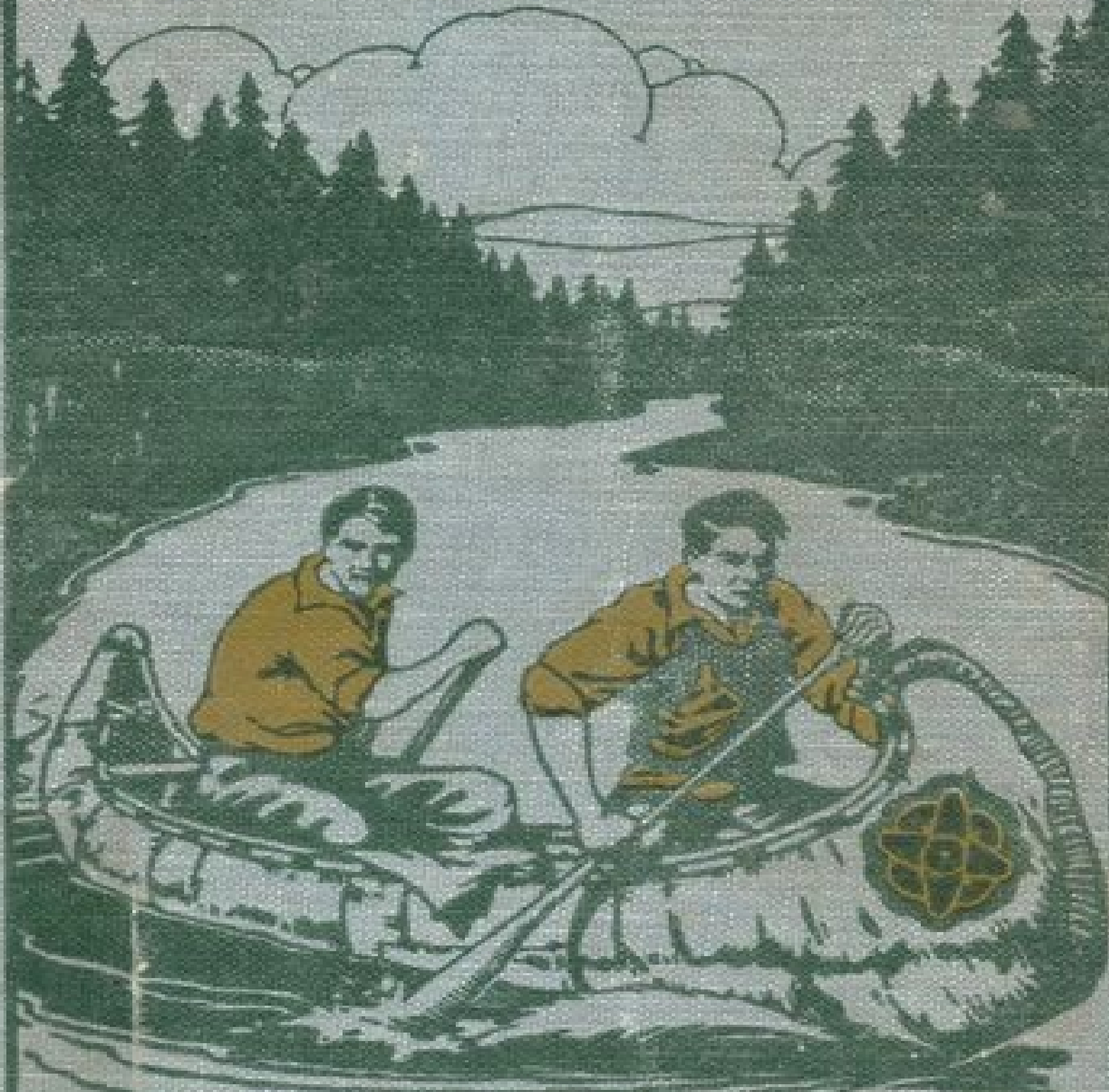


The

GOLDEN BOYS

AND THEIR NEW ELECTRIC CELL



L. P. WYMAN

The Project Gutenberg EBook of The Golden Boys and Their New Electric Cell, by
L. P. Wyman

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Frontispiece

**Foot by foot the Sprite crept up to the Winner till the
two boats were racing side by side.**
(The Golden Boys and Their New Electric Cell) [Page](#)

**THE GOLDEN
BOYS
AND THEIR
NEW ELECTRIC
CELL**

BY L. P. WYMAN, PH.D.
Dean of Pennsylvania Military College

AUTHOR OF

*"The Golden Boys at the Fortress," "The
Golden Boys in the Maine Woods," "The
Golden Boys with the Lumber Jacks," "The
Golden Boys on the River Drive."*

Title Page

A. L. BURT COMPANY
Publishers New York

THE
GOLDEN BOYS SERIES



A Series of Stories for Boys 12 to 16 Years of
Age

BY L. P. WYMAN, PH.D.

Dean of the Pennsylvania Military College

The Golden Boys and Their New
Electric Cell

The Golden Boys at the Fortress

The Golden Boys in the Maine Woods

The Golden Boys With the Lumber
Jacks

The Golden Boys on the River Drive



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THE GOLDEN BOYS AND THEIR NEW ELECTRIC
CELL

Made in "U. S. A."

THE GOLDEN BOYS AND
THEIR NEW ELECTRIC CELL



CHAPTER I.

THE NEW CELL.

"Say, Jack, do you have any idea that this thing is going to work?"

"I don't know, Bob, the theory is all right, but how it will work out in practice is a cat of another color; one thing is sure, though, and that is if it don't work we are out of the running in the race, for the new boat the Jenkins boys have just bought, will run circles round the Sprite."

"Well, we'll soon know, for it's about ready to test."

This conversation took place one afternoon in the latter part of July in the basement of a house in Skowhegan, Maine. The room was fitted up as a combined workshop and laboratory, and a single glance would indicate that the two boys were by no means novices, for it contained many expensive and intricate pieces of machinery.

Jack and Bob Golden, 15 and 17 years old respectively, were sons of a rich manufacturer, who had made a large part of his fortune through his own inventions. Mr. Golden was an indulgent father and seeing that his inventive genius had descended to his sons, had fitted up a modern machine shop and laboratory for them and had supplied them liberally with money for experiments. He had by no means been disappointed in the results, for although they were but boys, they had already worked out several designs, which had been patented and had proved very successful.

Mr. Golden was proud of his boys and with good reason. They were large for their age, Bob standing 5 feet 10 inches in his stockings and Jack being but two inches shorter. They were fine, manly, looking fellows, and their clean-cut open faces told that they were generous to a fault and were boys to be trusted.

The rest of the family consisted of Mrs. Golden, a small lovable woman, and a daughter Edna, 14 years old, who was almost worshipped by her big brothers. Altogether they were as happy and jolly a family as one would find in a long journey.

Through the center of the town ran the Kennebec river, and six miles to the north lay a beautiful sheet of water, five miles long by two wide, known as Hayden Lake. Here the boys kept their motorboat, and as Mr. Golden had a large cottage on the shore of the lake, the family spent the greater part of the summer there. The shores of the lake were dotted with cottages, and probably thirty or more motor boats were owned by the people who made the place their summer home. During each summer many races were held, and proud indeed was the boy or man who secured the blue ribbon given to the winner of the final race held the first week in August.

"I say, Jack," shouted Bob from the farther side of the room where he was closely watching a piece of electrical apparatus, "shut down the dynamo, will you? I want to look at these cells and see how they are coming. We ought to have about enough in the first one."

"Right you are, son!" replied Jack as he turned a lever, and as the hum, which had filled the room ceased, he added, "There you are."

Bending over a glass tank, which was about 12 inches square by 8 deep, and nearly filled with dilute sulphuric acid, Bob disconnected two wires and reaching in his hand, lifted out a cylinder of metal about 6 inches long and 1½ inches thick.

"Hurrah," he shouted, "she's almost full. Now in about a minute we'll know whether or not we've wasted our time during the last week. Have you got those caps all ready and is the motor in trim?"

"Sure thing," replied Jack. "But say, Bob, I'm mighty nervous; suppose it don't work."

"Well," said Bob slowly, "it won't be the first time we've had to try again. If there is any trouble I feel sure it's in the caps, for this manganese dioxide was made by the electric current, and if the caps make it decompose into manganese and oxygen, the same amount of electricity will be produced as was used in making it. It's the same principle as the regular storage battery, only we are going to do without the plates and sulphuric acid."

"That's all right," said impatient Jack, "but hurry up and hitch it on and let's get the anxiety over with."

While talking, Bob had screwed on to each end of the cylinder a metal cap which

had attached to its middle an insulated wire. He now laid the cylinder on a table and fastened each of the wires to a terminal of a small, but powerful electric motor.

"All right now, switch her on and let's see her hum."

Instantly Jack threw over the lever, but, alas for the hopes of the boys, nothing resulted. As they looked at each other keen disappointment was evident on both faces. Almost instantly, however, Jack grabbed his brother by the arm and almost shouted.

"Well, if I'm not the original clumsy Claude."

"What is it? Tell me quick."

"Why, don't you see? I gave you two positive caps instead of a positive and negative."

Bob quickly picked up the cylinder, and a glance told him that his brother was right. Quickly unscrewing one cap he replaced it with a similar appearing one, but which was marked — instead of +.

"Now we're off again, switch her on," and this time, to their intense delight, no sooner was the switch thrown than the little motor sprang to life, and the armature began to revolve with a whirl which seemed to shout success to the two boys. Catching hold of each other's hands they danced about the room fairly shouting their joy.

"For mercy sakes, what is this, a new kind of a war dance?" asked a mild voice, and stopping just at the beginning of a wild yell, the boys saw that their father had entered the room.

"Oh, dad," cried both boys, running to him and catching him by the arms. "It works, it works. Just see it go."

"Well, well, so it does, so it does," said Mr. Golden eagerly. "Boys, I certainly congratulate you; you have done a big thing and if it works as well as it seems to be doing, it will be one of the greatest inventions of the day."

"Now," said Jack, "we must see how long it will—hold on a minute," and to their amazement he rushed to the back door flung it open and dashed across the yard. He was gone fully five minutes and when he returned was panting for all he was

worth.

"Didn't you see him?" he demanded.

"See who?" asked Bob.

"Why, sure as I live, Fred Jenkins was looking in that window. He lit out, though, and got away before I could get out."

"What do you suppose he wanted?" asked Mr. Golden.

"Well, I'll tell you, dad," replied Bob. "Ever since we came down from the lake Fred and Will Jenkins have been trying to find out what we've been doing. You know they almost got us on that new vibrator we invented, owing to our carelessness in leaving it on the table one day when they came in."

"Yes," broke in Jack, "and they are just mean enough to sneak round and try to steal our new storage cell."

"We've got to be mighty careful this time," continued Bob, "and not let one of those caps get into their hands, for the secret of the whole thing is in them, as it is the action of the different metals composing them which starts the manganese dioxide to decomposing and converts its chemical energy into electricity."

"Well, come on boys," said Mr. Golden as soon as Bob had finished. "Your mother sent me down to tell you to come to supper, and we mustn't be late, as she has company."

"All right," was Bob's reply. "Just let me connect the motor with this clock. You see," he explained, "I have it arranged so that when it stops the clock will stop also and we can tell how long it has run."

Several times that evening the boys ran down to the basement to see if the motor was still going, and as it was humming merrily at 10:30, they decided to go to bed and trust to the clock to tell them when it stopped.

Early the next morning they rushed to the laboratory before they were half dressed, to find the motor silent and the hands of the clock pointing to 4:35.

"Whoop," shouted Jack, as he caught sight of the face of the clock, "that's almost twelve hours, just think of it Bob. One of those cylinders will run the Sprite ten or twelve hours, and it wasn't full either."

"It's sure great," returned Bob with no less enthusiasm. "I guess we'll show the Jenkins some sailing now."

"That's what we will," agreed Jack. "Now we must get busy and fill some more of those cylinders."

CHAPTER II.

JACK TAKES A BATH.

"Come there, I say, are you going to sleep all day?"

Jack Golden was just dreaming that he had run the Sprite into a big rock and was much relieved to find that the resulting thump was nothing more serious than the bang of a pillow thrown at his head by his brother.

"Hey, cut that out," he mumbled, but half awake. "What time is it, anyway?"

"Time you were up and dressed," was Bob's answer. "Today is Wednesday, and the race is Saturday, and, take it from me, we have a lot of work cut out for us before then if we are going to get the Sprite ready."

"I guess that's right, all right," was the sleepy answer. "If we're going to get that new motor installed in the Sprite, we sure have got to hustle. I'll be dressed in less than half a shake."

It was not yet 5 o'clock, but the Golden boys were early risers, especially when they had work to do.

Quickly dressing, they rushed down to the laboratory where they found old Mike busily engaged sweeping up the dirt they had made the day before. Mike McGinty was an Irishman and was very proud of that fact. It was his boast that "Ivery bone in my body is pure Irish, and don't you fergit it, young feller." He was about 40 years old, and for the last twenty years had been man-of-all-work for the Goldenes. He was very quick witted, good natured, had a decided mechanical turn, and his "byes," as he called Bob and Jack, were "the finest iver," and woe betide the person who said anything against them in his hearing. A good part of his time was spent helping the boys in the laboratory, and he was so careful and trustworthy that they found his help almost indispensable.

While waiting to be called to breakfast, the boys packed up what tools and

material they would need, for as soon as possible they intended to start for the lake and put a new twenty horsepower electric motor in the Sprite. Jack had just put the last tool in place when the breakfast bell rang.

As soon as the meal was finished, Bob said: "Jack, you run over to the garage and bring round the big car and Mike and I will get the stuff up from the lab."

"Bejabers and do ye'es think ye're agoing to take all that truck in the car?"

"Sure, Mike, there's lots of room in the back. Here's Jack now. Easy now with that motor and don't for mercy's sake, drop it. If we break it there'll be no time to get it fixed."

In addition to the tools and motor they were taking a lot of cooked stuff, for they did not intend to come down till they had finished, and as the family were not at the lake just then, there was no one to cook for them, and the boys did not want to take the time, although they could cook when necessary.

Soon all was packed in the rear of the car and saying goodbye to the folks, who had come to see them off, they started with Bob at the wheel, Jack beside him, while Mike sandwiched himself in the back seat.

It was a run of about ten miles to the cottage, as it was at the extreme upper end of the lake, but Bob was a fast driver, and in about thirty minutes their destination hove in sight.

"Well, byes, here we are, right side up wid care, bejabers," shouted Mike, tumbling out of the machine as it came to a stop. "Sure and I thought I'd break ivery blessed Irish bone in me body bumping round wid all that truck."

"I guess Irish bones must be pretty strong," laughed Jack, as he unlocked the door of the boathouse.

It was but a few minutes' work to unload, and soon all three were in the boathouse busily engaged taking the old engine out of the Sprite and so rapidly did they work, stopping only for a cold bite at noon, that by 6 o'clock it was all apart and out of the boat.

"Now, Jack, while Mike and I are packing this stuff away suppose you take the canoe and see if you can get a few perch for supper," proposed Bob. "You will find some worms in that pail in the corner."

"Right you are, son, perch is my middle name," replied Jack, and in almost less time than it takes to tell it, he had the little canoe in the water and was paddling across toward a little cove, the best fishing ground on the lake.

"Guess I'll try trolling first," he said to himself, and baiting a hook, he let out about forty feet of line and began rowing at a rate just sufficient to keep the canoe in motion. The fish bit well, and in less than a half hour he had a dozen fine perch flopping about in the bottom of the boat.

"No use in catching more than we can use," he thought, as he reeled in his line and started for the other shore. Hardly had he taken up the oars however, when, looking up, he saw a new motorboat coming rapidly up the pond, and only a short distance away. "That's the Jenkins boys in their new boat, the Winner, and she sure is some boat," thought Jack.

"Hello there, sonny, how they biting?" shouted Will Jenkins, as soon as they were within hearing distance.

"Fair," replied Jack as shortly as possible, for he did not relish being called "sonny" by them.

"Say," shouted Fred Jenkins, "are you going to enter the Sprite in the race Saturday?"

"Mebbe."

"Well, it won't be any use; we can run circles round your old tub with this boat."

"She certainly does look fast," replied Jack.

"Fast? She's a streak, and look at her name—that's no lie."

While talking the Jenkins boys had shut down their engine, and the two boats were only about thirty feet apart.

"Well, so long, we'll see you Saturday, if you can manage to keep in sight," taunted Fred, as he threw over the fly wheel of his engine.

The Winner started off at a good speed straight for the canoe. Probably Fred did not intend to run Jack down, but he evidently purposed to come as close as possible without hitting and give him a good scare. But just as he was going to turn to avoid hitting the canoe, something went wrong with the tiller and the next moment Jack was in the water. He could swim like a fish and shaking the water

out of his eyes he struck out for the canoe which was floating bottom up a few feet away.

"You clumsy Claudes," he shouted as he caught hold of the canoe. "Isn't the lake big enough for you to turn your old scow in?" Jack was mad clear through, for it had looked to him as though Fred had hit him intentionally. Fortunately, the canoe was so light, that it was not stove in, and he had little trouble in righting it and climbing in. Meanwhile, the Winner had come about.

"Say, Jack, I didn't mean to hit you; my tiller rope stuck and I couldn't turn her," said Fred. "Are you all right?"

"I guess so, but the next time you want to give me a wider berth or I'll be tempted to put a head on you."

"Ho, ho, hear the young bantam! Suppose you learn how to spell able."

Jack said nothing more but paddled about and managed to pick up all but two or three of his fish, while the Winner headed down the lake and was soon lost to sight round the bend.

"Just the same I don't believe he tried very hard not to hit me," muttered Jack as he headed the canoe toward the cottage.

He found that Bob and Mike had just finished packing away the old engine and told them what had happened.

"Begorra," said Mike, "that was a mean trick. If I had them two young saplin's in me hands I'd rap their two heads together, so I would."

"Well," said Bob, "perhaps it was as Fred said and only an accident, but he ought to be taught to be more careful. However no great harm is done and now let's go up to the house and get some supper; I'm hungry enough to eat those fish raw."

Supper over and the dishes washed, it was nearly 9 o'clock, and the boys decided that they would go to bed and be up bright and early in the morning.

It seemed to Bob that he had hardly touched the pillow when some one began to shake him and opening his sleepy eyes he saw Mike standing by his bed, holding a lantern in his hand.

"Jump up and dress quick," he said, "some one is trying to get in to the boathouse. I was smoking a last pipe by the window and saw him sneaking

round."

By this time Jack also was awake and in less than a minute they were out of bed and had pulled on trousers and shoes.

"Now, Mike, you slip down by the shore, and Jack and I will go round through the woods. Go easy now, for I want to find out who it is."

The boathouse was about 100 feet from the cottage, and the boys crept quickly through the trees, which were not very dense. It was a bright moon-light night, and as they emerged from the woods and were within about twenty feet of the boathouse, they saw two boys close to the house, evidently trying to get a window open.

"Come on now," whispered Bob, "let's make a rush for them."

Springing from the bushes the two boys darted toward the boathouse, and before the intruders could recover from their surprise, they were grabbed and thrown to the ground. It is not to be supposed that they gave in without a struggle, and for a few moments the fight waged fast and furious. But the Golden boys were strong and the fight was over by the time Mike showed up.

"Ah, I thought so," muttered Bob, as he turned his captive over. "What are you doing here this time of night, Will Jenkins?"

"You let me up," was the dogged reply. "Can't a fellow take a walk without being jumped on?"

"Yes," replied Bob, "but you can't get into our boathouse in the middle of the night, not if we see you first."

"Aw, we weren't trying to get into your old shack. We were only walking by and happened to look in," was the sullen answer.

"I don't believe a word of it," said Jack, letting up his captive, who proved to be Fred Jenkins. "They were trying to get in to find out what we have been doing."

"Now see here," said Bob, letting his captive up, "you hike out of here and what's more you keep away, see?"

"Yis and begorry," broke in Mike, "if I catch yees sneaking round here again sure and it's meself that'll be timplted to throw yees into the drink."

Muttering something about getting even, the two crestfallen boys slunk away.

"Now you byes go up to the house and go to bed," ordered Mike. "I'm agoing to sleep in the boathouse, and if them fellers come back here they'll think the auld bye hisself is after them."

"All right," agreed Bob, "I guess that will be the best plan. Come on, Jack, it is nearly 1 o'clock, and we have a big day's work ahead for tomorrow."

CHAPTER III.

THE STOLEN CAP.

"Say, Bob how fast do you suppose that new boat of the Jenkins boys will go?"

"I don't know, but she is sure some speeder and I tell you what, sonny, the Sprite has got to cut through the wet a whole lot faster than she ever did before if we are going to hang on to that blue ribbon."

It was late Friday afternoon, and Mike and the boys had just finished putting in the new motor.

"Jack," continued Bob, "you run up to the house and get those end caps, will you, while Mike and I run the boat out? Just as soon as it gets a little dark I want to give her a try-out."

Jack rushed off to the house while Mike swung open the big doors, and in a few moments the Sprite was floating at the pier. Just then Jack came running wildly down the path leading from the house, and as soon as he reached the wharf asked eagerly:

"Didn't you say you left those caps in the table drawer in the bedroom?"

"Yes, why, didn't you find them?"

"No, they are not there."

"But they must be. I saw them there this morning," insisted Bob.

"Well they might have been there then, but they aren't there now, that is, not unless I've lost my eyesight, and I seem to see you fairly well," replied Jack grimly.

"O pshaw, you probably overlooked them. Come on back to the house and I'll show you where they are," said Bob starting for the house on a run.

"All right," answered Jack, close at his heels, "I'm from Missouri all right."

In a moment the boys, with Mike bringing up the rear, reached the bedroom and as Bob yanked open the drawer, he said, "Some people never can find anything." But the next moment he started back in dismay, for although he had taken everything out of the drawer, the caps were not there.

"Well that's mighty funny," he muttered. "I declare I saw those caps there this morning."

"Who's loony now?" jeered Jack, as he saw the look of dismay on his brother's face.

But the caps were gone and a thorough search of the room, and the entire house as well, failed to disclose them.

"Well, begorra, one thing is certain sure," declared Mike, "them ere caps didn't walk out 'o here all by their lonesome. Somebody sure swiped 'em."

Just then a loud cry of "Bob, Mike, come out here quick," brought them running down the stairs to the back door, where they found Jack on his hands and knees in the path which led to the woods back of the house.

"Say, did either of you go out here since dinner?"

"No," both replied.

"Well then," continued Jack, "you know we had a hard shower just after dinner and these tracks were surely made since then."

"By Jove, that's so," affirmed Bob, examining the tracks carefully. "And look here, these tracks were made by some one wearing sneakers. Now who wears sneakers round here?"

"Why," replied Jack, "Fred and Will Jenkins most always wear them when they are up here."

"That's so, and I'll bet a fishhook that one of them sneaked in here while we were at the boathouse," said Bob. "You remember, don't you Jack, that you saw one of them at the window of the lab when we were trying them? They must have suspected then that we were up to something, and then the fact that we have been hard at work here ever since would make them feel sure that we were doing something to the Sprite."

"Begorra, and I'm jist agoing to go down to their place and make 'em hand 'em over," almost shouted Mike.

"No, no, that won't do," said Bob. "You see, we have no positive proof that they took them, and of course they would deny it."

"But, Bob," spoke up Jack. "We've just got to get those caps back. They can get them analyzed and find out how they are made and then our secret is up the flue, because most anyone who knows anything about storage batteries would know that we use either manganese or lead dioxide in the cylinder, and besides we haven't time to make any more before the race."

"You're right there, son. Now just let me think a minute," said Bob, and then a moment later, "I'm going to try it. It's the only way and it may work."

"What may work?" asked Jack.

"Never mind just now, but I'm going to get those caps back if they haven't thrown them into the lake or break a tug trying."

That night about 8.30, Bob, dressed in a dark suit and wearing sneakers, stole down to the boathouse, and getting into the little canoe, started paddling down the lake. The Jenkins cottage was about three miles from the head of the lake, on the east shore. It stood in a thick grove of cedars, about forty feet from the shore.

