

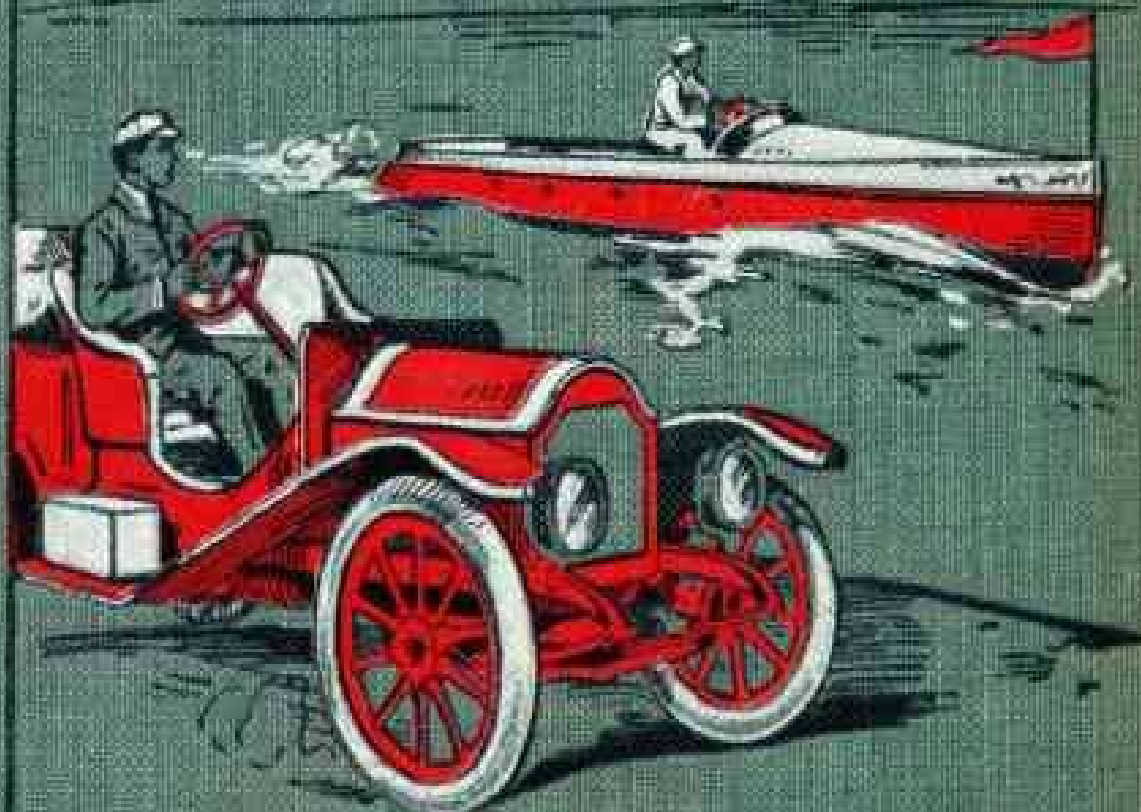
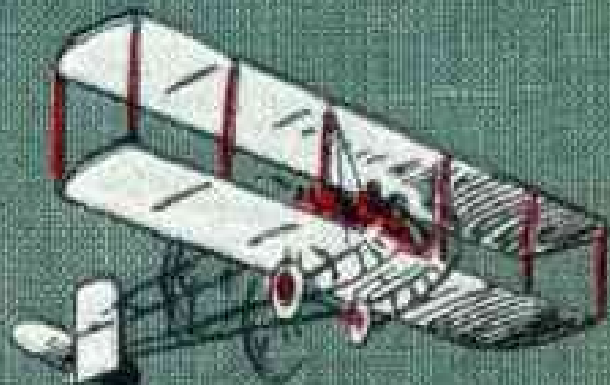
THE  
MOTOR  
BOYS  
AFTER A  
FORTUNE



CLARENCE  
YOUNG

# THE MOTOR BOYS AFTER A FORTUNE

MOTOR  
BOYS  
SERIES



CLARENCE YOUNG

CUPPLES  
& LEON  
CO.

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**[JERRY SENT THE CHASER DIRECTLY AT THE COMET.](#)**

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# THE MOTOR BOYS AFTER A FORTUNE

Or

The Hut on Snake Island

BY

CLARENCE YOUNG

AUTHOR OF

“THE RACER BOYS SERIES” AND “THE JACK RANGER SERIES.”

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY

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BOOKS BY CLARENCE

# YOUNG



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THE MOTOR BOYS AFTER A FORTUNE

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JERRY SENT THE CHASER DIRECTLY AT THE COMET.  
WITH SURE AIM, NED SENT THE LIFE PRESERVER  
TOWARD NODDY.

A MOMENT LATER A CAR SHOT PAST.

SUDDENLY ONE OF THE CONDUCTORS TOUCHED A  
MASS OF SNAKES.





## PREFACE

DEAR BOYS:—

I wonder if any of you are superstitious, or if you believe in “signs”? I, myself, do not, but as this happens to be the thirteenth book in the Motor Boys series, I just thought I’d mention it, more as a joke than anything else.

You know some persons think thirteen is unlucky. I do not, and I am sure you do not, either. So I venture to hope that I have been lucky enough to write for you, in this thirteenth volume, a book you will like better than any of the preceding ones that I have been happy to pen.

Certainly, Jerry, Ned and Bob, when they went after the radium treasure, on Snake Island, in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, had a chance to believe in “signs” if they were so inclined. But when they saw the strange “ghosts” they were not a bit frightened, and, later on, they discovered the cause of them.

This story, though a complete tale in itself, is linked with the others in the series. It tells how the Motor Boys, hearing through Professor Snodgrass, of a place where radium was supposed to be located, set off to find it. They had many adventures, and were in not a little danger. Then, too, they had to proceed against Noddy Nixon, who had unlawfully taken their motorship.

I venture to hope that you will like this story, and that you will care for more about the boys, whom I have come to regard as very good friends of mine. I should dislike, very much indeed, saying good-bye to them.

So, wishing you all the pleasure possible in the reading of this story, I remain,

Yours cordially,

CLARENCE YOUNG.

---

# **THE MOTOR BOYS AFTER A FORTUNE**

# CHAPTER I

## TO THE RESCUE

“But, Professor, do you really think it’s true?” asked Ned Slade, looking at the elderly gentleman, whose bald head glistened in the sunlight, as he sat leafing the pages of a scientific book.

“Is what true, Ned?” inquired Jerry Hopkins, who had crossed the room to look out of a window.

“What Professor Snodgrass was telling just now, about a fortune in radium being on a lonely little island in the Colorado River, somewhere in the Grand Canyon.”

“Radium!” gasped Bob Baker, turning slowly in a big chair.

“Yes, radium,” answered Ned, at whose house the other motor boy chums had called to meet their old friend, the professor, who was paying a short visit to Mr. Slade. “Radium, Bob. Do you get the idea, or are you still trying to figure out how long it will be until lunch time?”

“Aw, quit it,” begged the fat lad. “I guess I can think of something besides grub, once in a while. But I wasn’t listening very closely. What is it about radium? That’s the stuff they use to set diamonds in, instead of gold; isn’t it?”

“Say, what’s the matter with you, Bob?” cried Jerry, a tall, and well-built lad, as he wheeled around from the window. “Set diamonds in radium? You’re thinking of platinum, I guess.”

“Oh, that’s right!” admitted Bob.

“Radium!” broke in Ned. “I guess they’d be more likely to set radium in a diamond, if they could; eh, Professor?”

“Well,” admitted the little scientist with a smile, “it’s valuable enough to be set in diamonds, but I’m afraid it would be too dangerous to carry around that way. It can’t be exposed carelessly, you know.”

“Dangerous?” asked Bob. “How’s that?”

“Radium, that wonderful metal, as it is sometimes called, and about which so

much has been written, yet about which even the greatest scientists admit that they know very little, can cause very severe burns if brought near a person, and not protected in some way.

“The rays, or emanations from it, pass through almost all substances, you know, and not only does it cause burns, but also forms of mental diseases. It is a dangerous, as well as very valuable, metal.”

“But what’s this Ned said about some being on an island in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado?” persisted Bob. “That sounds interesting. Maybe there’s a chance for us to take a trip, and get some. Let’s hear more about it, Professor, please.”

“Well, I don’t know that I can say much,” came from the scientist. “I just happened to see a mention of radium in this book I was looking at, and I just told Ned that there was said to be a valuable deposit of it on this island—Snake Island, I believe it is called—though I don’t know why. Probably from some Indian name.”

“And I asked him if he believed it was true,” added Ned.

“As to that I can’t say,” resumed Uriah Snodgrass. “All I know is that some years ago a scientific expedition from Hartwell College set out to learn if the rumor about the radium was true. They had the story, I understand, from some prospectors who were searching for gold. The prospectors landed on this island, because their boat was wrecked, and one of them picked up a piece of stone, whether it was hornblende or pitchblende I can’t recall, but you know radium is often found in those substances.

“At any rate, one of the prospectors kept this piece of mineral, and when he and his friends left the island he took it with him, not knowing what it was. Later he gave it to a scientist, as a curiosity, and the latter at once recognized what it was, and learned where it came from.

“It was sent to Hartwell College, with which the scientist was connected, and aroused a great deal of interest. An expedition was at once fitted up, and about a year ago started for Snake Island.”

“Did they get there?” asked Bob eagerly. “And did they get any gold?”

“They did not, I regret to say,” replied the professor rather solemnly. “As for gold, they would scarcely have picked it up, had there been any, if there was radium to be had, for there is no comparison in the values of the two. With radium at ten thousand dollars, or so, an ounce, you can easily figure what a little

bit would be worth.

“At any rate, the expedition never even got to Snake Island. They started down the Colorado in a boat, but it was wrecked, and the party barely escaped alive. This so discouraged them that they returned, and as far as I know, no one since has set foot on the place where the radium is supposed to be. Yes, it was a sad piece of business.”

“Why sad?” asked Jerry Hopkins. “Because science missed the chance to get the radium?”

“Well, yes, in a way, but one of the searching party was lost.”

“Drowned?” asked Ned.

“As to that no one ever knew. He fell into the water when the boat was wrecked, and none of his friends ever saw him again. They had a watch kept on the river below, but the body was never seen. The man disappeared completely. He was quite a friend of mine, too, in a way, for we corresponded, and exchanged scientific books, though I only saw him a few times. Hartley Bentwell was his name, and he was one of the best authorities on radium that I ever heard of. I often wonder what became of him. He gave his life up in the interests of science.”

“And do you really believe there is radium there?” asked Ned, after a pause.

“Yes, I think I do,” answered the professor quietly. “I had the good fortune to see the piece of mineral, containing some, that the prospector picked up years ago. There was no doubt but that it contained radium, for all the manifestations were present. And if there was one bit of radium on that island, there must be more.”

“Unless it’s all evaporated by this time,” put in Bob.

“Radium doesn’t evaporate,” said the professor with a smile. “The smallest piece you can imagine, will give off what you might call ‘rays’ or ‘sparks’ for thousands of years, and, at the end of that time, the most delicate scales would show no loss of weight. It’s the same way with pure musk. A grain of it has been known to scent, say a box, or chest of drawers, for fifty years, and, at the end of that time, the whole grain of musk was still there.”

“That’s strange,” murmured Jerry.

“Oh, that’s not nearly all the strange facts about radium,” went on Mr. Snodgrass. “I could talk to you for hours about it and not half finish.”

“Tell us more about Snake Island,” suggested Ned.

“That’s all I know,” and the professor closed the book that had started the conversation. “I only heard what I have told you. It was because I was interested in Mr. Bentwell, and felt his loss so much that the tale impressed me. I often thought I would like to have a try for that radium myself, not because of the fortune, but because of the scientific value of the metal, or mineral, whichever you choose to call it. But I never seemed to get the time, and I had so many other things to do, gathering——”

The professor suddenly stopped talking, and made a dive for a certain spot on the carpet. He came down on his hands and knees, holding his palms together.

“I got it!” he cried triumphantly. “Ned, please get my smallest insect case. It’s in my right hand coat pocket,” and the scientist remained on his knees, a look of joy on his face.

“Did you fall?” asked Bob innocently.

“No, indeed, I jumped,” replied the professor. “As I was speaking I happened to see a new variety of pink-winged moth fluttering on the carpet, and as this moth——”

“Moths in my carpet!” cried Mrs. Slade, entering the room at that moment. “Oh, Professor! Let me kill it at once! Where is it?”

“I have it safe,” answered Mr. Snodgrass with a smile. “As for killing it, I’ll do that, but it must be carefully done, so as not to crush it. Have you the box, Ned?”

“Yes, here it is,” and the lad drew out a small, glass-topped case from the professor’s pocket.

“Well, as long as you have the moth, I suppose it can’t eat holes in my new carpet,” said Mrs. Slade. “I must put some cedar oil around, and kill the horrid things.”

“Oh, I beg of you, if you see any more to save them for me!” implored the professor. “There you are, my little pink beauty!” he exclaimed, as he put the moth in the case where it soon died, for the box contained cyanide of potassium, the fumes from which are almost instantly fatal to insect life. “That is worth many dollars to my college collection,” went on the scientist. “I would not have missed that for the world. This has been a lucky day for me. Let me see, what was I talking about?” and he looked at the boys through his powerful spectacles,

while he absent-mindedly brushed the dust from his trousers.

“It was radium, and you said you’d like to go to Snake Island,” suggested Ned.

“Oh, yes, and I had told you about how my friend lost his life seeking the place. Indeed I would like to go, but I am afraid it is out of the question. However, I suppose some one will get the fortune some day,” and the professor carefully put the insect box in his pocket, looking the while, carefully over the carpet for more specimens.

“Well, that surely was a queer yarn,” remarked Bob. “I say, Ned, what do you say if we have something to eat on it. I’m hungry, and——”

“You don’t care who knows it!” finished Jerry with a laugh.

“That’s all right,” put in Ned good-naturedly, for the chums were almost like brothers, and made themselves perfectly at home in each other’s houses. “I guess it must be almost lunch time. I’ll go see if it isn’t ready. I reckon we can all eat some, even Professor Snodgrass, if he can spare the time from his specimens.”

“Oh, yes,” laughed the scientist. “I am ready——”

At that moment there came an interruption in the shape of a small boy, very excited, and out of breath, who dashed up on the porch, on which opened the library windows of the room where the three chums and the professor had been talking.

“Whoop!” yelled the small lad.

“Andy Rush!” cried Ned.

“Wow!” yelled Andy, getting his second wind. “Come on, fellows—’sawful—dam’s busted—river’s got loose—houses being washed away—people in the water—dogs—chickens—boats—fearful—terrible excitement—come on—don’t lose a minute—the whole place may go—big flood—whoop—come on—don’t wait—wow!”

For a moment the three chums gazed at the excited small lad. Then Jerry asked, sternly:

“Andy, is this true, or are you joking?”

“True? Of course it’s true! Come on—rescue—big damage—dam’s busted—save lives!”

“Fellows, I guess we’d better go!” cried Jerry, and, followed by his chums, and the professor, he rushed from the room, Andy coming after, and giving vent to excited whoops at every other breath.





## CHAPTER II

### THE SAVING OF NODDY

“How did it happen, Andy?” asked Jerry, as he ran along.

“Yes, tell us more about it,” urged Bob.

“Is it the big reservoir dam that’s broken?” asked Ned. “If it is, there’ll be a lot of damage, and yet I don’t hear any great excitement,” and he paused a moment to listen if he could catch the roar of rushing waters. But there came no unusual sound from the direction of the river which bordered the town of Cresville, where the boys lived.

“I don’t know—didn’t see it!” panted Andy. “Old Pete Bumps told me—said it was the dam—terrible—everything washed away—come on—wow!”

“Oh, if it was old Pete Bumps, our hired man, who told you, it can’t be so bad,” returned Bob Baker. “Pete always makes a big fuss over everything. Let’s take it easy, fellows.”

“You can’t tell,” interposed Jerry. “Something must have happened. I see a lot of fellows running toward the river,” and he nodded toward a side street, through which could be had a glimpse of a thoroughfare parallel to the one on which our friends were, both extending to the stream. “Come on,” finished the tall lad. “We’ll see what it is,” and he increased his pace, his companions doing likewise.

While I have just a few moments before the boys reach the river, and in which time they are doing nothing but running, and wondering what has happened, I will take the opportunity to tell you something about the chums, and the various books, previous to this one, in which they have figured.

The first volume of the series entitled, “The Motor Boys,” told how the chums got together, and entered a bicycle race. Later on they got motor-cycles, and then an automobile in which they had many adventures. They took a long trip overland, got possession of a gold mine, and later went to Mexico, where they were in great danger. But they managed to escape, and, on a long trip across the plains they rescued the hermit of Lost Lake.

After these adventures, our heroes decided that motor boating would suit

them, and they succeeded in getting a fine craft. In the volume named, "The Motor Boys Afloat," is told how the lads cruised in the *Dartaway*, and succeeded in finding the robbers who had broken into Mr. Slade's department store.

The lads liked motor boating so well that they took a cruise on the Atlantic, during which they solved the mystery of the lighthouse, and, later on, they went to the strange waters of the Florida Everglades.

Naturally, after their adventures on the Atlantic, they turned their attention to the other ocean, the Pacific, and there they succeeded in locating a lost derelict.

By this time the science of navigating the air was becoming better known, and aeroplanes and dirigible balloons were being perfected. It could not be expected that such lads as the motor boys could be kept from this field of activity, and with the assistance of an old balloonist of experience, Rupert Glassford, Bob, Ned and Jerry built a motorship. In the book called "The Motor Boys in the Clouds," I told how they made a great trip for fame and fortune, and, some time later they went over the Rocky Mountains, and solved the mystery of the air.

Thrilling indeed were the adventures that happened next, for when they made their voyage over the ocean they succeeded in rescuing from mid-air a certain Mr. Jackson, who was trying out a new kind of balloon. He and his crew were rendered unconscious by escaping gas, but they were brought around all right after hard work.

In the next book, "The Motor Boys on the Wing," I told how the three chums sought and found the bank robbers, and recovered the stolen money. They had been home from this trip some little time, when the incident narrated in the first chapter of the present volume took place.

I might add that the three chums lived in the town of Cresville, not far from Boston. Their names you are already familiar with. Bob Baker, the fat lad, was the son of Mr. Andrew Baker, a well-known banker. Ned Slade's father was Aaron Slade, a wealthy department store owner, while Jerry Hopkins was the son of a rich widow, Mrs. Julia Hopkins. The three lads were about the same age, full of fun, grit and the love of adventure.

Many times, though, their fun was spoiled by a mean, bullying lad of the town, Noddy Nixon by name, and his crony, Bill Berry. But the motor boys generally managed to get the best of Noddy in the end. In this they were sometimes aided by Andy Rush, the excitable little chap, who had given the alarm about the bursting dam. Andy was always excited, and sometimes by the

slightest cause.

Professor Uriah Snodgrass was a well-known scientist. He often went with the boys on their trips, and he was continually on the lookout for rare bugs, or other specimens. He was employed by a well-known college, to get various articles for its museum, and often the professor would do odd things for the sake of getting a choice insect or reptile. He was a great friend of the boys, and often visited them at their houses. He had spent some time with Mr. Slade, who was one of the trustees of the college to which the professor was attached, and Mr. Snodgrass was about to return to his duties when, in a talk with Ned, the conversation turned to radium, as I have mentioned. But now all thoughts of that, and of Snake Island, were forgotten in the alarm raised by Andy.

“What do you think can have happened, anyhow?” asked Ned, as he raced along beside Jerry.

“I give it up; but it’s something, anyhow,” was the tall lad’s answer, “and that, in spite of the fact that you’ve usually got to discount what Andy says. Look at the crowd!”

As Jerry spoke he and the others reached the end of the street, and came in sight of the river. They could see that something out of the ordinary was taking place, but the stream did not seem to be unusually high, though it had risen somewhat on account of heavy spring rains.

“The big dam hasn’t burst, or we’d hear the roar of waters,” declared Ned.

“Yes, and we’d see ’em, too,” added Bob.

“Well, something busted, because Pete Bumps told me!” insisted Andy. “Maybe the bottom dropped out of the river—water may be all running away—ground sunk in—we’ll all fall through—whoop!”

“Andy!” cried Jerry. “Stop, or you’ll burst! Cool down; can’t you?”

“I can’t seem to,” answered the small lad. “Hey!” he cried, “there goes one house, anyhow,” and he pointed to a structure floating down the stream.

“That’s so!” agreed Bob. “It’s a boathouse, too. I wonder what’s up?”

They saw a moment later. Just above where the street on which they were running came out on the river front, was a small stream that joined the main one. This little stream had been dammed up, to provide a flow of water for an old-fashioned iron mill that used a turbine wheel. Part of this mill-dam had given way because of the heavy rains, and the waters that were held back had suddenly

been released, to flow into the river proper.

There was quite a crowd collected on the both banks of the river, and employees from the mill were endeavoring to repair the break in the dam, by putting timbers in it, and filling in the gap with stones, sod and earth.

“Say, this isn’t such an awful flood!” cried Jerry as he took in the scene. “I thought you said the whole town was being washed away, Andy?”

“And you said houses were being carried down,” added Ned.

“Well, there’s one house washed away, anyhow,” declared the small, excitable chap, as if to justify himself.

“That’s so!” cried Bob, “and it’s Noddy Nixon’s boathouse. It’s been washed away, and it’s going right down the river.”

“It didn’t take much to wash it away,” said Jerry. “It was built too far out in the water, anyhow, and the piles it stood on weren’t much bigger than clothes poles. I always thought it would wash away if the water got high, and now it has.”

Noddy Nixon had recently built a new boathouse on a piece of land near the river. It was just below the mill dam, and, naturally, when the rush of waters came, the structure was carried away, for it was not securely built. It was now floating down the stream, careening from side to side in the rushing waters.

“Somebody ought to save that boathouse!” cried Andy.

“Let Noddy do it then,” answered Jerry. “It isn’t worth an awful lot, and it will be worth less when this flood gets through with it.”

“Look!” suddenly exclaimed Ned. “Some one is in the boathouse!”

He pointed toward it, and, at the same time a cry arose from the crowds on either bank.

“Some one’s in the house!” was the shout. “He’ll be drowned!”

“It’s a man!” yelled Andy.

“It’s Noddy himself!” cried Bob.

The figure on the narrow platform in front of the floating boathouse could now be plainly seen. It was that of Noddy, as Bob had said, and the bully who had been endeavoring, by means of a long pole, to push his house toward shore, now threw up his hands, and cried for help.

“It’s time he did that before,” commented Ned. “The current’s got him now, and he’ll never get that house to land.”

“Where was he all this while?” asked Bob. “I didn’t notice him at first.”

“Guess he must have been on the other side, out of sight,” spoke Jerry.

Noddy was now frantically rushing up and down, calling at the top of his voice:

“Help! Help!”

“Say!” suddenly cried Ned. “The rapids! He’ll be down in them soon, and they’re dangerous with the water as high as it is now! That house will be knocked to pieces!”

“That’s so!” agreed Jerry. “Noddy ought to swim ashore while he has the chance. Otherwise he may be hurt! I forgot about the rapids.”

