that is driving it," replied Jim.

"It won't do a thing to this valley," I said. "Just look at the thick brush that covers the mountain side."

"Yes," remarked Jim, "and those pine trees, my! won't they burn?"

"I bet it will beat a prairie fire," I said.

"That's the one thing that we missed in Kansas," remarked Jim.

"But this will make up for it," I commented quickly.

"Yes, I reckon it will be more exciting than that cyclone twister that came near wafting us away," Jim said.

It was a lurid night when the sun went down in the clouds of smoke like a great red ball. Then as night came on we saw the glare of the fire in the smoke and the rolling clouds were great red columns flowing in white capitals.

"Here she comes," cried Jim.

As he spoke a great pine on the upper crest was transformed into a pillar of flame. The first crackle became a whole roaring volley as the charging fire swept to the summit, its red chargers spurred on by the furious winds. Nothing could stop its victorious onslaught.

Not only were the old warrior pines that had stood the attacks of countless storms and bitter winters overcome, but the tenderer children of the younger growth were devoured and the maiden saplings with them.

"It's grand," exclaimed Jim in wild enthusiasm. "I'm so glad we came. Wouldn't have missed this for a good deal, I can tell you."

"I don't care for the panorama," I replied. "I should like to have my money back and go home."

"The horses are beginning to wake up too," said Jim. "They don't like it."

"That's where they show their good sense," I observed.

They certainly were becoming nervous. At first they regarded the fire with their heads up and ears pricked forward. Then Piute began to stampede around the corral, snorting and plunging. I thought that he was going to rear over the fort.

"He must think that he is a circus horse," laughed Jim. "Whoa, my wild Arab!"

But the wild Arab was not be cajoled, and Jim had to strong arm him by the means of a rope. Then he stood trembling, crazy eyed and with flaming nostrils.

It was indeed a terrible sight as the flames swept down the whole mountain slope towards our isolated hill. The entire valley was illuminated with one brilliant glare of flame. However, the fire did not roll down in one solid wave, the pines stood too isolated for that.

But each pine rose in a single blaze with a swish, a crackle and a roar, but there were hundreds of them and it was a splendid but awful sight—a riot of fire and the flying embers were like stars in the smoke.

"We have only a few minutes now," suddenly announced Jim, "quick, get the saddles."

"What for?" I asked. "We surely can't ride through the fire."

"It's the very luck I was looking for," he exclaimed. "It's our chance to escape, don't you see?"

We got the saddles and flung them on the ponies, cinching them good and tight, and then put on the bridles.

"We are going to run for it," I cried in sheer amazement.

"No," said Jim in disgust, "what chance would we have. That fire would catch us before we got fairly started and I don't trust those Indians till they have been burned over once. They can scheme as well as we."

"Don't you think they have skipped out before this?" I asked.

"I wouldn't trust 'em to do what any white man might expect. Look out, Jo, she's coming now."

The embers began to fall all around us, but there was nothing for them to catch, as we had taken good care, you may be sure, to have every bit of brush cleared from our fort. Fortunately for us our hill was wooded only around the base.

Even then the heat was intense. It seemed to me as though my skin was shriveling up, and every once in awhile the waves of smoke would almost submerge us in their acrid, stifling vapor.

Then we were in the midst of it as it swept around our hill on all sides and the great pines below were turned into flaming spears that seemed to thrust themselves at our stronghold.

It was like being in the thick of a great battle, the crackling, the roar of the flames and stifling smoke, the crash of falling trees. It seemed like an endless time, but it could only have been a few minutes.

Gasping, only half-alive, like survivors of a wreck who reach the shore only

after having been overwhelmed with terrible seas, we leaned against our cowed ponies (they were originally cow ponies) with our heads down.

I hardly recognized Jim, his face was blackened with smoke and his eyes reddened, his eyebrows and eyelashes scorched. There was nothing familiar about him, but the white grin of his teeth.

"You look like a hunk of smoked beef," he remarked. "It's time we were out of this."

The center of the fire had swept in advance down the valley, but the left wing was still fighting along the upper slopes on the opposite side of the valley.

"One drink for me at any rate before we start," I cried.

My thirst was something awful and I raised the canteen to my lips, but I threw it down with a yell. The very metal seemed hot.

"That's a cursed shame, Jo," said Jim in sympathy. "You wait, we will get water before we camp again. We are going to get out of this hades of a place." This was not profanity but description.

"All ready now, Jo?"

I nodded, for I could not speak, and we started to attempt to escape in the wake of the fire. We made our way slowly down the rock trail and then out on the slope of the hill.

A scene of desolation lay around and above us. Nor was it all over. There were many blazing trees that had not fallen and there was plenty of light to guide us on our fiery journey.

The undergrowth was burnt off and nothing left but black bushes and grey smouldering ashes everywhere.

"Which way?" I asked Jim, when we reached the foot of the hill.

"Up the mountains, of course," was his command.

"Where are the Apaches?" I questioned.

"Ask of the winds that far around with fragments strew the sea. They have skedaddled," he continued, lapsing into prose.

"I wonder if the captain and Tom have been caught in this fire," I cried.

A fear struck to my heart. It did not seem possible that anyone could escape the devouring march of the fire. Not many would be likely to find the refuge we had.

"You may be sure of one thing," replied Jim, "and that is this, the captain will take good care of himself and Tom too."

There was ground for Jim's confidence. For the captain was a man of unlimited resource, backed by a remarkable experience and he was, no doubt, far more worried about us than we were about them.

For us it was a trying and difficult journey over this burnt section. It was hard on the horses, and must have burnt their feet cruelly. We picked our way as carefully as we could, following the gravelly stretches where it was possible so to do.

Then again, where we could do so, we would take the line of the creek that ran down the middle of the valley. There was no water in it, for it had been either choked or dried up. After all that rain of the previous day this seemed remarkable.

"How much ground do you suppose this fire has swept, Jim?" I asked.

"It's hard telling," he replied, "but it would not surprise me if we would have to travel several days before we get out of the burnt district."

We had now arrived at the top of the mountain, from which the valley sloped down.

"Which way now, Jim?" I asked, stopping a moment for a better view.

For answer he swung his horse north, along the ridge. It was comparatively clear here and quite gravelly and a cool breeze, unstained with smoke, swept over the divide, with refreshing life in it for us. It was the next thing to having a drink.

"How are your lips, Jo?" asked Jim.

"Burnt," I replied.

"It's a whole lot better than having the Apaches catch you," he reasoned. "Then you would have been burnt all over."

"It's some consolation," I said.

"I don't believe we could have escaped," said Jim, "if the fire had not helped us. The only thing we could have done was to have tried to make our escape at night."

"We would have fought our way through, perhaps," I suggested.

"Not more than one chance out of a hundred," replied Jim, "and I'm glad, for one, we didn't have to take it."

"We get a pretty good view of the conflagration from here," I commented.

This was true, for in both directions we could see the solitary blazing trees on the mountain slopes like the fires of a great army, and in the canyon below us on the other side the brush was still blazing.

CHAPTER X

THE SEARCH

"Shall we camp here?" I asked, "this seems to be as good a place as any."

Jim shook his head.

"No, we will work our way north till we can get a view of our old camp. Perhaps we will find some trace of Tom and the captain."

We rode on steadily, following along the top of the ridge. The whole vast, shadowy country blackened and desolate, lighted by the occasional fires, seemed to me quite unrecognizable.

"I don't believe we can tell the canyon when we arrive at it," I suggested, "they all look alike to me."

"I guess I will know it when we come to it," Jim answered.

"You are a better mountaineer than I am if you can," I said.

"I am," replied Jim coolly.

I reckon there was no doubt of it, for Jim had developed a remarkable sense for locality, and had a natural instinct for direction, while I was easily lost, but I could tell the east when the sun rose and the west where it set. Beyond that I was not much of an authority.

"Here we are," exclaimed Jim.

We had arrived at the head of a narrow canyon that looked to me much like the one we had just gone by.

"How can you tell?" I asked.

"Never mind," replied Jim, "you will see that I am right."

Jim was not above adding to his reputation by a certain mystery, which gave the impression that he controlled certain occult forces which he did not choose to

explain to the ignorant and the uninitiated.

"You guessed right," I said after we had ridden down a ways above the wall of the canyon. "You certainly have pretty good luck."

"We are above the camp now," said Jim, "let's see if we can wake them up?"

He put his hands to his lips and gave a yell loud enough to wake the dead. No response.

"I'm going down to make sure," he said.

So he swung himself off Piute, and followed by Santa the two soon disappeared, leaving me alone, but I was used to that. So I dismounted to give Coyote a rest. I hope Jim will be able to find water down there, I said to myself.

I did not have very long to wait, when I saw Jim, toiling up from below.

"What luck?" I asked.

He shook his head.

"They haven't been around since the fire and the pack horses are gone."

My heart sank and a sensation of absolute loneliness came over me. Here we were, the two of us, with no one to aid us. Only a short supply of ammunition. It certainly was a desperate situation.

"Cheer up," said Jim. "Here is something to wet your whistle."

He handed over the canteen. I seized it eagerly. I would not have exchanged its old battered tin hulk for diamonds or gold.

I raised it eagerly to my lips and let a stream gurgle down my throat. Talk about whiskey and its enthusiastic effects, I never tasted anything more intoxicating than that water. It made me feel absolutely dizzy.

"What next?" I asked.

"There is nothing to do but to look for them."

"Yes," I said, "I suppose we had better work down to the plains."

"Not much," replied Jim. "You take my word for it that they are back in the range. Ten chances to one if we went down we would fall into the hands of the

Apaches."

"Back to the woods for me then," I said very promptly.

"Let's walk a ways and rest the ponies," suggested Jim.

"All right," I said. "I have been cooped up so long in that fort that I won't mind having a chance to stretch my legs."

So we walked up the grade towards the summit we had left a little while before, the ponies following us like obedient dogs, while Santa took the lead. In an hour we had reached the top of the long ridge or rather mountain, which dominated the various canyons like little pigs near the mother sow.

The fires were still burning everywhere and we could see the skirmish line of the main fire eating its way in irregular outline along the darkened plain.

"It's up to you, Jim," I said, "which way now? You are the guide for this party."

"Over the hills and far away," he cried. "All aboard for the grand canyon."

And he swung into the saddle. There was something in the cheek of him that called out my admiration, even if I was his brother. To think of the object of our trip when it seemed the most impossible thing in the world to obtain. But it was like Jim.

"You see the outline of that mountain over there?" he asked, pointing to the West. "The one above the fire line?"

"Yes," I replied.

"That's the one I'm going to make for. When we get to the summit I am going to build a big signal fire that can be seen all over this country. Then we shall see 'what we shall see.'"

"Yes," I replied, "we 'shall see' the whole tribe of Apaches."

"Don't you worry," replied Jim. "If we once get our party together we will stand them off."

We now left the summit of the long ridge and rode down a long spur that tended down into a deep cross valley.

"What time is it?" I asked.

"Three o'clock," he replied, "we will soon hear the roosters crowing."

In an hour's time we had reached the depth of the valley. It must have been beautiful a few hours before, but now it was as black as the Valley of The Shadow.

"Look here, Jim, there's quite a stream," I cried.

"Good luck," yelled Jim. "Now our horses can have a drink."

They certainly made the most of it. The water throbbed down their long throats in regular piston strokes. No matter if the water was discolored and tasted of ashes and charcoal, Santa, too, made the most of it.

After the ponies had satisfied their thirst we crossed to the opposite side and Jim scanned the barren bulk of the mountain that rose above us. He was looking for the best line of ascent.

"Jo, did you hear that?" exclaimed Jim in great excitement.

"It sounded like two rifle shots close together," I answered. "Now, we are in for it. We never will escape the Apaches this time."

"Ho, ho," laughed Jim. "Apaches! That was the captain's rifle as sure as I stand here. That was no old carbine."

We waited, listening intently. Then we fired two shots apiece simultaneously. Then in a minute came the answering signal. Two rifles this time.

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! Whoop la," we yelled. It seemed to me the most joyful moment of my life. The captain and Tom found again after the terrible perils we had been through.

We urged our ponies in the direction of the shots and Santa sprang away in the lead. He would be the first to welcome the captain and Tom. In five minutes we saw the dark outlines of two mounted men and two horses following.

We met on the spur of the mountain with only the livid light of a burning pine nearby to enable us to distinguish each other. The captain swung from his horse and gripped Jim by the hand, then he took my hand likewise. "Well met," he exclaimed.

For a moment there was silence, then Jim spoke up.

"That was a deuce of a big fire you started, captain," he said. "You must have been pretty cold."

The captain smiled grimly.

"I could tell that was you from that remark, but your appearance is deceiving. You look considerably like a nigger."

"We thought that we wouldn't see you fellows again," said Tom. "You must have been through it, the way you look."

"Come, boys," said the captain, "the first thing for us to do is to get above the fire line and camp. We thought we had lost Santa. How did you get him?"

"He got us," I answered.

"It's all right now. He went off on a trail of his own," commented the captain. "I'm glad that he located you."

We now proceeded up the mountain on the back trail, the captain in the lead. After a while daylight came and it showed a scene of desolation below us. The blackened trees, some standing, thousands fallen, the pallid smoke rising from mountain slopes and curling out of deep canyons.

Above us, however, was a brighter prospect, for below the snow fields were the unscarred pines and the ravines where were the clear streams.

After an hour's hard climb we were among the trees with bushes, and here and there bunches of grasses and of flowers. It seemed like paradise to our fire scorched eyes. We made our camp in a wide ravine, near a pleasant stream.

"Well, this is jolly," said Jim. "I am glad to have a chance to wash my features and comb my hair."

We took the saddles off our tired horses and it was a pleasure to see how they took it. The fire was made and once more we were united around the old campfire.

Depend upon it, we had a long talk and the captain told of his efforts to help us. He and Tom had spent several hours in making their preparations. Below the ridge at a distance of three hundred yards or more apart they had placed inflammable pitch pine in dry brush and timber.

Tom had been sent with the pack horses up beyond the danger zone and then with a pitch pine torch the captain started the fire at the eastern end, then full gallop to the west and thus up the line. The wind was blowing a hurricane and scattered fire brands far and wide.

It is easy to unleash such a tempest of fire, but once started it is beyond all human control.

We told our story and then fixing up a bed of boughs or rather small branches, I rolled up in my blankets and was soon sound asleep. There was comfort in it after the hardships of the past two nights.

We did not move camp until the next day. By that time we were thoroughly rested and ready for whatever might be ahead of us, whether Indians or forest fires.

Our horses also were feeling good, which they showed by acting badly.

The captain scouted out and returning reported no signs of Indians. They had been driven away.

"Well, boys," he said, as we started the next day, "I shall have to leave you as soon as I get you out of these mountains."

"We hate to think of it," said Jim. "Better go with us as far as the river anyway."

But the captain shook his head.

"No, really Jim, I appreciate you boys' friendship and I like to be with you, but I am getting too old for this exciting life and I must get back to my plateau and my books."

"I have given the captain one of my books to read," said Tom.

"Gee," laughed Jim, "I bet the captain will be thrilled when he reads about the dukes and dukesses and all those high-fliers."

"That will do, Jim," said the captain. "I value the book as a gift from Tom."

So nothing more was said on that line. We were now fairly launched for the

remainder of our voyage through the mountains and we rode forward in good spirits.

CHAPTER XI

THE CAPTAIN DEPARTS

We traveled on for a week through the mountains with only the ordinary incidents of hard riding and quiet camps. We met with no extraordinary adventures, nor did we meet any wandering bands of Indians.

Although we saw the distant smoke of some large camps we did not seek any close acquaintance with the Apaches.

"You will find many of the tribes in the southwest rather friendly," said the captain, "not like the Apaches, or Cheyennes. Of course you always have to be on your guard. But if you do not arouse their suspicions or deal with them unfairly, there is no danger of that, I know, and you will find them safe."

"What are the names of these Indian tribes in the southwest?" inquired Jim.

"Well, there are the Navajos, a fine tribe in many ways, with rather good features, not like the fierce Apaches, much more human. They, too, are skilled in making blankets, stained natural colors of gray and brown and red and woven from sheep's wool. They roam above the San Juan.

"On the north below the San Juan are the tribes of Paiutes, while on the south are the Suppais and Wallapais; in Arizona and lower down come the Mojaves, Cocopas and Yumas, more worthless and degraded than the northern tribes.

"The most interesting of all the tribes are the Pueblos who have villages built in the cliffs or on the great Mesas. These people have a civilization of their own."

"It certainly will be interesting to see this country," I said.

"To me it is the most marvelous region on this continent," resumed the captain, "and has a fascination of its own. As you will soon find for yourselves."

Late one afternoon, we had been riding through a deep canyon and we came suddenly out upon the strange country with its sunlit vastness.

"Well!" said Jim, "it beats me!"

Upon the plain below us were several great mesas, with high perpendicular walls, some of grey stone and others of vermilion sandstone, and in the west were pinnacles and towers in varied hues.

Far away to the southwest were various chains of mountains, rising above an elevated but broken region. The mountains were sharp and clear cut. Over all was an atmosphere of wonderful clarity.

"The great Colorado River flows zigzag through that region," said the captain, indicating the distant mountains.

We gazed at it feeling the spell of its fascinating mystery creep over us. There was so much to take in that we sat on our ponies gazing out over this weird land for a long time. Later, we watched the faint crimson of evening die away and the azure that precedes the darkness, robe the distant horizon line of mountains.

This was our last camp in these mountains and also the last night that the captain was to camp with us. We were talking it over after supper as we sat around the fire.

"I don't consider this as good-bye," said the captain, "for I expect to see you at my cabin on the plateau after you return from Mexico."

"If it is possible, you may count on us," asserted Jim.

"You will have much of interest to tell me, I know that. I shall like to hear of the old trails that I have travelled years ago."

"We shall be just one trail ahead of you and that is down the Colorado River," said Jim.

"You're welcome to it," replied the captain, "from what I have heard of its style of action. As a preliminary I should like to begin with the rapids below Niagara."

"One thing is in our favor, we are all good swimmers," suggested Tom.

"Yes, that makes me feel some easier," continued the captain. "You must be careful of those maps I made for you, Jim, because you will need them from now on, until you reach the river. After that there is just one direction and you can't miss it."

"That's down the river, with the current," said Tom.

"That's it," assented the captain.

"If you see Juarez, send him along," suggested Jim. "We want him."

"I reckon he would enjoy it much more than pitching hay on the Kansas farm," said the captain. "It's time to turn in now, for you will want to get an early start to-morrow."

So we rolled into our blankets for a dreamless sleep on the edge of the Land of Enchantment that lay stretched out below us under the brilliant stars.

We were astir early the next morning and before the sun was up we were all ready to start out on the second division of our journey. Our ponies were saddled and the pack horses ready. The only thing that saddened us, was the fact that we had to part with our friend and comrade, the captain.

But in the light of a new day and refreshed by a good night's rest it did not seem such a gloomy prospect as on the evening before. We had found that in the hazardous life we had lived so long that when we turned in at night that it was the best way to forget, banish from our minds all worry about the next day. No matter what desperate matters faced us on the morrow.

We discovered that things never seemed so bad on the next day when we were on our feet to meet them as when we lay on our backs thinking them over.

We were now ready to say good-bye and no ado was made about it either by the captain or ourselves. What was the use? We all instinctively disliked any display of emotion.

"How long will it take you, captain?" asked Jim, "to get back to the plateau?"