Reaching a place, about a quarter of a mile from the cottage, just inside a point of land reaching out into the lake, Bob drew his canoe from the water and hid it in a little clump of bushes near the water's edge. Circling around away from the lake he approached the house from the rear. As he got within a few paces of the cottage, a dog began to bark and Bob shuddered as he knew that they kept a large collie which had a reputation of being very savage.

"He's coming this way sure as guns," thought Bob, as he heard the animal creeping through the bushes. Picking up a stone about as large as his fist, which he felt under his feet, he crept back behind a tree, hoping that the dog would not follow. But this hope was not realized, for the keen-nosed animal had scented him, and with a low growl was approaching. Holding the stone tightly Bob waited for the attack which he saw was inevitable. Just then the moon came out from behind a cloud and by its light, he saw the brute almost upon him and about to spring. Drawing back his arm he let fly the rock. Bob had pitched on the Skowhegan high school team for two years, and his practice now stood him in

good stead, for the stone flew true to the mark and hit the dog right between the eyes. With a single loud yelp he went down, gave a kick or two and was still.

"By Gum, I believe I've killed him," said Bob to himself. "Well, it was either he or I and I'm mighty glad it wasn't I."

Just then some one shouted from the house: "Here, Brave, come here, where are you?"

Bob recognized Fred Jenkins' voice and then he heard two persons coming toward him. Quickly he grabbed hold of the dead animal and dragged it into some thick bushes. Hardly had he done this and dodged back behind the tree, when he heard Fred and Will Jenkins within a few feet of where he was standing.

"Where do you suppose that dog went to?" he heard Fred say.

"I don't know, but I guess likely he heard a rabbit or something and has gone on a chase after it," replied Will, adding a moment later, "Let's go back to the house. If he's on a rabbit trail we won't see him till morning."

"No, I guess you won't," chuckled Bob as, much relieved, he heard them making their way back through the bushes. He waited till he thought they had had time to get back, then carefully creeping on his hands and knees he slowly approached the house.

The front porch, as he knew, was built up from the ground, being faced with lattice work, while both ends were open. Carefully creeping closer, he slipped through the open end of the porch and stretched himself at full length on the ground. To his great disappointment he heard nothing for some time and was about to crawl out when he heard a door bang over his head, and the creaking of chairs told him that the boys had come out on the porch. To his delight he found that he could hear perfectly all that was said. For some time they talked about things of no interest to our hero, and he was getting pretty badly cramped from lying so long in one position, for he did not dare move, but just then he heard Will Jenkins say:

"Fred, when are you going to take those caps down to the city and have them analyzed?"

"Oh, some time the first of the week," was the reply, then he added, "If it wasn't for the race I'd take them down tomorrow."

"Oh, well, I guess next week will do just as well, but I want it done as soon as possible," he heard Will say; then after a short pause he added: "I suppose those two swell heads will make a big howl, but they can't prove anything, and we have sure put them out of the race tomorrow."

"Perhaps we can't prove it," thought Bob, "but here's betting that we come pretty near it."

"Oh, by the way, where did you put them?" asked Fred a moment later to Bob's delight.

"I've got 'em safe," was the reply, "in my coat pocket, in the closet in our room."

"All right, you lock up and I'll go down to the spring and get a pail of water."

Bob heard them go into the house and in a moment one came out and started for the spring, a little to one side of the house, while he could hear the other going about locking the windows. Soon the one with the water returned and in a short time all was quiet. Bob waited a little longer and then carefully crept out and sat down behind some bushes a few feet away.

"I'll wait an hour," he thought as he looked at his watch and saw that it was a few minutes past 10 o'clock.

It was hard work to keep awake and the time passed very slowly, but at last the watch told him that the hour was up. Going to the back of the house, he carefully examined the windows and finally found one that he thought he could unlock.

"Well," he thought, "I never supposed that I would turn burglar, but I'm going to have one big try for those caps, so here goes."

With a strong knife blade he managed to push back the catch, and quietly raised the window. Slowly and noiselessly he crept through and flashing his electric torch about, advanced to the front of the house. Although he had been there several times before, he had never been upstairs and did not know in what room the boys slept. His heart was beating so that he was almost afraid that some one would hear it, as he was beginning to realize that he was engaged in a very serious and dangerous undertaking. He did not know for sure whether or not the two boys were alone in the house, but as he had heard no one else on the porch he thought it probable that the rest of the family was at their home in Skowhegan.

Very carefully he crept up the stairs and a flash of the torch showed him that four rooms opened from the hall. He stood still a moment and listened. The sound of deep breathing in one of the front rooms soon told him which was occupied and stepping to the door a flash showed him two forms in the bed.

"This is the room," he thought, "and that must be the closet, by the head of the bed. It sure couldn't be in a worse place. Wonder if I can get the door open without waking them?"

Like a cat he crept across the room and fumbled with his hand till he found the knob. The door squeaked slightly as he pulled it open, and one of the sleepers stirred and mumbled something about an electric boat. Bob's heart seemed to come almost into his throat, but in a minute the regular breathing of the sleeper reassured him and he edged into the closet. There were quite a lot of clothes hanging there, but he had not searched far when he felt something hard in one of the pockets, and the next instant he had transferred the precious caps to his own pocket.

"Now for a quick get-away," he muttered. But it seemed that Bob's good luck was to end right there, for as he stepped out of the closet his foot caught in something on the floor, and he fell forward into the room with a crash that fairly shook the house.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRY-OUT.

"Oh, Mr. Burglar, please don't hurt me."

This was what Bob heard as he picked himself up from the floor. The room was pitch dark, but it was evident that both the boys in the bed had been awakened by the noise and that they were also in a state of terror. Taking advantage of their panic, Bob quickly found his way to the hall and flashing his light, ran down the stairs and out the front door. Just as he stepped from the porch a revolver shot rang out from an upper window.

"Guess they got up enough spunk to get out of bed," chuckled Bob, as he crouched behind a convenient bush, and he could not resist the temptation to sing out, "Next time you steal anything you better not talk so loudly about where you hide it."

"I'll have you arrested for burglary, Bob Golden," came in angry tones from the window.

"All right, go ahead," replied Bob, "but I guess you'll have a fine time explaining how my property came to be in your coat pocket."

He waited to hear no more, but making his way as quickly as possible to where he had left the canoe, he lost no time in getting it into the water. Jumping in he bent to the paddle with all his strength and in about a half hour rounded the point, just behind which was the boathouse. He found Jack and Mike waiting for him on the porch.

"Gee, I thought you'd never come," said Jack. "Did you get them?"

"I did that," chuckled Bob, getting out of the canoe, and then of course he had to tell them all about it.

"Smart bye," said Mike, when he had finished, "Sure and you'd make one peach

of a burglar."

"Perhaps," said Bob, "but I don't fancy the part, it's bad for the nerves. Now," he continued, "it's about 2 o'clock and we must get some sleep for I want to be up by daybreak and give the Sprite a tryout before any one is about."

"Well I guess I will stay up till you wake," proposed Mike, "in case they try to get those caps back."

"Perhaps that would be the best plan," agreed Bob, "I don't believe they would have the nerve to try to get into the house, but they might try to break into the boathouse to injure the Sprite. It'll only be about three hours, for I want you to call us at 5 o'clock sharp."

It seemed to the boys that they had hardly fallen asleep when they heard Mike pounding on the door. "All right," shouted Bob, "we'll be right down."

Day was just breaking as they came out of the house. It took but a short time to get the Sprite into the lake, slip the cylinder in place and adjust the caps.

"Now," said Jack eagerly, "for the first trip with electricity."

It was surely an anxious moment to the boys, for if anything was wrong, there was but little time for adjustment.

"Push her off, Mike, and then jump in," ordered Bob.

Running the boat out to the end of the wharf, Mike gave her a push, jumping in as he did so, and a second later the Sprite was floating about twenty feet from the shore. Bob at once turned on the juice, as he expressed it, and to their delight the propeller began to beat the water.

"Hurrah!" shouted both Jack and Mike, "She's going."

"Yes, she's going," repeated Bob, heading her down the lake. "Now to see if she will make any kind of time."

Slowly he pushed the switch over notch by notch, and faster and faster the Sprite cut through the water, till Jack declared that they were going fully as fast as they ever went with the old engine. "Have you got on full power?" he asked eagerly.

"No," replied Bob, "only about half. But don't it seem funny not to hear her puff?"

"It sure does," assented Jack, "but push her over and let's see how fast she can go."

Faster and faster the boat cut through the water till it seemed to the boys that they were almost flying.

"Jiminy-jumped-up!" ejaculated Mike, speaking for the first time, "but ye'll get a hot box if ye don't slow her down."

"No danger of that," laughed Bob, "but we're going fifteen miles an hour if we're going an inch, and the best of it is she seems to be running in perfect order."

They sailed about the lake for about an hour and expressed themselves as being well satisfied with the results and confident that they would be able to keep the coveted blue ribbon. As Jack expressed it, "The Winner would have to go a good deal faster that afternoon than she ever had before to justify her name."

"Well, I guess we'd better go back now and get some eats," proposed Bob.

"Second the motion," shouted Jack, "I'm hungry enough to eat almost anything."

On the west shore of the lake, about half way down, was a grove where were a hotel, a summer theater and other places of amusement. Past the lake, about a quarter of a mile distant, ran a trolley line, about ten miles long, connecting the towns of Skowhegan and Madis. A spur track ran down to the lake almost to its edge.

The starting point for the race was directly in front of the hotel, while the course was marked out by buoys and ran down the lake on the east side, up on the west side nearly to the head, then down to the starting point, making a course of about twelve miles.

By 2.30 o'clock a large crowd of people had collected in the grove, for the great race was scheduled to start at 3.00, and promptly on time ten motor boats lined up ready for the starter's shot.

Besides the Sprite and the Winner, there were the Eagle, a fast little sixteen-footer, carrying a ten horsepower, two-cylinder engine; the Chum, twenty feet long with fifteen horsepower, and the Rocket, eighteen feet long, equipped with an engine of fourteen horsepower. The other five boats I will not attempt to describe, as they did not figure prominently in the race.

The Sprite was stationed farthest from the shore, then came the Winner, Eagle, Chum and Rocket in the order named.

Many ugly glances did the owners of the Winner cast at the Sprite and its crew as they took their places, but no words passed between them till just before the start, when in a sneering tone, Fred Jenkins said, "Bet you a hundred dollars we beat you."

"We don't bet," replied Bob.

"Huh, afraid," sneered Will Jenkins. "Tell you what I'll do, I'll make it a hundred dollars or any amount you like that we come in twenty lengths ahead."

"Nothing doing," calmly replied Bob, and at that moment the starter's voice rang out, "Are you all ready?"

"Aye, aye, sir," was the response.

"All right then, stand by," and a second later, crack, went his revolver. Instantly nine fly wheels were turned over, but Bob sitting in the bow of the Sprite turned the switch to the first notch.

CHAPTER V.

THE RACE.

"Hurrah; hurrah!" shouted the crowd, "They're off."

Down the lake swept the ten boats, the Winner taking the lead, closely followed by the Eagle, then came the Chum, the Rocket and the Sprite, the other boats bringing up the rear. By each buoy a boat was stationed to see that there was no cutting of corners. The boats passed the first buoy, about half a mile from the start, in the order named, the Winner being then about fifty feet ahead of the Sprite.

"Say, Bob," asked Jack, "how much power you got on?"

"Only about two-thirds," replied Bob. "But I don't believe the Winner is doing her best yet."

"Well don't let her get any farther ahead if you can help it," advised Jack.

"I won't," replied Bob grimly. "I'm going to try to close up a little now."

Throwing the switch over another notch, the boys were gratified to find that they were creeping up on the Rocket, and by the time they had passed the second buoy at the foot of the lake, they had passed both the Rocket and the Chum, and only a half-length separated them from the Eagle, while the Winner was only a length ahead of its nearest rival.

"I'm going to keep her like this," whispered Bob, "unless they go faster, and I think they are doing pretty near their best."

All the way up the east side of the lake the three leading boats kept at about the same relative distance, while the rest of the fleet was hopelessly out of the race. As they passed the last buoy, about a mile from the end, Fred Jenkins turned and shouted, "Now we're going to show you some speed."

The boys saw him turn his timer and almost immediately the Winner began to forge ahead of the others.

"Look out, Bob," whispered excited Jack, "Don't let her get away from you."

Bob's answer was to turn the switch another notch and in a very short time the Sprite had passed the Eagle and only a length separated the two leading boats.

"I've still got two more notches," whispered Bob, "and I think they're doing their best, and we're gaining on them."

Foot by foot the Sprite crept up on the Winner till, when they were about a half mile from the finish, the two boats were racing side by side.

"Let her out another notch," urged Jack, and as Bob complied, Jack, delighted to see that they were drawing away from the Winner, could not keep from shouting, "Goodby, see you later." But only angry looks answered him.

Just then they passed a small rowboat carrying a lady and two little girls, and a moment later the two boys were startled to hear a wild shriek. Turning they were just in time to see the Winner strike the small boat a glancing blow. The blow was not hard enough to cause the Winner to swerve from her course or to upset the boat, but it threw the girls into a panic, and standing up in the boat, it almost immediately capsized.

"Quick, reverse her," shouted Jack and forgetful of the race Bob pushed back the switch and shot in the reverse, at the same time turning the tiller wheel to its full limit. It took but a moment for the boat to turn and start back full speed, while the Winner shot past, her course unchanged.

"The miserable cowards," muttered Bob, "they aren't going to stop."

In almost less time than it takes to tell it, the Sprite was back by the overturned boat. The woman was clinging to the end, but the two girls were nowhere to be seen. Quickly shutting off the power, Bob shouted: "Dive, Jack, dive." Over the side went Jack, followed a second later by Bob. The water was about twenty feet deep and very clear, and opening his eyes Bob saw something white about ten feet away and a few strokes enabled him to grasp it. Kicking out lustily he was soon above water, holding one of the little girls by the hair. Glancing about he soon spied Jack with the other girl swimming toward the Sprite, which had floated some distance away. However, it took them but a short time to reach her, and they soon had the two girls in the boat. They had not been in the water long,

but both were unconscious.

"Now, Jack, roll them on the bottom of the boat while I start her up and get the woman."

Quickly she was pulled into the boat almost exhausted. "My girls, are they dead?" she moaned.

"I don't think so," replied Bob, heading the Sprite full speed for the wharf, about a quarter of a mile distant.

As the Sprite swung in toward the dock, she was greeted with a tremendous cheer by the crowd, which had watched the rescue, and as the boat struck, eager hands lifted the little girls, who had as yet shown no signs of life, from the boat. It happened that two doctors were present, and they at once set to work to bring back the lives so nearly gone. In a few moments, to the joy of the crowd, one of them began to show signs of life and a little later the other opened her eyes. When told that they would live, the joy and enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds, and Bob and Jack were nearly overwhelmed with praise. Among the first to reach them were Mr. and Mrs. Golden.

"That was worth more, my boys, than winning all the races in the world," was Mr. Golden's greeting, as he took them in his arms, while the tears ran down the cheeks of their mother as she silently kissed them.

"Where are those boys?" shouted a tall, broad-shouldered man as he pushed his way through the crowd, and then, as he saw them, "That was my wife and those were my little girls," and his eyes glistened as he tried to thank them. The boys tried to tell him that it was nothing, but he wouldn't have it so. It developed that he was a rich merchant from Philadelphia, by name, Samuel Wright, who had that summer purchased a cottage at the lake. Before he would let them go he had made them promise that they would call on him the next day or Monday.

"Well, boys, I guess we had better be getting over to the 'Roost,'" said Mr. Golden, as soon as they could get away from the crowd. "Your mother has finished her canning and we are going to stay at the cottage a few weeks."

As the boys stepped on the wharf, they were startled to see two men in the Sprite. They were bending over the motor, but straightened up as the boys approached.

"Fine boat you have here," said the older of the two, a man about fifty years old,

thick set and wearing a full beard. His companion was about five years younger, of rather slight build and smooth face.

"Yes, she's pretty fair," returned Bob rather dryly, for he did not like the looks of the two men and did not relish the idea of them getting into the boat without permission. However, he did not want to appear too churlish.

"Jack," said Bob, "you run up to the hotel and help bring down the stuff while I clean up the boat, will you?" A wink told Jack that Bob did not want to leave the boat alone, so he turned back to the hotel while Bob, seizing the painter, pulled the Sprite up to the wharf. The two men at once got out and, with an apology for their intrusion, turned away.

In about ten minutes the Golden family, including Edna, appeared, well laden with suit cases and bundles.

"Say, Bob," asked Mr. Golden, "do you think you can get us all over in one load? May is going too," May Brown was Edna's chum, of about her age and often spent several weeks at a time at the Golden cottage. She was a very jolly girl, and the Golden family were always glad to have her with them.

"Sure thing," replied Bob, "lots of room."

"Let's hurry then," said his mother, "I'm afraid you boys will catch cold in those wet clothes."

"No danger of that," laughed Jack, "It isn't the first time we've been wet, eh, Bob?"

Soon they were all aboard, bag and baggage and the Sprite's bow was headed up the lake.

But what of the winners of the great race? As the Winner shot over the finish line, not a cheer greeted her, and her owners, seeing only hostile looks on the faces of the crowd, never stopped, but kept on down the lake.

"Confound it," muttered Fred, "I guess we've botched things again."

"Well, it's all your fault," growled Will, "I told you to stop."

"I know you did, but I thought some of the other boats behind would be near enough to pick them up, and I didn't want to lose the race."

"It seems, though, that we didn't exactly cover ourselves with glory by winning," said Will grimly.

"I don't know why it is," argued Fred, "but it seems to me that those Golden boys are always getting the better of us. I wonder why it is that they are so much more popular than we? We have just as much money, if not more, than they."

As is usually the case, these boys could not see that it was their own selfish dispositions which was the cause of their unpopularity.

In a little over twenty minutes the Sprite was at the "Roost's" boathouse, and soon the merry party had landed and carried the baggage to the cottage. The boys, having put on dry clothing, proposed to the girls that a game of tennis would be a good way to pass the time while supper was being prepared, and soon Bob and May were contesting every point with Jack and Edna.

That night, after the rest of the family had retired, the two boys sat by the window, in their room, talking over the events of the day.

"Say, old man," Bob suddenly said, "I didn't like the looks of those fellows we caught in the Sprite this afternoon. Sure as guns they were trying to find out all they could about that motor. They didn't act right when they saw us."

"Well, I guess you're right," returned Jack. "I think we had better get that cell patented as soon as possible, before some one steals it."

"No, I don't want to do that yet. I have had something in mind for quite a while and I want to keep the construction of that cell a secret for at least a year."

"What's your idea?"

"Well, you remember reading, a while ago, in the Boston paper, that a prize of fifty thousand dollars had been offered to the first one to fly across the Atlantic. The difficulty has been," he continued, as Jack nodded assent, "that an airship can't carry enough gasoline, but we could take enough of those cylinders to send an aeroplane around the world."

"Gee, wouldn't that be great? Do you suppose father would let us try it?"

"I don't know, but I mean to ask him and if he gives his consent we'll have a try at it next summer. Now you see why I don't want to patent the cell. If the secret is known, even if it is patented, some one might get round it in some way and

beat us."

"Great head you've got, old man, and we'll do it, take my word for it, but I'm sleepy, so here goes for bed."

In a short time both boys were sound asleep, but if they had known of the exciting events and dangers they were to pass through during the next few days, it is doubtful if their dreams would have been as pleasant.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME ONE ELSE TAKES A BATH.

The next day was Sunday, and the entire family, including Mike, attended church in the village of East Madison, about a mile from the cottage. The afternoon was spent in reading and talking, for the boys never went on the lake Sunday, except in case of necessity. Soon after breakfast the next day, Jack and Bob were sitting on the porch discussing plans for the day, when they saw a rowboat, containing two men, rounding the point. They watched them, with no particular interest, till it was evident that they were making for their wharf, then suddenly Jack declared, "They are the men who were in our boat the other day."

"So they are," affirmed Bob, "Wonder what they want?"

"Guess we'll have to wait and see," advised Jack.

By this time the boat was within a few feet of the dock, and soon she was tied and the men were approaching the house.

"Good morning, boys," said the older man, pleasantly, as they reached the steps. "Good morning," replied both boys. "Won't you come up and sit down?"

"Thanks," and both accepted the invitation. "We've come up to have a little business talk," began the older man and without waiting for the boys to speak, he continued, "My name is Robert King, and this," indicating his companion, "is William Reed. We are from Boston and are spending a few days at the hotel down the lake. Now we want to buy a motorboat, and seeing yours Saturday, we thought we might be able to strike a bargain with you."

"Sorry, sir," broke in Bob, "but she is not for sale."

"That's too bad," said Mr. King, "for she is just what we want. Of course," he continued, "we could get one like her, but it would take several days and we don't want to wait, as our time is limited. Now I'll tell you what we'll do. We are

both rich men and money is no object to us, so we get what we want, and we are willing to pay you one thousand dollars for the boat."

This, as the boys knew, was considerable more than the Sprite was worth, but Bob gave Jack a slight wink as he said:

"That's a very generous offer, and much more than the Sprite is worth, but we don't wish to sell."

"Suppose we make it two thousand dollars," spoke up Mr. Reed.

"Nothing doing," replied Jack.

"Then you won't sell at any price?" asked King.

"No, not at any price," repeated Bob.

"Well, would you rent her to us for a few days?"

"Sorry, sir, but you see our vacation will be over in a short time, and we want her to use every day," replied Bob.

"Very well, then, we'll bid you goodbye," said Mr. King, as they both arose, but the look he gave them was by no means as pleasant as the one with which he had greeted them.

As soon as the two men were out of hearing, Jack turned to his brother, "Pretty thin wasn't it?"

"It sure was; all they were after was to get hold of that new battery. Something tells me that we are going to have trouble keeping our secret."

At this moment their father came out on the porch.

"Boys, can you take me across? I want to catch the nine-thirty downtown."

"Sure thing," answered Jack, "but we'll have to hustle, as it's after nine now."

On the way across the boys told their father about the visit of the two men and he agreed with them as to their motive. They landed Mr. Golden just in time for his car and, as they were casting off, they saw Mr. Wright running down the wharf towards them.

"Don't forget, boys, that you are coming to see us today."

"All right, sir," replied Bob, "We'll be down right after supper."

"And bring your sister and her friend with you," invited Mr. Wright.

"We'll do that," answered Jack eagerly.

The boys made good time back to the cottage, and spent the rest of the day playing tennis with the girls and swimming in the lake. As soon as supper was over, accompanied by the two girls, they started down the lake to make their promised call.

"Hope to goodness they don't make a big fuss over us," grumbled Jack.

"Oh, you are too modest," declared Edna.

They spent a very pleasant evening with the Wrights, although poor Jack's worst fears were realized, for it seemed that Mr. and Mrs. Wright could not praise them enough for saving their children. The two little girls, who were twins about ten years old, were very profuse with their thanks, fairly hugging both boys, to their embarrassment, which, however, greatly delighted both Edna and May. To their great surprise, Mr. Wright presented each of the boys with a very pretty gold watch "Not," he said, "to pay you for saving my girls, for I could never do that, but as a slight token of my gratitude."

About nine o'clock they said good night and started for home. It was a beautiful evening and, although the moon was not yet up, the stars helped to make the darkness less intense. Bob ran the Sprite at about half speed, for, although they had an electric searchlight, he did not want to take any chances with the girls on board. They were about half way home and near the middle of the lake, when suddenly a rowboat loomed up dead ahead, and coming directly toward them. In it were two men. One was at the oars, while the other was sitting in the bow. In a moment the two boats were within speaking distance and a voice, which both boys recognized as King's hailed them.

"I say, boys, can you give us a few matches; our lantern has gone out and we haven't a single one left."