The “rapids” were really not very dangerous at low water, but when the river rose, and dashed over the jagged rocks, about a mile below town, they formed eddies and whirlpools that were exceedingly risky to navigate. In fact no boats dare risk them with the stream at flood.

It was toward these rapids that Noddy’s boathouse, torn away by the waters, was rapidly drifting. The crowd soon realized this and began shouting advice.

“Swim ashore!”

“Get a boat and save him!”

“Jump off!”

“Throw him a rope!”

These were some of the expressions called to Noddy, but he paid no heed to them, continuing to race up and down on the platform, waving his hands, and yelling for help.

“Say, something ought to be done to help him,” remarked Ned in a low voice.

“Yes,” agreed Jerry. “It’s Noddy Nixon, and he’s been pretty mean to us, but I suppose——”

“Our motor boat!” interrupted Bob, pointing to a fine boathouse a little distance up the stream. It was where the boys kept their craft, and was above the point where the swollen mill stream joined the river, and so, consequently, was in no danger.

“I guess it’s up to us to save him,” said Jerry slowly. “Nobody else seems to have sense enough to do it. There aren’t any other motor boats near by.”

“Where’s Noddy’s, I wonder?” asked Mr. Snodgrass, for he knew that the bully owned a power craft.

“He had a collision with the dock the other day, and sprung a leak,” explained Andy Rush, who had cooled down somewhat. “His boat is laid up for repairs.”

“Like our auto,” put in Ned, for the machine of our heroes was across the river, in a distant town, being overhauled.

“Well, if we’re going to save Noddy Nixon, we’d better be getting a move on!” cried Jerry. “Come on, fellows!”

He raced toward their boathouse, followed by his two chums, the professor and Andy Rush. It was the work of but a few minutes to unchain the motor boat, run it out into the stream, start the engine and steer down after the floating boathouse with the frantic figure racing about on the platform.

“Hurrah!” yelled the crowd, when they saw our heroes start out. “The motor boys to the rescue! Noddy’ll be saved now, all right!”

“Help! Help!” yelled the bully, as his boathouse careened dangerously, almost throwing him into the water.

“The flood’s getting higher,” said Ned in a low voice, as he looked over the side of the boat. They were opposite the dam now, and in the grip of the rushing waters.

“Yes, there goes another slice of the dam!” cried Bob, as they saw a large portion of it slip into the water. The men on top, who had been endeavoring to stop the gap, had to race for shore.

“Say, we’re going to have our work cut out for us saving Noddy!” cried Jerry as he held the wheel in a firmer grasp.



## CHAPTER III

### NODDY BEGINS PLOTTING

“Ned, give me a little richer mixture!” cried Jerry, as the motor boat shot down the current, pitching and rolling in the waves caused by the influx of the mill stream. “I need all the power I can get. Cut down the air a bit, and turn on a little more gasoline!”

Ned bent over the carburetor, and adjusted it, while Jerry watched his own steering to see that he did not run the boat into the many floating logs and boards that had been carried into the river by the flood.

“Need any help?” sung out Bob.

“Not up here, but I wish you’d sit on the other side, Chunky,” replied the steersman, giving Bob the nickname that had been applied to him because of his stoutness. “That will trim the boat better, and she’ll ride easier. Professor, would you mind moving up nearer the stern. I want to get the bow as high as I can.”

“Just a moment!” exclaimed the scientist. “I thought I saw a new kind of water spider. Yes, there it is! Hold the boat back a moment, Jerry.”

“Can’t do it!” cried the tall lad. “This current is fierce!”

The professor suddenly made a lunge over the side with outstretched hands, and the boat careened dangerously.

“Look out!” cried Jerry.

“I’ve got him!” answered the professor. “Oh, it’s a fine specimen! I never had one so good. Where’s my spider-box?” and with one hand tightly clasped, holding the water insect, the scientist, with the other, began searching in his pockets for the box to contain his prize.

“I’ll get it for you,” volunteered Bob.

“It’s in my left hand coat pocket,” said the professor.

The insect was soon in captivity and then, as the boat shot ahead under increased power, due to the change in the gasoline mixture, all on board gazed at the floating boathouse, and the unfortunate owner of it, who was still rushing

about, unable to do anything to help himself.

“Look!” cried Andy. “It’s going to flop over!”

It did seem as if the structure would turn turtle, but a swirl in the current righted it, and once more it floated on a level keel, so to speak.

“Help! Help!” cried Noddy, waving his hands at the boys in the motor boat.

“We’re coming!” shouted Ned. “Keep cool!”

“Wow! Steady! We’ll save you—don’t jump—it’s all right—not as bad as it might be—hold fast!” excitedly cried Andy Rush.

“Keep still!” ordered Jerry. “You’ll have him jumping overboard next, Andy.”

“All right,” agreed the little lad, sitting down on the cushions, and holding to the rail to keep his nerves in control.

The motor boat was now well down the flooded river, and aided by the current and her engine, was rapidly approaching the floating boathouse. The latter structure was whirling about, careening from side to side, now on one edge of the stream, and now on the other.

“It’ll soon be in the rapids,” spoke Ned in a low voice.

“We’ll get there before that,” said Jerry confidently.

“How you going to get him off?” asked Bob. “Run along side and have him jump, or make fast?”

“I’m certainly not going to make fast to that house,” replied Jerry. “It would pull us over the rocks, I’m afraid. I guess Noddy will have to jump, and swim for it. Then we can pick him up. Ned, stand ready with that life preserver, and see that it’s fast to the rope.”

“Aye, aye, sir!” answered Ned, seaman fashion.

He made ready the cork ring, with its accompanying line, and took his place in the bow, ready to cast it when Jerry should give the word for Noddy to jump. The lad on the boathouse platform was standing, and looking at the approaching motor craft, waving his hands frantically, and occasionally calling for help.

“Why doesn’t he keep still?” spoke Jerry. “We’re coming as fast as we can.”

“Better not go much nearer,” advised Ned. “I can hear the roar of the rapids. They’re just around that turn.”



“I’m going to tell him to jump now,” said Jerry. “He’s a pretty good swimmer, and he can keep afloat until we can pick him up. Get ready with that ring, Ned.”

“All ready!”

Jerry stood up, and, bracing one knee against the wheel, to aid his hands in holding it steady, he shouted:

“Jump, Noddy! Jump! We’ll pick you up! Jump!”

“I—I’m afraid to,” whimpered the bully.

“You’ve got to!” yelled the tall steersman determinedly.

“I—I——” Noddy looked as though he were going to slump down on his knees, but a sudden swirl of the current saved him the necessity of jumping, for he was thrown off the slanting platform into the water.

“There he goes!” cried Bob.

“The ring! The ring! Throw him the ring!” shouted Jerry.

As Noddy went under the swirling waters, Ned leaped out on the bow deck of the boat, with the ring in his hand, watching for the reappearance of the bully.

“There he is!” cried Andy Rush.

With sure aim Ned sent the life preserver toward Noddy. It fell true, almost over his head, and, a moment later, he had grasped it with a desperation born of despair.

**WITH SURE AIM, NED SENT THE LIFE PRESERVER TOWARD NODDY.**

“Pull him in!” ordered Jerry, and Ned and Bob began hauling on the line. A few seconds later, half unconscious, pale, and with closed eyes, Noddy was pulled on board.

“He’s dead!” cried Andy.

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Jerry, as he began to turn the boat toward shore. “He wasn’t in the water more than three minutes. He’s fainted, I guess.”

“Better get him to shore as soon as possible,” suggested Professor Snodgrass. “He may have been injured.”

“I’m heading for that dock over there,” remarked Jerry, pointing to one on the Cresville side of the river. “We can lay him out there, and give first aid to the

injured, and, if he's swallowed any water, we can drain it out of him. Keep his head low and his feet high, fellows," he said to Bob and Ned, who were holding Noddy. The rescued lad had not opened his eyes.

It was a hard fight against the powerful current of the flooded river to gain the dock, but Jerry made it, for the engine of our heroes' craft was a fine one.

"Get him out now!" cried the tall lad, as he made the boat fast on the lower side of the dock, where the swirl of the river would not affect it. "Use artificial respiration."

The motor boys knew how to do this, and in a little while they saw that Noddy was breathing more strongly. It developed later that he had been hit on the head by a piece of driftwood, rendering him partly unconscious, so that he swallowed more water than he would ordinarily have done.

"I guess he's coming around all right now," said Ned, as he noticed a fluttering of Noddy's eyelids.

"Here comes Dr. Preston!" added Bob, as he saw a young man, accompanied by a small throng of persons, racing toward the dock. "He'll know what to do."

Dr. Preston, who had been summoned by some one of the crowd who had witnessed the rescue, was soon working over Noddy.

"He's out of danger now, though he's not fully conscious yet," said the doctor, after a few minutes. "It's a wonder he had strength enough to hold on to the ring as you pulled him in."

"Well, when Noddy gets hold of a thing, he hates to let go," remarked Ned. "Say, fellows," he added to his two chums, "a lot has happened since we started to talk about that radium deposit on Snake Island, in the Colorado canyon; hasn't there?" he asked. "It seems like a week, but it hasn't been half an hour."

"That's right," agreed Bob. "I want to hear more about that radium. Let's go back home, and the Professor can tell us. Noddy's all right now. If we could go to Snake Island and get some radium——"

"Hush!" suddenly exclaimed Jerry, nudging his chum.

"What's the matter?" demanded the stout youth.

"No use talking about that, where every one can hear you," went on Jerry in a low voice. "Besides, Noddy is coming to, now. His eyes are open."

The rescued lad was much better now, and was sitting up, held by the doctor,

who was administering a stimulant.

“That’s so, I guess I had better keep quiet,” admitted Bob in a low voice.

Quite a crowd had collected on the dock, and one man, who had a carriage, offered to take Noddy home. This was decided on, and soon, in the care of the physician, the bully was taken away. He had not recovered sufficiently to thank his rescuers, but the motor boys felt that the less they had to do with Noddy the better for them. They had done their duty, and were content to let it go at that.

“Think we can go up against the current?” asked Ned of Jerry.

“I’m not going to try it. The river will soon go down, for the water in the mill pond will all be out by night. We’ll just leave our boat tied up here. No use taking any chances on hitting a floating log, and stoving a hole in the *Dartaway*. We’ll come down and get her to-night.”

The motor boys made their way out of the crowd, from the members of which came murmurs of praise at the plucky act of our heroes. Noddy’s boathouse disappeared around the bend of the stream, and, a little later, was pounded to pieces in the rapids.

The three chums, with the professor and Andy Rush, made their way back to Ned’s house, talking on the way of what had happened.

“Well, it’s all over,” remarked Ned, as they came opposite the broken dam. “See, the pond is almost emptied. They can mend the break now. That was an exciting time while it lasted.”

“That’s right,” agreed the others.

“Let’s get that lunch we were starting on when Andy interrupted us,” suggested Bob.

“Chunky, you’re hopeless!” cried Jerry. “You’d eat if the world was coming to an end, I believe.”

“I would if I had time,” admitted the fat lad. “But there’s no use letting the lunch spoil; is there, Ned?” and he appealed to his other chum.

“No, I guess not,” agreed the merchant’s son. “Come on, Andy, have a bite with us, but don’t you get excited or you may choke on a piece of custard pie.”

“And while we’re eating maybe Professor Snodgrass will tell us more about the radium on Snake Island,” suggested Bob.

“I think I’ve told you all that I know,” replied the scientist, “but you may ask me any questions you like,” and, shortly afterward, while still at the table, the little man was fairly bombarded with inquiries about radium, its general properties, and in particular about the kind that was to be found on Snake Island.

Meanwhile, Noddy was taken home, and nursed. He was weak and ill, but this did not prevent him, as he lay in bed, from doing some hard thinking.

“Radium; that was what those motor boys were talking of,” he murmured to himself, as he felt of the bandage on his head. “Radium on some place in a canyon. Canyon—canyon—Grand Canyon. I wonder where that is? Radium; I know that stuff. It’s worth millions—but that canyon—Oh, I know—the Grand Canyon of the Colorado! That’s it. Snake Island! That must be a place in the river. I wonder if I could find it?”

Noddy dozed off for a moment. Suddenly he sat up in bed.

“I’m going to do it!” he exclaimed. “There’s no reason why they should have it! I’ll get ahead of them! I’ve got as good a right to it as they have!”

He was in deep thought for a minute.

“That college professor knows about it,” he resumed. “And if he knows, other scientists know too. Radium is used in colleges for experiments. I’ll do it! I’ll get Bill Berry, and we’ll find some other college professor, and start after that radium ourselves. I’ll get ahead of the motor boys for once in my life! Radium! It may be worth millions!” and Noddy’s eyes gleamed as he unfolded to himself the plot he was hatching against our heroes.

“I’ll start as soon as I can,” he went on. “It isn’t very far to that Colorado canyon. That’s what I’ll do. Me and Bill will get that radium. I guess I can find Snake Island as well as Jerry, Ned or Bob. They didn’t think I heard them, but I did. I just kept my eyes shut. Oh, I’ll fool ’em!”

And, mean bully that he was, forgetting that the motor boys had saved his life, Noddy Nixon began making plans for going to Snake Island after the deposit of radium, which was worth such a fortune.



## CHAPTER IV

### PLANNING A FORTUNE HUNT

“Well, I feel better now,” remarked Bob with a sigh of satisfaction, as he pushed back his chair from the table.

“You look better, too,” spoke Jerry, with a laugh. “You haven’t that worn and hungry appearance you had a while ago, and I guess the rest of us can have a little peace now.”

“Peace? What do you mean?” demanded the stout youth indignantly.

“I mean that you won’t continually be talking about something to eat.”

“I guess you were hungry, too,” went on Bob. “I notice that your plate is empty.”

“Here, you two quit scrapping,” advised Ned good-naturedly. “I guess we were all hungry. It was the excitement over rescuing Noddy that caused it.”

“That’s right!” chimed in Andy Rush. “Whoop! That was exciting all right. Let’s go back and see if they’ve got the busted dam mended—maybe there’s a lot of men drowned—maybe we can see where Noddy’s boathouse went to pieces in the rapids—wow—some excitement all right—I’m going—come on, fellows!”

“No, we’ve got business on hand,” answered Ned, a bit soberly. “But don’t let us keep you, Andy.”

“All right, I’m going—I like excitement—maybe they’ll let me help mend the dam,” and taking Ned’s words as a sort of gentle hint, the excitable little lad arose from the table and was soon hurrying down the street.

“I guess they’ll keep him away from the dam if they know what’s good for it,” remarked Jerry, as he watched Andy hurrying away. “He might talk so much that he’d put another hole in it. But what business did you mean, Ned?” and he looked across at his chum.

“The radium business, of course,” returned Ned promptly. “You fellows don’t mean to say you’re going to let a chance like this slip!”

“What!” cried Bob, “do you intend to go after it, Ned?”

“Well, I’m willing, if you and Jerry are, and if the professor would like to go along——”

“Go where?” asked Uriah Snodgrass, looking up from a scientific book he had started to read as soon as the meal was over. “Where do you want me to go?”

“After the radium on Snake Island,” put in Jerry. “Ned thinks we can get it, but I don’t know that it’s possible, after what you have told us about how hard it is to get down into the Grand Canyon.”

“It is hard,” said the professor seriously. “I haven’t in the least made up my mind to go on the expedition, but whoever does go, ought not to risk going in a boat, as the other scientists did. It is almost certain death. I really don’t know how one could make the descent into the canyon. The island, as I understand it, is in the middle of the river, near a place where there are dangerous rapids and whirlpools. The cliffs on either bank of the stream are impossible to scale.

“Of course at certain points it is possible to make a descent into that great canyon. I remember reading an article on it and it stated that there were several trails that could be used, Bright Angel Trail is one, and then there are Bass’s, Boucher’s, Berry’s and the Red Canyon Trail. Berry’s is near Grand View, as it’s called, and Snake Island lies somewhere between that point and Bright Angel Trail. Oh, a boat is out of the question, I think.”

“Then what’s the matter with our airship?” asked Ned quickly.

“That’s it!” cried Bob eagerly. “Why didn’t we think of that before? We’ll go in the airship, fellows, and get that radium! It will be just the thing! Here it is almost vacation time, school will close in a couple of weeks, and that will be our summer outing—to go after the radium fortune in our airship.”

“You forget that the airship is in Denver,” put in Jerry. “You know we loaned it to Mr. Glassford to give an exhibition at the international aero meet, and in his last letter he said he has won several prizes with it.”

“But the meet is over; isn’t it?” asked Ned, who seemed unusually excited over the prospective trip.

“Yes, and I suppose Mr. Glassford will soon be sending our motorship back,” admitted Jerry. “But——”

“Oh, don’t go to finding a lot of objections,” broke in Bob. “What’s the matter with leaving the airship out in Denver?”

“And walk out there to use it?” inquired the tall lad sarcastically.

“No, motor out there. Our auto will soon be out of the repair shop, and we could have a fine time going West in it. Say, things couldn’t happen better; could they, Professor?” and Bob began pacing up and down the room.

“What has happened?” asked the scientist suddenly, for he had again become absorbed in his book, and had paid no attention to the talk of the boys. “Is anything the matter?”

“We’re still talking radium,” explained Ned. “Trying to get Jerry enthused enough to go to Snake Island.”

“Oh, I’ll go if the rest of you do,” agreed the widow’s son. “Only it doesn’t sound feasible. Our airship isn’t at hand, the motor is laid up for repairs, and \_\_\_\_\_”

“But we have the motor boat,” broke in Ned. “We can use that.”

“On dry land!” laughed Jerry. “Say, you fellows have great ideas—great!”

“Give us some of yours then,” suggested Bob.

“Well, my notion is——”

“I’ve got it! I’ve got it!” fairly yelled Professor Snodgrass, leaping from his chair, and holding the book above his head. “I’ve got it!”

“What is it this time?” asked Jerry. “A pink-eyed toad or a blue-nosed grasshopper?” for the scientist was continually on the lookout for strange and rare insects or reptiles.

“Neither one,” answered Mr. Snodgrass, “but I have just found, in this book, an article telling about a strange double-tailed toad, very rare, which is said to be a native of New Mexico. It is a species of the horned toad, but very different. For years I have been investigating, trying to get on the trail of this sort of toad, and now, most unexpectedly, I come upon a clew. Boys, this has indeed been a fortunate day for me. I shall start right away for New Mexico. I must telegraph the college president at once that I can get a most valuable specimen to add to our collection. Oh, this is indeed fortunate!”

The professor was rapidly making notes from the article in the book. The boys looked at one another. Then Ned spoke.

“Fellows,” he said, “this just fits in. New Mexico is on the way to the Grand Canyon—or at least it won’t be much out of our way to go there. We can have a

try for the radium fortune and at the same time the professor can look for his tailless toad. How about it?"

"Two-tailed toad! Two-tailed!" cried the little scientist. "Don't make that mistake, Ned. But I think that will be a good plan. I was undecided about it before, but, since you are going, I will go with you, and I'll do all I can to help you get to Snake Island."

"And we'll help hunt the two-tailed toad," added Bob. "Now, how about you, Jerry?"

"Oh, I'm game. I'll go along, but we've got to straighten out about our auto and motorship. First we'll write to Mr. Glassford, asking him to hold the *Comet* in Denver for us. Then we must hurry the repairs on the auto."

Mr. Glassford, as my old readers probably remember, was the man who first helped our heroes to construct their motorship. He had recently borrowed their latest and largest craft for exhibition purposes.

"Well, get busy," advised Ned. "Here is some paper. Take my fountain pen and write some letters. It's decided then; we'll have a try for the radium, and we've got to get a move on to get ready."

"Here comes the postman," spoke Bob. "I'll get the mail, Ned."

The stout lad came back with several letters. One was for Ned Slade. He quickly tore it open, and, as he read it he gave a startled cry.

"What's the matter—bad news?" asked Jerry.

"Sort of that way," replied his chum. "This letter is from the man who was repairing our auto. He says he discovered a flaw in the back axle, and, in order to have a new one properly fitted in he sent the car to Pittsburg, where there is a firm that makes a specialty of such things. Our auto is in Pittsburg!"

"Then it's all up with using it on the trip west!" exclaimed Jerry. "We'll have to go by train I guess."

"No we won't!" cried Bob eagerly. "Fellows, I've got a plan."





## CHAPTER V

### NODDY'S PLOT DEVELOPS

There was a moment of silence following Bob's announcement. Then Jerry remarked:

"Well, go ahead, Chunky, and let's see what you've got up your sleeve. Are you going to suggest a wireless airship ride, or a motorless auto?"

"Neither one," said Bob. "But I was going to say I didn't see why we couldn't go in our motor boat as far as Pittsburg, pick up the auto there, when it's finished, go on in that to Denver, get the airship and then keep on to Snake Island. I think——"

"Say, that's all to the ice cream!" burst out Ned. "Bob, you have got a head on your shoulders after all. That's a fine idea, I think."

"So do I," agreed Jerry. "But can we go all the way to Pittsburg by water?"

"Sure," declared Bob. "Where's a map? Ned, hunt up a geography." One was soon found and then the boys, bending over it, saw that by using the river that flowed past their town for a number of miles, getting into a little lake, and thence into another river, they could, by means of a small canal get into a small river flowing into the Alleghany.

"We'd have to have the boat carted about five miles, but all the rest of the way we can go by water," explained Bob. "As soon as we hit the Alleghany we'll be all right. What do you say, Professor?"

"Anything you boys decide on will suit me," answered the scientist, who was still busy making notes. "I want to get that two-tailed toad, and I'll do anything in reason to secure a specimen. It strikes me that Bob's plan is a good one."

"It won't be monotonous, at any rate," commented Ned. "A motor boat, an auto and an aeroplane and dirigible balloon combined, ought to furnish a variety of travel that would suit almost any one. I think it's just the cheese, myself."

"Then we'll do it," decided Jerry. "I'll write to Mr. Glassford, and the auto firm right away, and we can mail the letters on our way home, Bob. I've got to be going soon. I told mother I'd go calling with her this afternoon, but I've been

here nearly all day.”

The letters were soon written, and then Jerry and Bob taking leave of Ned, started for their homes. Professor Snodgrass also sent word of the prospective trip to the college authorities by whom he was engaged. The scientist arranged to stay at Ned’s house until the time of starting.

“Let’s go have a look at the broken dam,” proposed Bob when Jerry had dropped the letters in the box. Accordingly they went a short distance out of their way, down to the river. The excitement of the morning had passed, and there was only a small crowd watching the mill men at work. The waters had now subsided, but it would be some time before the dam would be in shape to again hold back the stream, and provide power for the turbine.

“It was a hot time while it lasted,” remarked Jerry.

“It sure was,” agreed his chum. “I wonder how Noddy is getting on?”

“Oh, all right, I guess. He’s so tough it takes a good deal to hurt him. I suppose we’ll hear from his folks.”

The motor boys did, a few days later, Mr. Nixon sending Bob, Ned and Jerry a formal note of thanks for what they had done for his son. Noddy was getting on all right, his father said, and would soon be out of bed. From Noddy himself no word came.

“I don’t wish him any bad luck,” spoke Ned, “but I hope he stays in bed a couple of weeks.”

“Why?” asked Jerry.

“So he won’t have a chance to interfere with us. I’d like to get started on our radium trip before he’s up and nosing around.”