"I shall make quick time and use the cutoffs," answered the captain. "It won't be much over a week before I am sitting in the armchair, with my feet on the table reading a book, or looking down the canyon from my open door."

"And we will be gliding down the placid Colorado about that time," laughed Jim, "with Tom and Jo serenading the Indian maidens on the banks as we go drifting by."

"It's a beautiful picture," the captain smiled gravely, "but in reality I see you bailing out your boat and dodging rocks and Indian missiles."

"That's about it," I assented. "By the way, you won't forget to mail our letters

home, at the settlement, captain."

"Not I," replied the captain. "It will be good news for them to hear that you have arrived so far in safety."

"We never make much of our little adventures," remarked Jim, "when we write home. We want to keep them feeling cheerful."

"That's right," returned the captain. "Now it is time for you to start, the sun will soon be up. Good-bye and the best of luck to you."

He shook hands with each of us and there was the strength of friendship in his grip.

"Good bye," we called.

And the captain swung his horse around and headed up the canyon.

"Don't be surprised if we drop in on you in a year or two," cried Jim, after him.

"The sooner the better," shouted the captain, and with a salute, which we returned, he disappeared in the depths of the canyon headed north.

We rode south down the slope and reaching the plain turned our horses' heads directly west.

"It seems fine to be on level stretch," remarked Tom, "after going up and down hills, over mountains and through canyons."

It did give us a curious sense of freedom and exhilaration, very much as when you are out of sight of land on the ocean and see the blue surges rolling freely to the horizon.

"Let's have a race," I proposed. "Here is a good stretch."

"Hold on," cried Jim, "we aren't kids any longer. We have got to settle down and cut out our foolishness. There is no use in tiring our ponies out at the start, they will need all the go that is in them before we reach the river."

Jim was right as I recognized in an instant, though my first impulse was one of anger at being called down, but I thought better of it.

"All right, old hoss," I replied, "the jog trot for me. How far do you expect to go to-day?"

"Well, you see the ponies are fine and fit. I calculate to make between sixty and seventy miles."

"Whew!" I whistled, "you'll wear them out."

"Don't you believe it," replied Jim, "that's nothing awful. Why, don't you know that those buck Indians will cover seventy-five miles in a day and over mountains too? We'd do forty ourselves and not feel it."

"I reckon you are right," came from Tom, "this is certainly fine traveling. We ought to make time."

It was good going. The plain was covered with short, crisp grass. The sun was just coming up and the blue depths of dawn were broken by the shining arrows of the sun. The shadows were stript slowly from the great mesas and the weird buttes and strange desert sculptures stood out in absolute distinctness.

I tell you what, it was fine to be young and fit and free in such a country as lay around us. Hardships and sufferings were ahead of us, we knew that, and many dangers; we had experienced them in the past.

I wish you could have a picture of us as we jogged along, sitting securely, easily on our ponies, our rifles hung on our back, slouch hats flapping about our ears and hiding the sunburned radiance of our countenances as grey clouds do the sun.

Moccasins on our feet; our worn but serviceable clothes that did not altogether conceal our muscular figures. We were hard and fit and we ought to have been. Our hands were black as any Indians and what they gripped they could hold onto. In the rear of the procession trotted the two pack animals.

We may have seemed too young to undertake the responsibilities we had. But Jim was almost seventeen, the age that the famous scout, Kit Carson, started on his career in the West. Tom and I, the twins, were two years younger. Jim was the kingpin and we were auxiliaries.

CHAPTER XII

THE MESA VILLAGE

"I tell you one thing," said Jim, "I'm mighty glad to get out of the country of the Apaches. Our one experience with those beggars will last me the rest of my natural life."

"We might run into some roving bands," I said. "I don't believe that they have any regular boundaries to their country."

"They don't get beyond their own section, unless they are at war with some other tribes. They ought to be satisfied with all those mountains and plains back of us to hunt over."

"Say boys, what is that ahead of us on that mesa?" asked Tom. "It looks like some houses to me."

"Houses!" I exclaimed, skeptically, "what would anybody do with houses up on a place like that and who would live in them?"

"It's reasonable enough," said Jim, "that the Indians should build on a high place like that. It's a natural fort and they would be safe from the attacks of their enemies. In a flat country like this where there are no woods or other defense those mesas are just the thing."

"I suppose that we had better keep to the north," I said, "because we don't want to mix it with any Indians. I don't care for their society, no matter how kind and gentle they are and perhaps it isn't their day at home."

"We can't always be dodging around," replied Jim, "for we will never reach the Colorado River. It's right on our line of march and we might just as well take in all the sights."

"Perhaps it is just a mirage," I suggested hopefully, "like that beautiful lake we saw on the plains in Kansas, with the trees around it. That was nothing but a heated haze and our thirsty imaginations."

"That's no mirage, it's the real thing," declared Tom. "You'll see in a half hour."

"A half hour," laughed Jim, scornfully, "you've been in the West all this time and can't tell distance better than that. It will take us a good three hours to reach it."

Jim hit it about right, for it took us three hours and a half before we came within striking distance of the mesa.

"It looks like quite a town up there," said Jim, "but nobody seems to be at home."

I took off my sombrero and began to brush down my shock of light hair. "I must slick up," I announced, "if we are going into society. Lend me your mirror, Tommy."

"I'll lend you a kick," he offered, as he rode alongside, and shot his moccasined foot out, but missed me and hit Coyote in the flanks, making him jump.

"You do that again to my horse and I'll bump your nose for you," I cried, hotly.

I would not have minded it if he had landed on me. Tom knew that I meant business and refrained from further exercises along that line.

"Just look at the dust on your clothes, Thomas, I'm ashamed of you," I continued, after a moment, "and you have no more polish on your moccasins than you have on your manners."

"Stop your kidding, Jo," commanded Jim, "you and Tom can do your scrapping in camp."

"Beware of the Boss, he bites," I said, warningly.

Jim grinned, his only response.

"Look out, Tom, he's showing his teeth."

But we forgot our little controversy as we drew near to the great mesa. It was as impregnable as a powerful battleship of these later days. There was nothing to detract from its impressiveness as it rose in clear cut symmetry and sheer walls from the level plain. We gazed up at it in admiration.

"How high are those walls, do you suppose, Jim?" I asked.

"All of five hundred feet," he answered, "but I don't see how we are going to get up."

"Get up!" I exclaimed, "what for, we haven't got any relatives up there that we want to meet."

"Why Jo," expostulated Jim, "don't you want to meet and converse with our red brothers and have a great powwow. You know they are the original Americans?"

"All Americans are original," I retorted. "I thought you were in a hurry to see the river."

"I am," replied Jim, "perhaps we can see it if we climb up there. Then I want to see this village; you can't make out much from here. Looks something like swallow nests built in the rafters of the old barn."

"How do you suppose the Indians get up there?" I asked, "ladders?"

"Hardly," replied Jim. "Let's look around and find out. You and Tom go around the north end and I'll ride the other way."

"All right," we responded.

So we separated after we had arrived at the middle of the east wall. We rode slowly along, but found no break in the solid grey masonry of the wall. Before rounding the northern end we waved our hats to Jim in a given signal indicating that we had found nothing so far.

The mesa must have been three quarters of a mile in length and the ends about a quarter of a mile. As we came to the west side we saw Jim riding slowly along; as yet he had found nothing. Then I saw him wave his sombrero.

"He's found it," I cried, and we started our horses at full gallop, looking like little pygmies beside the massiveness of the great mesa that loomed above us.

"Here's the main traveled road," he cried, as we galloped up.

"Can we make it?" cried Tom.

"Gee! she's narrow," I commented.

It extended a mere pencil line zigzaging up the face of the rock.

"Come on," cried Jim.

I knew expostulation was useless, a mere waste of breath, so I followed behind Jim, as he started up. It was barely wide enough for our horses and though we

had taken a few narrower trails in the mountains, we had never followed one up a precipitous cliff before and I vowed we never would again if we ever got down safely.

Fortunately our horses were as sure footed as goats, but I shall not easily forget the sense of dizziness I felt as I looked down. One slip of Coyote and I would fall like Lucifer, never to rise again.

In some places there was nothing but the narrow two-foot width of rock, with nothing to stop a slide but the earth way down below, but in most places the path was cut into a little gully deepened by the corrosion of the rains.

I think that Jim by the time we had got up several hundred feet repented himself, of his foolhardy attempt. But there was nothing to do but go on, it was impossible for us to back down, but if Jim felt worried he did not show it by word or action to us.

There was no wind stirring and the early afternoon sun beat against the blank wall with blinding effect. It was surprisingly hot, intense and dry.

Every once in awhile we had to stop to spell our horses and they stood with heads held level, and one bent hindfoot, panting with the steep climb.

"If the Indians up there don't want us they can just toss us down," I said. "It looks suspicious to me. Something like an ambush."

"I don't see the bush," replied Jim, "I guess they are taking their siesta. Fine view, isn't it?"

I suppose it was, but it did not interest me just then, as I kept my eyes riveted on Coyote's ears, not caring to look out or down. If you want to get an idea of how I felt, step out on the jamb of a window of a twenty story building and look down at the street, where the people appear like crawling ants and the street cars like big cockroaches.

We were now nearing the top when Jim stopped his horse and the whole line halted. He gave a low whistle of surprise.

"What's the matter?" I asked, anxiously.

"Washout on the line," he said.

"We're in for it now," I said. "Is it dry?"

Jim dismounted gingerly from his horse and went forward a few steps. Then I saw a broken place in the trail with a sheer fall. We were check-mated.

It was impracticable for us to go back with the horses, though we could easily go back on foot. It was also impossible to go forward.

Then I saw Jim step back a ways, and with a short run, he made the leap across. It was only five feet, but in such cramped quarters it was very difficult. My heart stopped as Jim jumped. His foot slipped as he landed and he saved himself from being killed, by grabbing the outer edge of the trail, a thin knife of rock, then he scrambled up, his moccasined feet aiding him to a secure foothold.

"Never say die!" he yelled to me. "I'm going to investigate."

Then he disappeared on top of the mesa. In a few minutes he came back dragging two round poles with him. "Lend a hand, Jo," he urged.

I got off very carefully, not looking down and edged my way past Coyote and Piute, maintaining a firm grip on them as I went along. My back felt cold and creepy with nothing but the dizzy air back of me.

But I got by safely and helped Jim lay his bridge. He made several trips and as the poles were fifteen feet long we made quite a secure structure.

At first Piute absolutely balked. He would not lead at all. Then Jim got in the saddle and went for him with the spurs. The broncho strain showed up in him and he went across that bridge on the fly and went full gallop up the remaining bit of trail.

I led Coyote, who made no trouble as Piute had broken the ice and the rest of the procession followed.

In a minute I was on the deck of the broad mesa and at the threshold of the little town. Jim was waiting for me.

"Welcome to our little city, stranger," he said, "all the Indians are asleep, you must be careful not to disturb them."

"It's deserted," I said. "I guess the Apaches cleared them out."

We left our horses and proceeded to investigate this curiously silent village, isolated on the great mesa.

The houses were in a good state of preservation and would stay that way for years in this dry climate. They were made of adobe bricks with a mud cement over them, flat roofs, and with a second tier of smaller buildings on them. Ladders were used in reaching the roof and we found some that were unbroken lying on the ground. The doors were made of the regulation size and square windows cut through.

CHAPTER XIII

TWO HONORS

The houses were not separate, but the whole village was like one big rambling house of many rooms. We cautiously entered one of the houses.

As soon as our eyes became accustomed to the dim light we saw that it had been deserted for a long time. There were no marks of recent habitation.

On the hard, worn floor were shards of pottery of red and grey clay that had been baked according to the method of the tribe. In the blackened fireplace was a heap of rags.

"I bet the Apaches have cleared this town out," said Jim, reaffirming my previous statement.

"There's no doubt of it," I replied. "It's too near their territory anyway. It makes me feel sorry for these people. They must have been comfortable here and they were no doubt superior to the other Indian tribes because they have built themselves houses instead of living in tepees."

"Yes," remarked Jim, "and instead of living on wild meat they raised grain. You can see where they have crushed it in this round stone, that's hollowed out."

We were standing near the fireplace as Jim was speaking, when I saw the rubbish moving slightly, and then a great hairy spider rushed out at us.

"Look out, Jim," I cried, in alarm. "There's a big spider coming for you."

And I made for the door. If there's one thing I hate more than another it's spiders. If it had been a roaring mountain lion or a stealthy Apache or even a snake, I would not have cared, but a spider! that was my particular horror.

It's peculiar about folks; each one has some particular aversion that is natural and not unreasonable. I have known people that would have a fit if you threw a cat at them. Actually faint with horror if a cat should jump in their laps. Others have the same feeling towards snakes. My horror was spiders.

I think if that one should crawl up my arm I Would almost expire with horror. That was the reason I took to the door. This fellow was no ordinary customer, I can assure you.

His hairy, bent legs carried his body in the center and he had poisonous nippers and wicked little eyes. He rattled across the hard floor straight for Jim. My cry caused Jim to look down and he jumped to one side just in time to escape the rush of the reptile.

I expected to see the spider scurry away to a dark corner. Not he, for he came for Jim again. Then Jim picked up a stone and crushed Mr. Spider with a crunching sound.

"Come and have a look at him, Jo," cried Jim. "He's a beaut."

"I'll take your word for it," I replied. "I don't want to see it."

"Did you ever see a spider like that?" asked Tom, when Jim came out.

"That wasn't a spider," Jim said. "That was a tarantula. He must have been five inches across. But the gall of him prancing right up to me."

"Lucky he didn't bite you," I said.

"Well, I guess yes," remarked Jim, "I have heard that their poison will just about lay a man out."

"Judging from the looks of him I should think as much," I said.

"Let's have a look at the roof of this village," proposed Jim.

We searched around until we found a long ladder and we raised it up to the second story of the town.

"I feel like I belong to a hook and ladder company," laughed Jim. "Do you remember what fun we used to have running to the fires at home with the hose carts?"

"Sure I do," I replied, "and I recollect when we paraded with one of the companies on the Fourth of July and you had a belt that was intended for a fat man and it went around you twice and then you had to hold it up and your cap was two sizes too large and the visor was generally over your left ear. You were the feature of the parade."

"Never mind that now," grinned Jim, "you weren't much more of an ornament yourself if I remember rightly. Let's see what we can discover up here."

So he climbed the ladder, with me at his heels, and Tom came tumbling after. We found part of the roofs covered with other houses like those below. The roofs were perfectly flat and with round chimneys of grey adobe standing here and there. There were also square openings to the houses below where a ladder could be used for an inside stair.

"What is this long string of something, Jim?" I asked.

"Why that long string of something is dried peppers. I bet these Indians used a lot of it. It will be fine to cook with our meat," and he wound it gracefully over his shoulders.

We went into one of the houses on the roof and it seemed to be like the others, entirely deserted. This room of the village was larger than any that we had entered so far and it had a wooden door which Jim had shoved open without any difficulty.

I was standing with my back to the door looking around to see if there were any curiosities in view, when I felt something coming behind me swiftly and stealthily. I had no time to turn before it sprang and one dark skinny arm went around my neck.

It was an Indian, who held me with a grip like closing steel. I was almost helpless, from the pressure on my throat when Jim turned, hearing the scuffle and sprang to my help.

It took all his strength to tear the old Indian hag loose, for such it was. She was a terrible object to my startled eyes, with her grey bush of hair, parchment withered skin, the lean lines of her throat and the eyes beaming with the weird light of insanity.

Her strength seemed to leave her suddenly and she sat crouching in a dark corner. Keeping her eyes fastened on us and her lips moving in some strange incantation. Suddenly she sprang up with her claw-like hands stretched toward us, spitting at us; a very picture of demoniacal fury. Then she subsided again.

It was more like the rage of a wild beast than of a human being. And it gave me a sensation of horror to think that she had had me in her grip. Next to the tarantula she seemed the most repulsive.

"The old lady seems to have taken a sudden fancy to you," said Jim, as we stood looking at her.

"What is she doing up here all alone?" asked Tom.

"She may have been able to hide when the Apaches made their raid," Jim replied, "or possibly she was so old that she was worthless and I guess she is something of a sorceress, so they thought it best to leave her alone. She is trying to get the Indian sign on Jo now."

The old hag was pointing at me, with one long skinny finger and muttering; something that repeated the same words over and over again. She started to rise up and I shrunk back. I hated being singled out by her.

"Sit down you," thundered Jim, "down, I tell you. No more of your cursed nonsense."

The old woman actually obeyed him and she sank back, her grey head shaking with palsy. I guess she thought that Jim was the Big Chief all right.

"Come on, boys," he said, "let's call on somebody else. The poor old lady is too eccentric and we don't want to excite her."

So we went out, but we found nothing more of especial interest, except that Jim unearthed a blanket that had evidently belonged to some Navajo. It was thick and warm, with white ground and grey design.

After finishing with the village we went out on the mesa to look around. We found that it was covered with quite a depth of soil and there were signs that it once had been well cultivated.

"I guess these people grew maize up here. You can see where the soil has been turned over," said Jim. "Look here, boys, I have found an old plow."

We looked at it with real curiosity. It was certainly a primitive article, made of grey weathered wood and the plowshare also of some hard wood, just enough to stir the ground.

"These people must have been independent here and happy too," said Tom. "It was a shame they had to be run out by those Apaches."

We had now advanced to the edge of the mesa and were looking off to the west. It was a marvelous view in the afternoon light that brought out the strange and

symmetrical lines of the desert architecture with startling distinctness.

"There rolls the Colorado and hears no sound save its own rolling," said Jim, pointing in his most oratorical manner to the southwest.

"You can see the zigzag of it through that plateau," I cried.

"Yes, and way over there in the south is where it plunges into the mountains," said Jim. "Jove! it makes me anxious to reach it. This will be our last picnic till we reach the river, you can count on that."

"Down, boys, quick!" cried Tom. We dropped into some brush—scrub bushes that grew near the edge of the mesa without waiting to question. Tom's eyes were keen and his vision was to be respected.

"What is it, brother?" inquired Jim, in mock anxiety. "What dost thou see?"

"See! there is a party of Indians coming out around that butte over there," pointing to the north. Then we saw them all right. There was a large party, we could tell that. Though the distance was so great that they looked like moving specks.

CHAPTER XIV

A NIGHT ON THE MESA

"Do you suppose they saw us?" I asked.

"Hardly," replied Jim. "It's all we can do to make them out and they are mounted."

"It's lucky we stopped off here," remarked Tom, "because we would have run into them or at least they would have cut our trail."

"If they go east of the mesa they will do it anyway," I said, "then what will we do?"

"They would have a sweet time getting up here after us," said Jim.

"But they would starve us out," I said.

"Don't worry, Jo," Jim replied. "If they insist on hanging around we will have to turn farmers and till the soil. You and Tom would make a nice team to pull that plow, being twins; you are well matched, light bays, warranted kind and gentle."

"Any lady could drive, especially Tom," I said.

"I don't believe those fellows will bother us," said Jim, who was watching the Indians closely. Jim never allowed repartee to interfere with business. "You see they are keeping well to the west and in that case they won't see our trail."

"We will have to camp up here to-night," I said.

"Sure," replied Jim, "there is nothing else to do. It won't be long till sunset now and we want daylight for that trail."

"Do you suppose those fellows will try and come up here?" I asked.

"What for?" replied Jim, "they know that there is nothing here and they are not looking for useless exercise."

"Are we going to camp in one of those houses?" I inquired.