It happened that Bob had a box of safety matches in his pocket, and always willing to oblige, he shut off the power and soon the rowboat pulled up alongside. Reed caught hold of the side of the Sprite to steady his boat, while King dropped his oars and stood up in the boat, stretching forth his hand as if to take the box which Bob was holding out to him. But suddenly he was

dumfounded to see, shining from King's hand, the barrel of a revolver.

"Now, young fellow, we are desperate men and want no fooling. Just hand over that cell you are using to run that boat, and be mighty quick about it, too."

"Why—why—what do you mean?" stammered Bob, for he was so amazed at the turn affairs had taken that he could hardly speak.

"Quick, now, or we'll throw you all into the lake."

"Oh, Bob," whispered Edna, "let them have it or they'll kill us."

By this time Bob had partially recovered his senses, and his quick brain was trying to figure a way out of the difficulty, for he did not intend to give up the cell if he could help it. Fortunately, however, the problem was solved for him in a very unexpected manner. The stern of the rowboat was directly opposite the stern of the Sprite where Jack was sitting. The latter, quickly taking in the situation, rose to his feet, and suddenly giving a spring, landed, with his full weight, on the stern of the light rowboat. Under his one-hundred sixty pounds, the boat gave a heavy lurch and in a second King had lost his balance and fallen over backwards into the lake. Both girls screamed and Jack shouted as he scrambled back on board the larger boat. "Full speed ahead, Bob."

When the rowboat lurched, Reed lost his hold and before he could recover it, the Sprite was darting up the lake, while a string of oaths from the rowboat followed them.

"My, but that was great work, Jack, old fellow," exclaimed Bob. "I don't know how we would have saved the cell if you hadn't tipped that fellow out of the boat. How'd you happen to think of it?"

"Didn't think of it at all," chuckled Jack, "Just did it without thinking."

"Well," spoke up May, "it saved us and it was a mighty brave thing to do."

"Now, turn off the soft soap spigot," ordered Jack, and they all laughed.

They soon reached the wharf, and, running up to the house, told Mr. Golden what had happened.

"This is serious, indeed," he declared, taking up the phone. He soon had the manager of the hotel on the wire, telling him of the hold-up. The manager, in turn, said that two men, calling themselves King and Reed had been stopping

there for about a week and had started off for a row about eight o'clock that evening. He promised to have them arrested at once if they returned, but doubted very much if they would show up again. He suggested that Mr. Golden call up the police of Skowhegan and Madison and ask them to be on the lookout for them. This he did, describing the two men as well as he could from the boys' description, and the police promised to be on the watch. But although the country round about was well searched, no clue to them was found, but the rowboat was picked up the next morning near the foot of the lake.

CHAPTER VII.

BOB DISAPPEARS.

"It's your turn to get a pail of water, Bob."

"All right, just let me finish this chapter."

It was a couple of days after the events related in the last chapter. All the family were on the porch except Bob, who was inside reading. The drinking water, used by the Goldens, was brought from a spring, about fifty rods back of the house in the woods. The house was supplied with water from a deep well, but all liked the spring water much better for drinking, so the boys took turns going after it.

Bob noticed that it was nearly ten o'clock when he closed his book, took his electric torch and getting a pail from the kitchen, started for the spring. The night was pitch dark, as it was cloudy and there was no moon, but the torch lit up the path in front of him so that he had no trouble in following it. As he reached the spring, he thought he heard a slight rustling in the bushes, but beyond thinking, "Guess that's a rabbit," he paid no attention to it. He was bending over the spring to fill his pail, when suddenly he was grabbed from behind, jerked over backwards and, before he could cry out, a hand was placed over his mouth and he felt himself held to the ground by two men.

"Not a sound, if you value your life," hissed one of them, and then a gag was thrust into his mouth and he was rudely turned over on his stomach.

"Quick, Bill, hand me those ropes," whispered one of the men, and in another minute his hands were securely bound behind his back.

"Now let's get him out to the road as soon as we can," said the man who had done all the talking, and whose voice Bob recognized as belonging to the man he knew as King.

He was roughly pulled to his feet, and with King clinging to his right and the

other, whom Bob supposed to be Reed, hanging tightly to his left arm, they started for the road, about a half mile distant. The path was very rough, and as they flashed their light but seldom, it was some time before they reached the road. As they climbed the last fence, Bob could see dimly a large car standing by the roadside. Taking a large handkerchief from his pocket, King bound it tightly over Bob's eyes and ordered him to get into the back seat of the car. Poor Bob had to do as he was ordered, and was quickly followed by King, while the other man took the wheel.

"Now, hit her up, Bill," whispered King, and the car bounded ahead.

"It seems to me that Bob's an awful long time getting that pail of water," said Edna, getting out of the hammock. "I wish he'd hurry up, I'm nearly choked for a drink."

"Same here," declared Jack. "He's been gone long enough to get a dozen pails. Guess I'll go meet him and hustle him up a bit."

So saying, he got his electric torch from the house, and started off along the path. He was somewhat surprised not to meet Bob, or to hear his merry whistle, but was not alarmed till he reached the spring and, flashing his light around, spied the pail, lying on its side a few feet away. "Well, that's funny," he thought, and putting two fingers in his mouth, he gave two long shrill whistles, their signal to each other. Receiving no reply, he made a hurried search of the bushes nearby, but beyond noticing evidence of a struggle, he found no trace of the missing boy.

"Something has happened to Bob," he thought, now thoroughly alarmed. "There's been a fight here and I'll bet a fish hook that he's been kidnapped." In spite of the darkness, Jack nearly flew back to the cottage.

"Dad, dad," he shouted, as he bounded on to the porch, "they've got Bob."

"Who's got Bob? What do you mean?" asked Mr. Golden from upstairs, where he was getting ready for bed.

"I don't know who's got him," cried excited Jack, "but there's been some kind of a fight at the spring, and he's gone."

"It's impossible," declared Mr. Golden, who by this time had come down into the living room, where the family had gathered. "There's no one round here who would kidnap him."

"How about those men who held us up on the lake the other night?" asked May.

"By gracious, that's so," said Mr. Golden. "Why didn't I think of them before? Give me the phone, quick."

As quickly as possible he called up the police of all the towns nearby, and told them what had happened. They all promised to be on the watch and to do all they could to catch the kidnappers.

"That ought to get them," he declared, as he hung up the receiver. "Bob's been gone only about an hour, and they can't have taken him very far yet."

"Oh dear, Oh dear! Do you suppose they will harm him?" sobbed Mrs. Golden.

"No, my dear," assured her husband, trying to calm her, "I don't think they will dare to hurt him. If it is those two men who have him they will try to make him disclose the secret of the cell, for that's undoubtedly what they are after."

No one in the house thought of going to bed, but sat around eagerly listening for the ring of the phone. Suddenly, at eleven-fifteen, it rang and Mr. Golden eagerly grabbed up the receiver.

"Is this Mr. Golden?" came the voice over the wire.

"Yes, yes," he replied eagerly, "Who is talking?"

"This is Switzer."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Switzer. Any news?"

"Nothing much, but Joe has just come in and says that a big car just went over the bridge at about forty miles an hour. He shouted to them to stop, but they paid no attention, except to turn on more speed, and they were going so fast that he couldn't stop them nor get their number. But he's started off in his car and is going to try to follow 'em, but I'm afraid it's not much use."

Switzer was chief of police of Skowhegan.

"Well, let me know at once if you hear anything," said Mr. Golden as he hung up the receiver. Then he told the rest what he had heard, adding, "There's no telling which way they are heading, even if it were they, which, of course, is not at all sure."

The hours dragged slowly on. From time to time the phone rang, but it was

always the same; no other clue had been found.

"If he is not found by eight o'clock," said Mr. Golden, "I shall telegraph to Boston for a detective."

Meanwhile, what of the missing boy? The car, into which he had been thrust, started off at high speed, and although he tried his best to keep track of its direction, it was impossible, and in less than ten minutes he had lost all idea as to which way they were going. He was unable to speak, owing to the gag in his mouth, and not a word was uttered by either of the men as the car rushed on through the night. They had been traveling for, what seemed to Bob, nearly two hours, and his bonds were cutting his wrists cruelly, when suddenly the car slowed up and the character of the road changed. From its roughness and the slow pace at which they were now moving he judged that they must be passing over a woods road. After proceeding in this manner for perhaps twenty minutes, the car stopped and for the first time, the man at the wheel spoke.

"Well, here we are."

It was Reed's voice sure enough.

King immediately got out and ordered Bob to follow him. "You put the car up, Bill," he said, "and I'll escort our guest into the house."

So saying, he took Bob by the arm and led him forward.

"Now, step up," he ordered; and a moment later he announced, "Now we're going upstairs."

As soon as they reached the top, King led him a few steps and then said:

"Now we'll have a light and then I'll take off your blinders."

He lit a small lamp, and then, to Bob's great relief, removed the gag and blindfold. Bob looked about him and saw that he was in a small bare room containing only a cot and a small table.

"Say," he asked, "what's the meaning of all this, anyway?"

"Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies," answered King. "You'll know all about it in good time."

"Well, just untie this rope, will you? It's cutting into my wrists like the dickens."

"All right, but mind, now, no funny business. I've got a grudge against you for tipping me into the lake the other night, and if you get gay you'll get hurt, that's all."

He at once untied the rope which bound Bob's hands and Bob began to pound them together, for so tightly had they been bound, that they were almost numb.

"Now you can lie down on that cot and get some sleep if you want to, I'm going to bed downstairs."

"Won't you tell me why you have brought me here?"

"Not tonight, I won't tell you anything," was the gruff reply.

So saying, King picked up the light and left the room, and Bob heard him lock the door behind him with a key and also shoot a bolt. He had noticed a single window near the foot of the cot and groped his way toward it. It was unlocked, but on raising it, he found that it was protected by heavy iron bars, not more than three inches apart.

"Well," he thought, "here's a go for sure. Kidnapped in Maine in the twentieth century. Now wouldn't that jar you?" However, dark as the prospect seemed, Bob was a brave boy and by no means lost heart.

"Gee, but the folks will be worried to death about me," he thought as he sat down on the cot. "I'll bet mother is crying her eyes out. Well," he said to himself a moment later, "guess I might as well lie down and try to get some sleep, for I'll be likely to need all my strength before I get through with this mess." So saying, he threw himself back on the cot, which, he found, made a by no means uncomfortable bed. "If they think they are going to make me tell them about that cell, they've got another think coming," he thought, just before he fell into a deep sleep.

The sun was streaming in through the window when Bob awoke, and for a moment, he could not think where he was, then suddenly the events of the night before came back to him, and jumping up, he hastily stepped to the window. He could see nothing, however, but a dense forest. At this moment he heard the bolt shot back and the key turned in the lock. A moment later, Reed entered the room, carrying an old tin waiter on which were a cup of coffee, some sandwiches and a couple of eggs.

"Well," thought Bob, "they don't intend to starve me at any rate."

"Here's your breakfast, kid," announced Reed.

The thought came into Bob's mind that he might overpower the man and make a sudden dash for liberty, but just then he heard King below, and realizing that he would be but a child in the hands of so powerful a man, he quickly gave up the idea. Laying the tray on the table, Reed at once left the room, locking the door behind him. Bob lost no time in falling to, for he was very hungry, and soon every crumb had vanished. In a little more than half an hour, he heard steps on the stairs, and both men came in, locking the door after them.

"Now, kid," said King. "I'm going to tell you what we want with you. We've got you here a good ways from nowhere and you can't get away, and what's more, no one can find you here either. There isn't a road or a house anywhere near, so you can yell all you blamed please for all the good it will do you. Probably you can guess what we want. We happen to know that you have got on to a new kind of a storage battery and we mean to have it. Now, you tell us how it is made and as soon as we can send word to Boston, to our laboratory, and find out that you are telling the truth, we'll let you go. On the other hand, if you are stubborn, and refuse, you'll stay here and get all that's coming to you. We're desperate men and we're going to have it, so you might as well give in at once."

While he had been talking, Bob had been thinking rapidly. That they meant to do as they said, he had not the least doubt, but he didn't intend to give in unless he found it necessary to save his life. "Let me have a few hours to think it over, will you?"

"I'll give you till three o'clock, but don't think you can escape, for you can't. Even if you did get out, we have two of the ugliest dogs you ever saw watching below, and they'd tear you to pieces in a jiffy. Come on, Bill, we'll leave him awhile, but say, sonny," he added, turning to Bob once more, "we don't want to hurt you and you'd better give in and save trouble."

"I'll think it over," was Bob's reply as they went out.

CHAPTER VIII.

BOB ESCAPES—ALMOST

About noon Reed came up bringing Bob's dinner, consisting of potatoes, trout, evidently caught nearby, and a glass of milk. "You better make the best of this," he said, "I'll tell you now that you won't get another bite to eat till you tell us what we want to know."

Bob gave a sudden start. "So, that's your game, is it?" he asked.

"Yes, that's our game, and as you look like a pretty good feeder, I guess it won't take long."

"Perhaps not," said Bob, as Reed left.

Poor Bob! He ate up every crumb of his dinner. The prospect was dark enough, to say the least, but he had not lost heart, for an idea had occurred to him which he intended to put into practice that night. As there was nothing else to do he spent the time lying on the cot thinking. About three o'clock, King looked in.

"Ready to tell us?" he asked.

"Not yet," was Bob's reply.

"All right, just as you say. I suppose the old saying, that you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink, holds in your case, but if this horse don't drink pretty soon, he'll wish he'd never been born." Then, after a moment's pause, he continued, in a kinder tone: "Come now, boy, what's the use? We've got all the trump in this game and you've got to give in sooner or later, so why not do it now and save yourself trouble?"

"You seem to be on top just at present, for a fact," agreed Bob, "but just the same I'm not going to give in just now." King muttered something about him soon wishing he had and left the room.

That night he got no supper. Now, going without his meals did not, in the least, agree with Bob's disposition, at any time, and now he had much more than hunger to rouse his anger, and by eleven o'clock, he was, as he put it to himself, fighting mad.

"I haven't heard any dogs and I don't believe they've got any," he thought. "Anyhow, I'm going to run the risk if I can get through that door." Fortunately, he had not been searched and as he had a good strong jackknife, it had occurred to him that he might cut a hole in the door large enough to get his hand through. He waited till one o'clock, and then began his attack. It was pretty hard cutting, as it was spruce, but he kept steadily at it and in about an hour had a small hole through, and another half hour of hard cutting enabled him to enlarge it sufficiently to pass his hand through, turn the key and slip back the bolt. "Now for it," he thought. "If they've got a dog I'll give him the fight of his life."

Cautiously, he crept down the stairs, which creaked a little in spite of his efforts, holding the open knife in his hand. He finally reached the bottom without any mishap and, so far as he could tell, without being heard. Unlocking the door, he stepped softly out on the porch. It was a beautiful starlight night and, although there was no moon, it did not seem very dark. Bob was just beginning to feel easier, when he heard a low growl and, looking round, he saw a huge mastiff eyeing him a few feet away. "Good dog," he whispered, thinking he might make friends with him, but the brute continued to growl and slowly crept nearer.

Bob saw that he was about to spring and braced himself for the attack. As the dog jumped, the boy drew back his right foot, and with a powerful kick caught him fairly in the stomach. With a low whine of pain, the dog fell back and without giving him time to recover, Bob sprang forward and, seizing him by the throat, plunged the knife blade to the handle in his side. The dog gave one howl and stiffened out.

"One enemy the less," thought Bob as he rose to his feet, but he was not to get off so easily, for just then the door opened and Reed stepped out.

"Thunder and lightning," he gasped, "How'd you get out."

Bob did not stop to explain, but jumping off the porch and started on a run down the path.

"Quick, Jim, he's getting away," shouted Reed, as he started after the escaping boy.

Bob was a fast runner, but he was sadly handicapped by not knowing which way to go in the darkness, and the path was rough. Still, he might have escaped had he not met with a mishap. He had not gone more than a hundred yards, when his foot caught in a vine, and he fell forward on his face, his knife flying from his hand. Before he could pick himself up and start again, Reed was upon him. Bob did not intend to submit to capture a second time if he could help it, and, as he was caught round the body, he gave a sudden squirm, which broke Reed's hold, instantly drawing back his right arm, he struck out with all his strength. The blow was a heavy one, and caught Reed fairly on the nose, making him grunt with pain. It did not, however, put him out of the fight, and before Bob could turn and run, he felt a stinging blow on the ear, which dazed him for a second. He quickly recovered, and grabbing Reed, tried his best to force him to the ground.

Although a small man, he was no means weak, and the struggle waged fast and furiously. Finally, Bob succeeded in getting a half nelson round his neck, and the next instant Reed felt himself hurled to the ground, which he struck with tremendous force. All the fight was knocked out of him, and once more Bob started to run, but alas for his hopes, he was too late, for just then King appeared on the scene.

Bob was so nearly exhausted by this time, that he could make but little headway, and soon King grabbed him round the neck and bore him to the ground. He realized that it would be useless to struggle against this man, for he was almost a giant in strength.

"So you thought you'd give us the slip, did you? Well, you're a slick one, that's a fact, and you're no coward either, but really we can't dispense with your company yet awhile," said the man as he dragged Bob to his feet.

By this time Reed had managed to get on his feet. "D—— the brat," he growled, "he's strong as a moose. My nose is bleeding like a stuck pig, and it feels as though half my bones were broken."

"Well, Bill, we can't blame the kid for trying to get away, but it beats me how he got out of that room, and, say, what was that dog doing? Guess he's no good."

"I don't think he is much good any more," Bob couldn't help saying. "You'll find him on the porch."

"If you've killed that dog, I'll take it out of your hide," growled Reed.

"Easy there, Bill," admonished King, "I won't have the kid ill-treated for trying to get away and defending himself, and, if he had to kill the dog to do it, he had a right to. I admire bravery wherever I see it, but we'll fix things after this so that he won't have a chance to show his spunk to such good advantage."

While talking, the two men had been leading Bob back to the house. Seeing the dog on the porch, Reed turned him over; "Well he's done for all right, confound him. I wouldn't have taken one hundred dollars for that dog," he said.

"Come on now," urged King, "We'll see to him in the morning. I want to find out how this kid got out of that room."

Reaching the top of the stairs and holding up the lantern, which he had grabbed up from the porch, the method was plainly apparent.

"Well I'll be switched," said King. "Bill we ought to be ashamed of ourselves not to have searched him. I never thought of him having a knife that he could cut through that door with. You go down and get a board and some nails, and we'll soon have this fixed."

The hole was boarded over, plenty of nails being used, and as he drove the last one, King said, "Now I'll look him over and see if he has anything else he can use."

Bob knew it would be useless to resist, and so allowed himself to be searched, but nothing was found which they considered dangerous.

"I guess, Bill, one of us had better stay up the rest of the night," said King, as he finished his search. "I don't see how he could get away again, but we won't take any chances."

As they were about to leave the room, Bob asked, "Can't you give me something to eat? I'm awfully hungry."

"Sure thing," replied King. "There's a fine mess of trout downstairs, which Bill caught this afternoon, and I can boil some potatoes in no time. You just tell us what we want to know, and I'll have you a fine meal in less than half an hour."

But Bob was not yet ready to give up. "Never mind," he said, "I guess I'm not so hungry as I thought I was."

They went out and he heard them go down the stairs. Throwing himself on the

cot he groaned, "Oh dear, to come so near to getting away and then fail. But," he thought, "I did my best, and I'll bet Reed's nose will be sore for a few days. If that blow had only caught him on the chin, I might have made it before King got there."

He lay for a long time thinking how he could foil his captors. Suddenly, he sprang up. "Why not?" he said to himself. "It may work if I can carry through the bluff. Anyhow, it'll be better than starving here, and I'm going to try it."

Having decided on a line of action, he once more threw himself on the cot and was soon asleep.

No one came near him till nearly ten o'clock that morning, and by that time, Bob felt, as he expressed it, as though the bottom of his stomach had fallen out.

"How goes it?" was King's greeting, as he entered the room, "Getting pretty hungry?"

"Hungry!" growled Bob, "If you don't look out I may eat you up."

King laughed, "What's the use of sticking it out any longer?" he asked. "You've got to give in or starve."

"I'm beginning to think that's so," replied Bob, "I did intend to stick it out, but I'm too hungry."

"That's the way to talk. Now you tell me all about it, and then I'll bring you up a good dinner. But mind now," he added, "if you don't tell it straight, I'll—I'll, well, your folks will never have the pleasure of seeing you again, that's all."

"Well now, see here," began Bob, "I can't tell you how to make that cell so that you could do it."

"Can't? Why not?" demanded King.

"Because," continued Bob, "the success of it depends on the temperature at which the metals composing the caps are put together, and that point can be determined only by the looks of them, and I couldn't possibly describe it so that any one could detect the right point."

"Then how are you going to work it?"

"Why, didn't you say that you have a laboratory in Boston?"

"Yes, but what of it?"

"Well, why not take me there and let me make it for you?"

King thought a moment and then said, "I don't altogether like that idea, but I'll talk it over with Bill and see what he says."

As he was leaving the room, Bob added, "That's the best I can do. If I should tell you about it, and then you failed, you would blame me, and I'd have to suffer for it."

King was gone about half an hour, and when he returned, he brought a good dinner with him.

"We've decided to take you up, and here's your dinner," he said. "But now listen to me. My future depends on this thing; how, is none of your business, but I'd rather die than fail, so if you try any funny business, you can know what to expect."

"How soon shall we start?" asked Bob.

"We shall start, in the car, as soon as it is dark."

"I don't know," thought Bob, after King had left the room, "whether I'm jumping out of the frying pan into the fire or not, but that dinner looks mighty good to me, so here goes."

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE ROAD TO BOSTON

"Well, the die is cast one way or the other," thought Bob, as he ate the last scrap of his dinner; "that sure did taste good." Then as a sudden thought struck him, he began hurriedly to search his pockets. As good luck would have it, he found a small note book, containing several blank leaves and a stub of a lead pencil. Hastily, he tore out a page and wrote the following note:

"I am confined in a house in the woods, have no idea where, but it must be within twenty or thirty miles of Skowhegan. King and Reed are taking me to Boston tonight, in a car. Secret still safe."

BOB GOLDEN.

Folding the paper, he wrote on the outside, "Will the finder of this paper please send it to Mr. Golden, Skowhegan?" He made several copies of the note, thinking as he did so, "If I can only get a chance to throw these out of the car, one of them, at least, may get to father. I don't know as it will do me much good, but it will let the folks know that I'm still alive."

Supper was brought to him at five o'clock, and at seven, King came up to tell him that they were about to start. "Now, see here, boy," he said, "we don't want to be any harder on you than we can help, and if you give me your word that you won't try to get away, or make any trouble, we won't tie you."

Bob thought he might as well promise as he knew they would make it impossible for him to escape if he did not, and he dreaded being tied, so he gave his word.

"All right then," said King, "but mind now, that you keep it, because if you make any trouble, I'll have to tie you up and gag you."

"Are we going all the way tonight?"

King laughed. "I guess not; if we drove too fast, it would excite suspicion, and we'd have to drive like the dickens to make it in one night. No, we'll make

Portland by daylight and lie low there till dark. But come on, now; there's Bill with the car. I shall have to blindfold you for awhile, for I suppose you are pretty well acquainted round here and I don't intend to let you know where this place is."

He took a large handkerchief from his pocket as he spoke and tied it tightly over Bob's eyes.

"Now mind, you don't take that off till I give you permission," he ordered, as he led him from the room and down the stairs.

As they came out on the porch, Bob could hear a powerful car purring close at hand. He and King got into the rear seat.

"Have you got the suitcases and the rest of the stuff, Bill?" asked King.

"Yes, they're all in back there."

"All right, then, let her go."

Darkness was just falling as they started, and at first, their pace was very slow, as the road was too rough for any but the very slowest speed, at which a car could be run. In about twenty minutes, they came to the end of the woods road and the car turned into a much smoother highway, and Reed sent her forward at a lively clip.

"Now, kid, you get down on the bottom of the car till it gets a little darker," ordered King, and Bob had to obey.