“Why, he doesn’t even know we’re thinking of it,” put in Bob. “How can he interfere?”

“Well, somehow or other, he has always, more or less, made trouble for us whenever we go off on trips,” went on Ned. “I don’t know how it is, but it generally happens. Maybe this will be an exception.”

“How soon before we can start?” asked Bob.

“Not for a couple of weeks,” replied Jerry. “School closes a week from to-day, and then it will take us a week to get ready after that. We haven’t much time now, on account of examinations. I’ve got to do some hard studying to pass.”

“So have I,” admitted Bob. “Well, then, we’ll say in a couple of weeks. Maybe Noddy won’t be around by then, and we’ll be all right. Did you hear from Mr. Glassford, Jerry?”

“Yes, and he says he’ll have the *Comet* all ready for us. He won’t be there himself, as he has to come east, but he’s paid a man to take charge of the motorship for us. The auto will be ready in two weeks, also, for I had a letter from the factory where they’re repairing it. I wrote to ’em to make a few changes in it, to bring it up to date. Our motor boat, the *Dartaway*, needs a little overhauling, and then that will be in shape.”

Following the smashing of the original *Dartaway* in the freight wreck, the boys had bought a much larger and finer craft, with a cabin, and had named it after their first boat.

Their auto I have described in previous books. It was a large touring car, with plenty of room for the passengers and also compartments where food and supplies could be carried, and also a small tent with folding cots, so that in case they desired they could camp out wherever night overtook them. Recently a closed body had been put on the car, so that it was very comfortable to travel in, even during a storm.

The motorship *Comet* I have also described in other books, so I will only mention it briefly here. It was a combination of an aeroplane and dirigible balloon, and could be used as either or both.

The gas used in the bag was manufactured on board, as needed, and there was a comfortable cabin, sleeping berths and an engine room, fairly filled with motors, dynamos, air pumps, a gas generator and many other mechanical contrivances. The motorship could be kept aloft a number of days, and plenty of food and supplies could be carried, in addition to several passengers. It was an ideal craft of the air.

In the days that followed the motor boys were kept busy. When they were not “boning” away over their lessons they were getting the *Dartaway* in readiness for the trip. Professor Snodgrass remained as the guest of Mr. Slade, and the scientist spent most of his time wandering about the woods and fields looking for rare bugs.

“I’m just as anxious to start as you boys are,” he said to them one day, when he had paid a visit to the dock where the boat was tied up, and where Bob, Ned and Jerry were cleaning the engine, and overhauling the mechanism.

“Well, it won’t be long now,” remarked Jerry. “To-morrow ends school, and then—for the best vacation we ever had!”

“And the radium fortune!” added Bob.

“Hush!” suddenly exclaimed the tall lad.

“What’s the matter? Did you see Noddy Nixon?”

“No, but there’s his crony, Bill Berry, in that boat,” and Jerry nodded toward a rowing craft which a shabbily dressed man was propelling up stream. “He’s pretending to be fishing,” went on Jerry in a low voice, “but I believe he’s just spying around here to see what we’re up to.”

“That’s so,” admitted Bob. “I must keep quiet. But I’m glad it wasn’t Noddy. I guess he isn’t out of bed yet,” and the boys kept on with their work, the professor strolling off to see if he could get any specimens, while Bill Berry rowed around a bend of the river, and so out of sight.

But Bob was mistaken about Noddy not being out of bed. That bully had gotten up for the first time that day, and, even while our heroes were talking of him, he was sitting in the parlor of his father’s house, trying to evolve in his mind a plan for learning more about the radium, said to be located on Snake Island.

“I’ll need some one to help me,” mused Noddy. “I can take Bill Berry, of course, but I need some scientific fellow who will know radium when he sees it, for I don’t, and Bill certainly couldn’t tell it from a lump of coal. I wonder what I can do?”

At that moment the door bell rang, and, as the servant happened to be out, Noddy answered it. He saw, standing on the steps, a tall, lank man, whom the word “sleek” seemed to describe better than any other. The caller wore a long black coat, a flowing black tie, and had a tall hat, while he carried a small valise in his hand.

“Ah, good afternoon,” began the stranger, smiling at Noddy. “I believe I am speaking to the owner of the house?”

“No, my father owns it,” replied Noddy, not a little proud of being taken for the head of the home. “But I can do any business, I guess. I often help my father. His name is Nixon—I’m Noddy Nixon.”

“Oh, yes, I have heard of you. Your father is known to me by reputation, and I have called to see him, as I have in the case of a number of the most prominent

men in town. But I fear I will have to see Mr. Nixon personally.”

“Won’t I do?” asked Noddy. “I know a lot about my father’s affairs.”

“Well, I’ll tell you, and you can judge for yourself,” went on the man, as he entered the parlor and sat down. “I am Dr. Kirk Belgrade, head of the Mortaby Scientific School, a very important institution of learning. I am traveling about, seeking to enlarge the scope of our work, and, naturally I came to Mr. Nixon. I understand that he was one of the endowers of a number of colleges, and I thought perhaps he would give us a contribution. We confer degrees on those who aid us financially, and there are a number of scholarships available. Perhaps you yourself might be interested in taking up a new line of study.”

“I don’t know,” replied Noddy. “I go to a boarding school now, but it isn’t very good. I might change. Where is your school?”

“Well—er—that is—well, to be frank we have no fixed place or headquarters,” said Dr. Belgrade. “The Mortaby Scientific School is a sort of correspondence institution. Our pupils are located all over the world, and they get their lessons by mail, and also recite by mail. There is a good profit in it, and I’m sure if your father invested he would get a large return for his money. Some of the other prominent men in town have given me encouragement.”

“Did you go to Mr. Slade, or Mr. Baker—or to Mrs. Hopkins—she’s a rich widow?” asked Jerry.

“I did call on Mr. Slade and Mr. Baker, but I regret to say that they—er—they turned me down,” replied the educator with an oily smile. “They said they did not believe in my methods. But I assure you that they are most up to date. I will call on Mrs. Hopkins, at your suggestion, however.”

“Better not,” advised Noddy with a grin. “She and the Slades and Bakers are all alike. They don’t want anything new. I know ’em. But maybe my father would invest. He’ll soon be home, and you can wait if you like.”

“Very well, I will. I’ll show you some of our literature. I am one of the principal instructors. In fact I may say that I am the whole school, for all the other instructors come to me for advice. Just to show you how up to date we are, I will mention that we have a small laboratory——”

“Oh, say,” interrupted Noddy eagerly. “Do you happen to know anything about radium?”

“Radium?” replied the visitor. “Of course I do—a great deal. Why, to show

you how advanced my college course is, let me say that we have a small quantity of radium for experimental purposes.”

“You have!” exclaimed the bully, with increased eagerness. “The real article?”

“Radium, I do assure you, the genuine article,” said Dr. Belgrade. “I do not care to state just how I came into possession of it, but it is in our laboratory.”

“But I thought you said you had no school building,” said Noddy, suspiciously.

“Well, the laboratory is in my house, next to the bath room,” explained the instructor. “It is not a very large laboratory, but I hope to extend it soon. I need money, and I hope——”

“Radium!” interrupted Noddy. “Radium is worth money; isn’t it?”

“I should say it was, Mr. Nixon.”

“Would you like to know where to get some?”

“Would I? I would give up my present plans, turn my students over to an assistant, and travel a long way if I knew where to find some. Why do you ask?” and the man looked eagerly at Noddy.

“Do you know radium when you see it?” asked the bully.

“Indeed I do. I have made a special study of it, and I can detect it in any form. I am not boasting when I say that there are few who are any better informed about radium than I am. But what do you mean? Is it possible that you have some radium?”

“I haven’t it,” said Noddy in a low voice, “but I know where there is some. I’m glad you happened to call. I’ll tell you all about it, and maybe we can go together.” Noddy got up and closed the parlor door, shutting himself in the room with the sleek educator. Next he quickly unfolded to him the plot he had formed, after having overheard what our heroes had said about Snake Island.

“Is it possible!” gasped Dr. Belgrade, when Noddy had finished. “Is it possible!”

“It must be, or those fellows wouldn’t plan to go after it,” replied Noddy. “But I’m going to get ahead of them, if you’ll help me. Will you?”

“Will I? Well, I guess I will! Now let’s make some plans. With your father to finance our expedition, we may all become millionaires!” and the head of the

correspondence college rubbed his hands together and smiled at Noddy encouragingly.



## CHAPTER VI

### OFF FOR PITTSBURG

“So we start to-morrow,” observed Professor Snodgrass one evening, when the three chums were gathered about a table in the library of Ned’s home. “It seems like a month ago that we decided to make the trip.”

“And yet it was only about two weeks,” returned Jerry. “We have had a lot to do in the meanwhile, though.”

“But everything is in good shape,” remarked Bob. “We’ve got enough grub aboard to last until we get to Pittsburg, I think.”

“Oh, of course!” laughed Jerry. “You can trust Bob to look out for the ‘eats’ every time. I think we’ll make him the permanent commissary general.”

“Well, I notice you always come around when the dinner bell rings,” remarked the fat lad significantly.

“He’s got us there,” admitted Ned. “But it’s a good thing Bob does look after the food, for we’re always sure to have enough. Now let’s see where we’re at. Hand me that list, Bob, and we’ll check things off. If we’re going to start to-morrow we will have to get any last things we need to-night.”

The three chums went over the list together, the professor poring deeply into a scientific book, making occasional notes, and at times thinking of the two-tailed toad he hoped to get as a result of the trip.

“Well, so far Noddy hasn’t bothered us any,” remarked Ned, when they had completed the checking of the list, and found that everything needed was on the boat, or in readiness to stow away.

“He’s out and around,” remarked Jerry. “I saw him down the street this afternoon.”

“You did! And did he speak to you?” asked Bob.

“Just sort of nodded and thanked me for the way we fellows pulled him out of the water. He wasn’t very enthusiastic over it, though, and he looked rather thin and pale, I thought.”



“Maybe he was hurt worse than we imagined,” suggested Bob. “Well, if he doesn’t make any trouble for us, I’ll be satisfied. But I guess it’s time I went home. I want to get plenty of sleep, for I’m going to get up early.”

“Same here,” said Jerry. “I guess everything is in shape. We’ll meet at my house, as that’s nearest the river, and then we’ll get started as early as we can.”

“It’s all settled then; is it?” asked Professor Snodgrass.

“Everything,” replied Ned. “We’ll go by motor boat to Pittsburg, get our auto there, and ride across to Denver, and from there make the rest of the trip by airship. I guess that’s the best way to get down into the Grand Canyon.”

“It’s really the only way,” said Mr. Snodgrass. “Boats are almost out of the question, and to follow the trails down the sides of the big chasm wouldn’t help us much, for Snake Island is far off from any of the places by which you can get down to the river’s edge. But with an airship we can descend as well as if we were in an elevator. Yes, I think you boys have made the best possible plan.”

Bob and Jerry left Ned’s house soon after this, and, on the way to their homes they went past the Nixon residence. Bob, looking up, exclaimed:

“Noddy’s sitting up late to-night. There’s a light in his room.”

“So I see,” replied Jerry. “Well, if he stays up late he’ll sleep late, and we’ll get off before he knows it.”

“Why, are you worried about him?” asked the stout lad.

“Yes, I don’t mind telling you that I am.”

“Why?”

“Well, because I’ve seen Bill Berry hanging around lately. You know how thick he and Noddy are, and I shouldn’t be a bit surprised but what Bill was trying to find out where we are headed for this time.”

“Why would he do that?”

“Oh, just so he and Noddy could make trouble for us. It wouldn’t be the first time they have camped on our trail.”

“No, that’s right. But I guess we’ll fool ’em this time.”

But if Bob and Jerry could have looked into Noddy’s room at that minute, they would have been made aware that they had plenty of cause for suspicion.

For, as our two heroes passed on to their homes, glancing back momentarily at

the light in Noddy's window, that bully was in close conversation with a certain sleek individual, who, for the present, chose to masquerade under the name of Dr. Kirk Belgrade.

“Do you think you can find out when they go, and where they are headed for—I mean exactly?” asked the correspondence school man.

“Sure I can,” declared Noddy. “I’ve had Bill Berry on the watch for the past week. They’re going to start in their motor boat to-morrow morning.”

“To where?”

“Well, that I don’t know exactly. I’ve tried to find out but I can’t. Bill sort of fell down on that job. But I’ll get wind of it somehow. I know where their auto was sent to be fixed, and the man there knows my father. He’ll tell me where they are headed for, I’m sure. But even if we don’t find out, we can go West on our own hook, and locate Snake Island. The rest will be easy, and we’ll get that radium before they do.”

“I hope so,” spoke the educator. “I certainly need the money, and I have given up everything for this chance. The Mortaby Scientific School will have to get along without me for a time, but when I come back, with a fortune, I will build a real college.”

“First we’ve got to get the radium, and beat the motor boys!” exclaimed Noddy, as he grinned in anticipation of the trick he expected to play.

“You don’t like them, then?”

“I hate ’em all!” snarled the bully, “even if they did pull me from the river. If they hadn’t, someone else would.”

“Well, I hope we can soon start West,” went on the sleek individual. “When will your father give me some money?”

“To-morrow or the next day,” replied Noddy. “He is willing that I should undertake the trip. I told him I needed it for my health.”

Then the two talked over the details of their plot, sitting up until late in the night, while our heroes peacefully slumbered, and dreamed of strange adventures on Snake Island in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.

Bright and early the next morning Bob and Ned, with the professor, assembled at Jerry’s house. The last preparations had been made, good-byes had been said, and the motor boat looked over for the last time. She was pulling uneasily at the

mooring lines, which held her fast to the dock, for there had been a heavy rain, and the river was much swollen. It was as if the boat was anxious for the boys to come aboard.

“All ready?” asked Jerry.

“All ready,” replied Ned, and then, waving good-byes to Mrs. Hopkins, they started for the pier. It did not take them long to put their handbags aboard, and, once the professor was comfortably settled aft, in the open cockpit, he began scanning the water for rare insects.

“All aboard!” cried Jerry, as he took his place at the wheel.

“All aboard,” answered Ned.

“Then let her go,” ordered the steersman, and Ned turned over the fly wheel to start the motor.

There was a cheer from the little crowd that had gathered on the dock to see our heroes start. Andy Rush was among them.

“That’s the stuff!” cried the excitable little chap. “Off you go—wish I was along—never say die—blow up the boiler—whoop—off for Pittsburg!”

“Say, I wonder if he ever will calm down?” remarked Bob, helplessly.

“I’m afraid not,” commented Ned.

“I wish he hadn’t said that last,” said Jerry in a serious tone.

“Why not?” asked Ned, as the *Dartaway* swung out from the dock.

“Because I’d just as leave everyone wouldn’t know where we are going. It might get to the ears of——”

“Look!” cried Bob in a low, tense voice.

“What is it?” asked Ned.

“There’s Bill Berry, and Noddy Nixon is with him,” went on the stout lad, pointing across the water, to where, a short distance away, there floated a rowboat, containing the two enemies of the motor boys.



## CHAPTER VII

### IN DANGER

Jerry, Ned and Bob were gazing straight into the faces of Bill Berry and Noddy Nixon. The two cronies, in turn, returned the stare, and to our friends it seemed as if there was an insolent look on Noddy's face—a sort of half smile of triumph, as if he had divined their plans, and was going to try to frustrate them.

“Mind your wheel!” suddenly called Ned sharply to the tall steersman. “There's a rock just ahead of you, Jerry!”

“That's so, I forgot about that,” and Jerry twisted the rudder about so that the *Dartaway* swung toward the middle of the stream, missing the rock by a narrow margin.

“Too close for comfort,” murmured Bob.

“That's right,” agreed Jerry. “I don't know why I should have stared so at Noddy.”

“It looks as if he and Bill came out on purpose to see us off,” commented Ned, as the motor boat rapidly opened up a gap between herself and the rowing craft. “I wonder if he heard what Andy said about Pittsburg?”

“I'm afraid so,” said the tall lad. “Sounds carry very clearly over the water, you know, and Andy has rather a loud voice. Well, it can't be helped, and I suppose the only thing for us to do is to be on our guard.”

“That's all,” agreed Ned, and by this time they had gone around a bend, losing sight of the rowboat, and the dock from which they had started. The last glimpse they had of Andy Rush was when that excitable chap was dancing up and down, waving his hands to them, and doubtless letting off all sorts of explosive expressions.

Professor Snodgrass, during this episode, had taken no part in the conversation, remaining quietly in his place, scanning the water for a glimpse of some rare aquatic insect. At times he would dip into the river a small net he carried, and, bringing it up filled with mosquito wrigglers, or other forms of life, he would gravely examine his catch through a magnifying glass.

“Ah, here is a rare one!” he would occasionally cry. “A triple-jointed worm. But I don’t understand how it got into the water, as it is a form of land life. This is very puzzling. I must make notes on this. Perhaps the worm, having lived on land all its life, is going to become aquatic in his habits, as the whale did centuries ago. It is very strange.”

“Let’s see the worm, Professor?” requested Ned, when he had adjusted the motor to work smoothly, and while Jerry was steering in and out to avoid floating logs.

“There it is,” said the scientist, lifting the specimen out of one of the glass-topped boxes. “A beautiful creature! Most perfect! And yet I cannot account for it being in the water. I shall devote a good deal of space in my new book to this find. Perhaps I am the first to discover it, and, if so, I shall be made an honorary member of the Society for Advanced Scientific Research. A most beautiful and perfect specimen!”

“Why, it’s an angle worm—a fish worm!” cried Bob, as he caught sight of the wriggling creature. “A common, ordinary angle worm!”

“Of course it is,” agreed the professor. “I know that. It is, as you say, an angle worm—*angulus vermis* it might be called or even *vermis lophius piscatorius*. The first Latin words being merely indicative of angle and worm, while the latter, which I prefer, indicates the curious fish known as the angler, and which is said to catch other fish by angling for them with some attachment to its head, which resembles a baited hook. Of course it’s an angle worm, Bob, but the funny part of it is how did it get in the water?”

“Easily enough,” spoke Ned. “The river is much higher than usual, and I suppose it has overflowed some bank, and washed the poor worms out. I’m afraid, Professor, that you can’t claim to be the discoverer of a new kind of worm.”

“Oh pshaw! I guess you’re right!” exclaimed Uriah Snodgrass in disappointed tones. “That accounts for it. Well, I don’t want the specimen then,” and he tossed it back into the water. There was a little swirl, amid the muddy waves, and something grabbed the floating worm.

“Fish!” cried Bob. “There are lots of fish around here, fellows. I’m going to catch some for dinner.”

“There he goes again!” cried Ned with a laugh. “We’ve just had breakfast, and yet he’s thinking of the next meal. Oh, Bob! You’re hopeless.”

“All right, you don’t have to eat the fish,” retorted the stout lad, as he got out his line and some bait he had thought to bring along. “I’ll catch ’em, and Jerry and I and the professor will eat ’em. You can live on canned sardines.”

“You won’t catch any with the water as high and as muddy as it is to-day,” predicted Ned.

“Just you watch,” was all Bob replied.

He cast in, as Jerry steered the boat, the tall lad having to give his whole attention to it, for the stream was filled with floating débris that had been carried down by the rising water, and it required skill to avoid collisions. But Jerry knew his business, and rarely did a log scrape the *Dartaway* ever so gently.

Bob went out on the little after-deck to fish, while the professor also took his place there to look for more valuable specimens than angle worms. Ned busied himself about the engine, and got out some packages of food, and the dishes that would be needed for the mid-day meal.

Bob did have pretty good luck fishing, and, when noon came, he had a number of good-sized specimens. In order that Jerry could enjoy his meal without having to eat with one hand and steer with the other, the boat was tied up in a little cove and there Bob proceeded to get dinner on the gasolene stove that was in a small galley off the main cabin.

“Um! But this is good!” murmured the stout lad with his mouth fairly well filled.

“It’s a bad habit for cooks to praise their own broth,” remarked Ned.

“Well, isn’t it good?” demanded Bob.

“Of course it is,” put in Jerry. “It’s a good meal, Chunky, and Ned is only jealous. Don’t mind him.”

“I don’t intend to,” declared the stout lad, helping himself to more fish.

They started off again after dinner, and making good speed, aided by the current of the river, they found themselves that night on a small lake into which the stream emptied. They tied up near shore, and, the collapsible bunks being let down, they retired, after sitting up for a while, talking over the events of the day.

“This sure is sport,” declared Ned, as he pulled the blankets over him, for, while the day was warm it was cool at night on the water.

“It’s the right way to spend a vacation,” agreed Bob.

“And when we get in the auto, and the airship, we’ll have more fun yet,” predicted Jerry. “I’m anxious to get to Snake Island.”

“I hope that place doesn’t get its name from the fact that it’s filled with snakes,” commented Ned, in sleepy tones. “I hate the things.”

“I hope there are a lot of the reptiles,” spoke the professor. “I may be able to get a few specimens. And I certainly do want to get that two-tailed toad.”

“And I want some radium,” added Jerry.

The next day’s trip was without incident, and by night they had crossed the lake to its outlet, down which they expected to proceed for about a hundred miles.

The first part of this trip was delightful, but on the third day it rained hard, and they had to stay cooped up in the cabin, which was not much fun. But the storm could not last forever, and the sun finally came out, to the satisfaction of all.

“Well, we’ll soon have to take a little land journey,” remarked Ned, at the close of the fifth day of their trip.

“How’s that?” asked the professor. “Are you going to desert the boat?”

“No,” spoke Bob, “but by to-morrow noon we’ll come to the end of water travel, for a short space. That is, we’ll need to have the boat hauled over land to the canal that connects with the river by which we will get on the Alleghany. I wrote to a man who is going to move the boat, and he promised to be on hand with a big truck, and some helpers. We’ll run the *Dartaway* up on the truck, drive over to the canal, and float her again. Then it will be smooth sailing to Pittsburg.”

“And we haven’t seen a sign of Noddy Nixon,” remarked Ned.

“I hope we don’t—the whole trip,” spoke Jerry earnestly.

It was a little before noon when they had gone as far as was practical up the stream on which they were then motoring.

“The dock where the truck is to meet us must be around here somewhere,” said Ned, who was steering.

“There’s a man just ahead, who seems to be waving to us,” put in Jerry.

“That’s the place!” cried the merchant’s son. “Now we’re all right.”

It was no easy work to get the *Dartaway* out of the water, and upon the truck,

but finally it was accomplished by means of tackle and windlass.

“Are you boys going to walk, or ride on the truck to the canal?” asked the teamster, as he gathered up the reins of the four powerful horses.

“Guess we might as well ride,” decided Ned. “We’ll be there as soon as you are then.”

Accordingly the boys climbed up on the truck, and seated themselves in the cabin of their boat. The professor accompanied them, and the men who were to help unload the boat dispersed themselves about the big vehicle.

It was about a two hours’ ride to the canal, with so heavy a load, as part of the distance was up hill. When about half of the journey had been accomplished one of the men discovered that the boat was slipping down toward the end of the truck, and a halt had to be called to shift it forward.

“We don’t want it sliding off, and trying to navigate in the dust!” exclaimed the truckman with a laugh.

Professor Snodgrass grew restless at the delay and finally climbed down off the vehicle, with an insect net.

“I’m going to walk on ahead,” he remarked. “I may be able to catch a few rare bugs. I think I can find the way to the canal all right, in case you don’t overtake me.”