"Why not?" said Jim, "you are not afraid of the old lady stealing you, are you?"

"I don't see any use of our going indoors," I replied. "We always sleep in the open and it don't look like rain. At least not this century."

This last observation certainly seemed accurate. Though there were a few rolls of white clouds, floating around over the vast extent of blue sky, they were oases in the desert of its extent. Though along the eastern horizon were delicate veils of purple or grey showers skirting along. But there seemed no promise of dampness in them.

We lay at ease stretched out in perfect safety watching the Indians as they came into nearer view. It seemed like something more than a hunting party because they had their squaws and papooses with them.

The earth was warm and dry and the sun made us feel comfortable as we basked in it like so many grey lizards. Just then a curious little thing darted right in front of my face. I drew back in alarm. But Jim reached out quickly and clutched it in his hand.

"What is it?" I asked.

"It's nothing but a horned toad," he replied.

"Aren't you afraid that it will poison you?" I inquired.

"No," he replied, "the captain told me that they were perfectly harmless."

"Ugly as sin though," I commented.

It was flat in shape, with its rough skin covered with regular coloring of grey and dark brown. Above the eyes were two little horns and the center edge of its skin had saw-like indentations. Its belly was flat and of a whitish color.

"Now watch him catch this fly," said Jim.

The unsuspecting fly was crawling on Jim's hand. The horned toad was as quiet as immobile stone. Mr. Fly came along within a few inches of the toad. Then out flashed a little narrow wisp of red tongue and the fly disappeared.

"One strike and in," said Jim, proud of his new pet. "You see he is just about the color of the earth so that he can't be seen; all he has to do is to keep still and his game comes to him."

Then Jim slipped the horned toad into his pocket. The sun had now sunk down behind the distant Sierra. Above it glowed a few gold bars of clouds. In the east was a broad band of blue with a crimson veiling above it.

This pomp always accompanies a desert sunrise or sunset.

"The Indians are going to make camp," Jim announced.

It was true, they had stopped near two hills a couple of miles west of the mesa, where there was a growth of a few stunted trees. The braves slid from their ponies and turned them loose to graze, while the squaws busied themselves gathering wood. The children scampered around free as wild colts and playing as children will whether they are Indian or white.

"There must be a hundred of them anyway," said Tom.

"About the number that had us corraled back in those mountains," I said.

This was the first time that we had seen a family party of Indians and it was an interesting sight.

"It is time we made our own camp," said Jim.

So we backed slowly from the edge of the mesa, keeping under shelter of the brush, until we were far enough away not to be seen, then we stood up and made our way to the deserted village.

"I'm not going to sleep in that house," I declared, "and have a tarantula crawl out and grab me."

"Gee, but you are particular," said Jim, "anyway we can cook our food in one of these houses, so that the Indians down there won't see the smoke."

So we prepared a meal inside of a house for the first time since we had left the captain's cabin on the plateau. If anyone had told us that we were going to have supper in a house on top of a mesa in New Mexico we would have thought they were crazy. But strange things happen in a strange country.

After supper we prepared to turn in or turn out rather, because we were not going to sleep in the house.

"Let's go over to the other side first," said Jim, "and have a look at the Indian camp."

This we did. And it gave us a strange sensation, standing near the edge of the mesa with nothing but the void darkness below us for hundreds of feet.

It was a picturesque sight, to see the Indian fires making little spots of flame out on the plain. Sometimes faint sounds come from their direction borne on the evening wind. Overhead the innumerable stars were shining with sparkling clearness. The night seemed to be filled with the vague whispering of the wind.

As we turned back to the dead village the wind rose; at first it came in gusts and then it blew in steady and ever increasing volume, until it rose to the fierceness of a gale.

Not a cloud was visible, it came from perfect clearness and it seemed to have more power than if it had been accompanied with rolling clouds. The gravel blew across the mesa, cutting our faces.

"Are we going to have a cyclone?" inquired Tom, anxiously, yelling into Jim's ear.

"No!" he yelled back. "This country is too broken. It couldn't get started before it's busted."

"We can't sleep here to-night," declared Tom, "we will be blown away."

By this time we had reached the shelter of the village. It seemed uncannily quiet and dead within its walls.

"We can sleep here in the court yard," I said, "and we will be protected from the wind."

"All right," replied Jim, "it's funny to have the horses inside the houses and we out."

We made a comfortable bed on the ground of the courtyard with brush that we had cut on the outer mesa. Jim made use of his Indian blanket and said that it was all right.

In a short time Jim and Tom were sound asleep and their snoring rivaled the wind, but I could not sleep. I was very restless and I turned and tossed.

Overhead the stars were shining and the wind whistled and roared over the silent roofs around us. I kept listening for every sound. But after awhile I dropped off into a troubled doze. Then I heard a rustling near my ear. It was crawling

towards me in the darkness. A tarantula coming straight for my face. I flung out one desperate hand and struck a horny object. It was Jim's horned toad.

Thoroughly awake I threw off the blankets and stood up looking around. The wind was still keeping up its furious gait and the sky was clear. I judged it was about midnight.

It was a weird situation with those silent deserted houses all around and the gaping blackness of the doors and windows. I moved cautiously towards the center of the court. Then I stopped short. A long, pale face was in the upper part of a dark door. I saw it with perfect distinctness. Then it moved or rather moved slowly from side to side.

"Coyote, you rascal! What are you looking at!" I exclaimed, in decided relief.

I could not sleep so I sat down on a rude box in the court yard listening to the wind, my rifle across my knees. If ever a place seemed haunted this Pueblo village did at that hour.

CHAPTER XV

THE STRANGE COUNTRY

There is a chill isolation about a high wind in the desert, even though the wind be warm. It seemed to me as I sat there I could hear strange voices in the vacant houses. It was the wind no doubt, but the loneliness of the situation made them authentic.

As I watched in the darkness of the court yard, I saw a grey patch against the opposite wall. My eyes seemed drawn to it, then I saw it move. I scarcely breathed. It stopped for a moment, apparently listening, then it came forward again at a level of two or three feet from the ground.

I raised my rifle to fire, but something held me back. I now made out a dark object, too, behind the grey. It was creeping towards where the boys were sleeping. I tried to yell but my voice was just a squeak.

Just then a night bird swept low into the court, gave a shrill cry, then away over the roofs. Jim sat up wide awake and none too soon, for I saw the object rush forward with one hand upraised to strike.

"Get out of here," Jim's big voice bellowed out.

The old Indian woman, for such it was, shrank down muttering and then slowly retreated backward to the wall.

"Where's Jo?" cried Jim, in alarm.

This released the spell I was under and I got up and came over to where Jim and Tom were.

"What are you doing wandering around, this time of night, Jo?" Jim asked.

"I couldn't sleep and your old horned toad tried to cuddle up to me and I thought it was a tarantula," I replied.

"Gee! but I bet it scared you. What did you do with him?"

"I let out with my hand and sent him flying," I replied.

"I hope you didn't kill him," Jim said. "Then I suppose you decided to sit up for the rest of the night."

"It is just as well I did sit up," I said, "or that old hag might have scalped me. Where is she?"

"Creeping up behind you," replied Jim, "look out."

I turned like a flash, but saw nothing. It was simply Jim's superfluous sense of humor. However, she had disappeared.

"Well, I'm going to finish my siesta," said Jim, turning into his blankets again, but I knew that it was no use; so I sat up the balance of the night.

"Be sure and whistle if you see her old nibs coming again," said Jim.

In a few minutes he was fast asleep. Fortunately it was not so very long before the faint light of dawn showed in the eastern sky and I woke the boys up. It gave me a good deal of pleasure to do so because it did not please them and I had grown tired of being all alone in the world.

"You might let a fellow sleep a little longer," growled Tom.

"You would get hide-bound if I would let you," I said. "I wonder if those Indians have gone, because we can't start until they are out of sight."

"We will go over and look," said Jim, "while Tom gets the breakfast."

Tom growled some more, but he was in a minority. So Jim and I crossed the mesa, and taking to cover, we looked out over the plain. They were just breaking camp and we could hear their voices borne on the wind.

It was an interesting and animated sight as they caught their ponies and took short dashes about the plains, going through different tricks with remarkable celerity.

"They will be well started before we are ready," said Jim as we made our way back to the camp in the village.

"I thought this wind would go down with sunrise, but it whoops it up just the same," I said.

"You can't judge this country by any other," said Jim. "This is certainly a great wind, it just takes you by the seat of your pants and makes you walk Spanish."

"I'm glad you got back this morning," said Tom, "because there has been an awful row in the roof house above here. I think it was the old lady."

"We'll go up and see," said Jim.

So the committee of investigation proceeded up the ladder to find out the source of the trouble. Jim was the first to enter the door. He stopped and looked toward the corner, shaking his head. We could just see a huddled figure.

"She's dead, stone dead," said Jim.

It was true. On a closer view we saw that she sat there, staring with her sightless eyes, seeming to threaten even in death. I could not help but feel that she might spring up at any moment.

"Do you think that we ought to bury her?" asked Tom.

"No, no," Jim shook his head. "The Indians don't bury their dead, and in this dry air she will be kept like a mummy. Come on, it's time we were moving."

We took one more observation and found that the Indians were well on their way to the southeast and could not see us as we came down the trail.

"I'm glad this wind doesn't come from the other way," I said. "It would blow us off."

"You are a bright one," remarked Tom. "If the wind came from the other side, wouldn't the mesa protect us? It could not blow through it, that's sure."

"You just want to argue," I said. "I'm not going to pay any attention to you."

"Wouldn't it be funny if this wind should flatten us into the rock? It almost blows hard enough to. Wouldn't it puzzle these scientific fellars if they should find a living representation of Tommy in the wall of the mesa? They would sure take him for something prehistoric."

"They would probably think you were an aboriginal monkey," replied Tom bitterly.

"I'm going to walk," I said, after we had safely gotten over Jim's bridge of poles. "This is too steep for me."

Jim and Tom followed suit, because it was too hard on the ponies. We made

good time going down and were soon on the plain below the mesa.

Taking up our trail we made our way west.

"All aboard for the Colorado River," cried Jim. "No fooling this time."

We had to shout at each other, for the wind was blowing fiercely and the ground between the bunches of grass was brushed clear as a floor, while the gravel was blown up around the roots of the dwarf bushes.

We jogged along in the teeth of the wind, making our usual time. When we were several miles out from the mesa, I turned and looked to the southeast.

The party of Indians were on a low rise several miles distant as we came out of the shelter of the high plateau. They caught sight of us and we saw a number of braves separate from the main body and gallop out in our direction.

"We'll soon shake them," said Jim, "and not half try."

So we started our ponies on the run and they were feeling decidedly like a sprint. In two miles we passed around the corner of a high butte, and Jim flung himself off from Piute and ran back to watch the effect on the Indians of our disappearance.

"It's all over," said Jim, waving his hands down, "they've quit."

"I was afraid our horses would get tired going against the wind," said Tom, "but it didn't seem to feaze them."

"You couldn't stop these bronchos with a meat axe," said Jim.

"Hello," I said, "the wind has quit as well as the Indians. Don't it seem quiet though?"

It certainly did. It was surprising how quickly the wind had ceased, just as abruptly as it had started in.

Late in the afternoon we came into closer touch with the desert scenery. We rode over the ridge of a long divide and below us, several miles distant, rose a marvelous outline of red towers and turrets and a great castle mass rising in the midst; also of the prevailing color.

In the background stood a great mesa, with dark green walls, possibly of sandstone or granite.

"Did you ever see anything like that?" said Jim. "If that had been built by men it could not be more like a castle. Every detail is as sharp and distinct as though it had been carved."

"It doesn't look so much like a castle to me," I said, "but it is more like a big cathedral with those two square towers."

"What coloring!" said Tom. "It's perfectly rich. I never imagined a red like that."

"It will be a good place to camp down there," said Jim.

"How about water?" I asked. "We've got to find some, it's been a throat drying day."

"It looks to me that there is a stream running along the base of those cliffs," remarked Jim.

It was a correct guess. It was true the stream was not very large, but it was much appreciated.

"This is the first creek we have seen running in this direction," said Jim. "It means that we will soon be at the Colorado River."

After we had made our camp, we started over towards the great vermilion cliffs and found the formation just as interesting at close quarters as in the distance. We had never seen anything as sharp-cut and symmetrically carved as the buttes and pinnacles that rose around us.

"I wish we had time to stop here," said Jim, "I would like to take a pick and make an exploration of these cliffs, but I said before that we would have no more picnics and I meant it."

CHAPTER XVI

THE RIVER

We now traveled for a week in a northwest direction, going through a country very much like what we had been passing through, except the last three days.

During this time we went into the mountains again, following a northward trending valley. The mountains were a much lower range than the Rocky Mountains of Colorado and New Mexico.

One day, about noon, as we were riding along this valley, Jim disappeared around a turn in the trail and we heard him give a yell.

I was frightened, thinking that he had been hurt, and putting the spurs into Coyote, I dashed after him. Rounding the corner I saw what had drawn the yell.

Below us in a transverse valley we caught sight of a glittering section of the river. At last! We took off our hats in a silent salute. Then pressed on to cover the intervening miles as fast as we could.

"That isn't the Colorado yet, Jim?" questioned Tom.

"No, that is the Green River," he replied. "We will come to the Colorado after the Grand and Green meet, that form it."

After a while we reached the level mouth of the valley, where it joined the valley of the Green. We galloped rapidly to see who would be the first to reach the river. Jim and I reached the edge simultaneously.

We threw ourselves from our ponies, but Jim was a little the quickest and he plunged down the bank and into the river.

But our first experience showed us that it was not to be trifled with, for a swift current in shore carried Jim down and if he had not caught an overhanging bush, he would have been taken out into the river and drowned.

"It certainly is a river," exclaimed Tom, "but why do they call it Green when it is brown?"

"Probably it is green further north," answered Jim. "It depends on the color of the strata it flows through."

"Get out," I said, "this river was called Green after the man who discovered it. I read it in a book in the captain's cabin on the plateau."

"I don't care," said Jim, who was apt to be dogmatic when cornered. "My idea is the most reasonable and I bet everybody in the U. S. thinks it's green because of its color. It must be inconvenient to know so much."

"It is," I replied hotly, "when you have to associate with an ignoramous all the time."

"Come on, boys, let's have a swim and cool off," suggested Tom.

"Better make camp first," said Jim.

We found a good place back a ways from the river in a grove of old cottonwoods. Having made everything snug and shipshape we ran down to the river, but further up from the point where Jim plunged in.

Here the stream came in gently in a wide curve and there was quite a stretch of sandy beach.

"I tell you, this is fine," cried Jim, as he began to peel off his clothes. "I'm in first. Haven't had a bath for a month."

"You look it," I commented.

Tom and I got out of our few garments in short order. I was the quickest and beat Jim to the water by about five feet as I splashed in. It made me yell.

"Gosh, but she's cold," I cried, making the water fly as I plunged under.

"Gee whiz," yelled Tom, as he stepped gingerly in. "I should say it was cold. Talk about ice water!"

"Don't talk! get under!" cried Jim.

And he gave Tom a tremendous shove in the back that sent him with a sprawling splash into the water. Tom sputtered angrily and Jim soused him under.

There was a big rock out a ways on the edge of the current. It was a great wedge rock of granite, ten feet broad and twenty-five feet in length.

"I dare you to swim out there," challenged Jim.

"All right," I assented.

I was really a fine swimmer, better than Jim, though not so daring. This was a dangerous proposition. Jim went first, going up stream a ways, then he sprang out into the river.

In a minute we saw what a foolhardy attempt it was. The current caught him and sped him along like a straw. We could see his black head as it bobbed along down stream, now and then submerged by a wave that seemed to us a mere ripple.

He struggled valiantly to strike across the current, for he must reach the rock or be carried down the river to sure death. We looked on in fascinated terror.

Nothing but his extraordinary strength saved Jim at this juncture. As he was being dashed past the rock he threw out one hand and grasped the edge of it, then the water slammed him against it with great force.

For the moment he seemed stunned, but he clung to the rock as the player in a big game does to the ball as he goes over the line.

"Hold on, Jim, tight," we yelled.

We saw his muscles strain as he pulled himself slowly out of the hungry water. Then he reached the inclined surface of the rock and fell forward, all curled up like a man who is knocked out on the football field.

We were pretty well frightened and Tom thought he was done for, but I felt sure that Jim would come around in a few minutes. We did not have to wait long before Jim sat up. He gave his head a shake and was himself again.

"Don't try it," he yelled to us. "You can't monkey with this river."

He need not have warned us, for neither one of us was likely to try the experiment. How was Jim to get off that rock? was the question. It was impossible for him to take to the stream again, nor was the rock a desirable permanent residence.

In a minute Jim began to dance around on the rock, and we thought at first it was his exuberant spirits. But this was not the case.

"Gee, boys!" he yelled. "This rock is hot, get me off quick before I become a cinder. What are you waiting for? Get me a rope."

Why had I not thought of that before? I jumped out of the river and made a full speed trip to the camp. The sight was a great shock to Coyote and Piute, and they jumped to one side, snorting and visibly affrighted.

I got the rope and made a flying return trip to the river. I soon made a lasso loop and stood poised on the bank, directly opposite Jim, ready for the throw.

"You stand still now and I bet that I will lasso you," I cried.

This accomplishment the captain had taught us and sometimes it came in handy. So I wheeled the loop around my head several times and sent it whirling out over the river. It struck the rock all right, but would have fallen short if Jim had not caught it.

"Pretty good for a first throw," yelled Jim.

"Now, Robinson Crusoe, fasten it around your chest and under your shoulders," were my shouted instructions.

Jim did this and it left his arms free. Tom and I now took the rope and went up the river a ways to the beach. Tom stood on the bank well braced, while I went out in the river as far as I could and have a good foothold.

"Are you rested enough to try?" I yelled to Jim.

"Sure," he replied. "Are you ready?"

"Ready," I shouted.

Jim stood poised on the edge of the rock, then with a spring he launched upstream as far as he could. I drew in the slack as quickly as possible, then I felt the force of the current as it clutched at Jim. It pulled like a powerful runaway horse.

It almost drew us down the river; if Jim had not been able to help himself we would never have made it. But with the rope to give him confidence he fought strongly against the current.

It certainly tested our strength to the utmost. But the sinewy arms that I had acquired and the knotted muscles at the back again stood us in good stead.

I was aroused to the limit, and with a last powerful pull, we got Jim into shallow water and carried him to the little beach, for he was about all in, having shipped considerable water.

We worked his arms and rolled him in the most approved fashion and he soon came around, but he was perfectly willing to lie for awhile on the warm sand. As we worked there we talked over Jim's escapade.

"This will be the last time I'll fool with that river," said Jim ruefully. "It was just by luck that it did not send me down by the underground route."

"You're a pretty game fish to land," I said.

"You branded me under the arms all right with that rope," he said.

"It did raise quite a welt," remarked Tom. "I guess Jo thought you were a maverick when he lassoed you."

"You fellows look like white men now," said Jim, "since you've had a bath."

"It seemed mighty good to get to plenty of water," I said, "after coming through the desert."

"We'll be tired of water before we get through with this river," remarked Tom.

"It's the trip for me," said Jim cheerfully. "Do you know what it means, boys, to tackle a stream like this that hasn't been navigated except by two parties since the world began?"

CHAPTER XVII

BEGINNING THE BOAT

After we had got thoroughly rested, Jim from being rescued and Tom and I from doing the rescuing act, we went back to our camp.