They continued in this way for half an hour or a little more, when King said, "I guess it's dark enough now; you can get up on the seat again, and I'll take that rag off." As soon as this was done, Bob strained his eyes to see if he could tell where they were, but it was too dark to see much, and he was unable to so much as guess their location for some time. In about an hour, however, they passed a large house, which stood very near the road, and he at once recognized it as being but a few miles from Oakland. He was well acquainted with the road, as he had several times driven his father's car to Boston.

Reed was running at about twenty miles an hour most of the time, and instead of passing through the towns, he choose roads, for the most part, which led around them. They lost considerable time in this way, but Bob figured that they, would probably get to Portland before daybreak.

About one o'clock, they were passing over a particularly rough piece of road, when, bang, went one of the rear tires. "Hang it all, there's a blowout," growled Reed, bringing the car to a stop. "But it won't take long to slip on the extra rim."

While they were waiting, Bob noticed that King did not watch him quite as closely as he had been doing, and he managed to slip his hand into his pocket and take out one of the notes he had written. In less than fifteen minutes, Reed announced that the job was finished, and just as they were about to start, Bob, carelessly hanging his hand over the edge of the car, let the note fall to the ground, unnoticed by either of the men. Nothing more worthy of note happened, except that he managed to drop a second note as they passed through the little town of Brunswick, and at about half past four, just as the dawn was beginning to light up the East, Reed drove the car into the yard of a house standing well back from the road.

"Here we are," he announced, and King at once gave a peculiar whistle, which was soon answered by the raising of a window on the second floor.

"Hello, Frank, is that you?" asked King.

"Yes," was the answer. "What do you want?"

"Come down here, and we'll tell you," answered King, and the window was at once shut. In a few moments, they were joined by a short man, about forty years old, who Reed greeted as Frank, shaking his hand cordially.

"We're on our way to Boston, and we've got a young fellow here, who don't like our company any too well," explained King with a slight laugh, "and we want you to put us up till night, as it isn't good for our complexions to travel in the daytime. No one here, is there?"

"No, it's all right. Just drive the machine into the barn and come in. I'll have breakfast ready in a few minutes, and then you can turn in. Been riding all night, hain't ye?"

"Yes, and I guess we can do a little something in both the eating and sleeping line," answered King. "We haven't had any eats since we started."

They had a fairly good meal, after which the man called Frank said, "You and the kid can go up in the south room, on the third floor, you know which one, and Bill can sleep on the lounge in the parlor."

"All right," replied King, "Come on, kid."

The room which they entered was small, and contained but a single bed. It was lighted by two small windows, about eight inches square, placed nearly six feet from the floor.

"I guess you'll be safe here with me," declared King, as he locked the door, and put the key in his pocket. "I'm a very light sleeper, and I told Frank to keep his eyes peeled, so you'd better not try to get away."

As Bob made no reply, King, removing only his coat, threw himself on the bed, telling Bob to do the same. As the boy was very sleepy, and somewhat tired from his long ride, he was not long in obeying. Although he did not feel that he was bound by his promise, while they were there, he realized that the chances of escape were so small, that it would be foolish to make the attempt, and deciding to await a more favorable opportunity, he was soon fast asleep.

When he awoke, it was nearly three o'clock, and he was alone in the room. Jumping up, he tried the door, but, as he expected, it was locked. "Gee, but this sort of thing is getting on my nerves," he thought. "When we get to Boston, I'm going to do something desperate, if I have to, to get away."

He could hear some one moving about, on the lower floor, from time to time, but no one came near him till nearly six o'clock, when King came up and told him to come down to supper. After the meal, they waited till it was fairly dark, and then started off again. Nothing of importance happened during the trip, and Bob found chances to drop two more notes as they passed through small towns.

About three o'clock, they reached the outskirts of Boston, and King said, "Now I shall have to blindfold you again, and you will have to lie down on the bottom of the car."

"What for?"

"Never you mind what for," replied King, and then added, "You don't suppose I'm fool enough to let you see where we're going, do you?"

Bob was forced to obey, but fortunately, for his position was far from comfortable, they were not far from their destination, and in less than a half hour the car stopped.

"We're here at last," announced King, as he opened the door of the car, and

taking Bob by the arm, led him up some steps into a house. Once inside, the blindfold was removed, and Bob saw that he was in, what appeared to be, a fairly good-sized, but poorly furnished house. The opening of the door had evidently aroused some one, for the stairs creaked, and glancing up, Bob saw a very small man, with a huge hump on his back, coming down.

"Well, Nip, how's things?" asked King.

"All O. K., sir," replied the hump-back, "but I didn't expect you back so soon."

"No, I suppose not, but we're here and mighty hungry. Can't you give us a cold bite, quick?"

"I guess I can find something. You wait here a minute," and the hump-back went toward the rear of the house.

"We'll go in here and sit down till he's ready," said King, motioning Bob to precede him, into what seemed to be a small sitting room.

They had not waited more than ten minutes, when they heard from the rear room, "All right, sir," and going through a long hall they entered a room, where they found a table set with a plain, but generous lunch of cold meat, bread and butter and apple pie. Bob did full justice to the meal and, as soon as they were through, King said, "Now we'll go upstairs and get a little sleep, but I want to get to work as soon as we can."

He led Bob up some bare stairs, ushered him into a small room on the second floor and told him to make himself at home.

"You'll occupy this room while you're our guest, and as it has been fitted up for just such guests as you, I hardly think you'll leave till we get ready to let you go," King laughed, as he left the room.

The room was lighted by electric light, which King had turned on as they entered, and Bob proceeded at once to take account of stock, as he expressed it. The room contained only a bed and a single chair. It had but one window, and that was heavily barred. On examining the door he was surprised to find that it was made of steel.

"I guess King was right when he said that guests in this room stayed till they were invited out," he thought. "Oh, well, I suppose I must get some sleep while I can, so here goes."

It seemed to Bob that he had hardly fallen asleep, when he was somewhat rudely shaken, and opened his eyes to find King standing by the bed.

"Come," he said, "it's seven o'clock, and I want to show you the laboratory and get to work."

Bob rose sleepily and followed him downstairs. King led the way down to the basement, and into a large room. Bob needed but a glance to tell him that it was a fairly well-equipped laboratory.

"Now, I want you to take a careful look around, see what we've got that you can use, and then, make out a list of what else you want. I'll get them this forenoon, and you can begin work right after dinner. Oh, by the way, how long will it take you to do the job?"

"Well," replied Bob thoughtfully, "In my laboratory at home, I could probably make one in a week, but here, where I'm not used to things, it will probably take me ten days or more."

"Ten fiddle sticks," cried King angrily, "You're trying to fool me. You've got to do it in much less time than that I can tell you."

Bob knew that he could probably make one of the cells in a couple of days at the outside, but he intended to take all the time he could, and watch for a chance to escape, so he said calmly, "All right, if you can do it in less time, you'd better do it."

"Well, well, hurry and get your list made out," demanded King testily.

Bob walked around examining the laboratory and equipment for about a half hour and then asked for paper and pencil. They were quickly supplied, and sitting at a desk in one corner of the room, he soon handed King the following list:

Two pounds of lead nitrate.

One-half pound lead.

One-half pound antimon.

One-half pound copper.

One-half pound tin.

Ten or fifteen pounds of fine sand, suitable for making a mold.

One copper cylinder, eight inches long by 1 and one-half inches in diameter.

"How are you fixed for electrolysis?" he asked, as he handed King the list.

"Guess we can fix you up all right. We've got a good storage battery and two or three glass tanks and considerable platinum. Now we'll go up and see if breakfast is ready," he said, putting the pager in his pocket.

CHAPTER X.

THE DETECTIVE ARRIVES.

"But, father, isn't there something we can do?" asked Jack, for about the tenth time that day. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon of the day following Bob's disappearance. They had waited in vain for any news of the lost boy and at about eight-thirty o'clock, Mr. Golden had got into communication, by telephone, with a well-known detective agency in Boston and they had promised to have one of their best men there on the four-forty train.

"Yes, I guess we can do something now. We'll run across in the Sprite, and catch the four o'clock trolley to town, which will get us there in time to meet that detective, Mr. Sharp."

Glad of anything which promised action, Jack grabbed his cap and started for the boathouse. It had been a terrible day to him, for he was lost without Bob, and the thought that he might never see him again nearly drove him frantic. He and his father were soon in the Sprite speeding across the lake, and as they reached the wharf in front of the hotel, they saw Fred and Will Jenkins just getting into their boat.

"Hello, Jack, heard anything from Bob yet?" asked Will.

"No, not yet."

"Well, let us know when you do. So long."

Jack wasn't sure, but it seemed to him that there was a half sneer to Will's voice, and that both Fred and Will had an uneasy look about them.

"Say, dad," he asked after he had removed the cell from the motor and put it in his pocket, "did you notice anything strange about those fellows?"

"Strange, what do you mean?" asked his father.

"I hardly know, but somehow, I feel it in my bones, that they've had a hand in this business. Look here," and reaching his hand into his back pocket, he pulled out a small knife which he handed to his father, saying, "I found that about thirty feet from the spring this forenoon. It is not rusted any to speak of, so it couldn't have been there long."

"Do you know whose it is?" asked his father.

"I'm not sure," replied Jack, "but I've seen Will Jenkins use a knife which looked a good deal like this one. I'd have asked him about it, only I didn't think of it in time."

"You be sure and tell the detective about it," said Mr. Golden. "Of course it doesn't prove anything, as there are probably lots of knives just like it in town."

By this time they were on the car and in about thirty minutes they reached Skowhegan. As they passed down the street toward the station, they were stopped many times by friends, asking anxiously after Bob and by the time they reached the depot the train was whistling. As it drew in and came to a stop, a small man with a smooth face was the first to alight. There were not many passengers, and Mr. Golden knew most of them. The man who first got off, however, was a stranger, and he seemed to be looking for some one; Mr. Golden stepped up to him and asked if he was Mr. Sharp.

"Right first time," was the reply, "and you must be Mr. Golden."

Jack was then introduced, but he was much disappointed, for Mr. Sharp did not at all answer his idea of a detective. In common with most boys, he had always imagined a detective to be a very mysterious-looking person, while Mr. Sharp was indeed very ordinary in appearance.

The trolley car was waiting only a couple of squares away for its return trip to the lake, and as soon as they obtained his suitcase from the baggage room, they started.

"We'll be up in time for supper," said Mr. Golden, as they boarded the car.

On the way up, Mr. Golden gave the detective an account of Bob's disappearance, including the events which preceded it. As there were but few people on the car, they could talk in low tones with no danger of being overheard. The detective said but little, except to ask a question now and then, but when they were in the Sprite, on their way across the lake, he said:

"Mr. Golden, I want you to give me a careful description of those two men."

"I guess Jack can do that better than I, as I only saw them once, and then took no particular notice of them."

So Jack described them as well as he could, but the detective shook his head.

"Can't place 'em. Your description of Reed would fit a dozen men I know, and while the other one puts me in mind of a fellow I once arrested for counterfeiting, I'm not sure. You didn't notice a scar on his upper lip, did you?"

"No, I thought I told you that he had a mustache."

"So you did, so you did," said the detective, "I must be getting forgetful."

Supper was ready by the time they arrived at the cottage, and as soon as it was over, the detective asked to be shown the way to the spring, and once there, he made a thorough search of the immediate vicinity, but after nearly an hour had passed, he was forced to acknowledge that he had found no clue. As soon as they got back to the house, he called Boston on the telephone.

"Hello, Bill? Yes. I want you to find out as quickly as possible the whereabouts of Jim Edwards. Yes, that's the fellow. Call me as soon as you get any news." He gave the number of the phone and then hung up.

Early in the morning the phone rang, and Sharp was asked for. After a short conversation, he hung up the receiver, saying to Mr. Golden and Jack, who were in the room, "Nothing has been heard of that fellow Edwards since he got out of prison, nearly a year ago. Now, Jack, if you'll run me across in your boat, I'll go down to the village, and don't be surprised if you don't see me for a day or two."

"This is a mighty fine boat you have," remarked Sharp, as they were skimming across the lake in the Sprite. "Is this the new cell?"

"Yes," replied Jack, and then added bitterly, "I wish we'd never made the old thing, then Bob wouldn't have been kidnapped."

"It's wonderful to think of you boys making a discovery like that. Why, do you realize what a tremendous lot of money there is in it?"

"I suppose so, but I can't bear to think of it now that Bob's gone."

They soon reached the hotel wharf, and the detective, taking Jack by the hand,

said, "Keep up your courage, my boy; I don't think they will harm your brother, and sooner or later, we will be sure to find him." So saying, he started off toward the trolley, while Jack pushed off and sadly headed the Sprite for home.

"Somehow, I don't think much of that detective," he thought, as he sped along. "He may be all right, and I suppose he is, but he hasn't got enough snap in him to suit me."

Jack's adverse opinion of Sharp was increased tenfold, when he returned the following night and reported that he had been unable to find a single clue. "By the way," he said, "I tried to find those Jenkins boys to see if I could get anything out of them, but they left town on the early train yesterday, and no one seems to know where they have gone."

It was late the next afternoon. Sharp had gone off early in the morning, saying that he would probably be back that night. Jack had spent the forenoon on the lake with his mother and the girls, trying to cheer them up. Mrs. Golden was rapidly giving away under the strain, while Edna's eyes were constantly red and swollen from crying. Mr. Golden had gone to his office that morning, but had returned on the twelve o'clock car, and they had met him at the wharf and taken him over in the Sprite. It was about four o'clock, and they were till on the porch, talking as usual about the missing boy.

"Say, dad, I don't think much of that detective fellow," Jack was saying, when the phone rang sharply, and he ran into the house to answer it. A moment later he shouted, "Dad, you're wanted on the long distance." Mr. Golden came in quickly and took the receiver.

"Is this Mr. Golden of Skowhegan?" came over the wire.

"Yes."

"This is the police station at Brunswick. A boy has just come in here with a note, which he says he found in the street. It's so covered with dirt, that it's pretty hard to read, but listen and I'll read what we've made out. Can you hear?"

"Yes, yes, go ahead, I can hear all right."

The voice then read the note, which Bob had dropped the night before. As Bob had thought, it didn't tell them much, but it let them know that he was alive and well, and that helped some and made them feel a little better. After Mr. Golden had finished telling them what he had heard, Jack said nothing for some

moments, but sat thinking deeply. Suddenly, he looked up. "Dad," he said, "I want you to let me go to Boston. Bob's there, and I might be able to find him."

"Why, my dear boy, what could you do in Boston. It is a big city," spoke up Mrs. Golden, "and you don't know where they have taken him. Besides," she added sadly, "they might get you too."

"I guess I could look out for myself. Jerusalem, but I've got to do something. I'm tired of this sitting round waiting for some one else to do it all, and," he added sadly, "this all don't seem to amount to a hill of beans. What do you say, dad?"

"Well, I hardly know what to say," replied Mr. Golden. "We'll wait till Mr. Sharp returns, and see if he has any news." But, although they waited till nearly one o'clock, the detective did not come.

They had all gone to bed but father and son. "Come, dad, say I may go," pleaded Jack.

"Well, I'm not at all sure it's the wise thing, but something seems to tell me that I had better let you have your way."

"Hurrah!" shouted Jack. "I'll be off on the five o'clock train."

"No," said his father, "you had better wait till a later train, and perhaps I'll go with you, but I don't want to go till Sharp returns, and now let's go to bed."

Sharp did not return the next morning, and at breakfast, Mr. Golden said, "Jack, I guess you had better take the noon train. If Sharp doesn't come with some news by that time, I'll wait and come later, if I think best."

The thought that at last he was going to do something toward finding Bob filled Jack with joy, and by ten o'clock he was ready to start. He and Mr. Golden went across in the Sprite, after assuring his mother that he would be very careful and not get into trouble.

"Now, my dear boy, be very careful and look out for yourself," said Mr. Golden, as he bade him goodby. "Go to Uncle Ben's tonight, and tomorrow, you had better go to the agency and have them detail a man to help you in your search," and then he added sadly, "It's like looking for a needle in a haystack, but if you don't get into trouble, it won't do any harm."

"Don't worry about me," assured Jack, "I'll look out for myself and," he added,

"I'll find Bob if I have to go through Boston with a fine tooth comb."

The Boston train pulled into the North station at eight o'clock, and as he was pretty hungry, Jack thought he would go into a restaurant just across the street, for supper, before going to his uncle's, as he lived in Winthrop, a town about five miles from the city, across the harbor. As he left the station, he caught sight of a man elbowing his way through the crowd, that made his heart thump.

"On my soul, I believe that's Reed," he said half aloud, starting towards him. As he pushed forward he saw the man turn, and for an instant their eyes met, but the next moment the man had turned, and before Jack could get to him, he was lost in the crowd. He rushed about here and there, but to his dismay, he could not find him.

"That was he, sure as guns," he thought, "and I believe he recognized me."

He realized that his chances of finding him were virtually nil, and with a heavy heart, he entered the restaurant, and after a hasty supper, took a car for the ferry.

It was a very dark night, and a drizzling rain was falling as he stepped on the ferryboat. There were not many people on board, and what few there were, at once went into the cabin to escape the rain. Jack, however, had on a raincoat and stood by the rail, watching the lights of the passing boats, and thinking what hard luck it was to find Reed so soon only to lose him again. The boat was about half-way across the harbor, which is about a mile and a half wide, when Jack felt himself seized from behind, and before he knew what had happened, he was hurling through the air into the dark water below.

CHAPTER XI.

JACK IN TROUBLE.

It seemed to Jack that he plunged down to a great depth, and when he finally rose to the surface, he was gasping for breath. His first thought was to free himself from his raincoat, and as soon as this was done, he struck out for the east side, as he thought he was a little more than half way across. Although a powerful swimmer, the choppy sea, caused by a brisk wind, and his clothing, which seemed to drag him down, made his progress difficult. He weakened rapidly, and before he was half way to the shore, fear struck him that he might not be able to reach it. Raising himself as far out of the water as possible, he looked about him, but it was very dark, and he could see but a few feet. No help was at hand, and summoning all his strength, he started to swim once more toward the lights, which now seemed farther away than at first. But his strokes were now very weak and his progress slow; still he kept doggedly on, for he was not a boy to give up so long as a particle of strength remained.

After what seemed to him hours of struggle, he felt that he could keep up but a few moments more, and a dread fear seized his heart as he gave up hope. He thought not so much of himself, but of the father and mother, who might never know what had happened to him, and the thought nerved him to one more last effort.

"It's no use," he thought, after taking a few feeble strokes, "I can't hold out any longer, I'm so tired."

He tried, but his arms seemed numb and utterly refused to obey his will, and he was about to go under, when he felt himself seized by the collar and in another moment, found himself lying on his back on the bottom of a skiff, gasping for breath.

As he slowly began to recover his strength, he looked up and saw that the boat contained two men, but he was unable to see their faces in the darkness.

"Well, here's a rum go," he heard one of them say.

"Right you are," replied the other. "That chap was about all in, I reckon. Lucky for him we came along when we did."

"He'd sure gone down in another minute," declared the first speaker, "I'd never have seen him, it's so tarnational dark, if I hadn't happened to hit him wid the oar."

"What'll we do with him?" asked the other.

"Dunno, guess we might's well take him to the hole; might have something on him worth while," was the answer.

They evidently thought that the boy was unconscious, and, in fact, so nearly played out was he, that he was unable to speak. The man at the oars, began to row again and soon the light boat was going at a lively pace, as they were rowing with the wind. Shortly, Jack became conscious that they were passing under a wharf, as the pace became slow, and occasionally the boat hit against the piling. The continued in this way for perhaps ten minutes, and then he felt the bottom of the boat grate on the shore.

"See if he's come to, Jake," whispered the man who had been rowing.

His companion reached over and shook him roughly by the arm.

"I'm very much obliged to you for pulling me out," said Jack, weakly. "I sure thought it was all up with me."

"That's all right," said the man in a low voice. "Think ye can stand up?"

"I don't know, but I guess so. I'll try."

Helped by the man, he succeeded in getting to his feet and crawled over the side of the boat to the ground.

"I'm pretty wobbly," he gasped, "but I guess I'll be all right in a few minutes."

"Here, Pete, you take hold of one arm and I'll take the other, and I guess we'll get him along all right."

Jack stumbled along between the two men, for what seemed a long ways, but which was in reality only a few rods. He was too tired to take much notice of his surroundings, but soon saw, by the light of a dark lantern, which one of the men

carried, that they were passing between heavy piles. Soon they came to a stone wall and it seemed to Jack that they must be at the end of their journey, but as they came closer, the light of the lantern showed a small hole, just large enough for a man to creep through.

"I'll go first," said the man with the lantern, "then let the kid follow."

He reached through and set the lantern down on the other side, and by dint of much squeezing and grunting, managed to push himself through.

"Now you go, kid," ordered the other man.

Jack was much smaller than the man who had gone first and crawled through without much difficulty, followed a moment later by the second man.

"Now follow me, and mind you, keep close to the wall," whispered the man who carried the lantern, "and don't ye make any noise."

Jack began to fear that he had fallen into evil hands, but there was nothing for him to do but to obey and follow where they led.

The light was turned off, and they crept along in the darkness, Jack keeping one hand against the wall for some distance, when the man who led whispered, "Now, ye wait here a minute." Jack stopped, and in a minute heard the man give four raps on what sounded like a door. Almost instantly he heard a bolt shot back, and the next instant a door was flung open, letting out a flood of light. By its rays he could see that they were in a narrow passageway between two stone abutments.

"What ye got there, Jake?" asked a woman's voice.

"Dunno," was the somewhat surly reply. "Some kid we pulled out the harbor. Was about all in when we fished him out."

"Well, seems to me yer taking a mighty big risk fetching him in here," said the woman somewhat sharply.

"Now don't ye go to butting in, old woman," snapped the man. "I guess me and Pete knows what we're about."

They had entered the room, and Jack tumbled into a chair, too tired to stand up. He looked about him and saw that he was in a small room with a low ceiling and dirty with what seemed the accumulation of years. The woman who had

admitted them might have been anywhere between thirty and sixty years old, but so dirty and slack looking was she, that it was impossible to guess her age any nearer. He now got a good look, for the first time, at the men who had saved him, and saw that their appearance was wholly in keeping with their surroundings. The older of the two might have been sixty, while the younger was ten or fifteen years his junior. Both had hard rough faces, and his heart sank as he realized how completely he was in their power.

"Well, boy, have ye got yer wind back yet?" asked the older man.

"I guess so," replied Jack, "but I still feel pretty weak.

"S'pose so," grunted the man. "Now how'd ye get into the wet?"

"I was crossing on a ferryboat and some one came up behind me and pushed me over."

"Pshaw, ye don't say so!" exclaimed the younger man. "Now what de ye suppose he did that for?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Jack, and then as nothing more was said for a moment, he continued, "I feel stronger now, and if you will kindly show me to the street, I think I'll go, and," he added, taking a pocketbook from his inside coat pocket, "if you'll take this ten-dollar bill for your trouble, I'll still feel very thankful to you for saving my life." From the look on the faces of the two men, as they saw the pocketbook, he realized that he had made a grave mistake, but it was too late now.

"Not so fast, sonny," said the older man, "don't ye think yer life is worth more than ten dollars? Anyhow, Pete," he said, turning to the other man, "I reckon we can make mor'n that out of him, eh?"

"Well, I'd hope so," was the reply.

"How much money ye got there, kid?" asked the man called Jake.

"About one hundred dollars," answered Jack, for he saw that they intended to have it, "and I'll give it all to you if you'll let me go now."

"What yer say, Pete?" asked Jake, but it was the woman who answered.

"Don't yer let him get away, Jake. Mebby his father'll think his life's worth a lot mor'n one hundred dollars."

"Good for ye, old woman, mebbly we can work that gag." Then, turning to Jack, he asked, "Who's yer old man, boy?"

Jack hesitated a moment, and the man grabbed him roughly by the arm and said, "Speak up now, and no funny business, we're not to be fooled with."