“It’s a straight road,” called Ned, who had provided himself with maps of their journey.

The professor walked on, swinging his net from side to side in an endeavor to catch a butterfly or bug.

“Has he been that way long?” asked one of the men of Jerry, as there came a pause in the work of shifting the boat.

“What way?”

“Cracked, you know. Crazy—bug-house? Does he get violent?”

“Oh!” laughed the tall lad. “He’s not crazy,” and then he explained what a scientist Mr. Snodgrass was.

“Um,” said the man apparently unconvinced. “It does take queer forms, sometimes. I had a cousin who always wanted to sleep with his shoes on. No accounting for their notions. Come on, now, all together! Heave!”



Jerry gave up the attempt to make the man understand, and, a little later, the boat was shifted back to its place, and the journey resumed.

They were almost at the end of it, and were going down a slight hill, when suddenly a dog, running out from a farmhouse, dashed at the off forward horse, and nipped its leg. The frightened animal reared, crowded its mate, and, a moment later, dashed ahead, breaking one of the reins. The next instant the team of four powerful steeds was in a wild gallop down the hill, the truck swaying from side to side in the road, and the motor boat creaking and groaning as it strained at the ropes that held it fast.

“Stop the horses!” yelled one of the men.

“We’ll have a smash-up in another minute if you don’t!” added Bob.

“The boat is slipping back again!” cried Ned. “Jerry—Bob—help hold her on! If she slips off into the road she’ll be smashed!”

The lads braced themselves against their craft to prevent it sliding off. Some of the men helped them, but, in spite of this, the terrific speed of the truck threatened to bring about the danger they were trying to avoid.

“Stop those horses, Bill!” yelled one of the men.

“I can’t!” cried the truckman. “One line is busted, and if I pull on the other I’ll run them into the ditch, and then we *will* be in a mess. I’ve got to let ’em run it out.”

“They’ll run us into the canal if they keep on much longer!” cried someone.

“Brace, everybody!” gasped Ned, as he felt the boat slipping nearer and nearer to the end of the truck.

“Put on the brakes!” suggested Bob.

“Got ’em on, but that’s all the good it does,” responded the truckman. “I’m afraid we’re goners, boys! Get ready to jump when you see the water. Whoa, there! Whoa!” he called in vain to the horses, who were still madly galloping down the hill.

“I guess it’s all up with the *Dartaway*,” murmured Jerry, as he pressed his shoulder against the craft.



## CHAPTER VIII

### DOWN THE ALLEGHANY

The truckman was bracing himself in his seat, with his foot on the brake, trying his best to check the speed of the big wagon. As for the horses, he could do nothing with them, since, as he said, to pull on the unbroken rein would only be to send the steeds floundering into the ditch that bordered the road on either side. That is, providing the animals answered the pull.

“Can you hold the boat?” cried the truck-owner, giving a glance over his shoulder at the men and boys.

“We’re—trying!” gasped Bob, whose face was red from the effort he was making. Ned and Jerry, too, as well as the men, were doing their best.

“There’s the canal, just ahead!” observed one man.

Jerry had a glimpse of water sparkling in the rays of the sun. The road was now almost level, but the horses had not slackened their speed. Just where the canal came to an end, the highway curved abruptly, and it was not hard to guess what would happen if the runaways were not checked.

Either they would swing around the curve with force enough to overturn the truck, or, in their fright, they would plunge, boat, wagon and all, into the water. There was not much choice between the two dangers.

“Get ready to jump!” yelled the truckman on his seat.

The boys were in despair. They saw their plans for a fine summer outing partly spoiled, and their fine boat about to be wrecked.

Suddenly, from the bushes that lined the road, there ran out to the middle of the highway, and a little distance ahead of the galloping horses, a small man. At the sight of him Jerry cried:

“Look! It’s the professor!”

“He’d better get out of the way,” said the truckman grimly, in a low voice. “Nothing can stop these animals now, until they wreck everything. Look out!” he yelled to Mr. Snodgrass.

But the little, bald-headed professor did not have any such intention. That was evident. There seemed to be something in the road that he wanted. His net came down with a swoop, and he knelt in the dust.

“Look out!” came in a chorus from the men on the wagon.

Then, for the first time, Professor Snodgrass seemed to be aware of the approaching vehicle, with the boat for a load.

Up he jumped to his feet, holding his long-handled butterfly net, and staring at the approaching runaways through his big glasses.

“Get out of the way!” yelled the truckman.

The professor ran forward, waving his arms. In one hand he held his broad-brimmed hat, while the other flourished the big, green net.

“Stop!” he cried, loud enough to be heard above the thunder of the wagon wheels. “Stop! Stop! Don’t come on any farther. You’ll smash it!”

“Huh! We know that!” yelled the truckman. “But you can’t make these horses stop by just inviting ’em to. Look out, or you’ll get hurt!”

But the professor came on, running straight at the runaways. Now he was almost under their feet, but with a wild yell he still advanced.

Suddenly he threw his hat in the face of one of the leading horses, and, with another quick motion, he crashed his long-handled net across the eyes of the other. Then, nimbly leaping to one side, the professor caught the broken, dangling rein, and braced back with all his might. Though a small man, he was powerful, and his weight told.

“That’s the stuff!” cried the truckman. In an instant he began pulling on the unbroken rein which he still held, and thus, with the professor on one side, being dragged along, and the driver sawing on the other line, the horses were pulled up evenly, a thing that had been impossible before.

“By Jove! I believe they’re going to stop!” cried Jerry, as he noticed a slackening in the speed of the horses.

“It’s about time, too!” added the truckman, as he looked at the waters of the canal, not far distant. He continued to pull on one line. The professor still clung to the other, and the brakes were jammed on. Add to this that the road was level, and that the truck was heavily loaded, and it can easily be seen that the horses, tired as they were from their run, did not need much more to stop them. They

came down to a trot, then to a walk, and finally stopped. The truckman leaped from his seat, after a glance to make sure that the boat was in no immediate danger of slipping off, though it had slid back quite a way.

“Say, that was a plucky stop!” the man cried, holding out his hand to the professor. “I’ve caught some runaways in my time, but never better than that. You saved us from a bad smash-up.”

“Um! Well, perhaps I did,” admitted Uriah Snodgrass slowly, “but I must confess I wasn’t thinking of that at the time. I wanted you to stop before you got too far, that was all.”

“And didn’t you want to save us?”

“Oh, yes, of course. But you see I was just capturing a new and very rare specimen of a yellow grasshopper when you came along. I almost had him in my net, but he jumped under a stone, and I was afraid if the horses came along they might step on the stone, and crush the insect or run a wheel over him. That’s why I wanted to stop you. I’m glad I did, though I’ll have to put a new handle on my net, for it’s broken. But I must see if I have the grasshopper.”

He ran to a flat stone in the road, carefully raised it, and made a grab for something underneath.

“I’ve got him! I’ve got him!” he cried. “Oh, you little beauty! You’re worth at least fifteen dollars. Oh, I’m glad I stopped the runaways!”

“Well, you are a queer one,” murmured the truckman as he proceeded to tie the broken rein, and then he and his men made the slipping boat secure, to hold until they could cover the short remaining distance to the canal. “Stopping a runaway to save a grasshopper! That’s the limit!”

“But it’s a yellow grasshopper, and very rare,” put in the professor with a smile, as he placed the insect in one of the cases he always carried. “I doubt if any college but mine will have a specimen like this. How did the runaway happen?”

The others told him about the dog that had scared the horses, and then the boys, having expressed their appreciation of what the professor had done, helped the men steady the boat for the rest of the trip.

The horses were quiet enough now, and soon had the truck at the edge of the canal. There the work of getting the *Dartaway* into the water again was speedily accomplished, and, having paid the men, and called the professor away from an

ant hill he was examining through a magnifying glass, the motor boys once more got underway.

“Talk about excitement, it’s with us almost from the start,” remarked Ned.

“Yes, I thought our boat was a goner there, one spell,” added Jerry. “It took all my nerve to hold on.”

“Mine too,” added Bob. “I think I’ll have to make a cup of coffee, and take some sandwiches to quiet down.”

And this time neither Ned nor Jerry laughed at their fat chum.

Their trip along the quiet canal was uneventful, and in a few days, after tying up nights along shore of the river into which the canal opened, they swept out on the waters of the Alleghany, and were headed for Pittsburg.

“I hope our auto is all ready for us, and that we don’t have to wait,” remarked Ned one evening, as they got ready to retire for the night.

“Well, we’ll know by this time to-morrow,” spoke Jerry. “We ought to be in Pittsburg then.”

“What are you going to do with the boat?” asked Bob.

“I’ve arranged to store it until we get back,” replied the tall lad. “We’ll have to spend at least a day here, trying out the auto, and laying in some supplies. In that time we can see that the boat is properly put away.”

Professor Snodgrass sat up rather late that night arranging and classifying some specimens he had caught, and it was nearly midnight when he turned in. The boys were sound asleep, and the little scientist was soon in the same blissful state.

What time he was awakened Jerry did not know, but he sat up suddenly in bed, for he heard someone moving stealthily about on the after-deck. Then the door of the cabin was cautiously tried:

“Who’s there?” cried the tall lad suddenly.

There was no answer, and reaching out his hand Jerry sought for the switch that would turn on the electric lights which were operated by a storage battery. As he felt the button, he heard a boat scraping against the side of the *Dartaway*.



## CHAPTER IX

### OFF IN THE AUTO

“What’s the matter?” cried Ned, as he heard Jerry’s voice.

“Anything wrong?” demanded Bob sleepily. “Has anything happened, Jerry?”

“Not yet,” was the tall lad’s answer. “I fancy I was too quick for them. But I thought I heard someone on board, and I’m certain that a boat scraped against our side. I’m going to have a look.”

“Better be careful,” advised Ned, as he pulled on some garments. “They may be river thieves.”

“Thieves! Thieves!” cried Uriah Snodgrass, sitting up suddenly. “Are they after my specimens! Don’t let them get anything, boys! Those specimens are more valuable than gold! Oh, where are my glasses? I can’t see a thing.”

“Switch off all the lights!” whispered Ned to Jerry. “They can see us in here, and we can’t get a glimpse of them. Turn ’em off!”

Jerry did so, and at once there came another sound as if someone was out on the small after-deck.

“Who’s there?” challenged Ned.

There was no answer. Once more came the noise of a boat rubbing against the side of the *Dartaway*, and a cautious voice could be heard whispering:

“Come on! Can’t do anything now!”

“Who are you? What do you want?” demanded Jerry, but he received no answer.

With a quick spring Ned was at the cabin door that opened out into a sort of cockpit, and thence, by a short companionway to the deck. Throwing the portal open, Ned flashed on a small searchlight. As he played it about the river he picked up a small boat, containing two persons, who were rowing quickly away.

“What did you want? Were you on our boat?” demanded Ned, and then, as the two in the small craft maintained a silence, Ned flashed the light full in their

faces. As he did so he gave a cry that brought Jerry and Bob out to him.

“What’s the matter?” cried the tall lad. “Are you hurt, Ned? Did they attack you?”

“No, I’m all right. But look at that boat! See who’s in it!”

Jerry and Bob gazed across the stretch of black and swirling water, illuminated by the shaft of light from the search lantern. It threw into bold relief the boat and the occupants.

“Noddy Nixon!” gasped Jerry, as he saw the face of the bully.

“But who’s with him?” asked Bob. “I’ve never seen him before, that I know of.”

“He’s a stranger, I guess,” said Ned. “Noddy must have hired him to help get ahead of us.”

“But what were they doing here?” asked Bob.

“Trying to sneak up while we were asleep, to see what they could get, I suppose,” remarked Jerry.

“My specimens!” exclaimed Professor Snodgrass, who had come out to join the boys. “That’s what they were after. That yellow grasshopper is what they wanted!”

“I don’t believe so,” said Jerry in a low voice, as he watched the two rowing rapidly away—Noddy and a tall man, the latter with a sleek appearance, as though he was always trying to figure out the easiest way of getting something for nothing.

“Hello you, Noddy!” suddenly called Ned. “What did you want here?”

The bully and his companion kept silent.

“If you come around again I’ll turn the hose on you,” threatened Bob.

There was no reply, and a moment later the rowboat went around the end of a projecting dock, and was out of range of the light.

“Well, if they weren’t after my specimens what did they want?” inquired the professor.

“I’ll tell you what I think,” went on Jerry as they returned to the comfortable cabin, for it was cool in the night air, and they were lightly clad. “I believe they sneaked on board to see if they could get any clues as to where we are bound

for.”

“You mean Snake Island?” asked Bob.

“Yes. You see Noddy doesn’t know the exact location, even if, in some way, he has guessed, or overheard, some of us saying that we were going to the Grand Canyon. He needs to know more definitely just where we’re going, so he can sneak along, and try to get ahead of us.”

“Do you mean he was looking for a map?” asked Ned.

“Yes, or something like that. Maybe he thought we would be leaving our traveling directions lying around loose.”

“Say, maybe it would be a good scheme to fix up a fake map, and leave it where he could get it,” suggested Bob.

“Hardly,” decided Jerry. “He’d get on to the fact that it was a fake, for he knows we wouldn’t be as careless as that. I think the best way is to do just as we have been doing—make no map or sketch of where we’re heading for. In fact we can’t, for we’ve got to prospect around ourselves to find Snake Island.”

“Then we’ve got to be on our guard against Noddy,” suggested Ned.

“All the while I’m afraid, since he’s taken to trailing after us,” resumed Jerry. “I’d like to know who that fellow was with him. He looks like a sleek rascal.”

“Like Bill Berry, only different,” was Ned’s opinion. “I wonder where Bill is?”

“Oh, probably hanging around somewhere,” came from Bob. “He and Noddy generally travel together.”

There was nothing more that could be done that night, save to see to it that the cabin doors and windows were securely fastened. Jerry left the searchlight aglow, as he thought this would discourage any further attempt to board the motor boat. And, as a matter of fact, our friends were not disturbed again that night.

They made an early start for Pittsburg the next morning, keeping a watch for Noddy, but they did not see him. By noon they had tied up at the wharf where their boat was to be hauled out for storage.

“Now for the auto!” exclaimed Jerry, when the craft had been safely put away, and such stores as they needed, together with their clothing, weapons and other things, had been piled up ready to be put in the motor car.



They found that the repairs to their machine were almost completed, and that the car had been greatly improved. A new body had been put on, giving more room, so that, if necessary, they could sleep on board. And a small gasoline stove had been fitted up, so that a simple meal could be prepared. You can easily see that this was Bob's idea.

"Well, we can start in a couple of days," announced Jerry after a visit to the auto shop.

"And we'll need that time to give her a try-out," added Ned.

"And buy what grub we will need!" put in Chunky.

"Oh, forget the everlasting 'eats'!" begged Jerry. "We don't need to take much. We can buy it as we go along, and it will be fresher."

"I meant a few things like sandwiches, pickles and cake," went on Bob. "To eat between meals, you know. I often get hungry before it's meal time."

"Oh, we know it! You needn't tell us," cried Ned with a laugh.

They tried their auto the next day, having put up at a hotel near the repair works. The car made good speed, and seemed to have more power than before.

"She's great!" cried Jerry. "Now for a long trip West!"

Their preparations were complete. Almost at the last minute, though, the professor nearly backed out. He found a curious bug in the hotel where they stayed, and he wanted to remain a week or more, to hunt for others.

"You'd better come on and look for that two-tailed toad, Professor," advised Jerry.

"Yes, I think I had," agreed the little scientist. "But on our way back we'll stop here, and I can have another look for more of those rare bugs."

The auto, well filled with the goods of our friends, and themselves, was ready for a start, and, having inquired the best route on from Pittsburg, the boys, with Jerry at the wheel, set off one fine morning. What lay before them they little realized.

On and on they went, over fairly good roads, until they came to the open country. Then, having fixed the spark and gasoline levers to carry them at a moderate pace, Jerry settled back to enjoy the scenery.

They had covered perhaps ten miles, and Bob was wondering whether he dare

mention cooking a light lunch, as they whirled along, when Ned, who had looked back, uttered a cry.

“What’s up?” asked Jerry.

For answer Ned took a pair of powerful field glasses from a pocket inside the car. He focused them on an auto that was coming rapidly along behind the car of our friends.

“They’ve been following us for some time,” spoke Ned, “and I want to see who they are.” He was silent a moment, and then he exclaimed:

“I thought so! Noddy Nixon again, and this time Bill Berry is with him, as well as that other man! Fellows, he’s on our trail!”

“Well, here’s where he gets off!” cried Bob, as he reached his hand in his pocket, and pulled out a small wooden box. He opened it, and scattered something out on the road.

“What’s that!” cried Jerry.

“Big tacks!” answered Bob. “I thought something like this might happen, so I got ready for Noddy. Some of those tacks will stick point upward, and maybe something will happen. They’re good and sharp, and rather bad for pneumatic tires,” he added with a laugh.

He tossed the empty box away, and he and Ned looked at the car coming on behind them.

“Think they’ll hit ’em?” asked Ned.

“I hope so,” replied the stout lad.

Suddenly there was a commotion, and the pursuing auto was seen to swerve to one side.

“There they go!” cried Bob. “Two tires to the bad, I think! I guess they won’t follow us right away. Speed her up, Jerry!”



## CHAPTER X

### HELD UP

“That’s the way to do it, Bob!” exclaimed Ned.

“I never imagined you were such a plotter,” complimented Jerry. “How’d you come to think of it, Chunky?”

“Oh, it just sort of came to me,” explained the stout lad, as he looked back to see Noddy and his companions leap from their auto, and examine the burst tires. “I figured that after the way Noddy’d been spying on us that he’d try to follow us, so I got ready for him. I thought it out that tire trouble was the easiest for me to bring about, and it would hold him back as well as if it was something else. So I bought the tacks.”

“And made good use of ’em!” chuckled Jerry. “You’re all right, Bob!”

Noddy Nixon straightened up from an examination of his stalled auto. He shook his fist at our friends who were rapidly drawing away.

“I’ll—fix—you—for—this!” yelled the bully in a loud voice.

“Well, you’ll have plenty of time to do it in,” remarked Bob with a laugh. “You’ll have to use new shoes, and inner tubes too, I’m thinking. Speed her up, Jerry.”

“All right,” and the tall lad turned on more gasolene, until the big car was going along at a rapid pace.

“Not too fast,” cautioned Ned. “We don’t want to be taken in for speeding, you know.”

“Not much danger,” returned Jerry. “It’s rather a lonely stretch of country for several miles yet.”

“How do you think he managed to get after us so quickly?” asked Professor Snodgrass, who, wonderful to relate, was neither looking at his specimens, making notes about, nor seeking to capture others. He had been too much interested in the chase and its sudden termination.

“Oh, he must have heard Andy Rush say we were going to Pittsburg,” spoke

Jerry, “and he merely came on here ahead of us, by train, while we traveled by boat. Then he simply got his auto ready, and lay in wait for us. But you put a spoke in his wheel, Bob.”

“Two or three,” chuckled Ned.

As they sped on they talked of Noddy, and speculated on what his plan might be in regard to following them.

“It’s all guess work,” declared Jerry. “No matter what we do he may turn up on our trail sooner or later. The only thing to do is to fight him when we see him, be on our guard all the while, and not to worry.”

“I agree with Jerry,” said Uriah Snodgrass. “Now, as long as we’re so far ahead, Jerry, can’t you go a little slower?”

“Why, does the speed make you dizzy?” asked the steersman, for indeed the pace was very rapid.

“No, but I’d like a chance to look for insects on the bushes as we pass. You never can tell when you may come across a rare specimen,” and through his big glasses the professor anxiously scanned the bushes on either side of the highway, for Jerry obligingly slackened the speed of the big car.

“Are we going to sleep in the car or a hotel to-night?” asked Ned, as the afternoon drew to a close, finding them about a hundred miles away from Pittsburg.

“I vote for the car,” spoke Jerry. “We haven’t tried it in some time. Besides, we can do as we please, and won’t have to bother with fixing up, as we would at a hotel.

“Another thing. If we go to a hotel, Noddy may find it out, and he can thus keep closer tabs on our movements. Whereas, if we sleep in the car, on some country road, we can start off before daylight, breakfast when we please, and no one will be any the wiser.”

“All right, the car it is,” agreed Ned. Anything suited the professor.

“Another good point about the car,” said Bob, “is that we can——”

“Eat whenever we want to,” finished Jerry with a laugh.

“I wasn’t going to say so,” retorted Bob. “I was going to say we could sleep better here, for it will be quieter out under the trees than in a hotel.”

“That’s the time he had you, Jerry,” laughed Ned.

“Well, pick out a good place as you go along,” advised the tall lad, “and we’ll pull up there and stop.”

“That hill looks to be in a good location,” suggested Bob, pointing to a rise in the distance. “There is a grove of trees there, and we can pull into them for the night. Speed up, and make it, Jerry.”

The lad at the wheel was about to pull over the gasoline lever, and adjust the spark, when, out from a little country lane, just in front of the auto, leaped a man, with a shining badge on his coat, a club in one hand and a revolver in the other. He held out his arms to obstruct their passage, at the same time crying in loud tones:

“Halt! Hold on there! You can’t go any further! I’m the law, an’ I says so. You’ve got to come with me!”

Jerry looked quickly at the speedometer, and saw that it registered only about six miles per hour. He was glad he had not sent the car racing ahead.

“Come on now! No tricks! Stop that car!” commanded the evident official. “You’ve got to come with me.”

“What for?” asked Jerry. “Not for speeding evidently, for we were going like a snail.”

“I didn’t say nothin’ about no speedin’,” replied the man. “It’s a more serious charge than that. I’ve been on the lookout for ye a long time, an’ I got ye, by heck! Come along!”

By this time Jerry had easily brought the car to a stop not far from the grizzled man.

“What right have you got to stop us?” demanded the young steersman. “Who are you, and what is the charge against us?”

“I’m Constable Enberry Snook,” was the answer, “and this here is my authority,” and he tapped his badge with the club. “I derive my authority from th’ selectmen of Huckleberry Township, an’ these likewise is th’ main instruments that I use,” and he glanced from his club to his revolver, and back at the party in the auto. “Now be ye goin’ t’ come along peaceable like, or have I got t’ use force?”

“But I don’t understand,” said Jerry, while a puzzled look came over the faces

of the others. “We haven’t been speeding, and we haven’t assaulted any one that I know of.”

“Of course not!” declared Ned.

“Well, I’ve been instructed t’ arrest ye,” went on Constable Snook, “an’ I’m goin’ t’ do my duty, by heck! Now will ye come along peaceable, or have I got t’——”

He did not finish the sentence, for with a cry that was startling in its suddenness Professor Snodgrass, who had been sitting in front with Jerry, fairly leaped from his seat, and dashed at the constable.

“Don’t move! Don’t stir!” cried the excited scientist. “I’ve got it! It’s on you! Don’t move! I’ve been looking for it ever and ever so long!”

A moment later he had hold of the constable’s coat.

“Here! Let me go! Onhand me! This is treason! Ye’re assaultin’ an officer in th’ performance of his office, an’ it’s ten years’ imprisonment fer that offense. Let me go, I tell ye! Don’t ye dare t’ strike me! I’ve got assistants with me. Help! Help! He’s chokin’ me! He’s chokin’ an officer of th’ law!”