"It's rather nice," remarked Jim, "to camp under cottonwoods after having nothing but pines over us, or the sky."

"It does seem sort of civilized," said Tom. "This is one of the nicest places we have struck. Just the kind for a picnic."

The broad-leaved trees were over our heads, and there was an open space amongst them for our camp. The trees were old, and some with bent trunks on which we could sit and swing our feet. After the wide and lonely extent of plains that we had been journeying over, our camp among the trees seemed a cosy shelter.

But as evening came on our enthusiasm received a severe jolt, for swarms of mosquitoes came in from the levels between the two streams. We began to slap around our ears in frantic efforts at self-protection.

"Does this remind you of anything?" asked Tom.

"You bet it does," said Jim. "It was way back in Kansas where they came near eating us alive. I know when I tried to take aim at some ducks they settled so thick on the gun that I could not see the sight."

"Yes, I recollect building a smudge back of black Carl and setting his tail afire, too," I put in.

"We won't stay any longer around here than we have to," said Jim.

"How long do you suppose before we will be ready to start down the river?" I asked.

"We will get to work to-morrow," said Jim, "and we won't waste any time. It would not surprise me if we were ready to launch out after two days."

The reader will wonder what we will do now that the river is reached. Of course we had no boats with us and there was no place within five hundred miles where we could have them made. Nor did we have the materials wherewith to construct a boat.

As to our ponies we had no other course than to leave them at this point. We could not take them with us because we did not expect to build a Noah's ark. If we had been in striking distance of a settlement, Jim would have taken the horses and sold them.

However, we would not be out anything, as the ponies had cost us nothing, as we had captured them from the Indians, but we regretted having to leave our faithful companions who had once saved our lives when we were in desperate straits.

Of course we had not come so far without some definite plan of action when we struck the river.

"I don't think we could have reached the Green at a better point than this," said Jim, "because we have different kinds of trees to make a raft."

"It's a pity we couldn't have a boat," I said. "It would be so much easier to manage than a raft, and it would make better time."

"I don't know as it would be any safer," remarked Jim. "You could stove in a boat on one of those sharp rocks, but it would take something worse than that to break up a solid raft."

"If we are going to get up so early, we might just as well turn in now," said Tom.

"It will be a good way to keep off the mosquitoes," I said.

But we soon found that these pests were very persistent and kept serenading around our ears and settling on any exposed parts of our anatomy, so that we had to keep our head ducked down under the blankets, and thus curled up, we were soon fast asleep.

It was not uncomfortably warm, either, as there was a nip in the air that made the blankets seem all right. We slept a little later than was usual with us, for the deep shade of the trees shut out the rays of the sun, and it was a half hour before Jim roused us.

"Get up, boys, or we will miss our train," he cried, and he rolled us out of our

blankets onto the ground.

We did not resent this, as it saved us the trouble of unrolling ourselves. It did not take us long to stow our breakfast away in the hatches and then, with an eager vim, we sprang to our work.

We had packed the necessary supplies and tools to help us in constructing a raft. We each had an axe. There were also big spikes and several sizes of nails. We had plenty of these. Jim led the way to the slope of the valley, just above our camp, where grew the tall pines and in a few minutes there was the ring of the axes as we jumped into the work, each anxious to get his tree down before the other.

It was jolly work as I made the big yellow chips fly, and swinging into the stroke with all the weight of my body, poised from the toes.

Jim and Tom stood squarely on their feet and struck in only with the weight of their shoulders, and as they sent in their blows with greater rapidity, it looked as if they would surely beat me out. But it was like a bad stroke in rowing, and was hard on their wind and taxed their strength.

"Oh, you're slow," grinned Jim with a gleam of his white teeth as he glanced over his shoulder at me. "I'll have this fellow down before you are half through."

My only reply was to send another blow with precision and a big, perfectly blocked chip flew into the air and came down on Jim's back. It was my turn to grin. "They laugh best who laugh last."

It was true that Jim's first tree came down a few seconds ahead of mine, but after that I beat him easily, no matter how hard he struggled.

Oh, I tell you, it was great work, cheerful and invigorating in that resin fragrant air. We soon stripped off our shirts and, bareheaded, we swung out glittering axes into the trunks of the pines.

I don't think that any of the old knights used their great battle axes against the gates of beleaguered cities or on each other's iron top knots with any more enthusiasm than we three boys did as we slew the pines. I imagined that I was Ivanhoe or Richard C[oe]ur de Lion and this added more vigor to my blows.

I think it would have pleased our old physical director if he could have seen the muscles on our arms and back and shoulders. Jim, long and rangy, Tom

somewhat lighter, but with clear cut development, making for agility, while I was rather lithe, with symmetrical muscles and of tireless activity. It was a pretty strong, three-stand combination.

After the trees were cut and trimmed, the next thing was to get them down to the beach where the raft was to be constructed. Of course we had felled them as near the selected place as possible. Jim decided to press Coyote and Piute into service for snaking the logs down. Then there was something doing every minute, like in a three-ringed circus.

Jim fixed up a crude harness out of the ropes and hitched our broncho team onto the first log. They bucked and reared and kicked. Sometimes they varied matters by falling over backwards. We let into them with the whips, that is Tom and I did, while Jim held the ribbons or ropes.

Finally they started to run and the log went snaking down the slope, but in a minute they came to an abrupt stop, turning an unexpected somersault. But after an hour of gymnastics and acrobatics they settled into the harness like respectable animals.

After awhile we put Tom to work cutting saplings of cottonwood and quaking aspens. These were to be used for cross pieces to hold the raft together.

We had all the material gathered at the beach by the middle of the afternoon and we went to work to construct the raft. There was nothing so extremely difficult about it, but there was lots of hard work and it was not such a simple matter as making a raft to float on some quiet pond or down a gentle river.

There were some tough questions which came up and it took all of Jim's craft and strength to settle them, and Tom's ingenuity backed Jim up. The very weight of our boat was a problem, but three strong boys buckling into a job of that kind can make pretty good progress.

You can imagine how anxious we were to start on our dangerous and memorable journey. The call of the river was continually in our ears, and we would look way down the stretch of water and wonder what lay ahead of us in that far and mysterious land surrounded with weird plateaus and strange ranges.

"I'm going to put a keel on our craft," said Jim. "That will be the only way to keep her to the current."

"I'd like to know where you will find it?" I asked.

"Don't you worry about that," replied Jim. "I'll locate it all right. You fellows rest while I look around."

"I don't need a rest," I answered. "You lay out some work for us while you are scouting around."

Jim stood with his boot upon one log and his hand on his knee, supporting his chin. His eyes had a dull glaze and from this symptom and his attitude, I want you to know that Jim was cogitating, and it was a subject worth thinking about, too, for it was of great importance that we should have a raft that would meet the requirements of the river.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BUILDING OF THE BOAT

"All right, Jo," said Jim, "I'll give you a contract that you can work on until sunset."

He looked over our bunch of logs carefully and picked out the three largest and finest.

"You can begin on these," he said. "Take the adzes and the axes and go to work and hollow them out."

"What for?" I asked.

"You will see later," he replied. "Try to think it out for yourselves."

Then he took himself off and we went busily to work. We certainly had our task cut out for us.

"What do you suppose Jim is after?" I asked. "Perhaps he is going to have us hollow out a canoe apiece and go sailing down the Colorado to see who will reach the end or get drowned first."

"Maybe he thinks that it will make the logs more buoyant and they will float higher if they are hollow," suggested Tom.

"It will take us a month or more to finish all these logs," I grumbled.

"What shape do you suppose the raft will be?" Tom inquired.

"Something like this," I said, taking my index finger and drawing a square in the sand. Tom shook his head.

"That would be too clumsy," he said, "and it would be striking on every rock and would be terribly hard to steer."

"What's your idea?" I asked.

"Instead of having it square, I would have it this shape," he answered. And he

drew an oblong figure in the sand while I looked on.

"Yes," I said, "and if it ever swung sideways to the current it would dam the river besides spilling us out."

"I would have a long steering oar on the stern and that would keep her head to the current," he replied.

"Yes, you would have a jolly time where there was cross currents. It would take about ten horse power to steer it."

"It's a lot better than yours," he said.

No doubt that was correct enough, but I did not take any pride in my ability as a ship constructor. Jim was yet to be heard from. And doubtless he would have improvements on both our designs. There was no question but there was room for them.

We went to work again at our task of hollowing the logs. We went at it fiercely because we wanted to accomplish something before dark. It was almost sunset now. Then we heard Jim's voice.

"Gee! Haw! Buck! Get up, Piute! Coyote!"

"By Jove, he's snaking down a big timber with our old plugs. Where do you suppose he got it?" exclaimed Tom.

"Swiped it from our next neighbors," I suggested. "It must have been part of the foundation, from the size of it."

"Hey, Jim, where did you corner that?" Tom yelled.

Jim did not deign to reply until he had brought the big timber alongside of the other logs.

"I captured that over there on the other side of the valley," he informed us proudly but indefinitely.

"Where did it come from?" I inquired.

"From some of the Union Pacific bridges, about six hundred miles above here," he replied. "Some flood brought it down."

"It's a fine stringer," I commented.

"There's any quantity of good stuff in the drift over there," Jim said, "boards and about everything else we need to make our old raft shipshape. It's time to knock off work, boys, now; you have made a good start on those logs."

"I'm going to wash off," I declared.

The rest followed my example. It was a close, hot evening and it felt mighty refreshing to get into the river, for we had put in a hard day's work and were dirty and sweaty, though we were not especially tired.

"Why don't you swim over to that rock, Jim?" I asked.

"Not for me," he said, shaking his head. "I know when I have had enough."

We did not stay in the water long and in a short time we were seated in camp, and with ravenous appetites were attacking our supper, our heads still wet and our faces shining red from the water and the sun.

We were just tired enough to enjoy sitting on the old bent cottonwood, swinging our feet. You know how you feel if you have been tramping all day or working in the fields, and after a good clean up, sit down to a square meal.

We were in high spirits as we had made a good start or rather laid a basis for our work. We certainly felt sturdy and adequate enough for anything. There is a peculiar feeling of strength that comes to one after a day of muscular exercise and we had had that all right.

"What are you going to do with that big stick, Jim?" I asked.

"That goes for the keel," he answered.

"You are not going to build a boat, are you?" I inquired.

"No," replied Jim, "but even with a raft you will have to have something to keep her in the current."

We got into our blankets quite early and slept like logs, with never a thought of mosquitoes or anything else. A mountain lion might have crept down and yanked one of us off and the other two would not have been the wiser.

Jim got us out the next morning before the sun was up and we were down at the beach working like beavers. I tell you it was a busy scene.

Tom and I, with axes and adzes, hollowing out the two logs. Jim went to work on

his stringer, shaping it up and also digging it out after he had made some measurements of the log I was working on.

When night came, after we had put in twelve hours' steady toil I felt discouraged. It did not seem that we had accomplished much, but Jim was cheerful.

The following morning, however, after a refreshing night's sleep, it looked much more hopeful as I stood on the beach looking over what had been accomplished on the two previous days.

Jim's plans began to shape themselves and we saw what our new craft was to be like. His design was far superior to what we had planned. The groundwork was three of the longest and largest logs.

The bow was three feet across, the end of the logs being trimmed and shaped together. The stern was made by the spread of the logs and was at least six feet across. This end was also shaped up so as to offer as little surface to the current as possible.

The logs were held together by heavy planking that we had recovered from the drift. These were spiked to the logs. Before this was done Jim had fixed his heavy keel to the middle log.

He had hollowed it to the shape of the log so that it fitted to it and made it as much like a boat keel as possible. It was pretty well water soaked and half as heavy as iron.

"How are you ever going to launch this craft?" I inquired. "She will be sure to weigh a ton."

"We will come to that in a couple of days," replied Jim.

The crucial time came and we went to work to get the raft into the stream. We were aided by the fact that it had been purposely put together near a steep slope into the river.

By means of the leverage of long poles and blocks we raised it up, and with smaller logs placed underneath we rolled it down into the stream.

"Hurrah!" yelled Jim. "She floats like a duck."

It was a jubilant moment for us. We had worked hard and carefully, and it was worth while.

It was a quiet stretch of water in the bend, but we took extra precautions and had strong ropes at each end fastened to heavy rocks on the shore. Jim had also selected a very heavy well-shaped stone, and we used this for an anchor at the stern.

"It's taken us a full week to get her launched," said Jim, "but before we are through with this river we will be mighty glad that the old tub is so strong and shipshape."

We now executed a dance on her main deck, which was more remarkable for action than for grace.

"She's steady as an old rock," I said. "What shall we call her?"

"The Juanita," suggested Tom, who was always something of a gallant.

"Call her 'The Colorado,'" I suggested.

"Hold on," cried Jim, "I know a better one than that. We ought to remember our old friend. Call her 'The Captain.'"

"The Captain," we cried in chorus, raising our hands in military salute. So our boat was named and well named.

"We ought to finish the superstructure in three days," said Jim. "You would have thought it was an ocean liner to hear Jim talk.

"And the oars," I said.

"Yes and the cabin," put in Jim. "Of course," he said, smiting his chest, "the commodore must have a cabin and we want a place where we can store things and keep them dry."

"She will look like quite a boat," said Tom. "I suppose you will want to rig up a sail, too?"

"Never mind about the sail now, Tom," said our new commodore with dignity. "You landlubbers can go ashore, I'm going to sleep abroad."

Tom and I decided that we preferred to be on *terra firma* as we were more used to it, so we slept in camp, leaving Jim on his beloved yacht.

CHAPTER XIX

WE START

The next few days were as busy as the preceding ones, except that the work was not as heavy.

When we went down to the river in the morning we found Jim busily at work. He was bending over, driving a nail in a board on the side and I struck him fairly with a carefully aimed clod of earth.

"Hello, commodore, how are you this morning?" I inquired. "Were you seasick last night?"

"What do you beach combers want?" asked the commodore severely. "I haven't anything for you to eat."

"We want work," said Tom.

"Come aboard and I'll give you all you want," was the reply.

"Did she hold all right last night, Jim?" I asked.

"Steady as a scow," he replied.

"What are you going to do to-day?" Tom inquired.

"You and Jo can work on the side boards," he replied, "and I will make the oars."

So we went cheerily about our work, feeling that in another day we would finish the job.

"How many miles do you suppose we will make a day?" I asked.

"That depends on the current," replied Jim. "The captain said that an old trapper told him that in some places the river went over twenty miles an hour."

"That's as fast as some trains," Tom said.

"Of course it averages much below that," continued Jim, "Probably it is going ten miles by here."

"We ought to make a hundred miles a day in some places, then," I said.

"You can't tell; sometimes we will have to walk," responded Jim.

"Walk!" exclaimed Tom. "How's that?"

"Well, climb would be the better word," he explained, "because we will come to rapids, where we will have to let it down by ropes while we are climbing along the cliffs."

"You might just as well try to hold a dozen runaway horses as that boat going down a steep rapid," protested Tom.

"That's so," said Jim and his face clouded as he thought it over. "Never mind, I'll back this craft to go through. 'The Captain' is no egg shell of a boat. All we will have to do is to hold on. You can't sink her and I tell you she's put together to stay."

"How do you think she will act in the current, being so much broader in the beam than at the bow?" asked Tom.

"You see if she isn't easier to steer than a flat bottomed scow," said Jim. "The way she is cut under fore and aft will help a whole lot. Then the logs being hollowed out makes her more buoyant."

The evening of the third day after this conversation found us ready to embark the next morning. All our supplies were aboard. What was perishable we had put in the deck house which was a little aft of the center.

It was made as near water tight as possible. The cracks between the boards we had filled in with pitch taken from the pine trees. In this house we stored our provisions, which we had put into boxes that we had made from boards that had come down in the drift.

Our axes and other carpenter tools were fixed securely by strips of leather into which the blades and handles fitted. Nothing was left to roll around at hazard.

We knew to a certainty that we would have fierce rapids to run and sometimes we would be awash from stern to stern. Our rifles had places fixed for them on the outside of the deck house, which was covered with tarpaulin to make it as completely water-tight as possible.

Now everything was finished and we stood surveying our boat with pardonable

pride. It had taken nearly two weeks of unremitting toil, some of the working days being twelve and fourteen hours even. But it was worth it all. It gave us a sense of fitness and security for the perilous trip that we were to start on in the morning.

"'The Captain' looks like a man of war with all those glittering axes and other weapons. We ought to go out on the Spanish main."

"If she lines up to her name she will be a man of war," said Jim. "I wish it were morning so we could start. Let's have supper aboard anyway."

This was agreed on, and we soon had a fire built on the beach, and the blue smoke rising in a slender column through the absolutely still air.

Jim slept aboard, but Tom and I decided that it was softer on the sand, so we rolled into our blankets and with the sound of the river in our ears, as it rolled its volume into a narrow ravine below, we were soon asleep.

A shrill whistle woke us up.

"All aboard, steam's up," cried Jim.

It did not take us a second to wake up to the glad realization that this was the day we started. It beat all the holidays rolled into one for genuine interest and excitement.

Full of life and health and young, with a marvelous and exciting trip just before us.

"Hurrah for 'The Captain'," yelled Jim.

"Hurrah for the Colorado," cheered Tom.

"Hurrah for us," I cried.

A brief breakfast and we were ready to cast off. We had to say good-bye to our ponies. It hurt us more, in a way, than if they had been human beings.

They did not seem to mind and the last we saw of them they were grazing peacefully in the meadow along the smaller stream. Tears were in Jim's eyes as he took a last look at Piute. I did not have such a deep affection for animals as Jim, though I thought a good deal of Coyote.

As the sun came up over the eastern height of the adjacent valley, we were ready

to start on our perilous trip.

"Now, shove her off," cried Jim. "Then to your oars."

Slowly we pushed her away from the bank, Jim at the stern, Tom amidship and I in the bow. In a second the current caught her and with a slight clip and rush we went down a little rapid, past the rock that Jim had swum to, and then out into the main current of the Green, and we were at last on our way to the Colorado.

For the first ten minutes nothing was said, for we had our hands full taking our first lesson from the river, and learning something of the ways of our boat.

I had the bow oar and Tom had the other oar just back of me on the opposite side, while Jim was at the stern with the big steering oar, which had taken him one day to make and half of another to put in place.

It was a mighty essential part of our equipment and Jim could guide her in good shape as he stood at the stern, bending it this way and that.

We found that we were able to fight the most capricious currents with Jim at the stern oar, and I pulling on one side and Tom backing water on the other.

Our first preliminary run was through a ravine, where the river was about two hundred feet wide. I had the most thrilling position in the bow, as I could see first what was ahead.

For the first three miles our course lay straight and the water swept steadily along with a tremendous power in it that made us feel our insignificance.

But at the end of the three miles the river narrowed to a gorge and I could hear the roar of rapids ahead, the first of many that we were to encounter.

It is impossible to describe the peculiar sensation of being dashed along helpless into something that we could not see, and the hazard of which we could not imagine. Judgment must be instantaneous and a single mistake meant destruction.

CHAPTER XX

OUR FIRST DAY

Jim depended on me very largely for his orders, as he had to give his whole attention to the steering oar.

"Now, Jo, watch sharp for rocks," he yelled.

I nodded my head. We were almost at the beginning of our first real canyon. It seemed like going into a cave full of hundreds of roaring lions. The white-grey rocks rose up for a thousand feet or more and there was no sunlight at the bottom of the canyon, only a cold, forbidding gloom.