Seeing that it would be useless to resist, he answered, "My father's name is Golden, and he lives in Maine."

"Got any rocks?" eagerly asked the woman.

"A little, I suppose."

"Huh," she grunted, "I guess when a kid like you runs round with one hundred dollars, and carrying a gold watch like this," she added, taking it from his vest pocket, "his old man's got plenty more."

"Well, what do you intend to do with me?" asked Jack more boldly, for he was not easily scared, and, realizing that he was in the hands of a gang of harbor thieves, he had made up his mind to put on a bold front, trusting to his luck to get away. But no one answered him.

"Where's Jim and Joe?" suddenly asked Jake, turning to the woman.

"Gone over to the city."

"When'll they be back?"

"Not much 'fore morning, likely. The boss sent for 'em; said that he had a job on hand that might take all night."

He then turned to Jack, "Hungry?"

"No," replied Jack, "I had supper, but I'd like to get these wet clothes off and lie down if you aren't going to let me go."

"Well, I s'pose they do feel kinder oneasy. Say, Mag, take him upstairs and lock him in the middle room. He can take his duds off, and they'll dry out by morning. I'm hungry's a bear and want supper, quick."

"Seem's if you're always hungry," she growled, as she motioned Jack to follow her. "I'll be back in a jiff, and supper'll be ready's soon I can git it."

She led him up a flight of dark rickety stairs and, passing along a narrow

hallway, pushed him into a room, saying, "There's a cot there, and ye can strip and wring out yer duds and they'll dry by morning. But say, kid, don't yer try to get away, for take it from me, if Jake catches ye trying anything, he'll do ye up for keeps."

She left him a small lamp with which she had lighted the way up, and going out, closed and locked the door.

"Guess they forgot all about that one hundred dollars," thought Jack, as he held up the light and looked about him. The room contained no window, but there was a small opening in the ceiling, which seemed to open into a room above. The only thing in the room was an old broken cot.

"Well," he thought, as he set the light on the floor, "I wasn't long in getting into trouble after I landed in Boston, that's sure; still I don't see how I could have avoided it. It must have been that man Reed who threw me over. He probably followed me, but I don't see why he tried to kill me. Perhaps he thought I had a clue as to where Bob is," he mused.

While these thoughts were running through his mind, he had been taking off his wet clothes. Stripping to the skin, he wrung out what water he could, and then spread them out on the floor. "Good thing it's so hot," he muttered, "or I'd get a fine cold, but I guess there's no danger in here, as it's hot enough to fry eggs. Well, guess I might as well take things as easy as possible."

The cot was covered with an old sheet, which, strangely enough, seemed to be fairly clean, and wrapping it around him, he threw himself on the cot, too tired even to think any more, and in spite of the heat, was soon fast asleep.

He dreamed that he was in a baker's shop, where many workmen were busily engaged baking bread. In some unaccountable manner, he was changed into an immense loaf of bread, and although he tried his best to tell the baker that he was a boy and not a loaf of bread, he was thrown into the oven. The heat grew more and more intense, until finally, when it seemed that he must be about done, he suddenly awoke.

"Well," was his first thought, "that was a funny dream." Then he sat up, trying to think where he was. Soon remembrance returned, and with a groan he sank back.

"Whew, but it's hot in here," he said to himself. "Don't believe I can get to sleep again; guess I'll turn up the light and see if my clothes are drying." As he stepped

to the floor, the boards seemed almost hot to his feet.

"Wonder what makes it so awful hot," he thought, as he turned up the light. Just then, he thought he heard a faint snapping sound from below, and an instant later, the odor of burning wood came to his nostrils, while he saw thin puffs of smoke curling up through the cracks of the floor.

"My goodness," he thought as he realized his position, "the house is on fire and I'm locked in here!"

CHAPTER XII.

BOB BEGINS WORK ON A FAKE CELL.

About noon, the hunchback brought Bob's dinner to him, and two hours later, King opened the door, saying, "Well, son, I guess I've got all you'll need, and now I want you to get to work at once."

"All right, I suppose I might as well begin now as any time."

"Now, let me tell you something," continued King, as they started down the stairs. "I know all about electricity and storage batteries and I'm going to watch you every minute, and if you try to fool me and don't make that cell right, I give you fair warning that it'll be the worse for you."

Bob made no reply, but thought to himself, "If you can catch me before the thing is done and tested, you're a good deal smarter than I think you are." He fully realized that he was taking a desperate chance, for he knew that the cell, as he was going to make it, would not work, for he had tried one like it while he and Jack were experimenting. But he had made up his mind not to give the secret away, trusting that an opportunity to escape would present itself before he had finished. He had also resolved to work as slowly and to take as long a time about it as he dared.

King led the way down to the laboratory and showed him the things he had bought. It would be tiresome to relate Bob's work in detail, and we shall tell about only those parts that are necessary to the story.

He managed to use up that afternoon and the greater part of the next day making one cap, but about four o'clock he had to declare that part of the work done.

"Now, what's next?" asked King.

"We'll have to make another cap to go with this one."

"Are they both alike?"

"No, this one is positive and the other will have to be negative. We'll begin on that one in the morning."

"Not much we won't," almost shouted King. "We'll start it right now, and we ought to have it done by twelve o'clock tonight. I believe you're loafing on the work anyway."

"Believe what you please," said Bob, mad clear through, "but I'll tell you right now that I'm not going to work any more today, and what's more you can't make me either."

"Can't, eh, we'll see about that," snapped King, coming toward Bob with clenched fist.

Now, when Bob was real good and mad, he could be as stubborn as a mule, and he was in exactly that condition now, regardless of consequences. So, when King raised his fist as if to hit him, he stepped back, saying in a firm tone, "You hit me just once, and I won't do another bit of work on that thing if you kill me for it."

King dropped his fist, and the two looked each other in the eyes for a full minute without speaking. "You'll work tonight or you'll get no supper," he finally threatened.

"Get no supper, eh?" snapped Bob. "If I get no supper tonight, there'll be no cell made tomorrow, just remember that," and then, as King did not at once reply, he continued, "Now see here, no one yet, except my parents, ever made me do a thing I'd made up my mind not to do, and I've made it up good and hard, right now, and you can't make me back down. You've got me in your power, and I suppose you can put me out of the way if you want to, but that won't get you the cell, so what are you going to do about it?"

King realized that he was licked, and gave in, with as good grace as he could muster. "All right," he growled, "have your own way."

Bob was much relieved when he realized that he had won, for although he had put up a bold front, he had by no means felt as confident as his looks indicated. He spent the next forenoon getting the copper cylinder and the tank ready for the electrolysis, telling King that he had decided not to make the other cap till the cylinder was done, although he could easily have done the work in an hour. After dinner he dissolved the lead nitrate in water, poured the solution into the tank, and adjusted the cap.

"Have you a piece of platinum foil?" he asked King.

"What do you want that for?"

"Why, you see I make this cylinder the positive pole of the circuit and have to have the platinum for the negative."

"All right, I guess I can find a piece," he replied.

Bob hoped that he couldn't, and, as a matter of fact, he could have used a piece of copper just as well, but, he thought, "if he will only go out after some and leave me here, I might find a way to escape." But, to his disappointment, it was soon forthcoming, and putting it in place he was soon obliged to acknowledge that he was ready to turn on the current.

"How much do you want?" asked King.

"One and four-tenths volts and six tenths of an ampere," replied Bob.

As the current was turned on, King watched the cylinder closely, and soon he could see that a dark brown powder was collecting on the outside.

"Hold on a minute," said Bob, "I forgot to insulate the outside of that cylinder. Have you a piece of rubber tubing, large enough to slip on over it?"

"I guess so, but it seems to me that you are all the time forgetting something or other."

The correction was soon made, and the cylinder returned to the bath. After the current had been running about half an hour, King purposed that they take the cylinder out and see if they were getting any results, as they could not see the inside of it while it was in the tank. Glad of any delay, Bob readily assented, and as soon as it was removed, it was seen that a very small amount of the powder had coated the inside.

"Humph," growled King. "It's mighty slow. Won't it go faster if we use more juice?"

"Yes," replied Bob, "but it will be too loose and spongy." This was the truth, as he had found by experiment, and he was very glad that this part of the work would have to go slowly, whether or no. When supper time came, King proposed that they leave the current running all night, but Bob wouldn't hear to it.

"No," he said, "I must be here to watch it, for I know what to expect if it don't pan out, and much depends on how that peroxide of lead is deposited. Either you turn off the current or I quit."

King knew from past experience that it would be useless to threaten and grudgingly yielded the point. "Shall we take the cylinder out?" he asked.

"Of course," replied Bob, "I thought you knew something about this kind of work."

King muttered something about wanting to make sure, and leaving the laboratory they went up to supper.

That night about ten o'clock, as Bob was lying on his bed trying, as usual, to think of some way to escape, he heard the key turn in the lock and the hunchback entered.

"Mr. King sent me up to tell you to go to sleep good and early for he's going to call you at five o'clock."

"Oh, he did, did he?" returned Bob. "Well, you just tell him that I'll go to sleep when I get good and ready and not a minute before. Do you get that?"

While speaking, he had got off the bed and gradually approached the hunchback. As he finished, he suddenly grabbed him round the neck, and before the dwarf had time to defend himself, he was hurled to the far side of the room. Bob made a quick dash for the door and in an instant had it closed and locked behind him. Quickly, he turned and darted down the stairs, but before he reached the next floor, he heard the man shouting and pounding on the door. "I must hurry," he thought, taking the next flight three steps at a time. He had reached the lower floor and was unlocking the front door, when a door at his left flew open and both King and Reed rushed out.

"What's all this?" demanded King; then as he saw who it was, he sprang forward and grabbed Bob by the shoulders and roughly yanked him back. "So you thought you'd give us the slip, did you? How'd you get out of that room?"

Poor Bob's heart sank as he realized that his attempt was a failure, and he made no reply.

"We'll soon find out," said King. "Come on now," and he made Bob precede him up the stairs.

"You miserable runt," he shouted, as he unlocked the door and saw the dwarf. "What does this mean?"

"Gee," replied the latter, "he jumped me so quick, I didn't know what was up before he was out of the room and I was locked in."

"Don't blame him," broke in Bob, "it wasn't his fault."

"Well, the next time I send you up here, just deliver your message through the door, do you understand?"

"I certainly do. I won't give him a chance to get hold of me again," declared the dwarf, rubbing his arm.

Bob was much cast down as they went out. "But I won't give up," he thought as he was undressing. "But, confound it, I've got to do something pretty soon for I'm not going to make that job pan out nearly as long as I thought I could."

Before he slept that night, he had resolved upon a bold stroke for liberty, which he was resolved to put into execution at the very first opportunity.

About eight o'clock the next morning, Bob realized that his chance had come. King was watching the cell while he was standing about three feet to one side. Suddenly, Bob drew back his right arm and before King could defend himself, he struck. The blow was a jim dandy, as Bob afterward expressed it. It caught King fairly on the jaw and he went down like a log, knocking over the tank as he fell. Bob quickly leaned over him and took the key of the laboratory from his pocket, where he had seen him put it several times.

"Now, if I can only get out," he thought as he unlocked the door and stole softly up the stairs.

CHAPTER XIII.

BOB'S ESCAPE.

Bob's heart beat wildly as he crept up the stairs, for he had resolved to let no one stop him if he could help it, knowing that it would go hard with him if he again fell into King's hands. He reached the top of the flight without hearing any one and quickly passed through the dining room to the front hall, and for the second time since his imprisonment, he was at the front door. The hall had a vestibule and just as he succeeded in getting the inner door open he heard a key turn in the outer door, and before he had time to dodge back, it swung open and Reed entered.

Coming thus suddenly face to face, it would be hard to say which was more at a loss what to do, but as soon as he could speak, Reed gasped, "You?"

"Yes, me," answered Bob, "and if you don't step aside and let me pass, some one is going to get hurt and don't you forget it."

"Where's Jim?" Reed demanded, shutting the door.

"What's left of him is down stairs, and I rather guess he'll stay there a while."

As Bob had taken the precaution to lock the door of the laboratory after he came out and had the key in his pocket, he felt that he had little to fear from that quarter for a time at least, even if King had come to.

"Your little game is up," he continued, "and you might as well step aside and save trouble and perhaps your head as well."

"Think so?" sneered Reed, and Bob saw him reach his hand back toward his hip pocket and before he was able to spring forward, he was looking into the barrel of a .32.

"Now, my young friend, I rather guess you will reconsider your conclusion. I don't want to hurt you, but I'd much prefer putting a bullet through you to letting

you get away. Now, about face and march down to the laboratory again, and no monkey shines, or this here gun will be apt to go off, for when I get excited, my finger gets twitchy, and remember, if it does go off, the bullet will come out of the end that's pointing at you."

All this had probably not taken over a minute, but during that time, Bob had been doing some quick thinking and had resolved that, gun or no gun, he was not going to lose this chance. They passed out into the dining room, Reed following Bob at a distance of perhaps six feet. Reaching the door, at the head of the stairs, Bob pretended that he was trying to open it.

"It seems to be locked," he said, "Guess the wind must have blown it shut."

"Well, hold on a minute, I've got a key in my pocket."

Bob turned and saw that Reed had lowered the revolver a little as he searched his pocket for the key. It was the chance he wanted. Like a flash he leaped, and before the startled man could raise his arm, his wrist was seized and given a powerful twist, which sent the revolver spinning to the other side of the room. Reed, maddened to the point of frenzy, struggled with all his strength, and he was no mean antagonist, but Bob knew that he was fighting for his liberty, if not for his life, and fought as he had never fought before. Round the room they struggled, knocking over the chairs as they fought. Once the man got the boy down on his back, and with his hand on his throat, began to choke him, but Bob managed to squirm over, and, getting to his knees, flung one arm round Reed's neck, and giving a powerful twist made him lose his hold. Both quickly rose to their feet and stood facing each other, panting for breath. Suddenly, catching sight of the revolver on the floor near his feet, Reed made a move toward it. But the movement gave Bob the chance he wanted, and, springing forward, he swung his right arm with all the strength he could muster. His fist landed squarely on the man's right eye, and he went down in a heap. He was not knocked out, but the blow gave Bob time to grab up the revolver, and by the time Reed was on his feet again, he took his turn at looking down the barrel.

"Now, my old friend, I guess I'll have to ask you to recognize that conclusion you spoke of a few moments ago. This thing don't look quite so good at that end, does it? Give my regards to your friend below, if you can get enough life in him to accept them."

So saying, he backed out of the room into the hall, still pointing the revolver at the man, who stood looking daggers at him, but not daring to move, and this

time reached the street without mishap.

"Whew!" he thought, as he slipped the revolver into his pocket, "that was some exciting time while it lasted. Well, I'm free at last and I'll take mighty good care that they don't get me again. Wonder which way I'd better go?"

Although well acquainted with a good part of Boston, as he looked about him he had no idea in what part of the city he was, except that it was one of the poorer districts.

Coming to the harbor front, he turned toward the south, judging that the ferry was in that direction. He had gone but a few squares, when he heard the cry of fire, and glancing down a side street which led to the water's edge, he saw a number of men and boys running toward an old house near the water and about a square from where he was standing.

"Guess I'll see what's doing," he thought as he turned and started to run down the street.

Coming opposite the house, which stood somewhat apart by itself, he saw that it was a three-story frame structure, and the flames were already visible through the windows of the first floor, while smoke was pouring from those of the first and second stories.

"It won't last ten minutes," said a man standing next to him, "the walls will fall in before the fire engine gets here."

"Are the people all out?" asked Bob.

"Dunno, guess so. Don't see any one, do you?"

But, at that moment, a figure appeared at a front third-story window and shouted for help. At the sound of the voice, Bob's heart almost stopped beating, and shading his eyes with his hand, he gazed eagerly upward. "It can't be possible," he thought, "but that was Jack's voice sure as guns, and what's more, it looks like him." Just then, the boy gave another wild cry for help.

"My soul, that's Jack," he groaned, "sure as fate. Quick," he shouted, "where's a ladder?"

The cry was taken up by the crowd, and in a minute, a man pushed his way through the crowd, carrying a fairly long ladder. Eager hands seized it and raised

it toward the boy, but alas for their hopes, it reached only to the middle of the second story window, too short by nearly eight feet. Bob gave a groan, but just then he saw a store on the opposite side of the street, and rushing across, he darted in. "A coil of rope," he shouted, but there was no one there. Just at that moment, however, a man rushed in, and hearing Bob's cry, darted to the back part of the store, to return almost instantly, dragging about twenty feet of rope after him. Snatching the end of the rope from his hand, Bob rushed back across the street rapidly coiling it as he ran. By the time he reached the foot of the ladder the smoke and flames were pouring from the windows in great clouds and the entire front of the house was tottering.

"Can't do it," shouted a man, "it'll fall before you can get up."

"I'm going to do it anyway," muttered the boy as he started to ascend.

The heat was terrific, and the smoke nearly choked him, but he fought his way upward rung by rung. It seemed that he would never reach the top, as the rungs of the ladder were so hot they fairly blistered his hands and the walls threatened to fall at any moment, but he did it, and bracing himself by putting one foot through the ladder, he grasped one end of the rope in his right hand, holding the coil in his left.

"Now, Jack, catch it," he shouted.

"Great guns, Bob, how'd you get here?"

"Never mind now, catch this rope," and he threw it up toward the window with all the strength he had left, which was not very much. By rare good fortune Jack caught it.

"Quick, now, fasten it to something, this wall won't last much longer."

Jack disappeared for what seemed to Bob a long time, but at last he saw him at the window again.

"I've got it," he shouted.

"All right, now, come down while I hold this end."

Jack swung himself from the window and came down the rope hand over hand and soon had his feet on the top rung of the ladder.

"Now, quick, we haven't a second to lose," cried Bob, as he started to descend.

"Are you all right?"

"Sure thing, look out, I'm coming," shouted Jack.

By this time several of the rungs were on fire, and two or three broke as Bob stepped on them, but he managed to keep his hold, and, reaching the ground, looked up to see Jack half way down. But, now the ladder was so weakened that, as the boy stepped on to the next rung, it swayed and broke fairly in two, and at that instant, the entire front of the building fell in with a tremendous crash.

Jack, however, was safe. He had felt the ladder, as well as the wall, going and had managed to throw himself backward away from the burning building. He fell only about eight feet and landed on his feet unhurt. Running quickly back, away from the intense heat, the two boys hugged each other in a frenzy of joy, while the crowd set up a great shout of gladness.

"You saved my life, old man, but for mercy sakes, how did you get here?"

"It's too long a story to tell now," replied Bob, "let's try to get out of this crowd."

Although many tried to detain them, the two boys managed to slip away just as a fire engine, with a great ringing of bells, dashed on to the scene.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE KIDNAPPER'S TRAIL.

The two boys were pretty well tired out from the strain through which they had just passed and they both had several bad burns on their hands, which, now that the excitement was over, began to assert themselves. They had not walked far when they saw a small park, where were some benches, and Jack proposed that they sit down and rest up a bit. As he knew that Bob had been taken to Boston, naturally the latter was the more surprised of the two on seeing his brother there, and as soon as they were seated on a bench Bob said:

"Now, Jack, tell me all about it, quick, and then I'll give you an account of my racket."

So Jack, starting from the time Bob disappeared, told him all that had happened. When he reached the point where we left him, he said:

"I tell you what, Bob, when I found that those rascals had varmoused and left me locked in that burning house, I was scared. I pounded on the door and yelled till I was hoarse and when no one came I was about ready to give up. By this time the room was pretty full of smoke, and my eyes smarted so that I could hardly keep them open and the floor was so hot, that I had to fairly dance, and it was getting hotter every minute. I had managed to get my clothes on by this time and started to see if I could kick a hole in the door, but it was too strong and I could make no impression on it."

"Couldn't you cut a hole in it with your knife?" asked Bob.

"I thought of that, but I had lost my knife somewhere. Well, just as I thought that all hope was gone, I remembered that there was a hole about two feet square in the ceiling at one end of the room. It was fully eight feet from the floor, but I took the cot and leaned it against the wall and managed, by climbing up on it, to reach the edge of the opening and climb up through. I found myself in an empty room running the entire length of the house. There was a stairway at the other

end and I ran to it, but the smoke was pouring up in clouds and I could see that the stairs were ablaze and the room below full of fire, so I didn't dare to risk it. I thought then it was all up with me, but it was a little cooler up there and I managed to get one of the front windows open, and you know the rest. I tell you, Bob, old man, you never looked so good to me as you did coming up that ladder with the rope in your hand. I think I should have jumped in another two minutes. But, now tell me all about yourself. Where have you been and how did you get away?"

Then Bob gave him a full account of his adventures and when he told how he had hit Reed on the nose, Jack said, "Good enough for him, wish I'd been there." Then, when Bob had finished, he asked, "But why do you suppose Reed pushed me overboard? It must have been he."

"Of course it was," answered Bob, "there's no one else who would do it except King and it couldn't have been he, for he was with me at the time. I suppose he saw you, and thinking you might make trouble for them, he probably thought he would dispose of you."

"I guess that's about the way of it, leastwise, that's the way I figured it out. Hello, there's a cop; suppose we ask him where we are."

They soon learned that they were only about a half mile from the station, and as they were well rested, they decided that they would go there and take the train for their Uncle Ben's in Winthrop.

Reaching the station, they found a train about to leave, and in less than a half hour, they were getting off at Winthrop Beach. Uncle Ben's house was but a few minutes' walk from the station and soon they were ringing the bell, and their Aunt Lucy answered it.

"Why, it's Bob and Jack," she cried as she saw them. "Where did you come from? My, but I'm glad to see you," and without giving them time to speak, she grabbed one in each arm and gave them a good hug and kiss.

"Where's Uncle Ben?" asked Bob as soon as he could get the question in.

"He had to go to the bank, but I expect him out on the next train, as he said he was only going to stay a little while. But there, I'll bet you haven't had any lunch and are as hungry as two young bears. Come right in and we'll have something to eat in less than no time."

"How are all the folks?" asked Aunt Lucy, as they sat down.

"Fine and dandy," replied Jack, "but my goodness, Bob, we must call them up right off. Can I use the 'phone, auntie?"

The 'phone was in the front hall and Jack was gone some little time, but at last he returned. Just as they began to eat, the door opened and Uncle Ben entered the room. He was no less delighted to see the boys than Aunt Lucy had been, and the meal was a merry one. The boys said nothing regarding their adventures till the lunch was over, then Bob said:

"Uncle Ben, we've got quite a long story to tell you."

"Is that so? Well, fire away."

So Bob began and told them all about their adventures. He was interrupted many times by expressions of horror and indignation from Uncle Ben and Aunt Lucy.

"Well, of all the happenings," declared Uncle Ben, when he had finished. "Say, Bob, do you think you can find that house where they had you?"

"Yes, I think so. It was in East Boston, 54 Uhl street. I noticed the number of the house and the street as I ran out."

"That's in one of the worst sections of the city," declared Uncle Ben. "Now, boys, if you are not too tired we must take the next train to the city and report this to the police, and we may be in time to catch them. The scoundrels, they must be caught and punished if possible; it's not safe to have them at large."

Both boys declared that they were not tired, and, as the next train left in about fifteen minutes, they started at once.

In a short time they reached East Boston and took the ferry across.

"It must have been here that I went overboard," said Jack as they were about half way across, and he shuddered as he looked down at the water. "I wouldn't want to go through that again."

"I should say not," said Uncle Ben. "Oh, by the way, Jack, you didn't see either of those fellows round the house after the fire, did you?"

"No, I never thought a thing about them."

"Well, they ought to be found and locked up, for they undoubtedly intended to

rob you, and were probably going to make your father pay a big sum of money."

"Yes, I guess that's so," agreed Jack, "but then they saved my life and I'd rather call it square."

"Well, if that's the way you feel about it," said Uncle Ben, "we won't say anything to the captain about them."

Reaching the other side of the harbor, they lost no time in getting a car, which took them to State street, where was the police station of which Uncle Ben's friend was captain.

"Is Captain Long in?" he asked a sergeant, who was sitting at the desk as they entered.