Mr. Snook, dropping both his club and revolver, sought in vain to pull away from the grasp of Professor Snodgrass, and then the constable, finding that the scientist had too firm a hold, pulled out a whistle, and blew a shrill blast. A moment later two men, evidently farmhands, each armed with a pitchfork, leaped out of the bushes at the side of the road.



## CHAPTER XI

### NODDY IN ADVANCE

There was a moment's pause, during which all the actors in the little rural comedy looked at each other. And, as for the professor and the constable, they did more than look, for the scientist still had a firm hold of the other's coat, and the man was pulling desperately to get away.

"Are ye there, Sim an' Jake?" gasped the constable.

"Thet's what we be!" cried the taller of the farmers, evidently Sim, as he advanced with ready pitchfork.

"Me too," put in Jake. "What's up, Enberry? Have them highwaymen attacked ye?"

"Attacked me? I should say they had!" cried the constable. "That's why I whistled for help. Jab 'em!"

"Hold on!" cried Jerry, fearing the professor might get hurt. "Come on, boys," he urged Ned and Bob. "We've got to take a hand in this!"

"But what in the world does it all mean?" asked Ned.

"And what makes the professor act so queer?" Bob wanted to know.

"Don't stop to ask questions!" cried Jerry, vaulting from his seat. "Come on!"

The three boys advanced toward the group of men who now surrounded Uriah Snodgrass. The scientist still retained his grip of the constable with one hand, while with the other he was making cautious advances toward the coat collar of the farmer-officer.

"Let me be!" cried the constable. "Jab him, Sim an' Jake! Jab him!"

"Keep still," ordered Professor Snodgrass. "I'll have him in another minute!"

"Ye've got me now, consarn ye!" snapped the constable, trying in vain to pull away. "If ye lay another hand on me I'll have ye sent t' jail fer life! Let me go, I tell ye!"

"Look out with those pitchforks!" cried Jerry, as he saw Sim advance the

prongs dangerously close to the professor's legs.

"There! I've got it!" suddenly exclaimed the little scientist. His hand made a descent on the farmer's collar, and then, with something tightly clasped in his fist, Mr. Snodgrass leaped back. Sim and Jake closed up alongside of the man who had summoned them by whistle.

"What'd you take offen me?" demanded Mr. Snook suspiciously. "My badge? Ef ye have——"

"I only took one of the most beautiful specimens of a green spider I have ever seen," was the answer of the professor. "I saw it on your coat collar, and I was so afraid it would get away. I had to act quickly. The only way was to grab you, for if you had felt the spider on your neck, it might have tickled you, and you would have brushed it off. Then it would have been lost for ever. Ah, but I have you, my little beauty!" and the professor peered in between a crack in his fingers to make sure that the spider had not escaped. A moment later he had popped it into one of his specimen boxes.

"A—a spider?" gasped Mr. Snook, as if he had not understood.

"A *green* spider," corrected Mr. Snodgrass. "A most perfect specimen. It was on your coat collar. A moment later it would have crawled on your neck."

"An' if it had, I'd have squashed it, sure!" cried Mr. Snook. "I sure would have squashed it! A green spider! Why I'd a squashed it, if it had been a red, white an' blue one! I hate 'em! Ye must be crazy t' want 'em!"

"I want them for scientific purposes," said Uriah Snodgrass, and then he briefly explained that he traveled for a college that wanted all the specimens he could collect.

"A college perfesser," murmured Sim. "Say, Jake, it's a good thing we didn't jab him."

"I guess it is. An' t' think of any mortal man wantin' such things as bugs!"

"Well, everybody to their notion," said Mr. Snook grimly. "If ye want spiders ye're welcome t' 'em. But that don't alter th' fact that you folks have got t' come along with me." He was less excited now.

"But I don't understand," spoke Jerry. "What is the charge, and who makes it? Were you waiting here for us?"

"That's what I was," declared the constable. "I got a telephone t' be on the



lookout for ye. I was warned ye'd be desperit, an' try t' escape, so I swore in Sim an' Jake as my special deputies. It looks like I'd need 'em, too. Jake, stand by on this side of me, an' Sim, you git on th' other. If they starts t' run, jab 'em. Now, I arrest ye in th' name of th' law," and in turn he laid his hand on the shoulders of Jerry, Bob, Ned and the professor. "Are ye comin' along peaceable, or shall I have t' use force?" he asked again.

"If this is a regular arrest, by a regular officer we certainly will come along peaceably," replied Jerry. "But who makes the charge?"

"That I can't tell ye. I got my authority from Judge Amos Blackford. Ye'll have t' appear before him. It were him as were telephoned t', an' he passed it on t' me."

"And you really have the authority to arrest us?" asked Ned, still doubting.

"There's th' warrant, sworn t', all reg'lar an' in due form, according t' law," said the constable, pulling out a paper with a flourish. "Ye kin look at it."

Jerry read it quickly. It was merely a short form of bench warrant, "sworn to on information and belief," wherein the judge himself appeared as the accuser, the real party's name not being mentioned.

"If ye don't believe that, ye kin ask Jake an' Sim here if I ain't th' regular constable fer this township," added Mr. Snook proudly.

"That's what he is!" chorused the two farm hands.

"Well, then I suppose we will have to go with you," admitted Jerry, "though I don't understand it. Come along, boys. Do you want to ride with us?" he asked, turning to the two farm hands and the constable.

"Not for me," spoke Sim, and Jake, too, shook his head. "I wouldn't ride in one of them gasolene wagons fer a month's wages," added Sim.

"Then I guess we can find room for you, Mr. Snook," went on Jerry. "That is if you're not afraid of the machine, and don't imagine that such desperate characters as we are will do away with you."

"Oh, I guess I kin trust ye," said the constable with a sheepish grin. "Th' judge's house is about a mile down th' road. He kin hold court there, an' fine ye, I suppose."

"But I don't see what for," said Jerry. "However, come along."

They were soon in the auto, and had started off, the two hired men, with their

pitchforks, standing in the road with open-mouthed wonder as the car shot away. Ned noticed that Mr. Snook grasped the sides of the seat with nervous hands, as if he expected something to happen at any moment. Chunky was a bit nervous, and Jerry was clearly puzzled. As for the professor he was too much occupied in making notes about the green spider to care whether he was arrested or not.

It was not a long run to the house of Judge Blackford, who lived in a comfortable residence. He himself proved to be a genial, old-fashioned gentleman.

“Well, Enberry,” he observed with a twinkle in his eyes as the auto drove up, “you got the desperadoes, I see.”

“Yep,” answered the constable shortly.

“Did they abuse you much; have much trouble in capturing them?”

“Nope. They come along peaceable enough, though at one time——” and then, thinking that he had not proved himself much of a hero in the spider episode, the constable stopped.

“Out with it!” cried the judge with a laugh. “I’ll find it out sooner or later.”

“I’ll tell ye later,” promised Mr. Snook nervously.

“May I ask what this is all about?” inquired Jerry. “The constable says we are charged with assault and battery. By whom?”

“By Noddy Nixon!” was the unexpected answer of Judge Blackford.

“Noddy Nixon!” cried Jerry. “Is he here?”

“No. I’ll tell you how it was,” went on the magistrate. “I received a telephone this noon, from Judge Lawton, of Middleville township. He said a party of autoists had come to him, and had sworn that another party of autoists, naming and describing you, had caused them to burst two tires. And, as the tires burst, Mr. Nixon and his party were thrown to one side of their car, painfully bruising and contusing them, as the warrant says.

“So Judge Lawton, before whom the original warrant was sworn out, asked me to issue a supplementary one, and to intercept you as you came through here. Which I had to do, it being my duty. Now you can consider yourself charged with the crime, and how do you plead. I’ll hold court right here. Did you or didn’t you?”

“Well, I guess I did it,” answered Bob. “I threw the tacks in the road. But it

was to prevent Noddy from following us.”

Thereupon the judge was told as much of the story as Jerry and his chums thought necessary to explain of their conduct, no mention being made of the radium on Snake Island. He was told how Noddy had repeatedly tried to take a mean advantage.

“Hum. That makes it different,” spoke Judge Blackford. “I reckon that Nixon chap didn’t tell this to my friend Judge Lawton. Otherwise he wouldn’t have asked me to issue a warrant. Now this is how the matter stands.

“I was requested to apprehend and hold you for examination. That I must do. This Nixon fellow promised to be here in the morning, at nine o’clock, to give his evidence. I don’t believe he’ll come and face you. But I must hold you until then. I ask you, in the meanwhile to be my guests. Then, in the morning, if he does not appear, I shall discharge you, and explain matters to Judge Lawton. I know he will approve of it. Will you stay and dine with me? I’ll be glad of your company, and you needn’t consider yourselves prisoners. You’re out on bail, so to speak. Supper will soon be ready. Will you stay?”

“I—yes—of course we will!” cried Bob so quickly that both his chums laughed, and Mr. Blackford looked at them curiously.

“Then the court is adjourned,” went on the magistrate. “Come in, boys, after you leave your auto in the barn. You needn’t wait, Enberry.”

“All right,” answered Mr. Snook, who hurried off, looking over his shoulder as if he feared he might see more spiders.

The boys found Judge Blackford to be a most congenial host. It developed that he and Professor Snodgrass had once attended the same preparatory school, and the pair exchanged pleasant memories.

The judge explained how Noddy had probably proceeded.

“After his tires were repaired,” he said, “the Nixon fellow must have hurried on, following you. He figured out that you would have to pass through here, as this is the main road. Then he went to Middleville, swore out a warrant, which he had no right to do under the circumstances, and the rest you know. I am sorry you were inconvenienced.”

“Oh, it’s all right,” said Bob. “We’ll probably have a better meal than if we ate in the auto; eh, fellows?”

“Say, Chunky, you are the limit!” cried Jerry, and then he had to explain to the

judge their chum's failing.

The magistrate, however, took quite a liking to Bob, and soon there was a merry party gathered at the table. The evening was spent pleasantly, and there were plenty of comfortable beds in the judge's big, old-fashioned house, where he and his wife lived with some old servants.

Nine o'clock came next morning, but Noddy Nixon did not appear.

"He only did this to delay us," declared Jerry, and the others agreed with him.

"Well, if he isn't here by ten I'll formally discharge you, and send the warrant back to Judge Lawton with an explanation," said Judge Blackford.

Ten o'clock brought no change in the situation, and holding court in his library, the magistrate discharged the "prisoners." Constable Snook was on hand, and looked rather disappointed when he saw that he was not to have the pleasure of taking the boys and the professor to jail.

"But we have strict laws agin' speedin' here," he warned them, as Jerry got out the car to resume the trip. "If I catch ye' speedin' I'll have t' take ye in."

"We won't come this way soon again," replied Jerry. Then, good-byes having been said to the judge and his wife, our friends started on their journey.

"I wonder what happened to Noddy?" spoke Ned, who had taken his place on the front seat with Jerry.

"Oh, he has either turned back, or else he's waiting until we get far enough ahead of him so that he can follow as he pleases," replied the tall lad.

They had turned off the main road to reach the home of the judge, and were now coming out of a sort of long country lane, thickly bordered with trees, to reach the main highway again. As they were about to swing around a turn they all heard the chug-chug of an auto.

"Someone's coming," remarked Ned.

"Yes. I guess we'll let 'em get ahead of us, so we won't have to take so much dust," decided Jerry. "We can wait here in the shade."

He stopped the car, behind a screen of trees and bushes, not far from the main road. [A moment later a car shot past](#), and, as it did so, Ned uttered a low exclamation.

**[A MOMENT LATER A CAR SHOT PAST.](#)**

“Did you see that?” he asked Jerry.

“I sure did!” replied the tall lad.

“What was it?” inquired Bob, who was in the rear with the professor.

“Noddy Nixon!” answered Jerry. “He’s ahead of us now, and that’s where we want him. He can’t follow us now. I guess, Noddy, you’ve over-reached yourself,” and Jerry smiled grimly.



## CHAPTER XII

### DISAPPOINTMENT

“What do you suppose his game is?” asked Bob, as the auto containing Noddy and two others shot around a curve in the main road, leaving a cloud of dust behind.

“His game was to delay us long enough to catch up to us, I think,” explained Jerry. “You see he lost time when he had to stop to fix his tires, and he’s depending on us to show him the way to Snake Island, since he failed to get any clues as he sneaked around. But he spoiled his own chances. We’re behind him now, and he’ll have his own troubles tracing us.”

“Are you going to let him get a long way in advance?” asked Ned.

“I think so. The more trouble we can give him to pick us up the better—for us. I’m even going to get off the main road, if I can, and take a less-used route.”

“The nerve of him charging us with assault and battery, just because he happened to run over a few tacks!” exclaimed Bob, with an air of virtuous indignation.

“Well, I suppose it did batter them up a bit,” remarked Jerry with a smile. “The auto stopped rather suddenly, you remember.”

“It sure did,” agreed Ned. “But say, I wonder who that other chap is with Noddy. I saw Bill Berry plainly enough, but I can’t imagine who the other fellow is.”

“I had a glimpse of his face,” said Professor Snodgrass, looking up from his note book. “I have seen him before, somewhere, but I can’t recollect where. I never forget a face, but the association sometimes escapes me. However, I may recall it later. I think—hold on, Jerry, don’t move!” he exclaimed suddenly, for the tall lad had reached forward to start the car. “There’s a fine, big yellow-backed toad at the foot of that stump. I must get it. It isn’t as valuable as the two-tailed one, but it is a very good specimen,” and the scientist leaped out and was soon in possession of the toad, which he clapped into a box.

“All ready now?” asked Jerry, with his hand on the gear lever.

“All ready—unless I see something else,” answered Uriah Snodgrass, and the auto rolled slowly forward. Noddy had been given enough start so that there was no danger of catching up to him unless he halted, and he was not likely to do that, Jerry thought. At the first farmhouse they stopped to inquire their way on some less frequented road, and, learning it, they took another highway, which, while not so good to travel on, made it less likely that they would meet or pass the bully.

For three days they traveled on, having fine weather on all but one—the day after their “arrest.” Then it rained from morning until night, and they progressed through water and mud, which cut down their speed.

They were dry and fairly comfortable, however, for the closed car was as snug as a bungalow, and they could cook and sleep inside. Then the weather cleared, and, save for muddy roads, there was no discomfort.

“And we seem to have given Noddy the slip,” remarked Jerry, one day, for they had neither seen nor heard anything of their enemy or his companions. “We’re having fine luck.”

They had been traveling by auto over a week, and were getting close to Denver, whence they would make the rest of the trip by airship, when there came a turn in the good fortune that had, so far, accompanied them.

They were going down a hill, one evening into a little town when the foot brake unexpectedly broke, and they started off at a rapid pace. Jerry, however, quickly threw in the emergency, and brought the car up before any harm had resulted.

“Hum! This is a nice pickle!” exclaimed the tall lad. “Now we’ve got to lay over until this is fixed.”

“Maybe we can have it fixed over night,” suggested Ned. “There’s a combined blacksmith shop and garage just ahead,” and he pointed to it. “If we pay extra we can have the man work all night on the brake, and have it ready for us in the morning. There must be some sort of a hotel here, where we can put up.”

“Fine!” cried Bob. “Then I won’t have to cook supper.”

“No, but you’ll eat it,” said Jerry. “But I guess Ned’s plan is a good one.”

The blacksmith, who also did auto repair work, agreed, for an extra fee, to put in the night fixing the brake, and the car being left at his shop, the boys went to the only hotel in the village of Lafayette.

“Here’s the register,” spoke the landlord, handing over the book to the boys and the professor. “Supper’ll soon be ready.”

“That’s good,” murmured Bob, and his chums laughed as they advanced to sign their names. As Jerry put his down first, he uttered a cry of surprise, and pointed to the signatures just above where theirs were to go.

“Great Scott!” exclaimed Ned, looking over his chum’s shoulder. “Noddy Nixon, and Bill Berry! They were here a couple of days ago!”

“And that must be the mysterious man who was with them,” added Jerry, pointing to the signature of Dr. Kirk Belgrade.

“Kirk Belgrade! Kirk Belgrade!” murmured Professor Snodgrass, as he saw the signature. “Where have I heard that name before? Where have I seen that face?” He was in deep thought for a moment, and then he exclaimed:

“Oh, I have it! Belgrade. Yes, he was an instructor at my college a few years ago. A smart man, but he did some underhand work, and he was asked to resign. The last I heard of him he had started a sort of mushroom correspondence school. Poor Belgrade! He was a brilliant scholar, but he wanted to live by his wits, instead of working.”

“What can he be doing with Noddy?” asked Ned.

“Give it up,” murmured Bob. “I wonder when supper will be ready, and what we’ll have to eat?”

Jerry was in deep thought.

“Professor Snodgrass,” he asked suddenly, “what branch of science did this Dr. Belgrade teach in college?”

“Well, his specialty was electricity, and I remember when radium was first discovered that he took a great interest in it. He even wrote a paper on it, that was considered very good. Another thing, though perhaps I should not speak of it. Our college had a small specimen of radium, that one of the founders bought, and presented to the laboratory. One day it disappeared, and it was the same day Belgrade was asked to resign.

“There was talk that he might know something about it, but the faculty considered that he had disgraced our school enough by something else he did, so they did not press the radium matter. Belgrade sold examination papers to some of the students. He was too brilliant, I’m afraid, for his own good. And now to think he is in with Noddy Nixon!”



“Yes, and I believe I know what for!” exclaimed Jerry. “Noddy has taken him along as an authority on radium, for Noddy wouldn’t know it from a lump of clay. I begin to see things now. Fellows, we’ve got to be on our guard. I wish Noddy was behind us instead of ahead of us!”

“Why, do you think he’ll get to Snake Island before we do?” asked Ned.

“He may,” replied Jerry grimly. “But he’ll have his work cut out to beat us. I wish that brake hadn’t smashed. I’d like to be traveling now.”

But there was no help for it. They had to wait until morning, and then they took to the road again. For two days more they traveled on and then, unexpectedly running out of gasoline one night they had to lay over again for a half hour while the garage dealer supplied them. He was out, too, but the tank wagon, with a supply was on its way, he said.

“Had another auto here, a while ago, and they took my last gallon,” explained the garage attendant. “Fellow by the name of Blixen, or something like that. Mighty fresh, too. He wanted to beat me down on my price.”

“Wasn’t it Nixon, and not Blixen?” asked Jerry quickly.

“Well, that might have been it. I didn’t pay much attention. His auto was badly in need of repairs, and I sort of asked if he didn’t want me to fix it. He said he didn’t as they were only going on a little farther.”

“A little farther,” remarked Jerry, for it was still some distance to Denver, where Noddy was undoubtedly headed for. It was common knowledge that the *Comet*, the airship of our heroes, was in Denver, for the papers had contained many accounts of how it had broken records at the big meet. Noddy could not have helped seeing them, and, naturally, he would suspect that the motor boys were going to pick up their craft.

“Well, he said he and his crowd were going to take a train the rest of the way,” went on the garage man. “They were going to Belmont station, and take the train there. Here comes the gasoline. I’ll soon have your tanks filled.”

“Fellows, we’ve got to do something!” exclaimed Jerry to his companions, as the gasoline was being put in. “Noddy may get ahead of us after all, and reach Denver first, if he takes a train.”

“What can we do?” asked Ned.

“Leave the auto, and take a train ourselves,” replied the tall lad.

“That’s it!” cried Bob. “Beat him at his own game!”

“Then we’ll do it,” decided Jerry. “How far is it to Belmont?” he asked of the garage man, as he paid for the gasolene.

“About twenty miles.”

“Can you get a through train there for Denver, Colorado?”

“No, only locals stop there. But if you want to go to Denver, I can tell you a better way. Why don’t you go to Meldon station. That’s only ten miles farther on, and the Denver Limited stops there. You can make it I guess,” and he looked at his watch. “She leaves there at nine o’clock to-night, and it’s one of the few stops until she hits Denver. You can only get locals at Belmont. The Limited beats them all to pieces.”

“We’ll do it!” cried Jerry. “Come on, fellows! On to Meldon!”

“You’ve got to travel pretty fast,” the man warned them. “And the roads aren’t very good—especially at night.”

“We can do it!” cried Jerry. “Meldon for ours, and we’ll beat Noddy on his local!”

They were soon chugging down the road, in the gathering darkness. Bob started to get supper, when Jerry stopped a little later to light the powerful gas lamps, and then they went on at increased speed. Jerry drove the car as fast as was safe, but their bad luck pursued them, for they took the wrong turn at a point five miles from Meldon, and went eight miles out of their way.

“Oh hang it!” cried Ned when they were set right by a truck farmer on a load of produce. “Can we make it, Jerry?”

“I guess so,” and the tall lad threw the gasolene lever over a couple more notches, and advanced the spark full.

The big car fairly bounded along, and it seemed as if they would get to Meldon in time to catch the Limited. But they struck a stretch of sand that held them back. However, Jerry drove on like mad, and soon the lights of the station came into view.

“What are you going to do with the car?” cried Ned above the noise of the motor.

“Leave it with the agent, and have him store it for us,” replied Jerry. “I guess we’re in plenty of time, fellows,” he cried with a look at his watch. “I thought it

was later.”

He stopped the car with a screech of brakes at the station, and jumped out.

“You fellows get out the baggage, and I’ll see to the tickets!” he cried.

“Don’t leave any of my specimens!” cried the professor.

Jerry rushed up to the ticket agent behind his little barred window.

“Four tickets through to Denver!” exclaimed the tall lad. “On the Limited! We’ve got quite some baggage and I’d like to leave our auto in your care. We’ll pay you well.”

“The Limited pulled out of here about an hour ago,” said the man. “You’re too late.”

“Too late? Why it isn’t nine o’clock yet!” and Jerry looked at his watch.

“Guess you must be wrong, friend,” spoke the agent. “That clock is standard time for this section of the country.”

Jerry looked at his watch and gave a low whistle.

“By Jove! She’s stopped,” he cried. “That’s it. I forgot to wind my watch last night. Oh, what a chump!”

“Then we’ve missed the Limited,” said Ned.

“And Noddy Nixon is ahead of us,” added Bob.

“I’m afraid so,” admitted Jerry, a look of disappointment on his face. “Has the local from Belmont gone?” he asked.

“Some time ago,” replied the agent. “She doesn’t stop here. The Limited will have passed her by now, though.”

The boys said nothing. They did not know what to do. Their enemy was ahead of them, and they were stranded. The professor was calmly looking for bugs on the wall of the depot.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PROFESSOR'S LUNCH

“Well, what are we going to do?” asked Ned, after a long and rather gloomy pause.

“I don't know,” answered Jerry.

“Might as well go on in the auto,” suggested Bob. “We'll get to Denver tomorrow or next day, won't we?”

“Oh, yes,” agreed the tall lad, “but Noddy will be a good deal ahead of us, even if he is on a slow local. Hang it! Why didn't I think to wind my watch. I meant to, but we had so many things to think about that it slipped my mind.”

“Well, there's no use crying over spilled milk,” consoled Ned. “The thing now is to decide what's best to do. We might have looked at our watches.”

The station agent had gone outside to attend to some of his duties, leaving the boys and the professor alone in the depot. The scientist seemed to have shaken all cares from his shoulders, as he walked about, peering through his powerful spectacles for any stray specimens he might be able to capture.