We had no time to become frightened, there was always something to do, some quick decision to make, no time for backing out.

Then we shot down into the gloom of the canyon with resistless force. Never shall I forget that turmoil of sensation that was like the turmoil of the river around us.

About a hundred yards ahead a great rock divided the river. We were bearing down upon it.

"Starboard," I yelled, bending my head in the direction, and pulling with all my might, while Tom backed water and I could see the bow swerve as Jim bent to the steering oar.

Then we swept sideways from the rack. I thought we were going to be sent square over, flopped like a pancake.

We were on a big slant and I could do nothing with my oar. We plunged down into the river and a swift current was bearing us straight to the precipitous wall as fast, it seemed to me, as an arrow from the bow.

I had not time to use my oar, so drew it in and picked up a long pole that we had for just such an emergency. Tom sprang back to help Jim at the steering oar, and their combined strength made the boat swerve. How they pulled! Double their ordinary strength. It told though.

I braced my feet against the sideboards, near the bow, and as we came slanting to the cliff I shoved against the rock with all my weight and might.

The water piled up against the side bow and I swerved it clear by a couple of feet, and with a mighty wrench at the steering oar, we swept by the precipice and out into the river again.

"A pretty close call," shouted Jim and Tom in chorus, and I agreed.

There was no time for rest and congratulation. The rapids humped themselves all around us, and we held a straight course amongst them. In a few minutes a greater peril than the one we had just passed through faced us.

We could see a line of foam that seemed to extend across the river. An anxious look came into Jim's face. It was the first time that I had seen him look worried.

It was a quarter of a mile away. There was no place for us to stop, nothing but the precipitous cliffs on either side. We had to decide on a course and quickly.

"Through the center," yelled Jim. "It's our only chance."

Then I saw a split boulder in mid-stream and the water passing through it. It did not look more than eight feet wide though it may have been ten.

We swept down towards it at race horse speed. There was a terrible roar of confused waters all around us. It depended on Jim, for we had to draw in our oars entirely, quite a distance before we reached the rock.

It seemed as if we were going into the jaws of destruction. One swerve and we would pile up against the rock and be rolled over and over to sure and certain death. Escape was impossible in that turbulent and terrible river, with its onrush of water.

As our oars were in, Tom jumped back to help Jim. I knelt in the bow waving my hands to direct them for my voice could not be heard. Jim, grim, with tense jaw and lips curled back as if he were snarling at the river that would cow him, guided her straight and true into the jaws of the dragon.

On a full tide of water we rushed between the rocks that seemed to dash by as do objects by an express train going at full speed, not a foot to spare on either side. Then we plunged like a shot down the streaked incline of foam sprinkled water into the river below.

I thought the bow was going clean under, and I ran back toward the stern. Talk about going down hill on a sled, this beat it altogether.

This was the proper move, because our combined weight in the stern, of nearly four hundred pounds, helped to keep the bow up some. But she shipped a good deal of water.

After sliding down hill for a half mile further we ran into quieter water, and within an hour we were out of the narrow canyon into an open and more sluggish current.

"Tom, you steer now for awhile!" commanded Jim. "It's easy, and Jo and I will bail."

"I bet you feel pretty well used up, Jim," I suggested. "It was terrible work for awhile."

"I'll feel it in my shoulders to-morrow, I reckon," he admitted. "But what do you think of that last sprint we made between the rocks? That was a 'la-la-peruso.'" This was Jim's ultimate term of expression; he never got higher than that and he used it but rarely.

"Think of it!" I exclaimed. "I don't want to think of it. It makes me dizzy even now. What luck to get through!"

Jim's face sobered for a moment.

"It was partly my steering and partly providential," he said. "Otherwise we would never have made it. I don't believe that we will strike anything worse in its way than that."

After we had finished bailing, Jim sat on the deck house looking over his boat with commendable pride.

"Well, boys, what do you think of 'The Captain?'" he asked. "She looks all right to me."

"She certainly is," I replied, "and she don't ship as much water as I expected."

"She rides light for such a boat, too, keeps her head well above water," remarked Jim, "but one thing has got to be done and that is to cut holes in the sides so the water will drain out quickly. Otherwise we will be carrying a good many more hundred pounds than we need to."

"You come and try your hand at steering, Jo," said Tom. "It's lots of fun."

"It's a shame to deprive you of the pleasure," I returned.

Still I had some curiosity to see how she steered, so after awhile I relieved Tom. It was interesting work where there were no especial obstructions, and the current was running broadly and smoothly as it was at this point.

"She steers fine, Jim," I said. "You can get a big purchase on this oar standing up."

"See how you can get around that rock ahead," he called.

I could see its grey back bulging up from the water ahead, and the foam bubbling around it. I bent to the oar, swinging the bow around, and went by the rock in good shape.

"She certainly answers the helm all right," I reported. "We can manage unless there is a string of rocks right across the stream."

"It will be easier as we go along," said Jim. "Not the river, of course, that will get worse, but we will understand it better, all its little curly-cues and cute little ways, like slambanging you into a cliff when you think that she is going to curve the other way."

In the early afternoon we ran into a broader canyon with great walls set back from the river and thickly dotted with pines.

The walls were magnificent, over two thousand feet in height, reaching in curves ahead of us, and curving down to the stream in bold promontories.

"By Jove, but this is a fascinating business," called Jim, as we approached a great curve in the canyon. "You never knew what is ahead the next minute."

"Yes," I replied, "it is, but there is an uncertainty about it that I don't like. How do we know but there may be a waterfall just around the corner there?"

"It may be rapids, but no waterfall," replied Jim. "You needn't expect any Niagara to loom up, because the parties who have been down here before would have discovered it and that would have been all that they would have discovered."

"I bet that this stream rises sometimes," interposed Tom. "Just look at that drift

caught up there on that cliff, that must be all of thirty feet."

"It isn't very low water now," said Jim, "which is lucky for us, for we would be knocked out pretty quick if we ran into a whole nest of rocks or at least we would get stalled."

"I reckon that only a light skiff could go down here in low water," said Tom.

"Yes," I replied, "but it would be stove in pretty quick if it should strike an outcrop of rock."

"I guess 'The Captain' is the boat for this business," commented Jim. "We will knock through with her somehow."

"More rapids," I cried, as we rounded the curve in the canyon.

Tom and I sprang to our oars, and in five minutes we were fighting our way through a bunch of foaming rocks, then down a bunchy descending current.

After a run of fifteen miles we came to a place where the river broadened into quietness, and ahead of us we saw a place where the waters rippled into a cove.

"There's the place to land," cried Jim.

CHAPTER XXI

A RIVER AMBUSH

We pulled diagonally across the river, and brought "The Captain" quietly alongside a gravelly shore that came down quite steep to the water.

"Let go your bow anchor there," commanded the commodore.

Splash went the heavy rock overboard with rope attached, and Jim let down the other anchor from the stern.

It seemed to me fine to be on land again. It was a relief to be out of the savage grip of the river, even for a little while.

"How far have we come to-day, Jim?" I asked.

"Between eighty and ninety miles, I reckon," he replied. "I feel as if I had rowed it myself. It gets into your shoulders handling that sweep."

"It's work, too, with the oars," I suggested. "We ought to be pretty powerful specimens by the time we have see-sawed down this river for a thousand miles or more."

"It's liable to make us muscle bound," declared Tom gloomily.

"Ho! ho! Tommy," cried Jim, slapping him on the shoulder. "You certainly are a lulu. Don't worry, you will never get muscle bound."

"But bound to get muscle," I put in.

"You needn't knock a fellow down," exclaimed Tom, wriggling his shoulder. "Might just as well be hit with a brick as have you pat me with that big hand of yours."

"It's good for you," said Jim. "Will make you tough."

"I've got too many things to make me tough," declared Tom. "We're plumb crazy to be tackling this river. It wasn't intended to be navigated."

"Perhaps not," responded Jim coolly, "but it is going to be navigated this time. I am going to fix our boat now so we won't have to bail when the waves come over."

So Jim went to work and in a short time he had cut three places on either side so that the water could drain through and back into the river.

While he was busy I went back of our camp with my shotgun, looking for game. At this point the walls bent back from the river for over a mile, and there was a growth of brush and of pine and cottonwood trees.

I had gone probably half a mile, when I saw a heavy bird rise from the brush ahead of me and light in a tree. It was too big for a grouse and I was puzzled to make it out.

Keeping cautiously out of sight I crawled up to within range, and, taking aim at a dark bunch among the branches, I fired and down it came kerplunk on the ground.

I ran quickly up, and to my surprise I saw that it was a fine turkey, a big gobbler. "My! won't this make the boys open their eyes and their mouths too," I mused to myself.

Picking up the turkey I continued hunting back towards the receding wall of the canyon. After a half hour's climb over rocks and through brush I came to a dark, narrow slit running westward through the wall of the canyon.

I decided not to go any further and perhaps it was just as well. Something made me turn around, and I took up the trail for the camp. I had not gone far before I knew that I was being watched and followed.

Once I caught sight of a stealthy figure crawling from bush to bush. I was not greatly concerned, for I did not think that the object of the Indian was an attack, but simply to stalk me, and find out my business.

When I reached camp, I found Tom and Jim busy getting supper. They glanced up as I approached. I had fastened the turkey behind me in my belt.

"You're a mighty hunter," jeered Jim. "Got nothing but exercise as usual."

"Just bad luck. I'm sorry, boys," I replied meekly.

"What's the use of being sorry?" growled Tom. "I'm tired of eating nothing but

jerked venison. I want a change of diet."

"You do, you old growler," I exclaimed. "Take that," and I swatted him over the head with the turkey.

Tom nearly fell over with the shock and the surprise of seeing a real turkey.

It was the first that we had seen since we had left the hospitable home of our friends the Hoskins, way back in Kansas.

"Thanksgiving has come!" cried Jim. "Where did you put salt on his tail?"

"He was roosting in a tree back there," I replied, "and I just naturally called him down."

"Glad you did," came from Tom. "We will soon have him ready for supper."

"That wasn't all I saw," I announced with an air of mystery.

"Dew tell," remarked Jim. "I hope it was cranberries."

"No, an Indian," I replied.

"Where is he?" inquired Jim.

"I didn't bring him in," I said. "I guess he's over there in the brush, looking at us now."

"Haw, haw!" exclaimed Jim, turning in the direction indicated. "Come in Lo, and have some turkey," he called.

But the Indian showed no inclination to come forward.

"Why didn't you shoot him?" asked Tom.

"I only had the shot gun," I replied, "and then he may belong to a friendly tribe."

"That's so," assented Jim. "We don't want to make enemies if we don't have to."

We slept that night without being disturbed, and the next morning we were ready to start while dusk was still in the canyon, though it had been morning for several hours upon the upper and outer earth.

"How do you feel, Jim?" I asked.

"All right," he replied. "I was a bit lame when I got up. You boys were still sleeping, so I took the gun and went back hunting for turkeys."

"What luck?" I asked.

"Look in the cabin," he replied.

"Three!" I exclaimed, "that's fine. They will last us four or five days."

"I found all three of them roosting on a limb," Jim said, "two the first barrel, and the other one the second."

We now made preparations to reëmbark. It did not take us long to weigh anchor and with a hearty shove we were headed down stream.

Jim was at the sweep and I had my position in the bow.

"It seems kind of home-like to be aboard again," announced Jim.

"It does that," I replied. "We understand our craft now, and feel sure she will take us through if we do our share."

This was true. Perhaps we did not have the enthusiasm with which we started, but we had a confidence in ourselves and in our boat that had come through dangers and difficulties, encountered and overcome.

I felt a thrill of competence and expectation go through me as I gripped the familiar handle of my oar and settled myself ready to pull hard when the time should come.

I did not have to wait long, for now we were going through a continuous canyon with great walls of red sandstone, two thousand feet in height. After running a succession of rapids, dodging boulders this way and that, we saw ahead of us the sharpest canyon curve we had yet met. It seemed that the canyon itself ended right there and that the water was piled upon the great red wall opposite.

If you want to get the idea in a miniature way, take a board, put it partially across some little stream and see how the water runs up on the board and curves around the end of it.

Pull as we would we could not overcome the force of the current that was carrying our boat towards the wall. It would have required superhuman strength to have turned our craft.

We struggled frantically and Jim bent the sweep till it seemed on the point of breaking. The best we could do was to modify the force of the current.

We bore down on the cliff like a shot, as if we were about to ram it. But we managed to swerve the boat somewhat, and we struck the rock a glancing blow that jarred our boat through and through.

The force of the impact sent me hard against the side of the boat.

How Jim kept his legs I do not know, but before I had time to struggle to my feet, we had rounded the curve and were taking a dizzying plunge down the current.

To you boys of these days, it was comparable only to shooting the chutes.

On the downward slant the experience was like that when a buggy goes around a curve on two wheels, almost tipping over.

Fortunately our boat did not capsize. I sprung and got my oar as we shot down into the boiling river.

There was no time to be frightened, only to act. A great rock rose squarely in our way.

We were rushing down on it with the speed of an express train.

Jim bent the sweep into the rushing tide of the river and I buckled to the oar. We grazed by and down the rapids we went.

We were becoming used to incidents like this and did not make much ado about them.

We had a clear sweep ahead of us, but very rapid. The walls widened some, with ledges and shelves above the water. I was the lookout in the bow when I saw a sight that caused me to yell to Jim:

"There's a whole lot of Indians on the cliff up there waiting for us."

"We can't stop," grinned Jim. "If they want to say anything they will have to telegraph."

This was correct, for we were being borne along on a current that was running fifteen miles an hour, if not more.

"Do you think they are hostile?" Tom inquired anxiously.

"It wouldn't surprise me a bit," I replied. "That Indian who trailed me last night probably was a scout, and has told his people that we were shooting the river and this is the reception committee."

"Take to the cabin, boys," commanded Jim, "if they commence to fire things. I'll steer."

CHAPTER XXII

THE ATTACK

We had only a couple of minutes for anticipation, for we were coming down like a runaway race-horse toward the narrow place in the chasm where they stood.

Jim swung the boat over to the middle of the stream to get the benefit of the fastest rapids, for it was speed just now that we needed more than anything else.

We might have steered in close to the wall under them, but there was a nasty "sag" that would have rendered us helpless, and when we did get into the current again we figured that we would lose headway and make a better target.

We could make out that there was great excitement among the Indians, on the ledge some four hundred feet above the stream. There was little doubt about their intentions now, and they were not of the peaceful variety.

One of them had a carbine which he aimed toward us, a little puff of smoke and then there was a flick in the water back of us.

Others stood with bows drawn back at full strength as they poised forward and let fly a snow storm of their white feathered darts.

Swish, swish they cut into the water all around us.

"It beats the hail storm way back in Kansas," yelled Jim.

Six or more of the arrows struck in the boat. One transfixed the top of the cabin. As if stung, our boat leaped forward down the rapid.

Now we were almost under the party of Indians. As I dodged into the cabin where Tom was already curled up, I saw them stand poised with stones, some grasping them above their heads with both hands. Then they hurled them down in a regular hail. The water splashed in white foam all around the boat and the spray dashed in all directions.

One large round stone struck the bow splintering a board. Several more fell crash on the deck. Two grazed Jim as he dodged, yet stuck valiantly at his post,

holding the boat to the current. He was splashed from head to foot with the flying spray. Fortunately none of the missiles struck the steering oar.

Finally a shell,—well it seemed like it, but I mean a stone,—came down fair on the roof of the cabin, splintering through and falling on Tom's leg. This smoked us out, and we crawled out on deck.

"Give those fellows a shot," yelled Jim, "make 'em dance, Jo."

I seized my rifle from the side of the cabin and leveled it back up the canyon at the group of Indians, who had given us such a warm reception.

It was laughable to see the effect upon them as I aimed. All that could dropped flat to the ledge, making themselves extremely small. Some clambered winding up the rough face of the rock.

I picked one of the climbing Indians and fired, the roar of the concussion in the narrow canyon was startling. It rolled back and forth like the thunder of artillery.

At my third shot an Indian slipped, it was one below the fellow I was aiming at, caught frantically at the face of the rock, missed the narrow ledge and shot down toward the river, whipped twice over in his fall, and with a great splash, disappeared into the muddy, whirling river.

I shall never forget the dark velocity with which that Indian fell. It was something appalling and it made me shrink inwardly, even if the fellow was our enemy.

"Good shot, boy," yelled Jim.

"He wasn't the fellow I was aiming at," I explained, "it was the one above him."

"Why didn't you keep still," came from Tom, "no one would be the wiser and you might have had the credit of a fine shot."

"I don't see it," I replied, "there's no real satisfaction in that sort of a bluff. Then, too, you establish a reputation that you can't live up to in case of need and that's no fun."

"Right you are, Jo," commented Jim. "Don't mind Tom's advice because he is going to be a lawyer."

"I'm more likely to be a cripple," retorted Tom. "That stone came near breaking

my leg."

"To the oars, boys," suddenly cried Jim, "here comes another rapid. Never mind the leg now, Tom. We will run ashore as soon as we can."

So we took our places again. The board on Tom's side was smashed by a rock and as we dashed into the rapid we begun to ship water. Fortunately this series was nothing like so bad as we had before passed through.

In a half hour we got into quieter water and soon sighted a gravel beach at the foot of a cliff that here receded some.

"We will run in there and look things over," announced Jim. "Stand ready to throw over the bow anchor, Jo. The river is running strong there. We will have to catch it just right."

Partly by good luck and good management we did manage to lay alongside the gravel beach, though "the Captain" pulled taut at the anchors.

"What do you think of that for a scrape?" asked Jim. "Talk about it raining pitchforks, why, it rained arrows and hailed rocks. I know now something how it would be to be under fire in battle. But this was fun."

"You were certainly *under* fire if I'm a judge," commented Tom.

"It's a wonder you weren't struck, Jim," I said.

"It seemed like a miracle to me," he replied. "Why, two big rocks just grazed me and an arrow struck right between my feet and I don't know how many swished by me. They simply made a pincushion of the water around me."

"I'm the real hero," grinned Tom, sarcastically, "because I got wounded. It was a hard bump too."

"It's lucky that you had a roof over you," I remarked.

"You were just as lucky," he retorted.

"All hands and the cook repair ship," commanded Jim. "We might just as well get the surplus stones overboard. We don't need so much ballast."

There must have been eight stones of various sizes, but mostly round. The largest was about eight inches in diameter. The eight pounder, Jim called it.

"It made the old boat shiver when that landed," remarked Jim. "It's the only one that broke the deck."

It had embedded itself in the planking, and when he yanked it out we could see through to the water underneath. The other stones had left bad dents and bruises on the three half-inch planking, but none had gone through except the eight-inch shell above referred to.

"Lucky we brought those extra boards along," said Jim. "We will soon fix up that hole in her bow."

"And put a new roof on the cabin," I pleaded, "that's up to Tom because the stone that broke it hit him on the leg."

"You've got a logical mind, haven't you?" sneered Tom. "It wasn' my fault that the coon Indian threw the rock that did the smashing."

"Don't go to arguing, Tom," said Jim, "but get to work; Jo is just guying you, Tom," he concluded.

It sounded like a carpenter shop set up in that grim canyon, for a while, with the drawn rip of the saw and the ringing of the hammers driving home the nails.

Every sound was sent bounding and echoing from rock to rock on either side, until the canyon was like one great clangorous workshop.

In an hour's time we had everything shipshape again. The bow was repaired, also the hole in the deck and in the cabin roof.