"I think so, sir, please wait a moment and I'll see." Touching a bell on his desk, he ordered the attendant to see if the captain was in his office.

"Right, sir," said the man going out.

He was back in a minute, and telling them that Captain Long would see them at once, conducted them through several rooms into his private office.

"Why, hello Ben," greeted a large broad-shouldered man, wearing the uniform of a police captain, as they were ushered into the room. "Come to give yourself up?"

"Not just yet, Harry. These are my two nephews from Maine," he said, introducing the boys, "I think likely you've seen them around my house, but I guess you've never met them."

The captain expressed himself as pleased to know them, and then motioning them to sit down, asked:

"Now, what can I do for you?"

"Well, Harry," answered Uncle Ben, "these two youngsters have been through enough to turn your hair gray." Then turning to Bob, he said: "Tell him your story as quickly as you can, for every minute may count."

So, for the third time that day Bob gave an account of his kidnapping, only this time he made it as brief as possible. The captain said nothing till he had finished, but they could see that he was not losing a word.

"Give me as careful a description of those two men as you can," he ordered, and Bob obeyed.

"This is indeed serious," said the captain, turning to Mr. Golden when Bob had finished. "I'll bet you my cap that the smaller of the two men is Jim the Penman, and if that's right, he is one of the most wanted men in the country today. Why, there's a reward of \$10,000 for him, and that other fellow may be Oily Joe; they have worked together a good bit and are two of the most expert counterfeiters in the world. The two of them have given us a lot of trouble. I'm mighty glad you came to me, although I'm afraid it's too late, as they've probably skipped, but we'll make a try for them and it's possible we may be on time."

He touched a button on his desk, and an officer entered.

"Have the patrol out at once with six of the best men available," he ordered, "Report to me here. Let's see," he said, as the man saluted and retired, "you said 54 Uhl street. That's over across the ferry."

In less than two minutes a knock sounded and at the captain's "come in," six uniformed policemen entered. Quickly, he explained the situation to them and gave his orders.

"The driver will let you out about two squares this side of the house, and I'll be there by the time you are, and tell you how to arrange things."

He gave them the address and saluting, they left the room.

"Don't lose a minute," he shouted as the last man went out.

"Now," said Captain Long, turning to Mr. Golden and the boys, "don't you want to come along with me in my car?"

"We sure do," cried both boys together, and even Uncle Ben seemed no less anxious.

"All right then, this way," and he led them out to the street.

His car, a powerful two-seated machine, stood in front of the station house, the chauffeur dozing on the front seat, but he sprang to activity as he heard the captain's voice.

Quickly, they entered the machine, Captain Long giving the direction to the driver, and just as they started, the patrol whizzed by, the horses at full gallop.

CHAPTER XV.

THE COUNTERFEITER'S DEN.

They passed the patrol just as they reached the ferry and all crossed together. Reaching the other side, the machine soon distanced the patrol, and, after running for about ten minutes, the captain told the driver to stop and the car drew up at the curb.

"The place is only two squares away," he explained, "and we'll wait here for the patrol."

It came dashing up in a few moments and the men got out.

"Now, two of you go round by Clear street, and come up by the back way," ordered the captain, "and two more go up Clover a couple of blocks and then turn down Front, which will bring you to the front of the house. The rest of you wait here a few moments, and then go straight there and we'll follow about a square behind. Now, don't make any noise till we are all there, but if you see any one leave the house, arrest him at once."

Four of the men saluted and started off in the directions ordered, and, after waiting five minutes, the other two left, followed a moment later by the captain and the Goldens. Arriving at the house, they found the four officers there.

"Are the others round back?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir," answered one of the men.

"See any one?"

"No, sir."

"All right then, you wait here and I'll ring the bell." This he did, but no one answered the summons.

"Guess they've skipped," said one of the men.

After ringing several times, Captain Long said:

"Two of you stay here and the rest of us will go round to the rear, and see if we can get in without smashing a door, and," he added, "keep an eye on those side windows."

They found the two officers waiting at the rear.

"Seen anything?" asked Captain Long.

"Not a thing," was the reply.

They found the back door locked with the key on the inside, and, remarking that he guessed they would have to break a window, the captain took a small diamond glass cutter from his pocket and scratched a circle about six inches in diameter on the window pane, just above the catch. A quick push shoved it in, and reaching his hand through, he soon had the window open.

"Now, Bill," he said, turning to one of the men, "you jump in and unlock the door."

"In a minute they were in the house, and passing through to the front door, admitted the others. Leaving one man on guard at the front door, another at the rear, while a third was stationed in the middle room, the rest made a thorough search of the upper part of the house. But, to their disappointment, they found no one. They returned to the first floor and the captain said:

"Now we'll go down to the basement."

Bob found the room looking about as he had left it earlier in the day, except that King was no longer there. He showed them the cylinder, on which he had been at work, and which he found lying on the floor. They made a careful search of the room, but found nothing of an incriminating nature and were about to return upstairs, when Jack, had been looking over a desk in one corner of the room shouted:

"Come over here a minute, I believe I've found something."

He had noticed a piece of paper lying partly concealed, under one corner of the desk and had moved it slightly to get the paper without tearing it, when he noticed a break in the flooring, and on moving the desk a little farther, he saw a

small ring in the floor.

"I believe there's a trap door here," he declared as they came over to where he was.

It was but a moment's work to shove the desk out of the way, and sure enough, there was a trap door about two feet square. One of the officers took hold of the ring, and a second later they were gazing down into a pitch-black hole. Captain Long kneeled down and flashed the light from an electric torch into the space below.

"Jove," he shouted, "here's a find sure enough; I'm going down and the rest of you follow."

It was a large room about twenty feet long by twelve feet wide. The walls were of brick, and so far as they could see, there was no break in them. The room was lighted by several incandescent electric lights, which one of the men had turned on. Looking around, they found that the room contained an electric furnace, such as is used for melting bullion, a small printing press, and several other pieces of machinery, which the captain recognized as pertaining to the making of counterfeit money. They also found several dies for stamping quarters and half dollars, as well as a number of plates for printing bills of ten and twenty dollar denominations. Several pounds of lead and copper, together with a smaller amount of silver and gold was also found.

"I'm mighty sorry that we didn't get the rascals," declared Captain Long, "but this find is well worth our while."

He started to mount the ladder, telling the others to follow him, when a very astonishing thing happened. Suddenly the trap door banged down and at the same time the lights went out, while a mocking laugh sounded from above. Quickly, the captain sprang up the ladder, and bracing himself, pushed with all his strength against the door, but it did not so much as budge.

"We're trapped, sure as fate," he said, as he gave it up and came down the ladder. "Where do you suppose those fellows were hid all the time?"

"They probably had some secret hiding place which we didn't find," declared Mr. Golden.

"I guess that's about the size of it. Here, Bill, I guess you and Fred are the strongest, you two get up on that ladder and see if you can make any impression

on that door. I wonder how, in the name of all that's funny, they have fastened it, for I didn't see any lock on it."

The two officers did as ordered, but in spite of their most strenuous efforts, they could make no impression on it. They did, however, make a most decided impression on the ladder, for suddenly it broke near the middle, and the two came tumbling down in a heap. Fortunately, they were not hurt by the fall and laughed as they picked themselves up.

"Well, we're in a pretty fix, sure enough," declared Captain Long. "I should have left one of you on guard, but I never thought of those fellows being in hiding there after the way we searched the place. It's a good thing I left word at the station where we were going, but the rest of the force will sure have the laugh on us."

"Say, do you smell anything?" suddenly asked Bob.

"Seem's though I do," replied two of the officers sniffing.

No one spoke for a moment and then Captain Long said:

"My God, men, that's coal gas and it's getting stronger every minute. Those devils have turned it in here somehow. Quick," he almost shouted, "we've got to get out of here at once or we'll all be dead men in less than ten minutes."

By this time the odor of the gas was very strong and was rapidly getting stronger. Several of the officers were equipped with electric torches, and using them, they made a hurried search of the walls to see if by chance there was any opening which they had overlooked before, but nothing of the kind could they find.

"Gee, but I'm getting sleepy," said one of the men.

"We'll all be worse than sleepy in about a minute," groaned another.

"Well," spoke up Mr. Golden, "It's hard to die penned up like this, but if it's God's will, let us meet it like men."

"Oh, what'll my poor wife and babies do?" groaned the man who had spoken before.

But little more was said. Bob got hold of Jack's hand and whispered:

"It'll be an easy death, old man."

"I know," replied Jack. "I'm not afraid, but I do wish we could see the folks."

The deadly gas was rapidly getting in it's work, and three of the officers were already stretched on the floor, while the others were breathing heavily. Bob's head was swimming and he knew that he would be unconscious in another moment. He stretched himself out on the floor, putting one arm around the neck of Jack, who was already lying down. The other arm he stretched out along the floor, and as he did so, suddenly his fingers felt an iron ring. Hardly knowing what he did, he began to pull on it. To his surprise, he felt it give, and summoning all his remaining strength, he rose to his knees and gave a quick yank to it. A trap door opened, letting in a rush of cool fresh air. It partially revived him and he shouted.

"Quick, here's a way out."

Only Mr. Golden and the captain were conscious, and they dragged themselves, as quickly as possible, to the opening.

The inrush of air had cleared the gas away from the open door somewhat, and Mr. Golden had strength enough to whisper:

"You and the captain go down the hole quickly and I'll try to pass the others down to you."

Quickly lowering himself over the edge, Bob found himself in a passage way about three feet wide where the air was perfectly fresh, and coming through with a strong draft. He felt much stronger at once. In an instant, the captain had followed him, dragging Jack with him.

"I'm afraid we'll never be able to get them all out," he gasped, "but this draft is carrying the gas out and it's not so bad as it was."

Mr. Golden succeeded in dragging two of the men to the opening, where they were grabbed by Bob and the captain, and dragged a few feet along the passageway. But now his strength gave out, and as Bob grabbed the third man and pulled him through, Mr. Golden fell unconscious half way through the opening. The captain caught him and dragged him through and Bob said:

"I'll get the rest."

Without waiting for a reply, he lifted himself through the opening, an electric torch in his hand. The gas had been driven out so that it was not so very bad, and

he soon succeeded in getting the last man out. As he again lowered himself through the opening, he closed the trap door after him. Jack and three of the men, as well as Mr. Golden had, by this time, somewhat revived, and in a short time two others came to and were able to sit up, but the last one brought out still lay as one dead.

"Now, let's see where this passage leads to," said Captain Long, "but two of you stay with Ed and keep moving his arms up and down and I guess he'll come round all right."

The rest started forward, by the light of their torches, and after walking about a block, they came to a flight of stone steps. Mounting these they found themselves in the kitchen of an old house, which seemed to be deserted.

"Two of you fellows go back and get the rest and we'll wait here," ordered Captain Long.

In a short time they returned with the others. The man called Ed had revived, but was not able to walk, and two of the officers had carried him through the passageway.

"We were certainly fortunate to get out of that alive," declared Uncle Ben, solemnly.

"Indeed we were," agreed Captain Long. "If Bob hadn't hit on that ring just when he did, we'd all been past help by this time." Then, turning to the officers, he asked, "How are you fellows feeling now?"

All declared that they were all right, with the exception of Ed, who was still pretty weak.

"All right then, one of you take him to the patrol and the rest of us will go back to that house and see if we can find those fellows this time."

CHAPTER XVI.

BUT THE BIRDS HAD FLOWN.

As they were on the way back to the house, Jack turned to Bob, who was walking beside him and said:

"I hope to goodness that our adventures for today are about through. I tell you what, coming so near to death twice in one day is a bit too strenuous to suit me."

They soon reached the house and entered by the front door, which they found unlocked, with drawn revolvers. The room smelled strongly of gas, but they quickly opened the windows, and it was soon nearly all driven out. They searched the house as before, but with no success and finally came to the laboratory. Here the gas was pretty bad, but one of the officers soon found where it was turned on and shut it off. They were, however, unable to find the secret hiding place of the counterfeiters, although they searched for some time. At last the captain said:

"Well, I guess we'll have to give it up for now, but I'm going to leave two of you men here to keep watch, and I'll send some one to relieve you as soon as I get back to the station." Then, turning to Mr. Golden, "We might as well be going now, I'm not going to have that stuff down there removed till tomorrow."

On their way back Bob said that they must take the night train for home, as their parents would be anxious to see them, but Uncle Ben said:

"Your Aunt Lucy and I intended to run down to Skowhegan in a few days anyway, and if you'll wait till morning, we'll all go together in the car. We'll telephone as soon as we get back to the house and then we'll get an early start tomorrow. What do you say?"

The boys eagerly agreed to this plan, and by the time it was settled they were at the ferry where they said goodby to Captain Long.

The latter went at once to the station house and sent out a general alarm for the apprehension of the counterfeiters, but we will say here that they were not caught.

On their way to Winthrop, Uncle Ben asked the two boys to say nothing to Aunt Lucy regarding their narrow escape, as it would worry her, and they promised to be careful and not let it out in her hearing.

It was nearly suppertime when they reached home, and Jack at once called up his father and told him of their plans, while Bob gave his aunt an account of their afternoon's trip, carefully avoiding, however, any mention of their being locked in the counterfeiter's den.

"It's too bad they escaped," she said when he had finished.

Uncle Ben then told her of their plans for the morrow, and she said she guessed she could get ready in time, although it was pretty short notice.

As the boys were very tired after such a strenuous day, they were in bed before nine o'clock.

"We want to be off by six o'clock," shouted Uncle Ben, as they went up stairs, "and I'll have to pull you out by five."

"All right," answered Jack, "we'll be ready."

After they were undressed they did not forget to kneel down by the bed and thank their heavenly Father for His care over them.

"George, but this has been some exciting day," declared Jack as he tumbled into bed, closely followed by Bob. "I don't think I would care to go through that mess again."

"I should say not," agreed Bob, "we might not get off so lucky next time. I don't believe we'll ever be any nearer death again, till our time comes, than we were this afternoon."

"I guess you're right there," then suddenly, "Say, Bob, do you suppose we've seen the last of those two fellows?"

"Hard to tell, but I sure hope so. I'd feel a good bit better if we'd caught them this afternoon."

"Same here," came sleepily from Jack.

They were too tired to talk any longer and were soon fast asleep.

They were still sleeping soundly, when a little before five o'clock, their uncle awoke them.

"It's too bad to wake you, boys," he said, "but breakfast is almost ready, and we've got to be off in about an hour."

They were soon dressed and running downstairs found a hearty breakfast awaiting them, to which they did full justice.

Mr. Golden's car was a big roomy Lozier, and by six o'clock they were off. They took the chauffeur with them, although the boys, taking turns, drove the greater part of the way. They reached Portland by eleven o'clock, and stopped there for dinner. When nearly to Waterville, about twenty-five miles from the cottage, a tire blew out, but as this was their only mishap, they did not complain, and a new one was quickly substituted. The run up from the latter city was made in a little over an hour, and they reached the cottage shortly after six o'clock. The boys were greeted as heroes by their parents and the girls, and there was great rejoicing over their safe return, old Mike coming in for his share, the tears fairly rolling down his cheeks as he grasped their hands saying:

"Begorra and I always did say you byes had more lives nor a cat, and all ways were sure to land on your fate."

While eating supper, Bob and Jack in turn, gave a full account of their adventures, except that they said nothing about being so nearly killed by gas, and their mother's face paled as she realized how nearly she had lost one, if not both of her boys. When they had finished, their father said:

"We must keep a sharp lookout for those rascals, although I hardly think they will dare to show up here again."

"Say, dad," asked Jack, "where's that detective?"

"We haven't seen or heard from him since you left," answered his father.

Uncle Ben agreed with his brother that the boys should be very careful, saying:

"There's been a lot in the papers about those fellows, that is if they're the ones we think they are, and they have a reputation for daring that has seldom been

equaled."

"Well," remarked Bob, "I hope they keep away, as I've had all of their company that I care about for a while at least."

"Same here," agreed Jack, "but I say, it's mighty funny what's got that Sharp detective."

He had hardly spoken when the doorbell rang, and as the maid opened it the detective walked in. When he saw Bob his eyes stuck out, as Jack after expressed it, as large as saucers.

"Well, I'll be blowed," he cried, "where in the world did you come from?"

And then the story had to be told over again.

"Well, I'll be blessed," uttered the detective, when they had finished, "Guess I'm getting too old for a job of this kind. Here I've been working night and day, and have scoured the country for a distance of twenty miles in every direction, and didn't get a smell, and you," turning to Jack, "find him first whack off the reel."

"I didn't find him," declared Jack, "He found me," and he added, "it was a mighty lucky find for me."

Mr. Sharp seemed very much downcast, but Mr. Golden assured him that he was sure that he had done all that any one could have done.

"You, of course, didn't know that he had been taken to Boston, and the two boys meeting as they did was a coincidence, which wouldn't happen twice in a thousand years. No, you needn't reproach yourself in the least."

After this the detective felt much better, but remarked that it was the third time in his twenty years as a detective that he had been beaten.

Uncle Ben then proposed that they take a run across the lake in the Sprite and get their trunk, which they had sent by express, and which ought to be at the hotel. The women folks decided that they wouldn't go, so Mr. Golden, Uncle Ben, Mr. Sharp, who wanted to catch the night train for Boston, and the two boys, composed the crew.

"So that's the wonderful cell that all the trouble has been about, is it?" asked Uncle Ben, as they started. "Well, it certainly is a big thing and I'm proud of you boys."

On the way across, they told Mr. Golden of their narrow escape in the counterfeiter's den, and why they had kept silent about it at the table. He shuddered, as he realized how near death they had been and said that they had done just right in not letting their mother and aunt know about it, and Mr. Sharp declared that he was going to take up the search for them as soon as he got to Boston.

They obtained the trunk, and saying goodbye to the detective and wishing him good luck, started back for the cottage, which they reached about nine o'clock, and, as they were all tired, they soon retired for the night.

The boys spent the next day sailing on the lake with the girls, while their father and uncle went down to Skowhegan, having some business to attend to. Late in the afternoon the four young people went fishing and, in a short time, caught a good mess which they had for supper.

That night, as the boys were getting ready for bed, Jack suddenly said:

"I say, Bob, what's the trouble with fitting up our motorcycles with electric motors and running them with the cells?"

"Just the thing! Wonder why we didn't think of that before."

"Huh, that's easy, guess we've had our minds fairly full of something else, lately."

"That's a fact, we have," agreed Bob, "We'll go down on the wheels, first thing in the morning and see what we can do. I guess likely we can get the motors at Watson's, and if we can make it a go, we'll have some bikes."

Right after breakfast the next morning, they got their motorcycles out and in less than fifteen minutes, were in Watson's store in Skowhegan. Fortunately, he had two small motors, of ten horsepower each, on hand, which seemed to the boys to be just what they wanted, and asking him to send them up to the house at once, they were soon in the laboratory hard at work.

"You start on a couple sets of caps, Jack, and I'll get the electrolysis apparatus going and fill a few cylinders," Bob had said as soon as they got there. By noon, Jack had the caps done, as he had everything at hand to work with and knew how to do it, and by five o'clock, they had taken the engines apart and had the wheels all ready for the installation of the motors.

"Come on now and get washed up," called Bob, as he shut down the dynamo and took out two cylinders, which, he was pleased to see, were full. "That's eight we've filled today, but come get a move, we must catch that five o'clock car or we'll be late to supper."

Edna and May met them at the wharf, in the Sprite, and by six-thirty they were eating supper and telling the family about their day's work.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NEW ELECTRIC MOTORCYCLE.

Bright and early the next morning found the boys hard at work again. They were very skillful at this kind of work, and by three o'clock the motors were clamped in place, the cylinders installed and everything ready for a tryout. The current was turned on by twisting the left-hand grip and, as that controlled the entire running part, it was very simple.

"My goodness, Bob," said Jack, as he straightened up, after making the last connection, "I'll bet these machines don't weigh more than half as much as they did before."

"No, I guess they don't. These motors are very light compared with the gasoline engines, and they're what made the most of the weight. Now, let's take them out on the road and see how they'll go."

Wheeling the machines out by the basement door, they were soon on the road in front of the house.

"Well, here goes," cried Jack, jumping into the saddle and giving the grip a slight turn.

Off he went up the road, followed a moment later by Bob. The wheels ran perfectly and with no noise except the low humming of the motors, which could be heard, but a few feet away. They were going at about twenty-five miles an hour and were using but a small part of their power.

"Say, old man," shouted Bob, as he rode up beside his brother, "this is going some, eh?"

"It sure is," was the reply. "It beats the old gasoline engines all to pieces. I wonder how fast they will go?"

"Shouldn't wonder if they would hit a hundred, but there's a good stretch, let's let

'em out a little and see what they'll do."

Slowly twisting the grips, they increased their speed till Bob declared that they were going fully a mile a minute, which he declared was plenty fast enough for him. But, even then they had not used nearly all their power. They were delighted with the result of their work, and as they slowed down, Jack said:

"This must be about the next thing to flying."

"I guess it is," agreed Bob, "but next summer if father'll let us, we'll do some real flying. I say, son, do you realize what these cells will mean to an airplane? Just think of the great decrease in weight and the increase in power."

"Sure thing," replied Jack, no less enthusiastically, "but we better be getting back now."

They had ridden some five or six miles out into the country and were passing through a piece of woods, but now brought their wheels to a stop just after rounding a curve in the road.

"Yes, I guess we had better be getting back," agreed Bob, "It's nearly four now," he added, looking at his watch. "Let's see how long it takes us; we ought to make it in about eight minutes."

They had just started to mount their wheels, when they heard a shrill cry and the rapid pounding of a horse's hoofs, and before they had time to ask themselves what it was, a light carriage, drawn by a spirited horse going at full gallop, dashed round the curve. The carriage, which was swaying from side to side of the road, held a young girl, and it was evident that she had lost control of the horse. So quickly had it happened, that the boys barely had time to get their wheels out of the way as the horse dashed past.

"It's Evelyn Nason," gasped Bob, as he recovered his wits, "and did you see one of the reins was broken? Come, we've got to catch her."

They quickly mounted their wheels and turned on the power, but Bob's wheel failed to respond. With a cry of dismay he got off, shouting to Jack, who was already some distance away.

"Something's wrong with my wheel; go after her."

But Jack was out of hearing and without looking back, he faced after the

runaway, which was dashing down the road in a cloud of dust. He knew that about a mile farther on, there was a very steep hill, at the foot of which ran a wide brook, and here the road made a sharp turn before it led over a narrow bridge. The bridge was a high one, as the stream ran through a deep gully, and unless the turn was made safely, he knew that horse and carriage would be dashed over a stone abutment to the stream, several feet below, as there was only a very flimsy fence by the roadside at this point. All this ran through Jack's mind as he raced along, and he realized that if he was to do any good he must catch the team before it reached the top of this hill. Turning on still more power, he was soon almost flying along the road, and in a short time was alongside the carriage.

As he passed it, he stood up in the saddle, leaning forward, his hands still grasping the handle grips. He was now opposite the horse's head, and quickly shutting off the power, he straightened up, stood on the saddle, and leaped with all his might for the head of the maddened brute. His leap was true and he caught the bridle near the bit with both hands and hanging on with a bull-dog grip, gradually brought the horse to a stop right on the brow of the hill.

"I—I guess you had better get out now," he gasped, still holding the horse by the bridle.

The girl, who was about fifteen and very pretty, obeyed.

"Oh, Jack," she cried, as she got on to the ground, "I never was so scared in my life, and you have saved me. If Prince had gone down that awful hill I'd have been killed sure."

"I guess it's more than likely, Evelyn, but how did it happen?"

"Why, just before I got to that turn in the road, where you were, Prince shied at a piece of paper that blew across the road, and I yanked on the reins. One of them broke and, of course, after that I had no control of him, and I didn't know what to do. I set out to jump, but he was going so fast that I didn't dare to."

By this time, Bob had ridden up, having located the trouble with his wheel, which was only a wire that had slipped from a connection.