“Well, the only thing I see,” spoke Jerry, “is to take the Limited to-morrow. We can stay here in town to-night. I guess we'll go to a hotel, for I want to stretch out in bed. Then I can arrange with some garage man myself, about looking after the auto, instead of leaving it for the station agent to do. But I certainly am sorry we missed that train. We'd be ahead of Noddy by this time.”

“It wasn't your fault any more than it was ours,” spoke Ned. “We ought to have looked at our watches, too.”

Bob said nothing. He had strolled over to the far side of the depot where there was a lunch counter. But the place was closed by glass partitions, through which the food could be seen.

“Just look at Chunky,” said Ned in a low tone.

“Here, come away from there!” called Jerry in a loud voice to his chum. “Hands off!”

Bob started.

“Can’t I look at it if I want to?” he asked. “I was seeing if they had any nicer stuff than we did in the auto. If they did we might better eat here instead of going to the hotel. Supper’ll be over there, anyhow.”

“Come away, or you’ll get wireless indigestion,” advised Jerry. “Oh, say, I wish I knew what to do,” he added impatiently.

“Guess the only thing is to go to bed and take the first train in the morning,” advised Ned.

At that moment a young woman came into the depot. She walked with a business-like air, and, advancing to the lunch room, opened the door leading into it. Then she began taking down the glass windows that closed it off. Bob, who had walked back toward his chums, started for the counter again.

“Would you look at Chunky!” remarked Ned again. The stout lad was eagerly looking over the collection of food, at the same time casting stray glances at the young woman—she was little more than a girl.

“Are—are you going to serve lunch?” asked Bob.

“If anybody wants it—and I hope they do,” was her reply with a bright smile, showing two rows of white, even teeth.

“I—I guess I do,” went on Bob, with a half-ashamed glance at his chums.

“Here, Bob! You come away from there!” ordered Ned in a loud voice. “Don’t go to bothering the young lady. You mustn’t mind him, miss,” went on the joking Ned. “He’s harmless. We’re taking him back to the asylum. He just got out today—escaped. He thinks he’s always hungry. Did he annoy you?” and with a half-fierce air Ned started for Bob.

“No—no, sir, he didn’t say anything out of the way,” replied the girl, with a startled air.

“Well, he doesn’t mean anything,” explained Ned without a smile. “He always imagines he’s hungry. That’s his peculiar form of insanity. You wouldn’t believe it, but he just ate three roast chickens, not half an hour ago, and my partner and I have had the hardest work to prevent him breaking into your lunch room. Come over here, I say, or we’ll put the strait-jacket on you!” ordered Ned to his fat chum.

For a moment Bob could only gasp, he was so surprised. Then he ripped out:

“Well of all the nerve! I’ll fix you for that! Don’t you believe him!” he went on. “I’m not crazy at all, I’m only hungry.”

“They all say that,” put in Jerry, carrying on the joke.

“Jerry Hopkins!” cried Bob. “I—I’ll——”

He did not say what he would do, for at that moment Professor Snodgrass, who had been unsuccessful in his search for insects, approached the lunch counter. The girl had started the coffee machine, and an aromatic odor filled the waiting room.

“Ah, that smells good!” exclaimed the professor. “I believe I will have a cup of coffee, and some sandwiches. Will you join me, boys, as long as we have to wait?”

“Yes, do,” urged Bob, and he glanced appealingly at his chums. They did not have the heart to plague him further, and with a laugh, at which the girl seemed much relieved, Jerry clapped his stout companion on the back, and linked arms with him.

“I believe I can take something myself,” spoke Ned. “Bob, you do the ordering, and then we’ll go to the hotel, and try to forget our troubles in sleep.”

They drew the tall stools up to the marble-topped lunch counter, and the girl, evidently much relieved, and pleased at so many customers at that hour, began setting out plates, spoons, knives and other table utensils in front of them.

“Chicken pies!” exclaimed Bob, rubbing his hands as he scanned the bill of fare. “That sounds good. We’ll start with them.”

“I think I will take some fruit first,” said the professor. “Those bananas look tempting,” and he motioned to some under a glass cover.

“Just help yourself to them, please,” invited the lunch girl. “I’ll put the chicken pies in the oven to heat.”

Mr. Snodgrass lifted the cover off the bananas, and, as he did so he uttered one of his usual cries of delight.

“There it is! There it is!” he exclaimed. “Oh, what a beauty, and such a long tail! Oh, I must get that! Look out boys! Don’t let it get away.”

“Oh, what is it?” screamed the girl. “It’s a mouse, I know it is! Oh, a mouse! A mouse! Father, come quickly!” and she leaped upon a small stool, and thence to the broad shelf back of the lunch counter, while Professor Snodgrass clapped a

specimen box down over something amid the bananas.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE WRECK OF THE LIMITED

The door of the station opened, and the ticket agent rushed in. At a glance he sized up the situation, the girl on the shelf, screaming, the excited professor holding his hands over the bananas and three more or less startled boys looking on.

“What’s the matter?” demanded the agent. “Mildred, has anything happened? Have these people annoyed you?”

“Oh, no, father. It’s a mouse—a mouse in the bananas, but the gentleman has captured it. But he acted so queer—he called out so, and—and——” She stopped, on the verge of tears.

The agent took a step forward. His manner was rather threatening. Jerry saw that it was time to explain at once.

“It’s all right,” he said in a quiet voice. “We did start to have a little fun with our friend,” and he nodded at Bob, “but we had no intention of annoying the young lady. We——”

“Oh, no, they didn’t annoy me, father,” the girl said earnestly. “It’s only the mouse.”

“It isn’t a mouse at all!” broke in the professor. “It is a very rare specimen of a long-tailed scorpion and——”

“Oh, a scorpion!” screamed the girl. “That’s worse! Oh, daddy, get a poker, or something, and kill the horrid thing. I saw one once, all covered with long hairs—a big spider—Ugh!”

“You are thinking of a tarantula, my dear young lady,” said the professor calmly. “This is a scorpion, which is entirely different. But this species is harmless, I do assure you. It wouldn’t bite a fly. I am very fortunate to have captured it. I saw it on the bananas as soon as I took off the cover, and I knew I must get it at once, or it would escape. There, I have it safe,” and he slid a glass cover on the box, and held out to view some sort of an insect, like a crayfish, with an extra long tail, which was squirming about under the glass.



“There is the little beauty!” cried the professor with enthusiasm. “It is worth at least ten dollars, and I am willing to pay that much to whoever owns it,” and he glanced at the girl.

“Ugh! Take the horrid thing away!” she cried. “Are you sure there are no more?”

“Not a one. I wish there were,” said the professor, looking carefully among the bananas.

“Then I’ll come down,” went on the lunch girl, as she blushing descended. “I’m sorry I made a scene, but I thought it was a mouse.”

“That’s all right,” spoke Jerry gallantly. “It was our fault for wanting lunch at this unearthly hour.”

“Oh, I always serve lunch at this time,” spoke the girl. “There’s quite a crowd comes in from the Denver Express, and they’re ’most always hungry. They’ll be here in about an hour, won’t they, father? Is the train on time?”

“About,” replied the agent. “But I don’t exactly understand. Is everything all right now?”

“I think so,” said Jerry, and he explained how he and Ned had started to have fun with Bob, how they had made up their minds to have a lunch, and how Professor Snodgrass had discovered the scorpion amid the bananas. He told what a learned man the scientist was, always on the lookout for specimens. Uriah Snodgrass was, by this time, painlessly preserving his scorpion, and making notes about it, forgetting his desire to eat. Not so Bob, however, who was eagerly waiting for the hot chicken pies.

The excitement soon quieted down, and matters having been satisfactorily explained the ticket agent became very friendly. He told the boys how he had secured the privilege of running the lunch counter at the station, and how his daughter, after the death of her mother, had taken charge of it. By this time the meal was ready, and even the professor sat up and ate.

“But I don’t see why you serve meals so late,” said Jerry, for it was now after ten o’clock.

“Oh, we have to accommodate the passengers of the Denver Express,” explained Miss Harrison, the lunch-girl. “At least they call it an express, though it doesn’t go very fast.”

“And it comes from Denver?” asked Ned.

“No, it goes to Denver,” she said.

“To Denver?” cried Jerry.

“Yes, it’s the last train out of here to-night. It gets to Denver to-morrow noon, when it’s on time, and that isn’t very often. But there are always a lot of travelers who like to stop off here for lunch. The train waits ten minutes for a freight to clear. So I always come back here after supper to serve a little lunch. I won’t have much left, though, if you people come in often,” and with a mischievous look on her face she glanced at Bob.

“A train to Denver!” cried Jerry. “That’s good news. I didn’t know there were any more. I supposed when we lost the Limited we were stranded here for the night. Boys, there’s a chance yet of beating Noddy Nixon!” he cried.

“Good!” exclaimed Ned. “Then we’ll do it.”

“Sure—we—blub—ugh—will,” added Bob, his mouth full of chicken pie.

“Then finish up!” ordered Jerry. “We’ll arrange to have the auto left here, and take our baggage on with us. In Denver to-morrow noon! That’s fine!”

“If you’re on time,” put in the agent. “I meant to tell you about that last train, but I had some freight matters to look after, and it slipped my mind. She’ll be along here pretty soon. Better get your tickets, and have your baggage checked if you’re going.”

“Yes, and we’ve got to attend to our auto,” said Jerry.

“And my specimens!” cried the professor. “I think I will express back to the college those I have, and begin on a new lot. Oh, how lucky I am to get the long-tailed scorpion!”

“Oh, don’t speak of it!” cried Miss Harrison.

While Ned ran the auto to the nearest garage and arranged to have it cared for while the boys were in the West, Jerry and Bob bought the tickets for Denver, and had the baggage checked. That is, Jerry did most of the work, while Bob paid occasional visits to the lunch counter.

“Say, Bob,” asked Jerry at length. “Is it the girl or the grub that you’re fondest of?”

“Ah—er—both!” stammered the fat lad. “Those chicken pies were fine!”

There was some little time to wait after all their preparations were made, for

the Express was late, as usual, and in the interim the boys and the professor struck up quite an acquaintance with Mr. Harrison and his daughter. Bob even insisted on buying a lot of sandwiches to take along on the train, for he said he might get hungry in the night journey to Denver.

“Well, it’s better than staying in town all night,” remarked Jerry, when the agent informed him that their train would soon pull in. “But I wish we had caught the Limited.”

“Well, maybe we’ll get ahead of Noddy yet,” suggested Ned.

The Express pulled in, and a score of hungry passengers besieged pretty Miss Harrison. She waved good-bye to the boys and the professor, and then began handing out food. Our friends got aboard, and settled themselves comfortably for the trip to Denver. At last they were underway again.

Through the night rushed the Express. Jerry and his friends had taken sleeping berths, and they stretched out for a long rest, as they were tired. There was some regret that Noddy was ahead of them, but this could not be helped.

“What do you think Noddy will do when he gets to Denver; if he arrives ahead of us?” asked Ned of Jerry, who had the berth below him.

“I don’t know. I hope he doesn’t find out where our airship is, and try to damage that.”

“He wouldn’t dare!”

“Oh, Noddy would do anything. Still, there’s no use in worrying until we have to.”

“Say, will you boys get quiet and go to sleep?” begged a nervous man across the aisle. “I’ve got to get up early.”

“Sorry we disturbed you,” spoke Jerry. “Good-night, Ned.”

“Good-night.”

“Thank goodness!” grunted the fussy man.

There was silence for a moment. Then, from the berth just forward of Jerry, came an inquiry.

“Jerry, did you see what I did with that specimen of the long-tailed scorpion?”

“Oh, mercy!” screamed a woman from somewhere in the car. “I hate bugs!”

“You expressed it back to the college with the other things, Professor

Snodgrass,” answered the tall lad.

“Oh, so I did. Good-night.”

“Good-night.”

“Thank goodness!” grunted the fussy man.

There was silence throughout the sleeping car. The train swung on through the night, making occasional stops. Then came a long run.

Suddenly there was a grinding of brakes. The train was halted so suddenly that many of the passengers slipped down to the ends of their berths, all crumpled up. There was a series of shrill whistles.

“What’s the matter?” cried the fussy man. “Are you boys cutting up again? Can’t you let a man sleep in peace? I’ve got to get up early!”

“Hello! Hello!” cried the professor. “What is it?”

“I don’t know,” answered Jerry. “It isn’t us, anyhow,” he added, for the benefit of the fussy man.

Just then a brakeman came hurrying through the car.

“What’s up?” asked Jerry, poking his head through the curtains of his berth.

“Wreck!” was the brief reply. “The Denver Limited, right ahead of us, has jumped the track. Our engineer stopped just in time, or we’d have been into her.”

“The Limited wrecked!” gasped Jerry. “It’s a good thing, after all, that we missed it!”

Then, from somewhere ahead, came screams and cries, and the crash of axes on wood.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE EXPRESS AHEAD

“Come on, fellows, tumble out!”

Thus Jerry called to his two chums, but they needed no urging. The curtains of their berths were violently shaken as the lads drew on their clothes, and leaped out into the aisle.

“Has anything happened?” asked the professor, hardly awake, even after his first question.

“Not to us,” answered Jerry. “Our luck seems to have turned. But there must be a lot of people badly hurt on the Limited. Come on, we’ll do all we can to help.”

Without stopping to dress fully, the three boys hurried out of the car. The professor and some of the other men passengers followed, the women remaining in frightened and tearful groups, discussing what had happened.

Jerry saw a brakeman hurrying from the sleeping car with several tools under his arm—an axe, a saw and a crowbar.

“Are passengers imprisoned in the wreck?” asked the tall lad.

“Some of ’em,” was the quick response. “We need all the help we can get. There weren’t many on the Limited, and what few there are can’t do anything. It’s a good thing her tail lights were burning, or we’d have smashed into her. Come along, boys.”

“Say, we’re right in the woods,” remarked Ned as he stumbled along the track in the darkness. Ahead of them they could see a glow of flames, reflected from the dark trees.

“It’s on fire!” cried Bob.

“That’s why we need all the help we can get to chop the people out!” cried the brakeman. “Here, you boys, take those tools, and run ahead with ’em. I’ll get more from some of the other cars.”

Jerry caught up a saw, Ned the iron bar and Bob the axe.

“Isn’t there anything for me?” demanded the professor, who was anxious to help.

“You’ll find more tools up ahead!” shouted the brakeman, with a wave of his hand toward the blazing wreck. “Hurry!”

The screams and cries of the injured could be heard more plainly now, and the fire was burning brighter. The three boys hastened their pace, and Jerry headed for one car, around which most of the rescuers were grouped.

“Here’s work for us, fellows!” he cried.

“That’s right!” shouted a brakeman. “Get busy!”

The motor boys could see the havoc wrought by the wreck. The engine lay on its side, down a slight embankment, and one car—a combined mail and express coach—had followed. The other cars were on the track, with the exception of one, which had fallen on its side, and was partly smashed. It was from this coach that the cries were proceeding, but fortunately that was not the car that was burning. The one on fire was an express car.

“There are people imprisoned in this car!” cried the conductor of the train, who was directing operations. “Chop and saw away at the windows, so we can get ’em out! Lively now, everybody!”

“But the fire!” cried a man, pointing to the express car. “Hadn’t we better try to put that out?”

“Can’t be done,” replied the conductor briefly. “We have no water.”

“But the poor souls——” cried the man.

“None in there,” was the quick answer. “The express messenger got out, and the stuff will have to burn. All the people in danger are in this car, and we’ve got to get ’em out. There’s no danger from the fire. It will have to burn out. Lively now!”

The boys fell to with a will, as did the other passengers from the wrecked Limited and from the Express. Several of the unfortunates had already been rescued, and were being laid on the cushioned car seats, or carried back to the rear train.

“Here’s someone under this window!” cried Jerry, as in the darkness, illuminated by the glow from the fire, he saw a white hand tapping on the glass, that had, through some strange agency, not broken.

“Chop ’em out!” cried Bob, raising his axe.

“Go easy there!” yelled Jerry. “You’ll do more harm than good!” The tall lad tapped on the pane, and a face was thrust close to it.

“Protect yourself from the flying glass,” ordered Jerry. “We’re going to break it, and pull you out. Cover yourself up.”

A few taps with the axe served to shatter the pane, after Jerry had noticed that the dim figure wrapped itself in a blanket, for this car was a sleeper. Soon the hole was big enough to haul out a fairly large person, and Jerry and Ned carefully scraped away the jagged points of glass.

“Come on now!” cried Jerry, thrusting his hands down into the opening. “We’ll lift you out!”

He caught hold of the wrist of someone, and Ned the other hand. They lifted, and there came into view a little girl, with light, curly hair. She did not seem to have a scratch on her, but she was crying from fright. As soon as Jerry had her in his arms she screamed out:

“Oh, where is mamma—and papa?”

A man came bursting through the crowd at the sound of the child’s voice.

“Oh, Gladys! Thank the dear Lord!” he cried, fairly snatching her from Jerry. “You are saved! I thought you were gone! Your mamma is safe. Come. Oh, boys, I can’t thank you enough! You have saved my little daughter.”

“And the glass didn’t cut me!” cried Gladys. “I was in a blanket. But, papa, I can’t go. Annabell is in there.”

“What, another little girl!” cried Jerry. “Come on, boys. More work!”

“Annabell is my doll!” explained Gladys, smiling now in her father’s arms. “But I want her. I love her.”

Jerry looked in through the broken window. In a pile of blankets, on what had been a berth, he saw what seemed to be a tousled head of hair. Reaching in his arm he pulled out a big doll, minus one leg.

“Oh, poor Annabell is hurt!” cried Gladys. “Oh, papa!”

“Never mind, you shall have a dozen dolls. Boys, I can’t begin to thank you! Montrose is my name, James Montrose, of Denver. I’ll see you again. I want your names. Now I must take Gladys to her mother. Mrs. Montrose is slightly

injured. Oh, what a terrible wreck!”

He hurried away, and Jerry and his chums looked for more work to do. But, so well had the rescue operations been conducted that, as far as could be learned, not another soul remained in the wrecked sleeper. From the other cars the passengers had hastened themselves, or been helped, after the crash, bruises and cuts being their worst injuries.

And, strange as it may seem, no one was killed outright, though several were grievously hurt. The wounded had been carried back to the stalled Express, and made as comfortable as possible. Fortunately, there was a doctor aboard, and a supply of bandages and medicine. The conductor of the wrecked Limited checked over his passenger list, and reported no one missing.

“I think everyone is out now, gentlemen,” he said to Jerry and his chums, and the little group of rescuers.

“Then I suppose we must wait here until the wrecking crew comes,” said one man.

“No,” answered the conductor, “we will go back, and get aboard the Express, just behind us. There is a switch, not far away, and we can go around the wreck, and proceed to Denver, though we’ll stop at the nearest hospital with the worst wounded.”

“On to Denver!” exclaimed Jerry. “Then we’ll beat the Limited after all. We’re going on ahead.”

“Yes, but Noddy is still in front of us,” spoke Ned in a low voice. “We’ll never catch up to him.”

“It can’t be helped,” remarked Bob. “Say, but we run into excitement and adventures when we least expect it.”

“That’s better than running into a wreck,” replied Jerry. “Hello, here’s someone evidently forgotten!”

The boys and Professor Snodgrass were walking back toward the Express, and were somewhat by themselves, when Jerry noticed the figure of a man lying on a pile of seat cushions on the railroad embankment.

“Let’s carry him back to the doctor!” cried Ned, and he advanced to take hold of one corner of the seat, which was like an improvised stretcher. The man on it never moved.



“We four can carry it nicely,” said Jerry. “Catch hold here, Professor.”

Mr. Snodgrass used one hand to reach for the corner of the plush-covered seat. His left he held clenched, some distance away from his body. As might have been expected, with only one hand, he could not lift his corner.

“What’s the matter?” asked Ned. “Is your hand hurt, Mr. Snodgrass?”

“Hand hurt? No. Why?”

“You’re not using it. Why do you hold it that funny way?”

“Funny way? I—er—bless my soul! It’s my collar button. I’ve been holding my collar button all this while. I started to put it in my shirt when I heard the call for help, and I guess I was so excited and absent-minded that I’ve been holding it ever since. I wondered why I couldn’t do more work, and all the while it was because I only used one hand. The other held the collar button. How stupid!”

He thrust the button into his pocket, while the boys could hardly restrain a smile. Then, with the professor’s two-handed aid, the sufferer on the seat was carried to the rear. He had fainted from a comparatively slight injury and was soon being cared for.

A little later, with all the wounded from the Limited on board, and all the other passengers squeezed in somehow, the Express backed up, went around the wreck by means of a switch, and headed for Denver.

The boys were beating the Limited, which they had missed, but they would reach the Western city considerably in the rear of Noddy Nixon for all that, since the Limited could not now pass the local train on which the bully and his cronies were riding.

“Well, it can’t be helped,” remarked Jerry, as he saw Mr. Montrose, whose little daughter they had rescued, caring for his wife. Gladys was happy with her injured doll.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE AIRSHIP GONE

Stopping in the early dawn at a good-sized city, the wounded from the Express were taken to a hospital for treatment. Though Mrs. Montrose was not seriously hurt her husband decided that she also had better stop off, instead of making the trip to Denver. Accordingly, after having bidden the boys good-bye, giving them his address in the Western city, and telling them he expected to see them there, Mr. Montrose got off the train.

“And I’m much obliged to you, too,” said little Gladys. “So Annabell would be, if she could talk, and I guess she doesn’t mind her leg being off—that is, not very much, for she’s been asleep most of the time, and when you sleep you don’t feel any pain.”

“I guess that’s right,” agreed Jerry with a smile.

The Express went on, but it was much behind time, and had to proceed necessarily slower each hour, on account of the wreck, for all the railroad schedules were set awry.

“But we’ll get there some time,” observed Jerry, though naturally he was nervous about what Noddy might do to get to Snake Island ahead of them.

Noon saw our friends still quite a distance away from Denver, and they fretted over the delay. They ate dinner at a way-station lunch counter, and, though Professor Snodgrass looked eagerly among the bananas for more rare specimens, he found none.

“But if I get my two-tailed toad I’ll not want anything else,” he said, as they got underway again.

It was late that afternoon, when they reached Denver, and went at once to a hotel, for a good bath and a change of clothing, for they had brought their big valises with them on the train.

“And now for a good hot meal!” cried Bob, as, much refreshed the chums sat together in the hotel parlor. “Railroad lunches are all right, even when a pretty girl serves ’em, but I want to sit down to a table where I can eat as long as I

like.”

“And as much,” added Jerry. “But I guess we’ll have to postpone our eating for a while, Bob,” and the tall lad winked at Ned.

“Postpone it!” cried the fat youth. “Why?”

“Well, we ought to go out to Buffalo Park, and look after our airship,” went on Jerry. The *Comet*, so Mr. Glassford had written them, was left at one of the hangars in Buffalo Park, where the aero meet had been held. The craft had not been taken apart for shipment back east, but had, in accordance with the instructions of the motor boys, been kept in readiness for a quick flight. A watchman, named Boise, had been left in charge, and Mr. Glassford had told him that Jerry and his chums would soon be on hand to claim their property.