The scars remained upon the deck alongside, but these we were rather proud of and we felt we had a right, for our boat had proved herself stanch and strong enough to resist every danger and every attack.

The arrows we had extracted and kept for curiosities. They were of darker wood than those of the northern tribes we had skirmished with. They were also tipped with a different variety of stone, with green streaks running through it.

While Jim and Tom were putting the finishing touches to the job I jumped ashore and busied myself looking for specimens among the shingles and small stones on the shore.

I always took advantage of every opportunity to get ashore, while Jim stuck to his boat like a barnacle and if he had been allowed his choice, he would never

have set foot off from her.

"You can see where the boat's entire side has been scraped," I said, "she certainly looks like she has been through a battle."

"That's where the rock we bumped into took the hide off," admitted Jim, "but she's none the worse for wear," he continued. "'The Captain' will take us through many a worse scrape than this."

I could not blame Jim for his confidence and he had a right to his pride in her, for it was his skill that had made her a serviceable boat instead of the clumsy raft Tom or I would have planned and constructed.

His success showed us the value of patient, hard work in preparing for an expedition that was hazardous at the best and would have been criminally reckless, if we had not had some one with a good head like Jim's to guide us through. It wasn't boy's work.

CHAPTER XXIII

A CLOSE CALL

I had a nice time of it, looking for specimens. There is a fascination about the search for some rare or precious stone.

You feel that the next step may bring it under your eye or that you may overturn some stones and find it hidden underneath.

I moved along carefully, keeping my eyes intent in their search among the small broken rocks and rounded pebbles. Suddenly my eye caught a clear glitter and I stooped and picked up a beautiful crystal, with its sharp cut sides and water clearness. A little later I picked up a green stone that looked like jade, through it was not so clear. My last specimen was a smoky topaz of mild, dark transparency.

I had been longer in my search than I realized, for I was so intent and interested that I did not note how time was passing.

"All aboard, Jo," Jim yelled. "Hurry or you will be left."

Tom was already pulling up the bow anchor and Jim stood ready to hoist the one at the stern.

"All right," I called back.

Then I stooped to look at a peculiar stone. I heard a cry of alarm and glanced up.

"For heaven's sake, Jo!" was the startled cry that reached my ears.

It was all that Jim could say. I needed no warning. The boat was drifting away from the shore, carried by the current rapidly towards the outer river.

If I could not reach it, I was absolutely lost. The boat could not return and I was shut in by inaccessible cliffs. There was just one thing to do.

I took a short run forward and sprang out in the river as far as I could in the direction of the drifting boat. Jim and Tom were doing all they could, but it was impossible for one oar to effectively hold against the current.

Jim had his hands full with the steering sweep. As soon as I lit in the icy river,—my leap must have been eighteen feet,—I struck out desperately for the boat. The current helped me, but it seemed to be carrying the craft on faster than I did.

It was terrible, I had to catch it or my death was certain. Nothing could have saved me. "The Captain" seemed as remote and unreachable as though the length in feet that separated us had been miles.

If you have ever chased after a train that was gathering momentum every second as it pulls from the station, a train that you feel you must catch, you can have a faint inkling of how I felt. Still only a faint idea, for there was no later train for me.

I had to fight back a blinding fear and panic. If my heart had become cold like my body I should have not had the slightest chance. I was a strong swimmer and in my desperation I actually pulled up two strokes on her.

Then she reached a swifter current and pulled away from me rapidly. I struggled on blindly, though I knew I was lost. A mist was before my eyes and I was conscious of nothing but a straining, strangling, struggling sensation.

Then my hand instinctively grasped something, and I held on with the clutch of desperation. It was a rope. I felt myself being drawn toward the boat. I had sense enough left to help myself onto the craft, then I collapsed.

I came out of it, in a few minutes and found myself lying alongside the cabin. For a second I did not realize where I was. I heard the roar of the river all around and saw the great walls of red sandstone towering up and up, almost shutting out the sky.

Then I saw Jim at the steering oar and Tom laboring at the bow oar, and it all came over me. I grew suddenly weak as I realized the narrowness of my escape and I clutched the boards and tried to shut out the sound of the river that seemed like a hungry and devouring animal that for a moment had been balked of its prey.

"How are you now, Jo?" yelled Jim, anxiously. "We can't do anything for you for a bit; we are in the rapids."

"I'll be all right in a minute," I answered in a hollow voice that I scarcely recognized as my own.

I decided that the best thing that I could do was to get to work at the oars and warm up, for I was chilled through and through to the very bone.

I staggered to my place and after I had pulled for a few minutes my blood began to circulate and I felt better and in a short time I was pretty well recovered, but I dared not let my mind dwell on the escape that I had just had.

That evening we made a cheerless camp, not being able to run out of the canyon and had to tie up at a place that was nothing but a narrow shelf of rock with a few tough and stunted bushes growing on it.

A grey rain, began to come down steadily into the canyon, the first that we had experienced, and we decided to sleep on the boat.

"Why did you let that boat get away?" was the first question I asked.

"It wasn't our fault," explained Jim. "It happened this way. When Tom pulled up the bow anchor the strain was too much on the other rope. It had become worn, I guess, and it parted near the stone."

"That was the rope that was trailing behind, I happened to grasp it and that was all that saved me. It was that close," I shuddered.

"No more talk about it to-night," said Jim, "you need a good sleep."

Jim rolled up in his blankets on deck, with a tarpaulin over him. While Tom and I lay under the cabin, with our extremities sticking out, but covered with canvas. We managed to feel quite comfortable and cozy with the rain coming down gently on the roof over our heads.

We were shut in and felt protected from the storm; and the roar of the river that swept by in the darkness only lulled us to sleep for we had become as used to it as a sailor does to the sound of the sea. Jim seemed to be perfectly comfortable under his tarpaulin and being on the deck of his beloved yacht, as he called his creation, he was thoroughly contented.

The next morning was grey and the rain was still falling but it seemed warmer than ordinarily and we put our clothes in the cabin to keep them dry and it was fun too, as the rain came down in a regular shower bath.

We shoved out into the stream and were soon racing down between the narrow walls of Dark Canyon, as we called it. Guiding the boat, and dodging rocks was

fast becoming second nature to us and our muscles, those that we had not used much before, were becoming hard and bunchy as rocks.

Jim's work at the steering oar was the best all-round exercises, as it took in every muscle in his body as he stood bringing the sweep back and then shoving it from him as the boat needed to be guided this way or that.

He had developed great power and control and the sweep had become a live part of the boat just as the tail of a fish guides it naturally through the water with an instinctive wave, this way or that.

Tom and I often took the sweep with several hours of exercise at a time, but when the rapids became very dangerous Jim was always at the helm. It was a pleasure to see his sinewy form as it bent to the guiding oar, with a wary glance ahead every now and then.

By noon we ran out of the Dark Canyon and the river broadened out, the walls became lower and stood further back from the stream than at any point we had yet passed.

It seemed to give us breathing space after being cramped so long in narrow walls. We also left the storm behind with its dark grey masses piled up on the cliffs of the canyon and the wind was stirring the vapor around and around between the narrow walls as though the storm was boiling there.

The sun had come out with all the hot, intense brilliancy of the desert atmosphere. The river seemed plated with the thin silver of the sun and its current was moving lazily along at about four miles an hour.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Tom, "but it's fine to have the sun again after being buried alive in those canyons."

"It's nice to loaf along like this too," I said, "after sliding down hill at forty miles an hour for several hundred miles."

"Better get all our wet duds out," put in Jim, "and hang them in the rigging until they get dry."

We did this and then we took it easy for several hours. I laid down on the deck with my head on one of the saddles gazing up into the blue sky and basking in the sun.

We felt like sailors who have been through days of storm and who run into a calm in which they can sit on deck and mend their clothes and absorb the sun into their frozen systems.

We had the whole afternoon of this restful drifting and made a good camp in a comparatively open place.

"Let's climb to the top of the cliffs and have a look out," proposed Jim.

It was not particularly hard and we enjoyed having a chance to climb once more. In an hour we reached the top.

"What a splendid view," cried Jim.

It certainly was. The mountains that we had seen first in the distance, stood out with clear distinctness in their marvelous symmetry and sharp outlines, but robed in a mystery of blue enchantment. We saw nearer to us the wide landscape of the plateau land.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE COLORADO RIVER

"See below there!" exclaimed Jim. "It looks as if a big river comes in there. It must be the Grand."

"Then we shall be on the Colorado River," I said. "I wonder if we will have any trouble navigating where the two of them come together?"

"I have read that there is quite a whirlpool, formed by the junction," replied Jim, "we will have to be careful."

"From the appearance of things we ought to be able to reach it to-morrow," suggested Tom.

"We certainly will if we have good luck," responded Jim.

"Do you suppose that we will find any gold or precious stones in the country that we run into below the Grand?" questioned Tom, who never lost sight of the practical side of our cruise.

"We stand a first rate chance," replied Jim. "One thing is certain and that is that there has not been very many ahead of us to get away with any valuables that might be near the river. I don't suppose that there have been more than a dozen persons down this river since the world first started rolling."

"Well, I certainly hope that we will find something that will repay us for all the risks that we have run the past months," remarked Tom.

"Just think of the experience you are getting. Don't you consider that valuable?" asked Jim.

"I have got a goldarned sore leg if that's what you mean, where that rock hit me," growled Tom.

"You've got a sore head, but you always had that," added Jim.

"It isn't sore from being swelled," Tom retorted, bitingly.

"If I ever want a lawyer with a razor-backed tongue, I will employ you," laughed Jim.

"You won't ever have the money, unless you strike something soon," remarked Tom.

"Let's not quarrel among ourselves, so long as we have the river and the Indians to scrap with," I suggested.

"Very well, old sox, we won't," concluded Jim, and Tom kept silent.

So peace was established, until the next outbreak.

It was the middle of the afternoon of the following day that we neared the junction of the two rivers, the Grand and the Green. We had considerable curiosity to see the uniting of the two great streams. We imagined that the surroundings would be "Grand and Green" as Jim phrased it, but we were to be disappointed.

The walls were neither so high nor so impressive as those we had already passed through. They appeared to be about twelve hundred feet high and were set back some distance from the river.

"We will make a landing," said Jim, "before we reach the junction of the two streams and get a bird's eye view of the situation."

"It's a good idea," I said, "I'll keep a sharp lookout for a landing."

I soon sighted ahead an excellent place in a rocky little cove, where the waters were quiet. Here we effected an easy landing and climbed up on a plateau of absolutely bare rock that extended from the river to the cliffs.

"What curious looking formation," exclaimed Jim. "It looks something like layer cake. A thick red base then a strip of grey and the red again."

There were low walls of this formation bordering the rock plateau and much recessed.

"Isn't that a strange looking rock over there," said Tom, "something like a bunty church with a round tower."

This expressed it as nearly as possible. Two-thirds of it was of the solid red rock with the broad white band of stone placed squarely upon it. But I cannot stop to

refer to the many odd and curious formations, that came under our observation, for I would never have done.

After a walk of about a half a mile we came to a place where we could look down upon the mingling of the two rivers. They rushed together equally, the Grand being the clearer of the two streams. They whirled in a round dance as they met, forming a great whirlpool.

"We will have to look out for that," said Jim, shaking his head, "but I think we can avoid it all right."

We returned to the boat and prepared for the descent. Everything was made tight and snug. "The Captain" trimmed perfectly and we shoved off.

"All ready now?" said Jim.

"Ready," we replied.

We were feeling fresh and fit and were prepared to put every ounce of our strength into the pull. We dropped easily down until we came to the junction.

There were deep eddies carved in the water upon the outer edge of the whirlpool, within them was the deadly smoothness moving around and around. We could not see whether there was any central suction of a dangerous character and we did not intend to find out by experience.

We got into one of the outer eddies and then we pulled until the blades of our paddles bent almost to breaking, while Jim threw all his weight and strength against the sweep to cross the eddy that was struggling to get the boat into its slow, powerful control.

It was an obstinate, bitter fight. For ten minutes it was an even break, then with a supreme, united effort we burst through the chains of water, stronger than iron and forged out upon the united waters.

At last we were upon the back of the Colorado, its powerful current carrying us swiftly along.

"Hurrah!" yelled Jim, "we're off."

Tom and I were too breathless from the past struggle to yell, but we threw up a triumphant hand. We did not look back to see what we had come through. That we could never do on the Colorado, for there was always something to look

forward to that required immediate attention.

"There's a big canyon ahead," I yelled to Jim. "It's got the biggest roar of any we have met yet."

"All right, Jo," answered Jim, "we will swing off to the first good landing."

This we found without much difficulty and we got a good night's rest to prepare us for the struggle that lay before us.

For the next two days we had a terrific struggle with this canyon, the most dangerous that we had so far encountered. In fact it was in many ways the worst we were to go through on the whole trip.

There was one place we ran through that struck me with terror. We came upon it early one afternoon. There was a sharp plunge downward of the river and on all sides it was beaten into foam among the rocks. In the center there was a swift, clear run, that ended in big successive waves.

We took it fairly in the middle. Jim had become too good a steerer to be beaten now. But when we struck the waves our boat plunged as in a heavy sea. Much of it would have made one seasick.

One big red fellow curved over the bow, knocking me forward and I was only saved from going overboard by grasping the side and holding on for dear life. It seemed as if the deluge held me under for a full minute, but it was only a few seconds.

My oar was shattered and I hastened to replace it with an extra one. We carried several for just such emergencies.

"Hello!" exclaimed Tom, after this exciting episode, "just listen to that thunder."

"Thunder!" cried Jim, "that isn't thunder. It's perfectly clear overhead. There is not a storm within a hundred miles."

"What is it then?" demanded Tom.

Jim listened for a moment. There was no denying the sound. It was different from the roar of the river. A deep rumbling bass with a grinding sound to it.

"I know what it is!" he cried. "It is the big boulders at the bottom of the river being rolled along by the current."

"Think of the force of it," I exclaimed. "I bet they are as big as a horse."

"Nearer an elephant!" cried Jim.

There was something appalling in a power that could play marbles with huge rocks.

"That's what helps to cut these gorges," said Jim.

I can give no adequate idea of this canyon. It was wonderful. In some places the walls were so perpendicular that they seemed to bend over us. But you must not imagine that the walls were all alike, and always perpendicular. For this was not so.

There was a wonderful variety. There were rounded summits of rocks standing back from the river giving the effect of their full majesty.

The walls averaged nearly three thousand feet. The prevailing color was the red sandstone but there would be broad bands of grey. Towards the lower end the walls were shattered into thousands of pinnacles rising in their piercing splendor towards the blue above.

Occasionally we swept past a narrow side, or lateral canyon. Our one quick impression was of narrow gloom between overwhelming walls.

"I wish we could stop long enough to investigate some of these side canyons," said Jim, "they look mighty interesting."

"There are no way stations on this line," I responded, "this is a through train."

It was with a feeling of tremendous relief that we finally emerged from this canyon safely. Battered and strained, but still alive. "The Captain" was still seaworthy and stanch but she showed many marks and wounds of the terrible descent.

CHAPTER XXV

A VISITOR

Our next canyon of importance was just the opposite of the one we had just passed through. It was as the change from bitter winter to smiling, sunny summer.

What a relief and pleasure it was to get into the canyon on below the terrible gorge from which we had just emerged.

The walls were not so high by half as the upper canyon, but were of the smooth red homogeneous sandstone, in which were formed caves, grottoes and curious formations by the action of the water.

This homogeneous sandstone was like smooth broadcloth, compared to the rough serge of the granite or the tweeds of the thin bedded sandstone. There were also groves and glen with broad-leaved trees as well as pines.

"This seems like a picnic," said Tom, "after tumbling and twisting and turning through that old gorge back there."

"You just wait," said Jim, "till we come to the granite gorge of the Colorado, then you will have something to talk about."

"I won't wait," said Tom, "I guess I'll go home now."

"Stay, stay, fair sir," adjured Jim, "we will prospect in this canyon for gold and precious gems, the latter of which you can take home to the dukes and other members of the Royal Family."

"You can joke all you please," retorted Tom, "the trouble with you guys is that you haven't brains enough to appreciate my kind of books."

"The saints be praised for that," ejaculated Jim, "I may have my faults of reputation and of character, but no one can accuse me without being shot of reading silly novels about the Lady Arabella and her lover, Lord Lumox."

Tom's face had grown red with repressed anger and suppressed speech.

"Look, boys!" I cried in alarm.

"What is it? What is it?" they both exclaimed.

"Don't you see behind those bushes? There's a whole bunch of Indians."

Tom made a plunge forward for his rifle.

"Hold on," cried Jim, "don't exert yourself, Tom. Jo didn't see any Indians. It was just his diverting method of breaking up our little discussion."

Tom was so disgusted that he turned his back on us and became absorbed in the view down the river.

In a little while we heard Commodore Jim's voice.

"To the oars, my bonnie lads. We are coming to another dancing, prancing rapid."

Tom regarded the commodore askance.

"What's the matter with Jim?" he soliloquized. "He must consider himself a blooming poet. I guess it's because he hasn't had his hair cut for a year."

But all further repartee was cut off by the necessity of attending to business. In a short time we ran out of the rapids.

After passing a great wide canyon we came to a very remarkable place. At this point the wall was set back well from the river.

"Make a landing, Jim," I cried, "there's a tremendous cave ahead there in the wall."

"All right," replied Jim.

So we swung our boat over into a quiet cave that was sheltered by gently bending branches of some flowering bushes.

Making our craft perfectly secure we took the trail to this new wonder that was carved in the great cliff.

"Well, this is immense," exclaimed Jim.

That expressed it. It was.

"It looks just like the entrance to some great and ancient temple."

"Whatever made it?" asked Tom, in amazement.

"Water," said Jim, "by a process popularly known as erosion."

"You got that out of the physical geography," said Tom.

"I didn't say that I invented it," remarked Jim, blandly.

"How long did this job take?" I inquired.

"A few hundred thousands of years, I suppose," said Jim.

"How do you know?" grunted Tom, "you are just giving Jo a filler."

"Well, putting it another way,", said Jim, "it took about as long as it would for you to acquire a knowledge of spelling."

This was Tom's weak point, but all further controversy was cut off by our nearer approach to this temple. There was a broad arch of one hundred feet in the smooth, red sandstone through which we entered. Before this arch and almost in the entrance was a screen of cottonwood trees.

We stood within, silent, wondering at the majesty of the interior. It was like being under the dome of some great cathedral, though this had the added grace of being natural.

The temple was five hundred feet in width, and two hundred in height, with an opening far above in the roof, through which the blue sky was faintly visible.

It was not dark, for the light came from the entrance and dusky slants of sunshine came through the opening above. Our eyes were soon accustomed to the twilight of the place.

"Isn't it grand?" said Jim. "I never imagined such a place as this."

The floor was mostly of bare rock, smooth but not level, as it was worn concave or with rounding ridges. We crossed over to the opposite side facing the entrance, and sat down on a narrow ledge with a comfortable back of sandstone.

"Let's sing," said Jim.

"Tune up," cried Tom.

The sound was not echoed, but the dome gave it a deep, sonorous quality that was really impressive. As we sang we forgot all the hardships of the past, the uncertainty of the present and the dangers of the near future. We were back in civilization again and among our home surroundings and folks once more. The warmth of the sentiment softened us and did us good.

"Way down upon the Suwanee River,
Far, far away,
That's where my heart is turning ever,
That's where the old folks stay."

"All the world am sad and dreary
Everywhere I roam.
Oh, darkies, how my heart grows weary
Longing for the old folks at home."