"You got him, did you, Jack, old fellow? I knew you'd do it if any one could," he shouted, as he dismounted.

"Indeed he did," said Evelyn, "and it was the bravest thing I ever saw. Why, he

stood right up in the saddle and jumped! I never saw anything like it."

They found that a buckle where the rein was fastened to the bit had given way, and by means of some stout cord, which Bob had in his pocket, it was soon temporarily repaired.

Evelyn Nason was a friend of the Goldens, and the two families were very intimate. Jack had long been her particular hero, and now, more than ever; it was natural that she should think there was none like him.

"You'll have to drive me back, Jack," she now declared, "I'm so nervous I'd never dare to drive back alone."

"All right, wait till I turn him around."

The horse, which now seemed quiet enough, was soon turned, and Evelyn and Jack got in the carriage. Bob mounted his wheel, and holding Jack's by one hand, started off ahead.

Mr. Nason was on the porch waiting for them. He had seen Bob riding home with Jack's wheel, and naturally had asked him where his brother was, and Bob told him what had happened.

As her father helped Evelyn out of the carriage, tears came into his eyes as he kissed her, saying:

"Bob told me all about it, dear."

"Oh, papa, Jack saved my life. Wasn't he splendid?"

"My dear boy," cried Mr. Nason, as he grasped Jack's head, "you saved my little girl and I shall never forget it. It was a very brave act."

CHAPTER XVIII.

BOB AND JACK GO ON A HUNT.

"Say, Jack, I've got an idea," said Bob that night after they were in bed.

"All right, fire ahead, I'm listening. You do say something sensible once in a while and I'm willing to take a chance."

"Well, I believe we could find that house where I was shut up."

"Think so?" asked Jack, full of interest now.

"Of course I'm not sure, but I recognized a house not more than seven or eight miles from it, and if we go there on the wheels, we could search the country pretty well in a short time. Let's try it tomorrow. What do you say?"

"I say yes, that is, if father will let us, and what's more, we'll find it, too, if they haven't lugged it off. We have to be mighty careful though, for those fellows may be in hiding there."

At the breakfast table, the next morning, Bob announced their plan, but Mr. Golden shook his head.

"I'm afraid you'll get into trouble," he declared.

"But," argued Jack, "we ought to do something toward finding those fellows and, if we can locate the house, we can have it searched by officers and have them nabbed if they are there."

Mr. Golden finally consented, but made them promise that they would be very careful and not run any risks. Getting the cook to put them up a good lunch, they were soon ready to start.

"That house," explained Bob, as they rode along side by side, "can't be many miles this side of Oakland. We'll go to Waterville first and then cross over to

Oakland, then we'll take the road to Norridgewock and look for that woods road. I suppose we might go by the way of Norridgewock. It would be shorter, but I guess the roads are better the other way."

The road to Skowhegan was rough and mostly down hill, and they did not dare to run very fast, but once outside the latter town, on the road to Waterville, they let the machines out and reached the city in forty-five minutes from the time they left home. As they rode through the city, people stared in amazement at them as they failed to hear the customary chug-chug of the engine.

They made no stop and were soon in Oakland, a little village about three miles to the west of Waterville. Here they stopped at a drug store for a glass of soda water, as the ride had made them thirsty. When they came out, they found that several people had collected and were examining the wheels.

"Say, bub, what kind of an engine you got here?" asked one man.

Now neither of the boys liked being called "bub," but they had been taught to be polite, and Jack explained that it was an electric motor.

"Well—well, I want to know! How do you run it?"

"Oh, that's a secret," laughed Bob, as they got into the saddles and rode off.

In about fifteen minutes they reached the house which Bob had recognized, and turning to his brother, he said:

"Now, Jack, here's where our search begins. It can't be very far from here and as it's only ten o'clock now, we've got several hours to hunt."

"Wouldn't it be a good plan to inquire at the house and see if they know anything about the place?"

"Not a bad idea," agreed Bob, getting off his wheel and running it into the yard. Telling Jack, who had followed him, to hold the cycles he knocked on the door. A slovenly looking woman answered the knock, and when he explained their errand, she gave a sudden start and said rather gruffly:

"No, I don't know of no such place," and shut the door in his face.

"I'll just bet my old hat that she does, all the same," declared Bob, as he rejoined his brother, then as the latter agreed with him, he added:

"I guess we better not make any more inquiries round here; some of these people may be in league with those fellows."

Mounting, they proceeded and had gone only about a mile, when they came to where the road forked.

"Any idea which is the right road?" asked Jack, as he stopped his wheel and dismounted.

"Not an idea. Guess we'll flip a penny. Heads to the right, tails to the left, here goes."

Heads it was, so they started off to the right. It was a fairly smooth road, so they made pretty good speed for about three miles, when Bob said:

"Now we'd better slow up a little and begin to look carefully. If we're on the right track that road can't be a great ways from here, and it may be nearer than I think."

"Do you know which side of the road it is?"

"Yes, it's to our right. Now let's ride on slowly and keep our eyes peeled."

Much of the way was through thick woods, and as they rode slowly along, they closely scanned the woods to their right, watching for a woods road. They had gone on in this way for several miles, when suddenly, they came out of a thick piece of woods. So far, they had seen nothing that in anyway resembled what they were after, but, about a mile farther on, Jack spied a rough road leading through a field to the right.

"Suppose that's it?" he asked, bringing his wheel to a stop.

"No, that can't be it, because I'm sure that it was in the woods, for I remember hearing the branches hit the top of the car all the way along till we got out where we turned into the main road, and another thing, I remember just before we turned, the car giving a terrific lurch as though we had crossed a good-sized gully beside the road, and you see, there's no such place here. No, this is not the road and we might as well go on."

They rode on for several miles, part of the time passing through woods, when they went slowly, and again through the open, where they speeded up. Finally, about eleven-thirty, Bob stopped his wheel and said:

"I guess we've taken the wrong road and might as well go back and try the other one."

To this Jack agreed, and by the time they reached the forks of the road, it was noon, and as they saw a small spring near the roadside, they decided to eat their lunch before going on. They had just finished, when they saw a farmer, followed by a huge mastiff, coming toward them.

"Gee, Bob, just look at the size of that dog, will you?"

"He sure is some dog all right," replied Bob. "I wouldn't want to meet him when he wasn't feeling in a good humor."

By this time the man was within speaking distance.

"Say, young fellers, what yer want round here?" he asked in a harsh tone, while his manner was most offensive.

"Why," asked Bob, pleasantly, "do you own this road?"

"Now don't you get gay with me, young feller."

"No one's getting gay; you asked me a question and I asked you one. Now, as you asked yours first, I'll answer it and then you can do as you please about answering mine, but I think we have a right here in the public road without being growled at. Now then, we are taking a ride on our wheels seeing the country."

The farmer looked rather uneasy while Bob was talking.

"Huh, mebby so, but yer the fellers what stopped at my house down the road here a bit, 'bout two hours ago, and was asking the old woman something about a house what was hid in the woods, hain't yer?"

"Yes, we did stop and make an inquiry," replied Bob. "Anything wrong about that?"

"Mebby not, only they hain't any sech place round here and yer needn't go to hunting for any."

"Well," asked Jack, laughing slightly, "if there's no such place where's the harm in our looking for it?"

The farmer perceived that he had made a slip, and grumbling something about fool kids poking their noses round where they had no business, he started off up

the road to the right, the dog following close behind.

"Well, well, the plot thickens, as the hero says in the play. Jack, that man knows something about that place, and what's more, he don't want us to know anything about it."

CHAPTER XIX.

THEY FIND THE HOUSE BUT LOSE A CAP.

As soon as the farmer disappeared, the boys started off once more, taking the left-hand road. After riding five or six miles, they entered a thick woods and about a half a mile farther on they came to a bridge, leading over a small, shallow stream. This bridge had been newly repaired as they could see that the plank flooring had been but little used.

"By jimminy, but I believe we're getting warm now," cried Bob, as he stopped his wheel on the bridge. "See where the road leads down through the brook there?"

"Yes," replied Jack leaning over the rail. "They must have crossed that way while the bridge was being fixed. But what of it?"

"Just this of it. I remember that just a few minutes after we turned into the main road that night, the machine suddenly stopped and then turned down a very rough, steep place just like this, and after going a few feet, came back into the road again, and I'll bet my cap that this is the place. Funny I didn't think of it before, for this bridge brought it to my mind. They hadn't taken the blindfold off then, so, of course, I couldn't see anything, but, this is the place sure as guns, and that road can't be more than a mile off."

"Well, come on," urged Jack, impatiently, as he mounted his wheel, "we'll soon find it if you're right."

They rode on slowly, closely watching the right-hand side of the road and had not gone quite a mile when Jack's keen eyes spied a slight break in the thick trees.

"Hurrah!" he called, "here's something that looks promising"; and then as Bob came up, "there's your woods road and there's your gully."

"I believe you're right, now what had we better do?"

"How far do you think the house is from the road?"

"Not more than a third of a mile I should say. Now I don't think we'd better take the wheels in there, because the road is so rough that if we should have to make a quick getaway, we could go much faster without them."

"Then let's hide them in the bushes and hoof it," proposed Jack.

"I kinder hate to leave them, but I guess it's the best way out. Come on."

They led the motorcycles along the woods road for perhaps a dozen yards and then turned off into the thick wood to the left, and after pushing along about two rods, Bob suddenly said:

"There's just the place, right by that birch tree. The bushes in front there are so thick that no one can see them."

Pushing on they carefully hid them there and then turned back to the road.

"I don't think we'd better follow the road," advised Bob, "for we might meet some one. Let's go parallel to it, but through the woods a little to the left." This they did and had gone about a quarter of a mile when Jack whispered:

"Say Bob, do you know we left the caps on the wheels?"

"Gracious, that's so; think we'd better go back and get them?"

"Oh, I guess they'll be all right; we must be most there now. Let's risk it."

So they pushed on, and had gone but a little farther, when Bob, peering through the trees, saw an opening in the woods, and a moment later a low two-story log house, standing on the farther edge, was visible. Jack was a few feet behind and, placing his finger on his lips, Bob motioned him to come on.

"That the place, sure as guns," he whispered, "Right out in front here is where I had that fight with Reed."

"Guess you're right, but I don't see any signs of life there, do you?"

"No, but we'll camp down here a while and watch."

Bob had hardly spoken, when they heard a low growl a little to their left.

"Goodness, there's a dog," whispered Jack, and the next moment a huge mastiff, similar to the one they had seen with the farmer, sprang toward them.

"Quick, Bob, your pistol," gasped Jack.

The boys always carried water pistols, loaded with strong ammonia water, when they went off on their motorcycles, and now they were to stand them in good stead. As Jack spoke, he jumped back, reaching for his pistol, which he carried in his back pocket, but before he could get it out the dog was upon him. Quickly thrusting forward his left arm, the dog caught him by the elbow, but the stout canvas, of which their jackets were made, prevented the sharp teeth from going through. By this time, Bob had his pistol out, and stepping forward, he shot the contents fairly into the face of the enraged beast. He let go his hold and with a loud yelp of pain, sprang backward, and began wildly clawing the dirt and leaves.

"Did he bite you, Jack?" asked Bob anxiously.

"Nope, nary a bite, you were too quick for him. But I think we'd better hike out of here. If there's anybody in that house, they must have heard that howl, and will likely investigate."

"That's right, you know we promised mother not to run any risks; come on."

Hastily they began to retrace their steps, but as there were no signs of pursuit, they soon slowed up a little.

"Don't believe there was a soul there," panted Jack, "but we found the house and that's one good job done anyhow, and I guess we'd better be content with that for today, but I would have liked to take a peep in that house."

By this time, they were in sight of the tree where they had left the wheels, but, when they hurried forward to drag them out, to their great consternation, no wheels were there.

"Jerusalem!" gasped Bob, "they're gone!"

"Well, what do you know about that?" echoed Jack. "If this isn't a pretty kettle of fish! Are you sure this was the place?"

"Course it is. Here's the big birch tree and you can see where the bushes are trampled down. Oh, if we'd only taken those caps with us! But come on, we

mustn't stand here doing nothing. We've got to get those wheels back, and let's hurry out to the road and see if we can see anything of them."

As they hurried along, Bob continued, "If King or Reed spotted us I guess it's all up, but it may be that some country lout saw us leave 'em there and has swiped 'em. If that's the case, we may get 'em back."

"We'll do our best anyhow," panted Jack, as they raced along.

They soon reached the main road, and quickly looked both ways, but nothing of the wheels was to be seen.

For a moment the two boys looked at each other in helpless despair, then Jack, casting his eyes on the ground, said:

"Here, quick, Bob, see here's their tracks."

Sure enough, in the dusty road the tracks of two wheels, leading in the direction from which they had come, were plainly visible.

"See, here's our tracks on this side of the road and there's the others," and a second later he added, "There's only one fellow; see where he walked between 'em."

"Right you are, Sherlock," shouted Bob, "come on now, on the run."

They set off at a rapid pace, their hopes away up. They ran nearly two miles, both being in good training, before they saw any one, then as they rounded a turn, they saw the object of their pursuit, walking rapidly about two hundred yards ahead of them, between the two wheels.

"Come on now as fast as you can leg it," said Bob, "Let's get as near him as we can before he sees us."

They were within two hundred feet of the thief, when he turned and saw them.

"Hey, you, drop those wheels!" shouted Jack.

The man hesitated a minute and then dropped the wheels on the road and, springing to one side, started off across a field at the top of his speed. In another minute they had reached the wheels, and with a cry of joy, Jack grabbed his up saying:

"Guess we're in luck again." But the next moment his spirits were dashed, when

Bob suddenly cried:

"Look, Jack, he's taken one of my caps." Then, before Jack could speak, he said: "You look out for this wheel, I'm going after that chap."

The man by this time was some distance away and running as fast as he could go, but Bob remembered that a little farther along a road branched off to the left, and hoping to cut him off, he jumped on Jack's wheel and fairly flew down the road in a cloud of dust. Coming to the branch road he turned and had ridden but a short distance when he saw the man climbing a fence, beside the road, just a little ahead. So quietly did the wheel run that Bob was nearly upon him before he was aware of his presence. He was a tall fellow, about twenty years old, dressed in overalls. Seeing that Bob was alone, he made no further attempt to escape, but stood in the middle of the road panting, as Bob came up.

Stopping the wheel and jumping off, he demanded:

"See here, what do you mean by taking our wheels?"

"Huh, don't yer wish yer knew? What yer going ter do about it anyhow?" he asked with a sneer.

"Well," replied Bob slowly, "you've taken a cap off one of the machines and if you give it to me at once, there'll be no trouble, but if you don't, why I'll just naturally have to take it away from you, sonny."

The tall youth laughed loudly, then stepping closer to Bob, shook his fist in his face, saying:

"I'm not saying I got the cap, but, if you think I have, mebby you'd better pitch in right now 'fore you forgit it."

Bob knew that the country youth was much stronger than he, as he was all of thirty pounds heavier, but he had taken several lessons in wrestling and boxing, and also was familiar with a number of the holds of the Japanese which had been taught him by a Jap friend. He therefore felt confident of his ability to handle the country boy, unless he had a similar training, which he doubted.

"Won't give it to me then?" asked Bob.

"Give yer nothing," the farmer boy started to answer, but before he had time to finish, Bob had made a rush and grabbed him round the waist.

"Easy now or you'll be apt to get hurt," he said, as he clasped his arms round Bob's shoulders.

This was exactly what Bob wanted, and giving a sudden twist to his body, he exerted all his strength, and threw the fellow fairly over his head. He came down with a heavy thud and was probably more surprised than he had ever been before in his life. He was not hurt, however, and quickly jumping to his feet, he made a wild rush for Bob, shouting:

"I'll fix you for that, you blamed dude."

He was more careful this time, however, and for two or three minutes they sparred, neither being able to strike a decisive blow. Bob found that the fellow was by no means ignorant of the art of boxing, as he soon got a blow on the nose, which made it bleed freely, but as one of his opponent's eyes were closed, he felt that he was at least holding his own.

"Blame yer, I'll get yer now," and the fellow aimed a powerful blow at Bob's head. If he had landed, his words would undoubtedly have come true, but Bob jumped nimbly to one side, and the country boy nearly fell forward from the impetus of his blow. Bob saw his chance, and quickly jumping forward, he grabbed him round the neck and, getting his knee in the small of his back, he pulled his head backward, a trick he had learned from the Jap.

"Gosh amighty, yer breaking my neck," gasped the fellow, now absolutely helpless, and the more he struggled, the more Bob's grip hurt.

Bob knew that he had him at his mercy, and freeing one arm, while he held him tightly with the other, he reached into the pocket of his overalls, and to his joy, pulled out the stolen cap. But his troubles were not yet over, for just then he heard the sound of rapidly approaching steps, and turning, he saw the farmer, who had questioned them that noon coming towards them on the run and only about one hundred feet away.

CHAPTER XX.

BOB AND JACK RETURN FROM THE HUNT.

As Bob saw the farmer coming, he had to do some pretty quick thinking, for it was evident that he was hostile to him for some unknown reason, and he did not intend to fall into his power if he could help it. Fortunately, he had left his motorcycle standing in the road, about ten feet away in the opposite direction from which the farmer was approaching. Giving the man he was holding a powerful shove, which sent him sprawling into the ditch by the roadside, he made a quick rush for the wheel, snapped up the rest and, giving the handle a slight turn, vaulted into the saddle. But he was just a fraction of a second too late, for as he started off, the farmer caught him by the coat tail. He had presence of mind to turn off the power before the wheel fell over sideways, and springing to the side, stood facing the farmer.

"Now, you young cub, what does all this mean?"

Bob had a habit of acting on the impulse of the moment, and before the farmer had time to put up his hands, biff! he was lying on his back in the middle of the road. By this time the younger man had picked himself from the gutter, and hastily running forward, bent over the fallen man, who Bob thought was probably his father.

"I'll have the law on yer for this," he shouted. "I guess yer've killed him."

"Will, eh?" said Bob, stepping forward.

His fighting blood was now at red heat, and he felt able to fight a dozen men. "Well, if you feel like taking the law into your hands, come on, and I'll give you one of the most interesting little picnics you ever saw. I was only playing before."

But he had evidently had enough, for he made no move toward reopening hostilities.

"All right then, guess I'll be going. By the way, your father'll come round all right in a minute. I didn't hit him very hard."

Just then the farmer gave a groan and opened his eyes, saying feebly:

"Laws amighty, did a mule kick me?"

Bob waited no longer, but, picking up his wheel, rode off unmolested. Just as he reached the corner where the road joined the main highway, he met Jack trudging along pushing his wheel.

"Well, old man," he shouted, "How'd you make out? Did you get it?"

"Did I get it?" repeated Bob, reaching his hand in his pocket, and pulling out the cap. "What do you say to this?"

"I say it's great luck."

"You may think so, but quite considerable of a fight had a good deal to do with it. Look at my nose. But," he laughed, "you ought to see the other fellow."

By this time he had screwed the cap in place.

"Come on," he said, "let's ride back a little way. Something back here I want to show you."

"What is it?" asked Jack as they mounted and started back.

"Oh, nothing much, only the road jumped up and hit a fellow on the back of the head a few minutes ago and I want to see how he's getting along. There are two of them, but I don't think there's much fight left in either."

He explained what had happened, as they rode along, and as he finished, they came in sight of Bob's late antagonists. The older man was just staggering to his feet, and riding up to within about twenty feet, Bob said pleasantly:

"Came round all right, did he?"

He turned and let out such a string of oaths as the boys had never before heard. When he stopped for lack of breath, Bob said:

"If that's the way you feel about it, I guess the less said the better, and we'll bid you good night. Come on, Jack."

They turned and rode slowly away turning their heads just in time to see both men shaking their fists at them.

"Well, that chapter is ended," remarked Jack, as they rode off. "Wonder what the next one will be like. We've certainly had some excitement since we made those cells."

"That's so," agreed Bob, looking at his watch. "It's after three now, and we'd better make tracks for home. You know mother will begin to worry about four o'clock if we're not there."

The road to Skowhegan, five miles down the Kennebec, was very sandy, and it was impossible for them to make good time. It was four-fifteen when they crossed the bridge in Skowhegan, but they made up for lost time on the run up to the lake and reached the cottage just as the clock was striking four-thirty.

All the folks were on the porch, including their father and Uncle Ben, who had come up from town in the car, a short time before. The story of the day's adventures was soon told, and Mr. Golden declared that on the morrow they would get some officers and visit the log house in the woods.

"Well, I declare!" said May. "You two boys do beat all when it comes to getting into scrapes and getting out of them again. It must be lots of fun. Wish I was a boy."

"That's all right as long as you do get out all right," remarked Jack a little dryly, "but there wouldn't have been so much fun to some of the messes we've been in lately if they hadn't turned out as they did. Please excuse me."

"Come on, Bob," shouted Jack, "that lake looks good to me. We've got just time for a good swim before supper."

The girls both declared it would be just the thing, and all four rushed into the house and upstairs, to reappear in an incredibly short time clad in bathing suits. The girls could both swim nearly as well as the boys, and soon they were having a splendid time in the clear water of the lake. They swam and dived, ducking each other whenever opportunity offered, until Mrs. Golden called that it was time to get dressed for supper.

The next morning, while they were at breakfast, the telephone rang and Mr. Golden went into the front room to answer it.

"What's that you say?" they heard him ask, "Mercy, is that so? I'll come right down, be there in less than a half hour."

When he returned to the dining room, his face was pale and his voice trembled, as he said:

"Bob, get the car out as soon as possible; the bank has been robbed."

"Robbed!" cried Mrs. Golden, as they all sprang to their feet. "How much did they get?"

"I don't know, I don't suppose they can tell yet, but Riggs said it was a large amount."

By this time the boys were at the garage, only a short distance from the house, and shouting to Sandy, the chauffeur, had the car out by the time their father and Uncle Ben were ready.

"Can we go?" asked Bob.

"Why, yes, I suppose so, but you'll get there sooner if you take your wheels. You coming, Ben?"

"Guess I will," replied the latter, and telling the women that they would 'phone as soon as they could, they were off, the boys leading the way on the motorcycles.

CHAPTER XXI.

BOB AND JACK THINK THEY HAVE A CLUE.

The First National Bank of Skowhegan, of which Mr. Golden was president, is situated on Water street. Behind it runs the Kennebec river through a rock gorge, nearly fifty feet deep. At the time of our story, the bank building was new, having been built only the year before. It was thoroughly modern in every respect, and contained what was supposed to be a burglar-proof vault.

The boys soon distanced the car and in exactly eleven minutes from the time they started were in front of the bank. They found a crowd of several hundred people collected in the street, for such a thing as a bank robbery in Skowhegan had never been known, and there was great excitement. Hurriedly, they pushed the wheels into a livery stable nearby, which was run by a friend of theirs, and then pushing their way through the crowd, managed to reach the sidewalk, in front of the bank, but here the people were so closely packed, that they were forced to stop.

"Guess we'll have to wait for dad," panted Jack, after a vigorous shove had failed to make an opening.

"Gee, but this is worse than a football game," declared Bob, "but here's dad now," as a big policeman pushed his way through the crowd shouting:

"Stand back now and let Mr. Golden through."

The mass of people slowly gave way, and Mr. Golden, followed closely by Bob and Jack, who had grabbed hold of his coat tails as he pushed his way past, finally succeeded in reaching the steps of the bank. The door was at once opened by Mr. Riggs, the old cashier, and Mr. Golden and Uncle Ben, who was with them, entered closely followed by the two boys.

"Oh, to think that I should live to see this day!" moaned the cashier, as he closed and locked the door behind them.

"How did they get in?" was Mr. Golden's first question.

The cashier pointed to the door and a glance was sufficient to disclose the means of entrance. Two doors, separated by a small vestibule, led into the bank. The outer door was fitted with a heavy plate glass window, but the inner one was of solid oak. This had been cut through by means of a bit, and a hole about twenty inches in diameter sawed out. A similar opening had been made in the glass of the outer door, a circular piece having been cut out, evidently with a diamond, and then, cemented back in again so cleverly, that it was not noticeable except on close inspection.