“Go to Buffalo Park!” exclaimed Bob blankly. “Why, that’s about seven miles out. It will take more than two hours to go there and back, and look at the *Comet*. That will make supper awfully late. I guess she’s all right. Can’t we wait until tomorrow, Jerry?”

“Well, that’s what I was going to propose,” remarked the tall lad, after what to Bob was a painful pause. “I guess we’re all too tired to chase out there, and our airship will probably be all right. I tried to see if I could get Boise on the ’phone, but I couldn’t.”

“We’ll go out there the first thing in the morning!” decided Bob, with a look of relief on his face. “Now, I’m going to the dining-room, and look at the bill of fare.”

“Don’t eat it,” advised Ned with a laugh.

“No danger. I’m not going to spoil my appetite,” declared the fat one. “I never had a better.”

“Then don’t say anything about it, or they’ll raise the rate on us,” cautioned Jerry. “Jove, but I’m tired!” and he stretched out in an easy chair, while Ned took another, and Bob strolled toward the dining-room, to find out how soon supper would be served.

“And we didn’t hear anything of Noddy,” remarked Ned, after a pause.

“Nor see anything,” added Jerry. “I inquired at the station, and they told me the local, which Noddy and the others must have taken, got in early this morning. He was several hours ahead of us if he was on that, and he probably was.”

Bright and early the next morning they were on their way to Buffalo Park. The place of the aero meet was deserted, and the hangars looked gloomy in the big expanse of open field.

“Wonder which is ours?” ventured Ned, as he and his chums alighted from the trolley car.

“There it is,” remarked Jerry, pointing to a big shed with the word “COMET” in large letters across the big doors.

“And now for a good flight!” cried Bob. “No more train wrecks for ours. Off for Snake Island and the radium!”

“And my two-tailed toad,” added Professor Snodgrass, looking carefully on the ground as he advanced for a possible rare specimen.

The boys found the hangar, where their craft was housed, closed and locked. They pounded on the doors, and Jerry remarked:

“This is odd.”

“Why?” asked Bob.

“Because Mr. Glassford said he had instructed Boise to just live out here until we came—not to go away at all. And yet he isn’t here.”

“Maybe he didn’t expect us, and has gone to town for supplies,” suggested Ned.

“In that case, as Mr. Glassford wrote, he was to have a friend on guard. Yet no one seems to be here.”

“Maybe he’s asleep,” ventured Bob.

Jerry kicked on the door, with enough force to awaken the soundest sleeper, but there was no response from inside. Suddenly, from the fields back of the boys came a hail.

“Hey! What are you fellows doing at that hangar? Get away!”

A man came running toward them. He seemed quite angry.

“Get away!” he ordered.

“Who are you?” asked Jerry, a sudden fear coming into his heart.

“I’m the watchman—Boise is my name—but I’m on my way to Denver now.”

“Why?” faltered Ned.

“Because there’s nothing more here to watch. My job is ended. But who are you fellows, anyhow; and what do you want here?”

“We’re the owners of the *Comet*,” replied Jerry, “and we came for our airship, that Mr. Glassford left with you.”

“The—the owners!” gasped Mr. Boise. “Are you the motor boys?”

“We are!” cried Ned. “Where is the *Comet*?”

“It’s gone—gone!” faltered the watchman.

“Gone; where?” Jerry wanted to know.

“I delivered it to a young fellow named Noddy Nixon last night,” answered Mr. Boise. “He had a letter from Mr. Glassford, and one signed Jerry Hopkins, saying he had been sent to bring the airship to you—said you couldn’t get this far, as there was a wreck.”

“Noddy—Nixon—has—our—airship!” gasped Jerry. “Fellows, he got ahead of us after all!”



## CHAPTER XVII

### AN UNEXPECTED OFFER

Blank amazement, despair, fear and anger showed on the faces of the motor boys, as they looked at one another and then at the watchman, Boise. The latter, no less than our heroes, was startled. He saw at once that something was wrong.

“And you let the airship go—our *Comet*?” asked Jerry, as if he could not believe the words.

“I did. I thought it was all right. This Noddy Nixon said he was a friend of yours, and he had two letters. They were orders on me to give up the airship, and, as I was expecting you any day, I thought it was the thing to do. Here are the orders now,” and he pulled two pieces of paper from his pocket.

“Let’s see ’em!” exclaimed Jerry eagerly.

Bob and Ned looked over his shoulder as the tall lad read. Clearly enough the letters purported to be orders on Boise for the delivery of the *Comet*. But it needed only a glance to show that they were forgeries.

“I never signed that letter!” cried Jerry wrathfully. “I might have known Noddy would be up to some trick like this.”

“And that isn’t Mr. Glassford’s writing, either,” added Ned. “I have a letter from him in my pocket, explaining where he would leave the *Comet* for us,” and he pulled out the epistle, comparing it with the one Boise had handed over. Though there was some similarity between the two signatures, the boys could easily see that the order for the airship had been forged. There was no question as to the letter purporting to be signed by Jerry. That signature was not a bit like his.

“And yet these don’t look as if Noddy wrote them,” spoke Jerry, as he scanned the forged documents. “He couldn’t write as firm a hand as this.”

“I shouldn’t be surprised but what that former college teacher did it,” suggested Professor Snodgrass. “He has probably added forgery to his other accomplishments. Let me take a look. I don’t know his writing, but I can tell an educated hand.”

The professor looked carefully at the two documents, and said it was very evident that Dr. Belgrade had written them.

“It is too finished a hand to have been penned by a lad like Noddy Nixon,” declared Uriah Snodgrass. “Probably Noddy did not feel equal to that part of the work, and got his crony to attempt it.”

“I believe you’re right,” agreed Jerry. “But what did they do with the airship, Mr. Boise?”

“Took her away, and right from in front of my face. Oh, I was a ninny to stand there and see ’em do it!”

“It wasn’t your fault,” declared Jerry. “Almost anyone would have given up the craft, after receiving two such orders as these. But where did they go?”

“That I can’t say. They seemed in very much of a hurry, and, after I had unlocked the big doors, and opened ’em, they wheeled the *Comet* out, and started her up. She ran beautifully, too, for Mr. Glassford had told me to keep her ready for a quick flight, and I did. There was plenty of gasolene in the tanks, and she was fit for a big journey.”

“Were there three of them?” asked Bob.

“Yes, the young fellow, who the others called Noddy, a rough sort of a chap, and a slick-looking man.”

“Bill Berry and Dr. Belgrade, all right,” commented Ned.

“Did you hear them say where they were going?” asked Jerry.

“No, they didn’t talk much. Just a few words. They seemed to know how to work the machinery, and I never had a suspicion that anything was wrong. I did ask ’em where they expected to meet you boys, and Noddy said somewhere outside of Denver.”

“I guess that part was the only true thing he said,” remarked Jerry grimly. “And when we do meet him, outside of Denver, or anywhere else, well——”

He did not finish, but there was a stern look on his face.

“Which way did they head, as they started off?” asked Ned, seeking for possible clues.

“I couldn’t say,” replied Boise. “I watched ’em until they got high in the air, and then they got beyond my sight. I haven’t very good eyes, so I couldn’t say

where they did head for.”

“Did they take any provisions along?” Bob wanted to know, and this time his chums did not laugh at him, for they realized the wisdom of his question.

“None that I saw,” replied the watchman. “And there were none in the airship.”

“Then they can’t go very far!” cried Bob. “Fellows, we’ve got to get right after ’em. They’ll have to come down to feed, and that will be our chance.”

“But how can we get after ’em?” asked Jerry. “On foot? Our airship is gone, and our auto is hundreds of miles away. How are we going to do it?”

“That’s so,” agreed Bob, much downcast.

“An airship is what we need,” commented Ned, “and that’s out of the question.”

“There were plenty here a while ago,” remarked the watchman, “but they’ve been taken away since the meet. Oh, I’m so sorry I let those fellows fool me!”

“You couldn’t help it,” declared Jerry kindly. “Now it’s up to us to get busy, and make Noddy pay for the trouble he has caused us. Come on, boys. We’ll get back to the hotel, and talk it over. Something has got to be done.”

“Yes,” agreed Professor Snodgrass, “we must get to Snake Island before they do, or they may get the only two-tailed toad that is there.”

“And, naturally, they’ll get all the radium,” spoke Ned.

“I’m sorry, but I can’t do anything more for you,” said Boise. “I just came out this morning, after closing the hangar up last night, to get a few things I’d left behind. My work here is done, and I’m looking for a new job. If I could help you I would.”

“I’m afraid you can’t,” replied Jerry, and, parting from Boise, they started for the trolley that would take them back to their hotel. They were sad and discouraged. After all their hard work and preparations, to be thus beaten by Noddy and his plotters! It was the worst of bad luck.

“Gentleman here to see you,” remarked the hotel clerk when they went up to the desk to get the keys to their adjoining rooms. “He’s in the reading-room now, I think. Said he’d wait a little while for you.”

“Who is he?” asked Ned eagerly.



“He didn’t leave his name. Front!” he called to one of the bell boys, “tell that gentleman with the tall hat, in the reading-room, that the young gentlemen he was asking for have come in now.”

“Yes, sir!” exclaimed the lad whose coat was a mass of buttons.

“We’ll go in the reading-room, and talk to him,” suggested Jerry, wondering who their visitor could be. As the three lads entered the apartment they saw a familiar figure at the far end.

“Mr. Montrose!” exclaimed Ned, as he recognized the father of little Gladys, whom they had rescued from the wreck.

“Oh, boys! I’m glad to see you!” cried Mr. Montrose. “I’ve been inquiring at half the hotels in Denver for you. I came on with my wife a while ago. She is much better, and as soon as I got home with her she insisted that I look you up. Gladys wants to see you also, and, as I forgot in the excitement to ask what hotel you were going to stop at, though I heard you say you were coming to this city, and as I mislaid your cards, the only way I had to find you was to describe you to the different hotel clerks. But at last I found you. I’m so glad! I want you to come out to my house at once.”

Then, as if struck by something in the lads’ faces the gentleman asked:

“Why, what is the matter? Has anything happened?”

“Yes, there has!” exclaimed Bob impulsively. “Our airship has been taken by Noddy Nixon,” and then, in a few brief words the boys told of what had happened.

“And so he got ahead of you, after all,” commented Mr. Montrose, “and flew away in your airship?”

“Yes, and we want to chase him, for he can’t get very far, but we haven’t anything to do it in,” remarked Ned.

“We need another airship,” added Jerry.

“Another airship!” exclaimed Mr. Montrose. “How big a one? Would a biplane, carrying three, answer?”

“Would it?” cried Jerry. “It certainly would! Even if we couldn’t take any provisions along for Chunky. But where could we get one on such short notice?”

“From me!” suddenly exclaimed Mr. Montrose. “Boys, I’ve been wondering how I could reward you for what you did for me—saving my daughter. I knew it

would have to be something out of the ordinary. And this gives me just the chance I want. I'll provide you with an aeroplane, so you can chase after Noddy Nixon!"

"But we need it right away!" cried Jerry. "There isn't time to have one made."

"Oh, that's all right. I have one that's in perfect order, if you can believe the man who made it. And it has flown recently, so it ought to go now. You can start this afternoon, I guess. Come and sit down, and I'll tell you all about it," and Mr. Montrose led the boys toward a quiet corner of the reading-room.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### ON THE TRAIL

“How in the world does it happen that you have an airship, just when one is most needed?” asked Jerry, as he and his chums seated themselves near Mr. Montrose.

“I admit it does sound like a fairy story,” said that gentleman with a smile, “but I assure you it is all plain facts. I am not an aviator, nor am I a dealer in airships. I’m a banker here in Denver. The quiet life for mine. I’d no more think of going up in an airship than I would of putting on a diver’s outfit, and going to the bottom of the sea. And yet I own what I am told is one of the best biplanes made. You see, it was this way:

“When we had this meet, for aeroplanes and balloons out in Buffalo Park, there were a number of cranks, as there always are at an affair of that kind.

“Some of them came to me, with plans for airships that I could easily see would never fly. Others seemed to have good ideas. They all wanted money to build their craft.

“There was one young fellow who seemed to have a plan for a good sort of airship, and I took quite a notion to him. I got an engineer to look over the drawings, and, on his report, I advanced the money for the young man to build his biplane. It was a success from the start, and he made several preliminary flights, and won some prizes in the meet.

“Then he met with an accident, and not, as you might suppose, while up in the air. He was coming to the park one day to give an exhibition flight, when he was struck by a trolley car, and so badly injured that he died in a few days. That left me with a first-class airship on my hands, for I took it away from the grounds, and had it stored in my barn.

“That’s how it happens that I have a biplane in good working order, and if it is of any service to you boys, you are welcome to her. I’d do anything for you, after what you did for me and I hope that you can make use of this craft.”

“It is very kind of you to offer it to us,” spoke Jerry, “and I think it will be just the thing we need. Of course we don’t know anything about the engine, or how

the biplane will sail, nor how fast. But I'm sure it will help us in our hunt for Noddy Nixon."

"Then suppose you come out to my place and look her over," suggested Mr. Montrose. "I have my auto out in front, and it won't take long to get to my house. Besides, I want you boys to pay me a visit, anyhow. Get your baggage from the hotel, and be my guests."

The boys could not refuse. They paid their bill at the hotel, and had their baggage taken to Mr. Montrose's fine big house. As soon as the professor arrived there, he hurried out to a fish pond, with a small net, and was not seen again until night, when he came in with more specimens.

As for the boys, their first visit was to the barn where the airship was stored. Mr. Montrose went with them, and he smiled in appreciation at what the three chums said.

For perhaps two minutes they examined it carefully, Jerry paying particular attention to the engine. Then Bob burst out with:

"Well, it's not so bad. I see a place where we can fasten a box on to carry some lunch."

"Trust Chunky for that," murmured Ned.

"The engine is powerful," was Jerry's opinion, "and the propellers are well made. She has speed all right."

"And she'll carry the three of us," added Ned. "Of course we'll have to come down after every trip of about a hundred miles, for she doesn't carry gasolene for much more than that. But we can chase Noddy in 'century' stretches, and gasolene is easy to get around here. I say, let's take her, and have a try."

"We can stop for lunch anywhere if we happen to run short," proposed Bob.

"If you say lunch again, I'll make you eat an onion!" cried Jerry, knowing how Bob hated them.

"Do you think it will do?" asked Mr. Montrose, full of interest in the project of the motor boys.

"Do? It's just fine!" cried Ned. "We can't thank you enough."

"It is I who am in your debt," spoke the banker. "You are welcome to the machine. I don't know anything about them, and you may be taking a big risk to run it, but I hope not."

“Oh, she’ll run all right,” answered Jerry, looking over the craft with a critical eye. “We’ll give it a try-out now.”

The professor being engaged in capturing specimens, the boys had the test to themselves. They wheeled the aeroplane out in a big field, and, after trying the engine, and finding that it worked almost to perfection, got ready for a flight. Mr. Montrose and his wife, who could sit up in an easy chair, and Gladys, with her wounded doll, watched the lads from a safe distance.

“Of course this isn’t like our *Comet*,” said Jerry to his chums. “It’s just a straight aeroplane, and if the engine stops we’ve got to volplane down. But I think she’ll enable us to get on Noddy’s trail. We’ll go up for a short flight, and then if she’s all right, we’ll start out, and go as far as we can before dark.”

“Which way?” asked Bob.

“Toward the Grand Canyon,” answered Jerry. “That’s where Noddy and his crew will head for.”

“Get busy then!” cried Ned. “We’re on Noddy’s trail once more!”

Our motor boys were too experienced hands with all forms of airships to have much trouble with the fine one the unfortunate young man had perfected. It worked perfectly, and carried the three with ease. Of course it was nothing like the *Comet*, and could remain aloft but a comparatively short time. But it was a great help in an emergency.

The lads soared upward, circled around over Mr. Montrose’s house, and then started straight away. They covered several miles and returned.

“Now for the chase!” cried Jerry grimly, as they made a descent.

“Oh, what wonderful boys!” cried Mrs. Montrose. “You are so daring!”

“No danger at all,” Ned assured her.

It did not take them long to pack a few articles of clothing, a light lunch and a few other necessaries on the aeroplane, which they named the *Chaser*. They planned to travel as far as they could before dark, and then stop at some hotel or farmhouse over night. In the morning they would renew the pursuit of Noddy. Professor Snodgrass was to remain at the Montrose home, seeking specimens, and the boys promised to call back for him when they had succeeded in their quest, or had proved to their own satisfaction that they could not catch Noddy.

“But we’ll get him!” cried Ned, as he and his companions took their places in

the *Chaser*.

“Come back to Annabell and me!” cried Gladys after them.

“We will,” promised Bob.

There was the clattering racket of the explosions in the cylinders. The big propellers whizzed around with terrific force. The biplane trembled, and then began to roll slowly across the smooth lawn on her bicycle wheels.

“Good luck!” cried Mr. Montrose.

His wife and daughter waved their hands to the motor boys.

A moment later the stanch little machine rose into the air, and soared away over the treetops on the quest after the unprincipled bully who had taken away the *Comet*.

“Now we’re on his trail!” cried Bob, as he looked to see that the lunch basket was securely fastened.

“I hope we catch him soon,” murmured Jerry, as he grasped the steering-wheel with a firmer grip, and peered ahead for a glimpse of their own beloved craft.



## CHAPTER XIX

### A DESPERATE RACE

From Denver to that part of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado in Arizona where Snake Island might be located, the distance is about five hundred miles. Jerry had calculated this before starting, and he had told his chums that there was a chance of catching Noddy before the latter could reach the great gash in the earth that represented the canyon.

“For I don’t believe Noddy is going to be very expert in managing our *Comet*,” commented the tall lad. “He may know how to run an ordinary aeroplane, but when he gets mixed up with our dirigible balloon he’ll come a cropper, sooner or later.”

“Make it later,” advised Bob. “We don’t want him smashing our airship with any croppers.”

“Oh, I don’t know that he’ll take a tumble,” went on Jerry, “only he won’t know how to run her so as to get the best speed out of her. That means that he’ll be longer than he thinks he’ll be in getting to the canyon, and we’ll have a chance to catch up to him, even if he has a good start.”

“I wonder what he’ll do, if he does get to the canyon?” asked Ned, as, in response to a sign from Jerry, he adjusted the carburetor so as to give the engine a richer mixture.

“Why, he’ll hover over it, the same as we would, I suppose,” replied the tall lad, “and try to pick out Snake Island. He doesn’t know exactly where it is, any more than we do, but I guess there aren’t many islands in that part of the river, and so he won’t have much trouble picking it out. The only thing for us to do is to get there first.”

“Can we do it with this machine?” asked Ned.

“Well, it’s a pretty good craft,” replied Jerry, as he turned on more power, and did various evolutions in the air to ascertain how the *Chaser* responded to the helm. “Of course she isn’t as speedy as the *Comet*, but she might be, with Noddy tinkering with our machinery, and not getting the best out of it. We’ve got to take our chance.”

The *Chaser* was indeed a fine craft of her class, and soon the motor boys were high in the air, sailing in an almost direct south-western direction from Denver, to reach the Colorado.

For several miles they proceeded in a straight line, at a height of about a mile, as this gave them a good view ahead, unobstructed by any clouds which would have hampered them had they gone higher. But the clear air held not a speck that might be taken for the missing *Comet*. The boys strained their eyes in vain. They were making good time, and the wind cut into their faces, for there was no protection as in the comfortable cabin of their own craft.

“Don’t you think you might slow up a bit?” suggested Bob after a while.

“Why?” inquired Jerry.

“Because it’s ’most lunch time, and—er—well, you know you can hardly breathe if you open your mouth going at this speed, and if we try to eat any sandwiches we may get choked. So if you slowed up——”

“All right, Chunky, enough said!” cried Ned. “Slow up, Jerry, I’m hungry too.”

Accordingly the *Chaser* was brought down to a speed that just kept her afloat, and Bob opened the lunch basket. It was no novelty for the boys to dine while high in the air, but it was rather more inconvenient in an open aeroplane than in the *Comet*. Still they managed.

They spent the afternoon going straight on, or circling about at times to cover a wider area, but with all their looking, and peering through powerful binoculars, they had no glimpse of the craft they sought. It was beginning to get dusk, and Jerry suggested that they had better go down, and seek a resting place for the night.

“There’s no use flying after dark,” he said, “and we can pick out a better landing place if we do it now, than if we wait until later.”

They were flying over a rather lonesome section of the country just then, and no houses were in sight. But, a little later, Jerry picked out a small cabin in the midst of a clearing in the woods, and said:

“I guess this will do as well as anything. It doesn’t look very big, but we can sleep out-doors if we have to.”

Jerry tilted the deflecting rudder, and the craft gracefully swooped down toward the earth. While yet a little distance from the ground the boys were



surprised to see a tall, lank man, followed by a woman and several children, rush from the cabin, and take refuge behind a pile of wood. Then, as the airship came to a stop, after running across the ground on the bicycle wheels, a rifle was poked over the top of the logs, held unwaveringly on the three lads, while a voice drawled out:

“Hold on, strangers! I may not be able to manage one of them consarned flippity-flop shebangs, but I’m a tolerable good shot with this gun, and she goes off on a hair trigger. So if you don’t want to be made into coffee strainers, git!”

“Why, what’s the matter?” asked Jerry. “We don’t mean anything, we only want——”

“Ye can’t fool me!” cried the voice of the man who held the gun. As for himself he was hidden by the wood. “Ye can’t come none of them games on me. Keep hid, ’Mandy, an’ don’t let the children stick their heads up. I’ll drive these pirates off.”

“What do you take us for?” asked Jerry, in surprise.

“Kidnappers—that’s what! I’ve read about ye in the papers. Kidnappers, an’ bomb throwers, that’s what ye be. They had a exhibition over in Denver, an’ the papers told how they dropped bombs from them airships, an’ how they took children up in ’em. Ye can’t do that here. I’ve got nine, an’ I want every one. Keep hid, ’Mandy.”

“I guess you’re mistaken,” spoke Jerry with a laugh, which was a bit forced on account of the gun that seemed pointed directly at him. “We are neither bomb throwers nor kidnappers. I don’t know how the papers could have said that anything like that was done at the Denver exhibition. Of course there may have been some bomb-dropping contests, but only harmless chalk balls were used, and, as for children, I never heard of any being taken up in an aeroplane.”

“Ye know you didn’t read it yourse’f, pap,” interposed a woman’s voice from behind the wood pile.

“Well, Gabe Ralston were tellin’ me about it, an’ I reckon he can read,” declared the man.

“Now don’t be silly, pap!” went on the woman. “I’m sure them young men look harmless.”

“I assure you we are!” cried Jerry, and he quickly told why they were on the wing, and how they had happened to come down. “We’d like shelter and a meal,

and are willing to pay for it,” he concluded.

At the mention of “pay,” the gun was at once withdrawn, and, after a moment of whispered conversation between the man and his wife, the former came out, looking rather ashamed of his action. He left his gun behind.

“Well, strangers,” he said, “I guess maybe it’s all right. I have to be cautious, you know, livin’ all alone as I do, with a wife an’ nine children t’ protect. Come out, ’Mandy,” he called, and a woman, followed by the nine youngsters, ranging in sizes like a “pair of stairs,” came from behind the wood pile.