There was something of pathos in our tones as we sang the last line. Jim had a good baritone, and Tom's voice was really a fine tenor, while mine was of a nondescript variety.

We spent hours in this cavern in singing and exploring around.

"I'll tell you what let's do," exclaimed Tom. "Let's carve our names in here."

"Good idea," I agreed.

So we went to work and in a couple of hours we had finished our task. The sandstone was soft, that is, comparatively so, and we enjoyed working in it. There was a peculiar pleasure in our quiet industry in that sheltered place away from the turmoil of the river and the lone, weird desert land through which we were traveling.

I finished my name first.

"Jo Darlington." If you ever visit that cavern, which is most improbable, you will see it there. If some future explorer, several thousand years from now chances to drop in, he will also see my name there, as durable as the stone itself.

I left the other artists at work and went out to take a look at our boat. I just stepped outside of the entrance, and at my first glance through the screen of cottonwoods I saw something that froze me in my tracks.

I made out an Indian making his way along a trail towards our boat. Who would reach it first? His purpose was evident. To reach the boat and cut it loose and drift with it into the river. Then where would we be? Stranded high and dry, with neither supplies nor guns, nor boat.

I gave one yell to the boys in the interior of the cave, and sprang forward with unleashed energy. The Indian started at the same time towards the boat. He had a clearer trail than I did, and leaped forward with the swiftness of a deer.

Never had I run for such a stake, neither brush nor logs could stop me. I tore through the bushes with tremendous speed and down the slope towards the boat I hurled myself.

But the Indian was ahead by fifty feet, and sprang on "The Captain." Then he turned towards me, throwing one hand up, exclaiming:

"How, how, Jo Darlington?"

I stopped and sat down in absolute and unbounded amazement. It was Juarez Hopkins.

"Hurry, boys," I yelled, "it's Juarez."

We gathered around him in an excited state, slapping him on the back, wringing his hand, and executing a war dance upon the deck of "The Captain." In reply to our numerous questions he told us simply of his trip in search of us with an occasional gleam of his white teeth.

He had met the captain and found out our plans, but not knowing exactly where we would start, he had determined to intercept us below, at the crossing of The Fathers.

He had worn out two bronchos, but was in good condition himself. It was by a curious accident that he had found us in the Temple canyon. I will explain how this was later.

CHAPTER XXVI

JUAREZ BRINGS US NEWS

"You look very much as you used to," said Jim, "only you have your hair cut. How were your father and mother?"

"Father and mother are very well," he said, speaking slowly and very distinctly in a low voice; there was only the slightest trace of an accent. "They grew younger when Juanita and I came home."

"How is Juanita?" inquired Tom with a deep and courteous interest.

Juarez smiled with a flash of his strong, white teeth.

"Ah, Juanita, she too is well. Very pretty girl. Tall and very strong, but no more than that like an Indian. Her eyes are blue and hair black, and her skin it is not bad either. Juanita she likewise is a child. She sent her love and thanks to the three boys who rescued her. How is that for high?"

We laughed. His grafting of a slang phrase on his precise English was amusing.

"My mother love Juanita very much. She is much comfortable for her. I tell father and mother I stay for awhile on the farm, but by and by leave and go with Jim and Tom and Jo. Out in the mountains, over the plains, follow the trail once more. See?"

"Yes, perfectly, Juarez," I said.

"I tell my own people I cannot sleep under a roof. I die, no air. I cannot drive fat, slow horses to town. I cannot pitch hay into a wagon or dig up the potato from the ground. No, No! They understand. I have one letter for you all from father and mother."

He extracted it from the inside of his shirt where it was fastened. We read it, sitting on the top of our ship's cabin. It contained many messages of good will for us and of affection.

They said that they were perfectly reconciled to having their son Juarez traveling

with us. That they realized that he could not be contented on a farm after having spent nearly all his life among the Indians. Also we must be sure to visit them before we returned East.

It was a good letter and we appreciated every word of it. We seemed united with the outside world once more, and we felt doubly fortified to have our tried comrade, Juarez, with us. There had been, as you remember, a natural friendship between Juarez and Jim. But now, Juarez accepted both Tom and me as comrades, something he had not done before, which we remembered, if you do not.

In appearance, Juarez was no longer the Indian, except for the lithe grace of his movements and his tireless endurance. There was also a certain dignity of reticence that he had derived from them. His dark hair was neatly cut and he wore a grey flannel shirt and blue trousers. The greatest change was in his eyes. They were of a mild brown and had lost that black fierceness of expression and sullen distrust that had haunted them when we had first met him on the captain's plateau, when his sister Juanita was still a captive in the power of Eagle Feather.

"What do you think of our boat, Juarez?"

"You make her?" he inquired.

"Sure," we replied.

He looked "The Captain" over from stem to stern, missing no part of its construction under Jim's careful explanation.

"Ah," he said finally, with a smile. "She is a Jim Dandy."

We grinned our appreciation of his pun.

"You are a real American," said Tom, "or you would have never thought of that."

"How did you happen to strike us here?" asked Jim, "instead of at the crossing of The Fathers as you had first planned."

"I wanted to make a search for some treasure that lies in this canyon," he replied. "I have often heard of it through the captives we took from the southern tribe, the Pai Ute, who in turn had got it from some of these Indians who build houses in the cliffs.

"I have it down in paper as much as I remember. We will look together if you

agree."

"There will be no trouble about that, Juarez," we said.

He took out a worn piece of paper and studied it carefully.

"It is gold nuggets, bracelets and gems and one gold cross taken from the early priests by the Indians.

"By tradition it was left hidden in the canyon.

"It is three curves in the river below a great cavern."

"There's the cavern, Juarez, up there," said Jim. "It is five hundred feet in width and two hundred feet high."

"So far, so well," he replied. "At the third curve you land on the west bank, you follow up a narrow slit in the wall of the canyon. Beyond it upon a rock, there is a natural formation like this sign O. That is a symbol for the Indians of this region. It means a great deal to them, but nothing to me." There was a note of contempt in his voice.

"It is in the locality of this marked rock that the Indian treasure is hidden. There you have it."

"But not the treasure, not yet," I said. "I suppose that it is guarded by some dragon or some evil spell."

"They say so. If the treasure is not removed and we get near it, we will be struck by blue lightning from red clouds and our bones will be crushed by some terrible beast or devil; I know not which."

"There is the dragon that guards this treasure," said Jim, pointing to the river, "and it is certainly a terrible one."

"How much is it all worth?" asked the calculating Tom.

"How can I tell?" replied Juarez. "Many men have sold their lives for it. How much is a man worth, eh? Count it that way. The many strange jewels, three big handfuls, are thousands and thousands of money, besides the gold. The box itself is a richness—beaten gold with gems all over it, so they say."

Tom stood with his mouth open and his eyes shining. Jim laughed at him.

"I bet you will make a regular old shylock when you grow up. You are money hungry like all those eastern grubs. I tell you now that you and Jo only have a third of our share between you, as you happen to be twins. You see, I'm the oldest, therefore I get two-thirds."

I grinned, because I knew that Jim cared as little for money as it was possible to. In fact, he was entirely indifferent to it. Tom should have known this. But money was, with him, too sacred and serious a matter to be taken lightly.

He grew white with anger, and picking up a stick made for Jim to strike him. Juarez stepped between them.

"You excite, hot under the collar. You sit down."

Tom did so suddenly, and with emphasis under Juarez guiding hand.

"Now you give me that stick?" Tom did so and Juarez tossed it ashore. That was all. Jim said nothing and paid no attention to Tom's attack.

Tom felt ashamed of himself, as he had every reason to, and for some time thereafter was a most amiable person, and Jim did not aggravate him.

"We will get an early start in the morning," announced Jim, "and drop down the river and try our luck in looking for this bunch of valuables."

"How did these Indians get hold of so much, Juarez?" I asked, "especially the gems."

"There are a good many stones to be picked up in the southwest," he replied, "and this collection has been growing for centuries."

"But the gold box," I said. "They did not make it, I suppose."

"No," he replied. "They captured it, that is the Indians in the early days, from the Hispanooles. And there were a lot of these jewels in it as well as the gold."

"Well, if somebody hasn't robbed the bank," said Jim, "we will soon be wearing diamonds."

"We will look like a sporty alderman," I said, "when we get rich."

"I expect to wear diamonds in my front teeth," said Jim, "if I can't dispose of them in any other way."

"We can buy a steam yacht, too," I said.

"Not for me," remarked Jim. "'The Captain' is a good enough boat for me. Can you row, Juarez?"

"Ah, yes, I think so some, yes. I paddle a canoe many, many times."

"This is no canoe, but I know you will do," replied Jim. "It's mighty lucky you dropped in on us when you did. Tom has had a sore leg ever since an Indian back there in another canyon dropped a rock on him."

"It was luck that Juarez did come along now," I joined in. "We will need him bad enough when we come to the 'Gorge of the Grand Canyon.'"

"That's the place!" said Jim. "I have read that it is over six thousand feet down from the rim of the canyon to the river."

"Straight up and down?" asked Tom.

"No," replied Jim. "It's nearly thirteen miles across from rim to rim and the precipitous walls of the gorge are only about fifteen hundred feet."

"I have heard of it," said Juarez. "All the Indians know something about it. Some say nobody can go through it alive. That the waters go down into the heart of the earth. It is very wonderful, me see. To-morrow we hunt for the treasure."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CLIFF VILLAGE

Tom was the first awake the next morning. The reason is evident already to the mind of the acute reader. Tom wanted to get on the trail of the buried treasure. We were not entirely indifferent ourselves.

As soon as breakfast was finished we got on the boat and pulled out, leaving a camping place which we always remembered with pleasure.

The charm of the place was in the Temple, where we had sung the old songs. In the evening, too, we had given a special concert in honor of Juarez.

We dragged some big pine logs into the interior, and soon had a great fire started in the center of the Temple. It was a really beautiful sight as the flames leaped upward toward the dome, and the auditorium, with its red walls, showed clearly in the ruddy light, and there was the drapery of the shadows gathered in the corners that moved as do the curtains in a gentle breeze.

It was weird, too, especially when Juarez gave us some of the old Indian chants and war songs. The sounds seemed to summon all the savagery of the southwest to the Temple.

It was easy to imagine it as a great council chamber in which the chiefs were deliberating on matters of grave importance. So it seemed when Juarez chanted.

Finally we had some rollicking negro songs, and ended up with the Star Spangled Banner, sung with tremendous enthusiasm by the entire congregation, and it was stirring, too, as our voices swelled in that great Temple.

No wonder that we looked back with regret as we shoved off into the turbulent river. We were at our usual positions as our boat took to the current.

Juarez was our guest, and we would not let him row, not the first day, but we promised that he would have all that he wanted later.

So he paced up and down the deck of the liner, watching Jim at the sweep and Tom and me at the oars. The stream was very mild in this canyon and nothing

like the foaming fury that we had been accustomed to.

Juarez watched everything with a keen and intelligent eye—saw how we steered and avoided the rocks. His searching instinct was at work.

"Do you think that you can steer the craft down this trail, Juarez?" inquired Jim.

"Yes, I can do so, certainly most. I soon get on to its curves."

This was to prove true, for his strength and skill were exactly what we needed in the boat.

"Here's the last bend," I cried.

We followed the graceful, sweeping water around it and made an easy landing on the west bank.

"Suppose we leave Tom to look after the boat," I said, "while we chase after the golden chest."

Even Juarez had to laugh at the comical look of dismay that came over Tom's face. He saw that I was joking, and a sheepish smile came over his face.

"What shall we take with us?" I asked.

"Something to eat," replied Jim.

"Of course," I said, "but how about the rifles?"

"Leave them," said Jim, "except one. We must travel light and be prepared for stiff climbing."

"Better take the heavy hammer and an adze," said Tom.

This showed that Tom had been doing some valuable thinking and he could, too, if he was really interested in anything.

"You're right, Tom," said Jim. "That's what we will need and we had better take a couple of big spikes."

"What for?" I asked.

"To drill with," Jim said, "if we find a place that looks likely we will have to investigate, that's the only way to find it. You don't suppose that it will be out in the open."

"Then if we are going into the mining business, better take some blasting powder."

"Good," replied Jim.

"Then a rope and pick may be of great benefit," said Juarez.

"Sure, Mike," replied Jim with a grin.

So each one of us contributed to the material we took along. We divided up the tools between ourselves and had them fastened on so that our climbing would not be impeded.

"Do you think it safe to leave the boat; we may be gone a day or two?" I asked.

"Certainly," replied Jim. "It won't need anything to eat in our absence, and it has plenty of water. Besides, I don't imagine that there are many people back of us coming down the river."

I could not help but smile myself at the idea of anyone making the terrible trip down the river.

"That's so," I replied. "You can't find three such fools as we are every year. There are other easier ways of committing suicide than gliding down the Colorado."

"But some Indians might find a trail over the wall and steal the boat," said Tom.

"How many trails do you suppose there are to the Colorado River within nine hundred miles?" asked Jim severely.

"I don't know," replied Tom.

"Just three," said Jim, "and this isn't one of them. At least not on the west bank."

So that was settled and we started out with a great deal of enthusiasm and energy. It was like being let out from the hard school of the river for a holiday.

We needed this breathing spell of pleasure too, for there was something depressing to the spirits in going through the deep and gloomy canyons, exposed to constant danger and shut off from the rays of the sun nearly all the time.

There was an exhilaration likewise in the search for this hidden treasure. Nor were we on a wild goose chase. We had a definite end in view and a definite guide, though there was enough vagueness to give us plenty of trouble.

We went whistling along, singing and joking each other, in high spirits. It was a beautiful, sunny day, with that wonderful quality in the air known only to the highest altitudes.

Our way lay first through glen, with flowering bushes, willow brush and the pleasant cottonwood trees that do so much to enliven the desert places of the West, so that one grows to look on them with a real affection that one would not give to the most beautiful tree of the overburdened tropics.

We came to a low, red wall that blocked our way. It was low, however, only by comparison, with the giant wall of other canyons.

Juarez regarded it carefully and then shook his head.

"Ah, no!" he determined. "This is not it. We must climb up."

This we did, and after a rather easy climb, going up a narrow transverse ravine, then after a steep pull we came out upon the top of the first wall.

We saw the greater outer wall of homogeneous sandstone rising about a half mile distant. Between us and it was a comparatively level stretch of rock, with a layer of thin soil upon it, from from which grew dwarf bushes, and everywhere were scattered boulders, some of them huge, others smaller.

"There is the place," said Juarez, nodding at the walls in front of us. They rose up to a height of over a thousand feet. "There we find it."

We walked with our long gliding stride, something as the Indians do, scarcely raising the foot. (I may as well have a word with you right here about walking, if you don't mind; it will be of use to you in long tramps. There is considerable nonsense in certain popular ideas about walking. Don't strut along with the shoulders thrown back. You will never see an Indian plainsman, nor any natural walker do that. Let the shoulders droop naturally, but keep the chest out. As you start, break the motion at the hips and use the feet as though they were paddles. Leave the backbone out of your walk. Anything that saves a jar to that makes for tireless endurance.

In using this simple method the weight falls on the front part of the foot. Move easily, even loosely, at the joints of ankle and knee. That breaks up stiffness, relieves strain and makes for endurance. Paddle out with the feet, and as you start, break the motion at the hip by a slight bend. By this method you acquire springiness. It is something the same effect you get as you stand on the end of a

springing board ready to make a dive into water. If you are persistent in using this method, you will find it worth while.)

"What is that curious formation under the cliff?" asked Tom as we approached the outer wall.

"That," said Juarez, "is what remains of the houses and caches of the cliff dwellers."

It was in a great sheltering cave or open cavern in the beautifully smooth sandstone cliff, several hundred feet from the base of it.

There stood, almost as a natural granite from the rock, the square, symmetrical ruins of a tiny cliff dwellers' village. There was something extraordinarily quaint and curious about it as it nestled close under the protecting breast of the great rock.

At the base of the cliff were the ruins of a lower village. We found several complete specimens of pottery and many broken shards.

We could see that the construction of the thick walls of the close set houses was of flat stones held together by dried clay or with nothing but the rocks themselves pieced together. The windows and doors had sides and slabs of smooth, red stone.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE FACE IN THE ROCK

"Will we find the treasure up there?" asked Tom. Juarez shook his head.

"No, but those people could have told."

We did not stop to cut steps up the precipitous sandstone to the village in the cliff, because we had no time to stop for antiquities.

"Let's divide here in two parties," said Juarez.

"All right," said Jim. "I imagine that this slit may be a very narrow lateral canyon."

"Maybe," Juarez replied. "I take Tom, you and Jo go together. The one finding it first will fire as a signal to the other party."

This was agreed on and we separated. Jim and I took the wall to the north and Tom and Juarez went south. Jim had his rifle and Juarez a pistol.

We made our way carefully, but saw nothing but the blank wall of red sandstone.

"What was that?" I asked twenty minutes after we had left Tom and Juarez. We stopped and listened intently. There was the faint sound of a distant report.

"They have found it," exclaimed Jim.

We took the back trail and we made good time too. In a short while we saw the two of them way down the wall of the canyon. They waved their hands to us.

"We have got it," yelled Tom when we came within hearing.

"What, the treasure?" cried Jim.

"No, the side canyon," replied Tom.

"My! how narrow," exclaimed Jim, as he got a first view of it.

"It looks just as if someone had taken an axe and split the wall right down," I

remarked.

That expresses it. It was only a few feet across, extending the whole height of the cliff. In most places the light was shut out as in a cave, in other places there was just a narrow piece of blue ribbon for the sky and a little white sunshine spilt along one upper edge.

We went single file—in many places there was no other choice.

"This is what they call Fat Man's Nursery," said Jim. "Fortunately we are a lean and hungry lot."

"How are we ever going to get out of this lateral?" asked Tom. "The gold chest will be high up."

"I tell you, Tom," said Jim. "Just put a foot on one side and the other on the other side and straddle up."

This really looked possible in some places. The floor of "Lean Canyon" was mostly of solid rock, worn into hollows and curves by running water. Occasionally we came to places where our way was blocked by some huge boulder that had fallen from the cliff above.

Or there would be one wedged in half way down from the top. It was a curious sort of a place.

"If you see an old woman's face in the rock," said Juarez, "tell me; that is one sign on this trail."

We then realized that Juarez had not told us all his secret paper contained. It was the natural secretiveness of the Indian that he had not been able to throw off.

We traveled thus for half an hour, the canyon broadening, and then we came to a steady and rugged ascent.

"There is the face," exclaimed Tom suddenly.

There was no denying it. It was formed in the end of the western wall of the canyon, a perfect outline of an old woman's face with a pronounced chin and munched-in mouth.

"Yes, oh, yes," said Juarez, a dark flush showing on his cheeks. "She is looking at the place of the sign."

With great difficulty we made our way up to the top of the western end of "Lean Canyon," where we could ask the question of the sphinx who watched the sign of the treasure. In one place that was narrow we had to leap across to the other wall.

There was a fall of three hundred feet below us. If we had allowed ourselves to become nervous we might have missed the narrow ledge which gave us footing, but we were too eager in our quest to take account of danger.

Our moccasined feet helped to give us a secure foothold and we made the jump of six feet with safety. Juarez was the first to leap and he did it with a measured nonchalance, while Jim, with his long legs, seemed to step lightly across.

As Jim and Juarez stood on either side to catch me, I jumped with confidence. Tom, however, got a bad takeoff and would have fallen back into the canyon head first if Jim and Juarez had not gripped him.