Going to the vault at the rear of the bank, they found an irregular hole, nearly sixteen inches in diameter, through the solid steel door. The edges of this hole had a fused appearance, and Mr. Golden at once said:

"Undoubtedly the work of experts, and they must have used an oxy-acetylene blowpipe flame to cut through that door."

Bob had been doing some pretty deep thinking, and now he caught hold of his father's sleeve and said:

"Of course, I may be a way off, but I believe that those fellows who kidnapped me are the ones who did this job."

"I think so, too," broke in Jack, "We know that they are criminals and what were they doing round here if they weren't up to some such job? You see," he continued, as his father was about to speak, "they didn't come here after those cells, because they didn't know anything about them till they saw the boat the day of the race. I believe they intended to rob the bank in the first place and then they saw our boat and thought that if they could get hold of our secret, it would pay them better than this job. That's the way I've got it doped out."

"And I believe Jack's right, dad," broke in Bob. "Something I heard that man Reed say just after they got me in the car that night has just come to me. I didn't think much of it at the time; it has never occurred to me till just now."

"What was it?" eagerly asked Mr. Golden.

"Why, we had gone but a little ways when I heard Reed say, in a low voice. 'How about that other job, Bill?' and King replied angrily, 'Shut up, you fool!' Then as Reed started to say something, he whispered, 'That can wait awhile; it won't spoil.'"

"I really believe the boys are right," declared Uncle Ben. "There is little doubt in my mind that when you get those two men you will have the robbers of this bank."

"I'll tell you what," broke in Bob, "if those two fellows did it, I'll bet a cent they'll go straight to the place where they took me, that we found yesterday. You see they think no one knows about it and that they will be safe there."

"Then we'd better get some officers and get after them as quickly as possible," declared Uncle Ben.

"I guess we might as well try it," assented Mr. Golden, "seeing it's the only clue we have. Mr. Riggs, see if Mr. Switzer is out there and if he is, have him come in, will you?"

The cashier disappeared, but was back almost immediately, followed by a powerfully built man about forty years old, the chief of police of Skowhegan.

"Hello, Switzer, glad you were at hand," cried Mr. Golden.

"Just got here," panted the officer, who appeared nearly out of breath. "I went over to Smithfield fishing early this morning and didn't know about it till I got there, and then I hustled back as fast as I could."

It may be well to explain here, that Skowhegan does not have a regular police force who give all their time to it. Mr. Switzer, besides being chief, was a butcher, and the rest of the force, consisting of five men, held different positions in the town.

Mr. Golden quickly pointed out what has been described, and then told him of Bob's suspicion.

"Just the thing to do," he declared. "George and Fred are outside and I'll get them and we'll start at once."

"We'll go in my car," said Mr. Golden. "I guess it's as fast as any in town, and will carry six of us all right, and the boys can go on their wheels, can't you, Bob?"

"Sure thing," the both replied.

"All right then, that's settled. Now let's get off as soon as possible. My car is right over there on the corner."

They went out and Mr. Golden and Uncle Ben at once made their way to the car, while Mr. Switzer searched through the crowd for his officers. Bob and Jack hurried to where they had left their wheels and were back at the corner in almost no time, where they were soon joined by the three officers.

"Now, where to?" asked the chief, as he took his seat by the driver.

"Norridgewock first," answered Bob, as he jumped into his saddle, and he added, as he turned on the power, "here's where we break all the speed laws ever made."

"You boys keep within sight of us," shouted Mr. Golden, as they dashed across the bridge.

In spite of the bad road, they reached Norridgewock in nineteen minutes. On the way, Mr. Golden told Uncle Ben and the officers that Riggs had said that nearly one hundred thousand dollars in cash and negotiable securities had been taken.

They made no stop at Norridgewock, but at once took the road leading to Oakland. Here the going was much better and in a little less than half an hour after leaving Norridgewock, they were within a mile of the woods road, which led to the big house. The boys were about a quarter of a mile ahead of the car and stopped here to wait for the rest of the party.

"Are we 'most there?" asked Mr. Golden, as the car came up to them and stopped.

"Yes, it's only about a mile from here, and I thought we'd better stop before we got any nearer, and make our plans," explained Bob.

"My idea," said Mr. Switzer, "is to leave the car by the side of the main road and go the rest of the way on foot. You see," he explained, "if we took it too close they would hear it and skip, that is, providing they're there."

All agreed that this was the best plan.

"Now, Bob," asked the chief, "how far from the main road is that house?"

"I should say a little more than a quarter of a mile."

"And how large is the clearing round it?"

"At the back the trees grow up close to the house, but in front there is a clearing of perhaps half an acre."

"Then, three of us had better get round to the back of the house, while the rest approach it from the front. George, you and Bob and Mr. Golden," indicating Uncle Ben, "can circle round and get behind. The rest of us will give you plenty of time to get there and then we'll go up to the house and demand admittance."

To this plan all agreed, and they started again, the boys keeping just in front of the car. They had gone about a mile, when Bob held up his hand for them to stop.

"See that big elm just ahead there?" he asked, pointing with his finger. "Well, the road is about ten feet the other side of that tree."

But just then something happened which caused a complete change in their plans.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CHASE.

Bob and Jack were a few feet ahead of the others, when the former suddenly stopped.

"Don't you hear that motor, Jack?"

"I do now, and I believe it's a car coming out that woods road."

The rest of the party had now joined the boys, and the sound of the approaching car was plainly audible.

"That must be them," said Bob in a low voice. "Now what'd we better do?"

"We'll hide in the bushes on each side of the road," proposed Mr. Switzer, "and when they come along, we'll jump out and stop 'em. You all got guns?"

It turned out that only the policemen had revolvers, so the chief, Mr. Golden and Uncle Ben hid on one side of the woods road, while the other two policemen and the boys concealed themselves on the other.

"Now," whispered the chief, "don't make a sound till I tell 'em to stop, then you cover 'em with your guns and if they try to get away, let 'em have it, but don't shoot to kill if you can help it 'cause we want to get those fellows alive if we can."

Nothing more was said and in a few minutes the car was near at hand, as they could tell by the sound, and, peering through the bushes, Bob spied a large car coming slowly along the road. Two men were on the front seat.

"I believe that's King driving," whispered Bob, "though he's shaved off his beard."

At that instant, Chief Switzer sprang out into the middle of the road in front of

the car, closely followed by Mr. Golden and Uncle Ben, while the other policemen and the boys followed suit from their side.

"Halt, in the name of the law," shouted the chief, flourishing his revolver.

The car was about ten feet from them as the order was given, and instead of obeying, the driver suddenly put on high speed and the car shot toward them. So quickly was it done that they had barely time to save themselves from being run down by jumping to one side as the car shot by and turned into the main road heading toward Oakland.

"Gosh, they'll get away sure as thunder," shouted Switzer, as he fired his revolver after the vanishing car. "Come on, we've got to chase them."

It took them but an instant to reach the road and, to their delight, they found that Sandy, seeing the car come out, had brought their machine up.

"Pile in, quick," shouted the chief, but although they obeyed as quickly as possible, the fugitives were nearly a half mile ahead when they started.

The boys rushed to where they had left their wheels, about a hundred feet away, and by the time they reached them and mounted they were quite a distance in the rear.

"Now, let 'em out," shouted Jack, as he sprang into the saddle, and turning on the power, fairly flew down the road closely followed by Bob, and before they had gone a mile, they were up with their father's car.

"I'm afraid we're going to lose 'em," they heard the chief say, as they drew up, one on each side of the car. "We're not gaining an inch. Getting all the speed you can out of her, Sandy?"

"I've got her wide open," was the reply.

Bob knew that there was a long, steep hill to ascend a little farther on and hoped that they would gain on them there, as his father's car was a splendid hill climber and he had a few weeks before taken that same hill on high gear. A moment later, as they swung round a curve, the hill was at hand, and Bob shouted to Sandy telling him not to shift.

They could see the robber's car about half way up the hill, and going slowly, evidently on low gear. Sandy hit the foot of the hill at a terrific pace and, as the

car went up on high gear, they could see that they were gaining rapidly. But the robbers had too great a start and reached the top several hundred yards ahead. The road was now slightly down hill for a mile or more, and they could see that, under the reckless driving of the robber, whose car must have been making nearly seventy miles an hour, they were rapidly losing ground, for Mr. Golden had told Sandy not to go faster than he considered safe.

"I want to catch them as badly as any one, but I'm not going to risk killing all of us to do it," he declared.

"He'll wreck his car and break their necks, sure as fate, if he don't slow up," thought Bob.

But the robbers reached the foot of the hill in safety and had gained all the ground they had lost in climbing the hill. For a number of miles now, the road was fairly level and the race continued without much change in their relative distance.

The two boys were now riding a little behind the car, and suddenly Jack turned to Bob, saying:

"I say, Bob, we're never going to catch 'em at this rate."

"Don't look like it. They've sure got some speedy car, and of course they're reckless about driving."

Just then they reached the outskirts of Oakland, and, as they had to stop to inquire which way the robbers had gone, they lost still more ground. Quickly learning, however, that they had taken a road which would probably lead them, by a round-about way to Portland, they told their informant to tell the police to telephone to the latter city to be on the watch for them, and again took up in the chase.

As they started off, Bob said to Jack:

"Say, Jack, we could catch 'em easily on these wheels."

"Sure we could, we've been running only about half speed, but what good would it do? We couldn't stop 'em, could we?"

"Perhaps not, but my idea is this. Let's get a couple of revolvers from the policemen and ride up behind them and see if we can't put a hole in one of their

tires."

"Good," shouted Jack, "Come on, let's go get em."

Putting on more power, as they had lagged behind a little, while they were talking, they quickly overtook the car.

"Hey, there," shouted Jack, as they rode up along side, "Give us a couple of your revolvers and we'll try to shoot a hole in their tire."

"Think you can do it?" asked the chief, leaning out of the car.

"Don't know, but we can try it. You'll never catch 'em at this rate and it's the only chance I see."

"All right, here you are," answered the chief, leaning out and handing each of the boys a revolver. "Go get 'em. But you look sharp, now. Those fellows are probably armed and won't hesitate to shoot if they are cornered."

"Yes, boys," joined in Mr. Golden, "don't you get too close to them."

"We'll be careful," replied Bob. "Come on, Jack, now let her out and we'll show them some real speed," and as they turned on the power, they rapidly left the car behind.

But they had lost more ground than they thought, and they rode for fully six miles before catching sight of the robbers, and had begun to fear that they had lost them. But, finally they caught sight of the car about a half mile ahead, and giving the motors a little more current, they rapidly crept up till they were within two hundred yards of them.

Suddenly, they saw the man who was not driving, turn his head, and as he saw them, he said something to his companion, and then, turning in his seat, he drew his revolver.

"He is going to shoot," shouted Jack, and the next instant a shot rang out followed by several others. But, the swaying car made accurate shooting impossible, and he emptied the chamber without doing any harm, although Bob heard one bullet whiz past his head.

"He couldn't hit a barn at the rate he's going," shouted Jack. "Come on, let's get a little nearer and then we'll try our hand at it."

They waited till they were within about one hundred and fifty feet and then Bob fired, followed a moment later by Jack. They were both good shots with the revolver, but, under the condition, they knew that it would be more good luck than anything else if they succeeded in hitting a tire. By this time, the man they supposed to be Reed, although he now wore a mustache, had his gun loaded again and began firing, but, fortunately, with no effect.

Jack had but one shot left when a ball from Reed's revolver passed through his hat.

"Gee, that's getting a little too close for comfort," he muttered.

Taking careful aim, he slowly pressed the trigger and this time a loud report followed the bark of the revolver.

"Got 'em," he shouted as both turned off the power and pressed on the brakes.

He had indeed got 'em more thoroughly than he supposed, for as the air left one of the rear tires, they saw the car suddenly swerve to the right, and before the driver could regain control, it had turned turtle into the ditch by the road side.

"Gracious, I guess that ends them," cried Bob, as they brought their wheels to a standstill not more than seventy feet from the overturned car.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ROUND UP.

The boys, thinking that the robbers might still be able to shoot, went back a little way until they saw the other car coming.

"Well, you got them, sure enough," declared Mr. Switzer, as the car drew up and came to a stop, "but I guess, by the looks, they're both dead. We'd better have our guns ready though, for they may be able to shoot," he added turning to his men.

Their fears were groundless, however, for on approaching the overturned car, they found that both men were unconscious, although they were alive. Reed, who had lost the false mustache he had been wearing had been thrown from the car and, having struck his head on a rock, was lying a few feet away, stunned, while King was pinned under the car, and groaning heavily. It was necessary to get the jack from the other car and raise the machine before they could drag him out. He slowly opened his eyes and groaned as they bore him to the car.

It took some time to bring Reed around, but finally he began to show signs of life and soon sat up and looked around in a dazed manner. As his eyes rested for an instant on Jack, a shudder ran through him and he muttered something about not doing a very good job and sank back with a moan.

They found the stolen money and securities in a box under the car, which was badly wrecked, and Mr. Golden took it in charge.

"Now," said Mr. Switzer, speaking to Mr. Golden, "if you are willing, George and I'll take these fellows back to Skowhegan in your car. There's a house just around that turn where a man by the name of Berry lives, and he'll probably hitch up and take the rest of you back to Oakland and you can catch the train there for home."

"All right," replied Mr. Golden, "I guess that will be the best plan, and the boys can go along with you on their wheels."

So it was arranged, and the two injured robbers were made as comfortable as possible on the back seat of the car with Mr. Switzer, after he had slipped handcuffs on them. They said nothing except that King said he believed his left leg was broken, and it was paining him a good deal.

"You're both mighty lucky that your necks aren't broken," declared Switzer.

"I don't know as it's so very lucky for us, either," said Reed moodily.

The other officer took his seat in front with Sandy, and as they started off, Mr. Switzer shouted:

"I'll send some one out to tow their machine in."

The return trip was made without incident, the boys following the car. The prisoners were not inclined to talk and refused to answer any questions. On reaching Skowhegan, they were taken to the jail and a doctor summoned, who found that King's left leg was broken below the knee. Beyond a good sized lump on the back of his head and a severe shaking up, Reed was not injured.

The authorities at Boston were notified, and it turned out that Reed was the long-wanted Jim the Penman, and, as Captain Long had suspected, King proved to be the man known as Oily Joe. They were both sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment in the state prison of Massachusetts.

As the boys, accompanied by Mr. Switzer, left the jail, after hearing the doctor's report regarding the condition of the robbers, Bob told him of his suspicions regarding the farmer and his son, with whom they had the trouble the day before.

"That must be looked into," declared Mr. Switzer. "It certainly looks as though they were mixed up in it somehow. Tell you what I think we'd better do. It's only ten-thirty now; suppose we take your father's car and drive right back there and see what we can find out about it."

To this the boys readily agreed, and taking the other policeman with them they started, waiting only long enough for Bob to call up his mother and tell her the news.

They reached the place in a little over an hour, and as they drove into the yard, the farmer was sitting on the back door step. As soon as he saw them, he rose and started to go into the house, but Mr. Switzer was too quick for him, and drawing his revolver, he pointed it at the man ordering him to stop. He wisely

obeyed and Switzer told him to come to the car.

"Is this the man?" he asked, turning to Bob.

"Yes, he's the man all right."

The chief then explained the situation to him and told him that he had better make a clean breast of it. The man was very much frightened and his voice trembled as he spoke, telling them that he would tell them all he knew.

According to the man's account, the house in the woods belonged to him. It had been built by a man from New York, three years ago, who intended to use it as a summer home, but his wife had died before it was completely furnished, and he had bought it at a very low price. King and Reed had driven into his yard one afternoon, a week or so ago, in an automobile. The smaller of the two, Reed, had said that he was a wealthy business man from Boston and that King was his servant. He, Reed, had suffered from a nervous breakdown, and his doctor had ordered him to go way somewhere, with his man, where he could be perfectly quiet and where no one would bother him, and they were looking for a place which they could rent.

He had at once thought of the log house in the woods and had offered to show it to them. On seeing it, Reed had declared it to be just the thing and had paid him a month's rent in advance. He had thought that Reed was pretty healthy looking for a sick man, but considered it none of his business so long as he got his money. He had seen but little of them, but did know that they were away most of the time. Yes, he thought it strange, seeing that he wanted to be perfectly quiet, but here again, it was none of his affair and he had not bothered his head about it.

Bob asked him why he had been so hostile toward Jack and him, and why his son had stolen their wheels, and why he had kept the cap, on abandoning them. He said, in explanation, that Reed had called at the house one day, and during their conversation had told him that two boys had stolen an invention from him. Some kind of a storage battery, the secret of which was in some metal caps. He had said that he was very anxious to get back at least one of the caps as he had lost the formula for making them and had been unable to get the right proportion of metals. Asked why he didn't have the boys arrested, he had replied that, unfortunately, he had no proof that they had stolen it, but that he would give one thousand dollars to get one of the caps. So, it happened that when he had seen the boys the day before, and had noticed the electric motors on their wheels, he

had at once jumped to the conclusion that they were the boys Reed had told him about. So, seeing a good chance, as he thought, to make one thousand dollars honestly and without much trouble, he and his son, who had been at work in a field nearby, had followed them, and he guessed they knew the rest.

The farmer's story sounded plausible enough as he told it, and, as they had no evidence to the contrary, Mr. Switzer said he guessed probably he was all right, but cautioned him to be more careful in the future or he might get into trouble, and telling him that he might be called as a witness, proposed that they start back.

"I don't know I'm sure," he said to the boys, on the way back, "whether that fellow was telling the truth or not, but as long as we caught the robbers, I don't see that we'd gain anything by arresting him and I guess we'd have a pretty hard time proving anything against him."

"Well, I got one good crack at him anyhow," chuckled Bob, "and I guess that son of his will think twice the next time, before he tackles a dude."

As the car drew up in front of the bank, they found that their father and the others had returned and getting their wheels, the boys lost no time in starting for the cottage, as they felt, according to Jack, hollow clear to the toes. Mrs. Golden said that he and Uncle Ben had eaten lunch and would be up later as he had some business to attend to at the bank.

As they rode through the town, they had to stop a dozen times and receive congratulations from their friends, and it was nearly two o'clock when they reached the cottage. However, they found a good lunch awaiting them, as their father had 'phoned that they were coming. While eating, they gave their mother, their aunt and the two girls an account of the events of the forenoon.

"I am very glad," declared Mrs. Golden, "that they are caught, as I would never have felt easy with them at large."

Mr. Golden and Uncle Ben came up in time for supper and the evening was spent in talking over the events of the last few days.

The next night, when Mr. Golden came up from Skowhegan, he told the boys that he had a surprise for them.

"What is it?" both asked eagerly.

"I received a telegram this afternoon from Captain Long, saying that a check for ten thousand dollars had been sent to you, which is the reward offered for the capture of Jim the Penman and Oily Joe."

The boys were surprised, and of course delighted, for they had not thought of a reward, although they now remembered that Captain Long had told them that one had been offered.

"But, father, don't you think that Mr. Switzer and the other policemen ought to have part of it?" asked Bob.

"No," replied his father, "I hardly think so. They only did their duty in arresting them, while you were really the ones who caught them. What do you say, Ben?"

Uncle Ben agreed with their father, in thinking that the reward belonged to them alone, but Jack proposed that they would feel better about it if they gave them a part, and Mr. Golden smilingly told them to do as they thought best. So, after talking it over, they decided to give them one thousand dollars each. Mr. Switzer and the other two men were much pleased when the boys gave them the money, and all decided that they had not expected any part of it as they considered that it belonged to the boys.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

"Say, Bob, what'll we do with this money?"

The check had been received on the day following Mr. Golden's announcement, and as soon as the boys got into bed that night they began to talk about it.

"Well, I'll tell you my idea. You remember what I said before I was kidnapped, about that prize of fifty thousand dollars for flying across the Atlantic, don't you? Well, tomorrow, let's ask dad about it and if he says we may try it, we can use it to buy an airplane next summer. What do you say?"

"What do I say? I say that, for a youth of your tender years, you have a mighty level head, and that last remark of yours is certainly a corker."

The next morning, at breakfast, they broached the subject to their father.

"Well, I never!" declared Uncle Ben, "What in the name of common sense will you boys think of next? But of course, you are only fooling."

"Indeed we're not," declared Bob, emphatically.

"But sober earnest now, Bob, do you think the scheme is practical?" asked his father.

"I don't see why not. Lots of aviators can stay in the air as long as their gasoline will hold out and the only reason they can't fly farther is because they can't carry enough fuel. Now we could carry enough of those cylinders to take an airship round the world."

"Well, well," said their father, as he rose from the table, "there's lots of time to think of that between now and next summer. I won't say yes, and I won't say no at present, but we'll see."

It was now the beginning of the last week in August and the boys spent the next few days delightfully, sailing in the Sprite, fishing, swimming and playing tennis with the girls. To Jack's secret delight Mrs. Golden invited Evelyn Nason to spend a week with them, and as she was a lively girl, they were a very jolly party, and Mike declared that they made more noise than a barrel of monkeys.

September came around too soon, and Uncle Ben announced that the next day he and Aunt Lucy must start for home. All were very sorry to have them go, for they all loved them dearly.

"Don't forget, boys, that you are to spend a week with us next Christmas," was the last thing Aunt Lucy said, as they started off in their big car.

Two days later, May and Evelyn went home and the Roost seemed quite deserted, and the Goldenes began to think about leaving the lake for the summer.

It was Wednesday evening, and they were going to close the cottage the following Friday. They were all sitting around the open fire in the living room, for the night was chilly.

"Boys," said Mr. Golden, throwing down the paper he had been reading, "how would you like to be tin soldiers?"

"Tin soldiers? What in the world do you mean?" asked Jack, as they all laughed.

"Well, I'll tell you. This afternoon a friend from Philadelphia was in the bank and he was telling me about a military college near there, where his boy went last year, and he praised it so highly, that I thought it might be a good place for you. I believe in military training," he continued, "as it teaches, besides other things, alertness and efficiency. I have very much regretted that I did not have the advantage of such training, and I would like my boys to have it. What do you say?"

The boys thought for a moment and looked at each other. Finally Bob said:

"I think it would be bully; how about you, Jack?"

"Same here. Do they teach cavalry there, dad?"

"Yes, they give courses in infantry, cavalry and artillery."

"That'll be great," declared both boys.

"Then you think you would like to go, do you?"

"Yes, sir, I think it will be just the place for us," answered Bob and Jack said the same.

"All right then, we'll consider it settled and I'll write to the president the first thing in the morning as the term opens the seventeenth."

The boys talked about it for a long time that night, after they were in bed, and the more they thought about it, the more anxious they were to go.

Friday morning came, and after a final sail in the Sprite, she was pulled into the boathouse and made snug for the winter. Needless to say, the cells were taken to Skowhegan for safe keeping. By noon, the Roost was ready to be closed, and after lunch, they left for their town home, the boys on their motorcycles and the rest of the family in the car.

"This has been a splendid summer," declared Bob, as they were about to start, "in spite of all the trouble we've had, and I've had more excitement than I expected to have all my life."

"That's so," agreed Jack and then added soberly, "we certainly ought to be very thankful that everything turned out so well."

One day, about a week after they came down from the lake, Mr. Golden said, at the supper table:

"Mr. Jenkins was in the bank today and said that Fred and Will were coming home tomorrow, and that he had decided to send them to the same college where you're going."

Instantly the faces of the two boys fell.

"He said," continued their father, "that he wished you two were more intimate with them."

"I don't," said Jack. "They're too mean and selfish and then you can't trust them. I'm mighty sorry they're going there."

"Oh, well," declared Bob, "I guess there'll be room enough for them and us, too."

It was Thursday and they were to leave the following Monday, and so we will leave them, busy and happy in their last minute preparations for their new life in

college.

And so we shall take leave of them for a short time. Their subsequent adventures will be found in a succeeding volume entitled "THE GOLDEN BOYS AT THE FORTRESS."

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