It tested their steel sinews to maintain their balance and to keep from being carried down into the canyon below. We made our way without further incident to the top of the canyon and could see the outline of the old woman's face three hundred feet above us.

She seemed to be looking at a great cliff about a half mile distant. We scanned every inch of the cliff for something that looked like the mystic sign, but even my imagination could not conjure up anything that resembled it.

Jim meanwhile had moved off some distance and was studying the old woman in the rock with the keenest interest and intelligence.

"Say, boys," he exclaimed suddenly, "she is not looking out or up. The old lady is looking down."

"It's so," someone exclaimed. "Now we may locate it."

Jim moved from one point to another of observation. Finally he came to a pile of stones, something like a surveyor's monument, only it was about ten feet high. This he climbed.

No sooner had he taken his position on top of the cairn, for such it seemed to be, than he gave a yell of exultation.

"I see it, boys. There's the sign as big as life."

We were upon top of the cairn in a moment, that is to say, Tom and I were, but Juarez would not come up.

"No, no," he said, shaking his head. "I take your word, Jim, but I will not step up there."

"All right, my boy. I won't urge you," said Jim good naturedly. He seemed to understand Juarez.

We followed the pointing of Jim's hand and saw the ancient symbol [Symbol -O] about seventy feet below the old woman, upon the surface of a rock that curved out.

"That must be twelve feet across," said Jim, "in both directions."

"How do you suppose it was done?" I asked.

"By water possibly, and it may have been carved too," Jim replied.

"And the white coloring?" I inquired.

"It comes from some wash above, or it may sweat out of the rock itself."

"Well," said Tom, "let's begin our search."

"I'm willing," responded Jim.

By cutting a few steps in the sandstone we were able to reach the sign. As Jim was busily engaged with the pick upon the rock, making the red chips fly, he turned to us who were waiting our turn below.

"What does this remind you of, boys?" he asked.

"Of the moonlight night in our first canyon in Colorado," I said, "when we had to dig steps for you to get down from the cliff and an Indian took a snap shot at us with an arrow."

"Right you are," responded Jim.

"I hope we will get something really valuable this time," remarked Tom coolly.

"Why, don't you value your dear brother?" grinned Jim. "He's your guide, philosopher and friend."

"Never mind about that," said Tom. "Let's get to work."

Jim took the hammer and sounded all over the surface of the rock, but found no hollow place.

"I'm going to put a blast right in the center of that letter," declared Jim.

Juarez shook his head dubiously. It was evident that he was in dread of something. But Jim went ahead and drilled a hole in the center of the sign, and put a fuse to it. We drew back a ways down the rock but not far.

We saw the smoke, a mere thread, and an occasional spark. Then an explosion that sent pieces of red rock flying up and around us. A big hole was torn in the center of the letter.

Jim was the first to reach the place.

"This is it," he cried.

He took the pick and began digging, and we saw that there was a round opening into a natural hollow in the rock. Jim was able to crawl partially in and he made a careful search, lighting several matches. Then he crawled out, shaking his head.

"Empty is the cradle," he said. "There's only a few flakes of gold and you can see the place where the box has stood."

I crawled in next. Sure enough, there was the tarnished place on the rock where it had stood for centuries perhaps. In feeling around my hand touched a small bit of folded bark. Without thinking much about it I picked it up and put it in my pocket.

Tom stayed in the treasure hollow so long that we had to yank him out by the feet.

"He is the chief mourner," commented Jim.

"Look out, boys," yelled Juarez, "big stone coming."

Like a great cannon ball it was bounding down the rock towards us. We jumped aside just in time and it smacked between us.

"A considerably narrow escape," mused Jim.

"The old witch up there is offended," said Juarez. "I saw a genie fly out when you sent off that blast."

"I think the explosion loosened the rock, Juarez," said Jim. There were the two views. We went back to the boat with more experience but no treasure.

CHAPTER XXIX

A TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE

That evening as we sat on the bank above we talked over our experience of the day. Then I bethought myself of the piece of folded bark and pulled it out of my pocket.

"Here's something that I picked up in the rock hollow," I remarked.

Jim seized it eagerly and Juarez watched its unfolding with the keenest interest. The word "bark" is only a rough term to describe it. The document was really made of some sort of pulp, whether of wood or cacti I could not say.

When it was spread out, the paper was 12x12 inches. There was a curious drawing in the center with words written in Spanish, and in one corner was the representation of a mountain.

"That's a diagram," commented Jim, "but I cannot make much out of it, can you, Juarez?"

"I see somethings," announced Juarez. "That mountain is in Mexico. But the lines I do not understand, but we shall see when we go down there."

"It is the key to the whereabouts of the treasure box," announced Tom, "that drawing is. Only we have got to get someone who reads Spanish to translate it. Let me keep it?"

"No," said Jim, decisively. "Jo found it and he can take care of it."

"Hold on," suggested Tom. "Let's make a copy of it for each one of us."

"That's the idea," I acceded. "Who is the best artist?"

"Let Juarez try his hand at it," said Jim, "he's the one."

So Juarez went steadily to work, and he justified Jim's choice, for it was splendidly copied. His trained eyes and hand were evident in the drawing.

The next morning we started on the last part of our journey.

"Heave ho, my hearties," cried Jim as we pulled up our stone anchors. "All ashore who are going ashore," and we swung out into the easy current.

"This is what I like," cried Jim. "Give me the boat every time."

"You teach me how to steer, Jim?" said Juarez.

"You bet I will," replied the commodore.

Juarez was an apt pupil and he soon learned to use his lithe strength to the best advantage. It was of the greatest assistance to us, for it gave either Jim or Juarez a chance to take the other oar on the side back of me.

This threw Tom out of a job, but he did not mind, as his bruised leg bothered him. Jim found him a position, however, for he stationed him back of us to keep a sharp lookout ahead for rocks and other dangers.

He was really a pilot and his keen eyes were of great help. By a wave of a hand he indicated the direction to Juarez in which to steer, and to Jim and me he would call port or starboard.

Tom liked this. He was quick of decision and was not afraid to take the responsibility. In an easy stretch he would lean against the cabin and shout out his orders in a clarion voice, but in rough water he stood braced on deck, looking keenly ahead.

"Starboard your helm," he would yell. Then we dashed safely by a great rock.

"Now let her r-r-run," he commanded (slurring his r's) as we came to a clear section of the river.

Tom assumed considerable style under the impulse of his new authority, and we had to take it out of him at regular intervals.

It really was a fine plan, for we could give our whole attention to the oars. Then, too, Jim and I were much stronger than Tom, and with Juarez or Jim at the steering oar, we managed "The Captain" as though she were a skiff. We had need of our skill, too, in the great canyons that were ahead of us.

For a week or more we had easy work, as the Temple canyon was wide and the rapids not so severe. But it was easy only by comparison with what we had been through. To a fresh voyager it would have seemed terrific.

The weather was mostly clear and sunshiny, but one afternoon we ran into a heavy storm almost like a water spout.

The roar of the thunder in the narrow gorge that we were going through was terrific and the lightning streaks lit the gloom of the canyon with weird intensity, flashing a strange glare on the red and turbulent river.

It was exceedingly dangerous and wonderfully exciting. I do not know how we would have managed if Tom had not been free to watch the river ahead.

It was so dark in the chasm that we could see only a short distance ahead. And the roar of the river and of the thunder was something terrible.

No landing could be made and we dashed blindly down. It was marvelously exciting, and we were keyed to the highest pitch of efficiency.

The white line of foam would be the first warning we would have of a rock ahead, then we would bend all our strength and sometimes our boat would tilt on the current that ran off from the rock. It was close.

If we had struck head on we would have been in a most critical situation. The lightning was of no real help, only serving to blind us. Tom closed his eyes for the second of the flash so that he would not be blinded.

Fortunately the storm was brief and we saw a beautiful sight when the clouds cleared. On both sides of the canyon, from the cliffs twelve hundred feet in height, sprang numerous little water falls.

Some amber, others tinged with red or glittering with the silver of the sun. The largest in volume were four or five feet across, but before they reached the river below, they feathered out in spray. These cascades were beautiful indeed.

Several days after the thunder storm we had an overwhelming experience. It came on us suddenly and without sufficient warning to enable us to reach the shore.

It was a clear day and there had been no storm in our vicinity. We were going swiftly down the current, in the midst of a canyon, with towering walls over three thousand feet in height.

Suddenly my ear caught the sound of a louder roar than the usual tone of the river. I glanced back and in my dismay I could give no word of warning.

But the other boys had heard the ominous, thunderous roar filling the narrow depth of the canyon. Jim sprang to the steering oar, and without a word Juarez leapt to Jim's vacant place.

A great flood wave was charging down the canyon, filling it from side to side, the center of it bulging and boiling forward in foam. It was a terrific sight.

"Roll the stern anchor forward," yelled Jim.

The wave was a quarter of a mile away, coming down upon us with devouring fury.

"Defy the dragon, will you?" it seemed to roar. "You are caught in its jaws now. No escape."

Jim looked at it with a sneer of set teeth.

"We'll show you," he yelled. "You can't beat us, curse you!"

"Draw in the oars," he commanded, "into the bows; use the poles."

It was almost upon us. The stern began to lift upwards.

"Stand by to repel boarders." These were the last words we could hear. Then we were swallowed up in a tumult of roaring, foaming water, whirled downward like a straw in the furious onset of the flood.

By throwing all the weight to the bow we had kept from being swamped. Our high, strong sides saved us for the moment. If anything could stand the fury of that charge "The Captain" could. Powerful, braced like an ironclad, unsinkable.

We rose out of the jaws into the back of the dragon, and were surrounded by a chaos of rushing drift and some big logs and timber.

This mass held the waves down, and our powerful little craft, wedged in for the moment, was carried along at bewildering speed. It was like going down a cataract.

Then came a veritable battle of the logs. They tried to ram our boat. We fought them off with poles as best we could. Occasionally we received a blow that jarred "The Captain" from stem to stern.

One log bent a board back by a heavy, glancing blow. In a minute I had it braced back to its old place. Without a second's cessation we fought desperately but not

wildly.

It was like a prize fighter tearing into a powerful opponent with flying, flaying fists to forestall a knockout. The next moment a jam of logs threatened to overwhelm us. It seemed viciously determined to thrust us against the wall of the canyon.

Something had to be done immediately. Juarez was the man. Before we could say a word, yea or nay, he leapt from the boat and on to the back of the jam. Prying with his pole against the key log of the combination he broke it and the freed logs swept down the current.

Nothing but his marvelous quickness and Indian litheness saved him. Just as it broke he sprang, with the nimbleness of a panther from the log that swirled back under the impulse of his leap, to the boat.

CHAPTER XXX

THE GREAT GORGE—THE END

"FINE boy, Juarez," rang out Jim's voice. "We'll beat this roaring devil yet."

No sooner had Jim spoken than our chance came. A change had taken place in the situation, as there was an opportunity to land on the west shore, as the canyon had ended and there was a break between it and the canyon following.

If we did not land now we would probably land at the bottom of the river, for we could not hope to run another canyon. Those below were terrific gorges, dangerous under ordinary conditions, but with the rush of the flood waters, absolutely impossible.

We were favored for the moment by a change in the condition of the river. The first rush of the drift had passed and there was a comparatively smooth stretch of water, but further up the river great red waves were coming with reinforcements of logs and timbers against our boat.

"To the oars," yelled Jim, "we must get out of this now or go under."

Juarez and I sprang forward with lightning quickness, placed the oars in position, and then we pulled, how we pulled! Biting the raging current of the river with rapid strokes.

Exerting his strength to the very utmost, Jim fought the boat towards the shore. He seemed animated with a fury equal to the floods.

"Pull, pull," yelled Tom in frenzy. "Here comes a log to kill us."

It was bearing down toward us with awful swiftness. Its great end, three or four feet across, was like a battering ram in the swift swing of the current, ready to demolish us.

It was the last blow of the river, escape it and we would be safe. No need to urge us. Our oars foamed into the current and "The Captain" responded. Down it came, flung forward on a wave above Jim's head. With a desperate surge of strength Juarez and I gave a last pull together and the great log swept by our

stern by six inches.

We were saved. With a few more strokes under Jim's skillful steering, we grounded our boat on the shore. Utterly exhausted Tom and I fell forward on the ground when we landed, our faces buried in our arms. Tom was sobbing hysterically. Little wonder! Even to stand on the shore and watch the raging river would frighten most of you into a chill.

Jim now turned and shook his fist at the baffled river.

"We fooled you," he yelled. "You don't get us or 'The Captain,' either."

Juarez said nothing, but sat on a rock breathing heavily, his hands hanging down before him. Without his help, quickness and skill we would never have made it.

We made our camp where we had landed, resting and repairing our boat. The river went down as rapidly as it had come up, for the flood had been due to a cloud burst and not to melting snow or a continuous storm.

On the third morning we were all ready to start upon the final round with the Colorado River. Before us was the marble canyon and the great gorge of the Grand Canyon.

Tom and I had recovered our equilibrium by the time we were ready to reëmbark. We felt reasonably confident of being able to navigate the gorges which were ahead.

"I shall be glad when we get through with this hilarious and irregular life," said Tom. "I don't believe any of us would have started if we could have known what we would have to go through with."

"I would," claimed Jim. "We have to hustle sometimes. But if you had stayed in the peaceful East you would have probably have gone bathing in some mill pond and got a cramp and drowned."

"You can't stop long enough in these darned canyons to get drowned," growled Tom.

We all laughed heartily at Tom's complaints. He was never so funny as when he was irritable.

"Another thing," said Tom in conclusion, "I'm not going to give up that search for treasure till we find it."

About noon of the day we started we saw ahead of us the shining walls of the greatest chasm that we had yet faced.

"Is that the Grand Canyon itself?" I asked.

"No," said Jim, who had been studying the maps carefully during our last stop. "That must be the Marble Canyon. The Little Colorado will come in below there somewhere."

"Is it really marble?" inquired Tom.

"You can see for yourself soon," said Jim.

However, names are deceitful things. It was indeed a marvelous gorge into which we entered. Where the waves of the river had worked, there shone a beautiful greyish marble, cut in curious deep lines by the action of the water, but above the walls were stained a deep red.

There was a massive solidness about this marble canyon that made the sandstone gorges appear light and airy. The walls rose in places to over three thousand feet in height.

Sometimes the walls were in thousand-foot terraces, sometimes well nigh perpendicular, at least so it seemed. It was, with all its grandeur, only the entrance hall for the Grand Canyon itself. Its peculiarity was in the sharp thrust out cliffs that rose perpendicularly from the river.

The Little Colorado was well named, for the river itself was but a small stream, but the narrow gorge by which it entered was impressive. It is the mingling of the Little Colorado with Marble Canyon that constitutes the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.

But it in reality is not quite so magically logical as that, since from miles below the entrance of the Little Colorado, the canyon walls fall away from the river and the canyon is like a great valley with perpendicular walls removed for several miles on either side of the river, and rising to a height of five thousand feet. Before us lay the great gorge, where the river seemed to lose itself in granite gloom as it wound downwards.

"Let's make a camp in this valley," suggested Jim, "and do some climbing before we take our last sprint down the river."

"I guess it will be our last too," groaned Tom, gloomily.

"Oh shut up!" commanded Jim wearily, giving him a kick with his moccasined foot. "You ought to have lived in the times of Jeremiah."

"You ought to have lived in the Stone Age," retorted Tom, "it would have just suited you."

We made camp near a pleasant looking green stretch of shore and on the following day we started out on our little picnic excursion that consumed several days.

It would take another book to describe what we saw on that trip. After some remarkably hard work and interesting climbing we reached the rim of the canyon, some six thousand feet above the Colorado, that seemed but a narrow rivulet and its long familiar roar was reduced to a gentle purr of sound.

We saw below and around us one of the unequalled panoramas of the world. Back of us was the black plateau of the great forest land, called the "Kaibab," covered with pines, and beneath our feet was the Grand Canyon itself. Twelve miles from rim to rim and in the chasm were towers, pinnacles, terraced plateaus, palaces and temples, and in the distance, faint and fair formations of beauty and of light.

The coloring was the most wonderful of all. Deep down and far away was the purple gneiss of the gorge, ribboned with granite, then on either side of the river rose the various architectural forms and structures of the canyon.

Based on purple, then a wonderful brown; widest of all the rich red of the sandstone, while the highest pinnacles, peaks and plateaus had a coping of white limestone to correspond with the eight hundred feet of the same rock just below the rim.

But who shall tell of the glories of the sunset as the light fades from the white of the western wall and the vast, vast canyon is filled with the purple shadows!

"Wouldn't it jar you?" exclaimed Jim, the first to break the awestruck silence that bound us, when its immensity first came under our eyes.

"Yes," said Tom, "if you stepped off it would."

Without foreboding, but with grim determination, we left our pleasant camp on

the bank of the river and swinging out into the current we headed for the gorge.

Then in a moment we were swallowed up between its jaws as a fly goes into the mouth of a lion. We were enured to dangers and terrible hazards, these we were prepared to meet, nor did we encounter anything equal to the flood of the week before. In that the Colorado had done its worst.

But it was the sombreness and the gloom of that granite gorge that overwhelmed us. It seemed as I have said, as though the river as it plunged and roared downward between the dark and narrow walls, was carrying us down into some nether and long-forgotten hell.

We could see little of the glorious upper canyon that was on either side of the gorge whose walls rose perpendicularly above us for fifteen hundred feet.

"One good thing about it," said Tom, "when we get through with this we are through for certain."

"It won't take us long if we keep up this gait," I said, as we swept downward like an express train, and the walls going by as fences do when you look out from a car window. We ran into one terrible rapid where the river was lashed into a mass of foam from wall to wall.

The waves poured over into our boat nearly swamping us. We pulled out of it alive and the worst was over.

At last, at last, our war worn, battered boat drifted out into the broad sunny reaches of the Colorado. Behind us was the gloom of the labyrinthine, rock bound prison with the gnashing river within it rushing ever downward, eager to escape.

We were glad, glad to have come through our terrific experiences alive and though we were weather beaten, well and uninjured.

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Jim, as he steered down the broad unhampered river.

So after some time of quiet journeying we came to the end of our trip. We found a pleasant camping place near a cove where we anchored our faithful boat. How splendidly it had carried us through.

Battered and beaten though it was, still perfectly seaworthy, or to be more exact,

riverworthy. It had been our home so many weeks that it seemed to be a part of our lives, and we had a real affection for it, like one has for a faithful dog who has been one's companion through trials and dangers.

One evening we sat around the campfire, underneath the cottonwood trees with the slow moving Colorado in the foreground. We had been talking of home, both in Kansas and York State and also of our old friend the captain, when Jim spoke up:

"Gentlemen of the Order of the Colorado and fellow pioneers," he said, in his most oratorical manner, "I move that we free and untrammeled Americans proceed next to the invasion of Mexico."

This was carried with but one dissenting voice and that was Tom's, but that was to be expected.

At this point I may say that "The Frontier Boys in Mexico, or Mystery Mountain," will be a book of varied and exciting incidents which take place in a wonderfully interesting and remarkable country. And now for a brief time I bid you adios.

As the reader who has been with us all through this trip from the fight with the Apaches to the navigation of the Grand Canyon seems to be a good fellow he is invited to come along too. You may not learn as much of the grandeurs of nature, which have in considerable measure found place in this book, but with exciting adventure it will be replete.

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