The children, once they saw that no immediate harm was intended, gathered about the airship, as did the man and his wife. Soon there was a feeling of confidence and friendship, and the woman at once set about getting a meal. Jerry and his chums told how the craft worked, and the solitary farmer was much interested. He admitted that all he knew about airships was what Gabe Ralston had told him.

“An’ Gabe can’t read over’n above well,” the man added.

There was hardly room for the boys to sleep in the small cabin, and so, after a generous supper, they were given blankets, and made their beds out of doors. The night was a fine one, and they slept well. Jerry’s generous payment for the accommodation brought a storm of protest from the man and his wife the next morning. But the tall lad said:

“Oh, that’s not too much, but if you think it is——”

“Have ’em put us up a lunch,” suggested Bob in a hoarse whisper.

“Chunky suggests a lunch,” finished the tall lad with a smile, and the woman hastened to fill the basket.

For the rest of that day the motor boys circled about, or advanced swiftly in straight lines, ever seeking the *Comet*. But she was not in sight.

At noon they descended to renew their supply of gasolene, and the night was spent in a country village, where they created considerable excitement and interest.

It was about ten o’clock the next morning when Bob hastily caught up the binoculars, and directed them at a speck in the sky off to the left.

“See anything?” asked Jerry quickly.

“I’m not sure,” replied the fat lad, after an observation, “it’s either a big bird

or——”

He did not finish his sentence, but his hands trembled slightly as he passed the glasses to Jerry. Ned reached over and managed the wheel while Jerry looked.

“It’s her all right!” suddenly cried the tall lad. “Now to catch him.”

“Is it Noddy?” asked Ned eagerly.

“It’s the *Comet* all right,” was the answer, “and I guess Noddy’s on board. Now to see what the *Chaser* is made of!”

Jerry opened the motor full, and with a roar that fairly shook the comparatively frail craft from end to end, she shot ahead, her propellers beating the air relentlessly.

“It’s going to be a desperate race!” cried Ned.

“And we’re going to win!” declared Jerry grimly.

The race was on. Faster and faster flew the *Chaser*, until, even without the glasses, it could be seen that she was drawing nearer to the *Comet*. A view through the binoculars showed that those on board the stolen aircraft were rushing frantically about, doubtless trying to develop as much speed as possible.

“Can you make it, Jerry?” asked Ned.

“We’ve *got* to!” was the quick reply.

It was evident that the only hope the motor boys had of recovering their craft lay in the inability of those on board her to get out of her all the speed possible. With the machinery of the *Comet* run to the best advantage, no other airship could catch her. But Jerry counted on Noddy and his cronies not knowing enough to do the right thing at the right time. Then, too, the *Chaser* was very speedy when rightly handled.

Nearer and nearer crept the pursuing craft. She was directly in the rear of the *Comet* now. Suddenly Bob cried:

“Jerry, they’re going up!”

“Then we’ll go too!” was the answer. “We can hit as high an altitude as they can.”

“And they’re flying as a dirigible, and not as an aeroplane at all!” added Ned. “They’re afraid to use the wing planes, Jerry! Maybe we can get ahead of ’em after all!”



## CHAPTER XX

### A GAME IN THE AIR

With a pull on the lever of the ascending rudder, Jerry sent the *Chaser* shooting upward into the air. He made the craft take a long slant, for he had seen that the *Comet* was going up more vertically, and Jerry figured on getting under the stolen airship, and then, when once in advance, turning, and so approaching head on.

“They’re going up fast!” commented Ned, watching their own craft narrowly.

“Yes,” assented Jerry. “They’re using all the gas the generator can turn out. I only hope they don’t burst the bag, or ruin the machinery.”

“If they do, we’ll make Noddy pay for it!” cried Bob.

“That would be more bother than it would be worth,” was Jerry’s opinion. “We’ll try to get the machine away from him before he has a chance to do much damage.”

Upward the *Comet* mounted steadily, for those on board were evidently pushing her to the utmost. On account of the limited facilities on the aeroplane, Jerry and his chums could not go up on such a sharp slant as could their enemies, but this suited our heroes just as well.

The two airships were now comparatively close together. The *Comet* was still shooting upward, and the *Chaser* was directly below her.

Suddenly, from the upper craft, came a cry of alarm.

“They’ve discovered us!” was Bob’s opinion.

“No, they did that some time ago,” said Jerry. “I’m afraid something has happened.”

“It does seem so,” agreed Ned. “Look at that smoke!” he yelled. “She’s on fire!”

“No, it isn’t that,” was Jerry’s retort, after a quick glance at their craft through the glasses. “They’ve been using too much lifting gas, and the generator is choked. It’s escaping through the safety valve. She won’t go any higher now, but

she can still go forward. We haven't got 'em yet."

As if to prove his words, the *Comet*, now that she had reached the limit of her climbing powers, darted forward. But Jerry had made good use of his opportunity, and he was now ahead of the *Comet*, though still slightly below her.

"What are you going to do now?" asked Ned, as he saw his chum put his foot on a pedal that connected with the motor.

"I'm going to use the last notch of speed, and see if I can stop 'em!"

With a rush the *Chaser* mounted upward and, a few minutes later, she was on the same level as was the *Comet*, and considerably in advance. Both craft were moving with considerable speed, but, owing to the fact that her gas bag was so choked with vapor, causing a big wind resistance, the *Comet* must necessarily move more slowly than the *Chaser*.

"What are you going to do, Jerry?" asked Ned, as he saw his chum reach for a rudder control lever.

"Turn around, and come back at him head on," answered the tall lad. "This is going to be a game of tag, and I'm going to make Noddy 'it.' To do that I've got to head him off. He'll try to dodge, I expect, but I think I can nab him."

Then began what was perhaps the most risky and sensational game of "tag" that was ever played—a game in the air, nearly a mile above the earth.

Turning quickly to the left, [Jerry sent the \*Chaser\* directly at the \*Comet\*.](#) As he had expected, Noddy, who was managing the craft from the pilot house, tried to dodge to one side. He could go no higher because the gas retort was choked. But Jerry was ready for him, and met the shift quickly. Once more Noddy dodged, this time on the other side, but Jerry was right there.

The two craft were slowly coming nearer each other, for both had reduced their forward speed. They were like two big birds of the air, facing each other, hovering, twisting and turning, dodging this way and that, one seeking to escape, and the other endeavoring to catch her antagonist.

First on one side and then on the other, Noddy dodged, but every time Jerry was there facing him. The *Comet* could not get past.

"He'll have to go down soon!" cried Ned.

"That's what I want him to do," answered Jerry grimly. "Once they are on the ground, we can deal with 'em."

“Where’s Bill and that fake doctor?” asked Bob.

“In the motor room, probably,” answered the steersman. “I hope they don’t do any more damage to the machinery.”

The game was nearing an end now. Noddy and his cronies were getting desperate. The bully made one last attempt to dodge past Jerry, but our hero was ever on the alert.

Head on, the two ships of the air were almost nose and nose together. Noddy could not possibly get past.

“Go down! Go down!” yelled Jerry. “Go down before I force you, and, if I do, I won’t be responsible for the consequences!”

There was no help for it. Noddy’s unpleasant face, scowling in anger, peered from the window of the pilot house. Jerry saw him pull the lever of the deflecting rudder, for the bully had sneaked around the shop of the motor boys often enough to learn the rudiments of running the *Comet*.

Down and down she went, fairly forced by the *Chaser* above her, by the *Chaser*, that frail little craft of the air, compared to which the *Comet* was like a battleship opposed to a torpedo destroyer. But those on the little ship knew their business, and, after all, brains and skill told.

“Can he get by?” asked Bob.

“I don’t believe so,” answered Jerry, watching every move of his rival. But Noddy had given up the fight. He was beaten at his own game.

Still downward he forced the *Comet*, while Jerry and his chums prepared to alight the moment their craft touched the earth, to drive away their enemies.

Bounding lightly, the *Comet* landed on the ground. A moment later the aeroplane followed, and Jerry let her run along on the bicycle wheels, the propellers urging her on, until she was almost in contact with the big craft. Then the tall lad yanked on the brake lever, and the *Chaser* came to a stop.

“Come on!” cried Jerry, leaping out of his seat. Bob and Ned followed.

Noddy Nixon lost no time in leaving the pilot house on the run, and from the motor room emerged Bill Berry and the college man. They leaped over the rail, and joined Noddy in flight.

“If we ever catch ’em!” panted fat Bob, as he ran as fast as he could. “We’ll—make—’em—pay—for—this!”





## CHAPTER XXI

### OFF FOR THE CANYON

Jerry, who was in the lead of the chase after Noddy and his cronies, came to a sudden resolve. What was the use of capturing the bully, when the recovered airship might need attention? Clearly it would be more profitable to look after their craft, and let Noddy escape, for the time being. So Jerry shouted:

“Hey, fellows, never mind. Let ’em get away. We’ll only have a fight on our hands, and it isn’t worth while. Let’s see how much damage they’ve done.”

“But, don’t we want to catch ’em?” demanded Bob, who, though much out of breath, had managed to catch up to Jerry and Ned.

“No; what’s the use?” asked the tall lad.

“But look what he did to our airship!”

“That’s just what I want to find out—what he did do to the *Comet*. That’s why I say don’t let’s chase after ’em any longer. It will only mean more trouble, and we’ve had enough. Come on back.”

Accordingly, the three chums ceased running, and turned back toward the two airships. Noddy, with a backward glance, had ascertained that Jerry and his two friends were no longer in pursuit, and so the bully slackened his pace. His companions did likewise and, a sorry-looking trio indeed, they made their way across the plain above which the air game had taken place.

“Don’t you want to catch Noddy?” asked Ned.

“No; what’s the use?” inquired Jerry. “He’s done all the harm he can. The thing for us to do is to remedy it. We must see to our own airship, and then get back, pick up the professor, and head for Snake Island.”

“But what will we do with Mr. Montrose’s aeroplane?” Bob wanted to know. “We don’t want it to keep.”

“We’ll have to take that back to Denver with us. We can easily do it, as the side planes are detachable. Let’s get busy at that, and we may be in Denver tomorrow.”

“And then for the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, and Snake Island!” added Ned.

Giving a last glance to Noddy and his cronies, who were still fleeing across the plain, our heroes made their way to the *Comet*. Aboard they found a scene of confusion, but no serious damage had been done.

True, a number of the machines were out of order, and the gas generator was badly clogged, but these were defects easily repaired. In general the stolen airship was in almost as good condition as when the conspirators had taken her.

Beyond securing a few articles of clothing and personal effects, Noddy and his cronies had brought away nothing from the airship. It looked as if they had boarded her hurriedly with very little preparation, and had rushed away, without even enough provisions for a long trip. They must have stopped somewhere to get food, for some was found on board.

It did not take the motor boys long to decide what to do. They soon ascertained that the *Comet* was in comparatively good running order. The clogged gas machine was fixed, and then, having enough food in the lunch basket, together with what they found on their own craft, to last them a day, they decided to sleep on board, even though they were in a lonely place, and start back for Denver in the morning.

As for what became of Noddy and his cronies, they neither knew nor cared. The bully and his conspirators had disappeared, and were doubtless seeking shelter for the night.

“We caught them just in time,” remarked Jerry, as they sat in the cabin of the *Comet*. “A hundred miles more and they would have been over the canyon of the Colorado. Then they might have reached Snake Island, and it would have been all up with our chances.”

“But now we’ll get ahead of him,” declared Bob.

“If Noddy doesn’t do something else,” spoke Jerry.

They spent the rest of the afternoon in taking apart the *Chaser* for transportation back to Denver aboard the *Comet*. Then they went to bed, tired out from the day’s chase.

By pushing the *Comet* to her limit, and by making an early start, our friends were able to reach Denver the next night. Mr. Montrose was exceedingly glad to see them, and he and his wife and little girl listened with interest to the account

of the adventures of the motor boys in the chase after Noddy.

As for Professor Snodgrass, he was so busy classifying and making notes of the specimens he had caught, that it is doubtful if he heard much of what Jerry and his chums said.

“And what are you going to do next?” asked Mr. Montrose, as the boys finished telling him they had brought his aeroplane back on their own craft.

“Start for the Grand Canyon as soon as we can,” replied Jerry.

“But if this Nixon young man takes after you again?” inquired Mrs. Montrose.

“We’ll have to do the best we can,” answered Jerry. “But I think it will be some time before he catches up to us this time. It was a very lonely spot where we left him.”

“And the walking wasn’t very good,” added Ned with a laugh.

“Still, after what he had done in the past, I would be on the watch,” advised Mr. Montrose.

“Oh, we will be,” declared Jerry; and then, after a good night’s rest, they put in the next few days getting ready for their trip to the canyon.

The *Comet* was thoroughly overhauled, and some needed repairs made. Though Noddy and his companions had not been careful in their treatment of the craft, still they had done no serious damage.

“Well, I think we are ready to start for the canyon to-day,” remarked Jerry one morning, after about a week spent at the Montrose home. “We can make it in two days, though it may take us a little longer to pick out Snake Island, and have the conditions favorable for a descent into the big gorge.”

“Then you are really going down into it?” asked Mr. Montrose. “You know it is quite a fearsome place.”

“From all accounts it must be,” admitted Jerry.

“Think of it!” exclaimed Mr. Montrose. “I have seen it many times, but no one can ever describe it. A great trough or cut in the earth, over a mile deep, twenty miles wide, and many hundreds of miles long, winding in and out, and, at the bottom a river rushing along resistlessly, with waterfalls, rapids, calm stretches and vast depths of black, silently moving water. And the walls of that canyon! All the colors of the rainbow cannot compare with them. They are wonderful! Down in it are mountains, great in themselves, but which look small in that vast

gorge. There is the glow of the Alps, the cold fogs of the Rockies, there are purple shadows, shifting lights, snowstorms and rainstorms. It is a place of terrific grandeur.”

“And we are going there,” said Jerry quietly.

“Yes, to an unknown island,” went on Mr. Montrose. “On what may be a fruitless quest. Oh, boys, think twice before you go!”

“We have thought,” went on Jerry. “We are going. We will start in the morning for the Grand Canyon of the Colorado,” he added.

“And all for a bit of radium—a fortune though it may be,” proceeded Mr. Montrose.

“No, not alone for the radium,” said Jerry solemnly. “I have not spoken of this before, as it seemed such a slim chance. But there may be, on that island, the missing scientist, whose body was never recovered. He may be there—in need—starving. We are going to try to rescue him, as much as to find the radium.”

“Jerry!” cried Ned. “You never hinted at this.”

“No, because I did not want to raise false hopes. But, now that we are at the last stage of the journey, I must speak of it. I hope we can rescue that unfortunate man. For the mere treasure I would not risk so much. But a life is at stake!”

“Then go,” said Mr. Montrose softly. “I would be the last one to hold you back. And, boys, from what I have seen of you, I believe you will succeed. I wish you all success! But, do not be deceived. You have a hard task ahead of you. The Grand Canyon does not like to be conquered.”

“We have the *Comet*,” replied the tall lad, as if that was much, as, truly, it was.

“Well, we will always be thinking of you,” said Mrs. Montrose, solemnly.

“And I want you to come back,” added little Gladys. “I may have a new doll by then.”

“We will come back,” said Jerry, and his voice had a new tone in it.

Early the next morning, having said good-bye to their good friends, the motor boys and Professor Snodgrass set off in the airship for the Grand Canyon.

As they waved their hands in farewell many thoughts came to them. Would they find Snake Island? Would they be able to discover the radium fortune? And, more than this, would they be able to find and rescue Mr. Hartley Bentwell, the

daring scientist who had been missing for nearly a year? Was he, by any chance, on Snake Island?

“If he is, we’ll get him,” said Jerry grimly, as he pointed the nose of the *Comet* toward the clouds.



## CHAPTER XXII

### OVER THE GREAT CHASM

There was no particularly difficult task in reaching the Grand Canyon from Denver. In fact the boys could have walked all the distance in time, or they could have gone by train, or in an auto. But their troubles, as they well knew, would not begin at the start. It was after they had reached the canyon itself—that awful gash in the earth’s surface—that they would have a problem to solve. And that problem was how successfully to descend into the gorge, and land on the island.

“And the first thing to do is to find Snake Island,” said Jerry, as they settled themselves comfortably in the airship cabin, after their start.

“Why, all we have to do is to sail along down in the canyon, and pick it out,” suggested Bob. “The canyon is miles wide—twenty in some places—so there will be room enough for us to get around.”

“Yes,” agreed Ned, who, with the others had been reading up some facts about the canyon. “But it isn’t always clear in the canyon. There are sudden storms, snow or rain, there are fogs—and you know you can’t see anything in a fog, even if you have an airship.”

“Oh, well, fogs don’t last forever,” declared Bob. “We’ll just have to keep on the lookout until we sight the island. Then we can lower ourselves, make a landing, get the radium, and come away, and——”

“You forget about the missing scientist,” suggested Ned.

“That’s so. Do you really think he’s there, Jerry?”

“Well, it’s hard to say. There’s just a chance that he landed on the island when the others were wrecked in their boat, and he may be there yet. It’s a chance worth taking. I understand that a lot of provisions were lost out of the boat, and they may have caught on the island, as they floated down. Then, too, there must be fish in the river at certain seasons of the year, and there may be birds, or some kind of animals on the island that would do for food.”

“It would be a sort of Robinson Crusoe way of living, but it might be possible. Of course it must be horribly lonely there, for one man alone on Snake Island,”

said Ned.

“With all the snakes,” put in Bob.

“We don’t know that any snakes are there,” remarked Jerry. “That may be just a name.”

“I hope so,” exclaimed Ned with a shiver. “I don’t much care for snakes.”

“Well, we won’t have much to do until we get to the canyon,” declared Jerry. “We can take it easy, and get in trim for the hard work ahead of us. I think we won’t make any night journeys. We’ll just land and rest. We’re in no special rush \_\_\_\_\_”

“Unless Noddy Nixon takes a notion to make another trial, Jerry,” suggested Ned.

“Oh, I don’t believe he will. He’s practically stranded. How’s he going to get an airship, and land on the island?”

“He might go by boat,” suggested Bob.

“That’s out of the question. No boat could live in the rapids. That’s how Mr. Bentwell came to be wrecked—he and his friends tried a boat.”

“Then you don’t fear Noddy?”

“Not much.”

The trip that day was without incident, and at night they came to earth in a quiet spot where they remained until morning. They made an early start, and thoroughly enjoyed the fine, dry, crisp air through which they sailed. They passed from Colorado into Utah, and the next night they were within easy traveling distance of the Colorado River.

The next day they sailed over the great sterile valley, or desert, and in the afternoon they had completed the first stage of their journey, and were at the head of the Colorado, where it was formed by the conjunction of the Green and Grand rivers.

“From now on, we’ve got our work cut out for us,” announced Jerry, as they came to rest that evening, not far from the great river. “We’ll follow it, and as soon as we get anywhere near Grand View, we’ll begin making inquiries about Snake Island.”

“But I thought the island was between Grand View and Bright Angel Trail,”

said Bob.

“So it may be,” assented Jerry, “but I’m not going to take any chances. It may be either one side or the other of those places, and, if we inquire as we go along, we won’t be so far out. It won’t take us long, and it is better to be sure than sorry.”

“All right, we’re with you,” assented Ned; and Bob nodded his head to show that he agreed.

Their trip over the Colorado, hovering in the air about half a mile above the river, was devoid of incident for the first two hundred miles. They made that in one day, and camped the first night just over the border of Arizona. From there the Grand Canyon proper starts, though it is of comparative little grandeur until the Little Colorado, a salty stream, joins the main body of water.

It was about noon, the next day, that the boys really got over the great canyon. They had been sailing along, talking of the prospect before them, and Professor Snodgrass had been classifying some of the specimens he had caught while at Mr. Montrose’s house, when the aspect of things suddenly changed.

“Don’t you think it’s about time we ate?” asked Bob, with a look at his watch, as he started for the galley.

Jerry happened to look down through the plate glass window in the floor of the main cabin, where they were all gathered, for the *Comet* was being steered automatically.

“Eat!” cried the tall lad. “Eat! Look down there, and then say ‘eat’ again if you dare!”

Ned, Bob and the professor looked. Below them they saw a great gash in the earth—a gash a mile or more in depth, and the sides of which were of black rock, mingled here and there with marble colored red, pink and blue, with an occasional bright yellow. Then came sandstone rocks, vivid in color. It was like looking into a great winding trough, wherein a painter had mixed his colors.

And, at the very bottom, like a silver thread, ran the river, zig-zagging in and out amid the mighty cliffs that towered on either side. Cliffs now hemming in the powerful stream, and again spreading out for ten or twenty miles. But the river itself was kept in narrow bounds.

And the very narrowness of these bounds made the stream rush along with such tremendous power, for it was a veritable Niagara in places. White and



foam-capped, again black and deep, with awful power it hurled itself along.

Above this scene of awful grandeur hovered the airship, and, as the boys looked, they saw how slight indeed was the power of their craft, compared to the mighty forces that had cut this gash in the earth, and which power still sent the river on its downward way.

“And we’ve got to go down there?” asked Bob softly.

“That’s it,” answered Jerry. “Do you wonder no boat ever lived to make the passage? Or, at best, very few of them?”

“And that is where the scientist was lost,” murmured Uriah Snodgrass. “I wonder if we shall ever find him—alive—or dead?”

And, as the boys gazed at the foaming river, down in the awful depths, it seemed impossible that human beings could ever have navigated it. But in the airship the problem was much easier.

“Now for Snake Island!” cried Jerry, as, having stopped the *Comet* in order that all might get a good view, he started the motor again. “Now for Snake Island!”

“And the radium!” cried Ned.

“And my two-tailed toad,” added the professor.

“And, perhaps, the poor scientist,” spoke Bob softly. “I—I hope he hasn’t starved to death.”



## **CHAPTER XXIII**

### **THE BOAT IN THE RAPIDS**

“Well, boys, we’re here at last,” remarked Jerry, after a while, when they had traversed some length of the canyon in the airship. “We’re here after a lot of hard work, and the next question is, what are we going to do; now that we are on the ground?”

“Go to Snake Island at once,” suggested Ned.

“Eat,” advised Bob, who had started to get a meal, but who had come back to the cabin, to wait while some of the things cooked.

“Chunky’s infallible recipe whenever anything goes wrong,” commented Jerry. “Still it wouldn’t be a bad idea. We can talk it over while we’re eating, and decide what’s best to be done.”

“What’s the matter with going at once to the island?” asked Ned. “I thought that was what we came here for.”

“It is, but I think it will be a good plan to see if we can learn anything about it before we go too far down the river. It may be that there is no such place as Snake Island. Or, it may be that, even in our airship, it is impossible to get to it. We want to find out all about it before we go too far.”

“Well, what’s your idea?” asked Ned.

“I think we ought to——”

“Dinner’s ready,” interrupted Bob, and they went out to the table, the professor carrying with him a book, carefully marking the place where he had been reading by putting his finger between the pages. The airship was moving at slow speed, and had been set to steer herself automatically. So the boys had nothing to interrupt their talk of the best plan to follow.

Eventually they decided to travel on until they reached Grand View, the point where Berry Trail led down into the canyon to the banks of the rushing river. They would make their inquiries there, regarding the possible existence of Snake Island.

It was night when they reached Grand View, and, in order that they might be among other tourists, who had come to visit the canyon, the boys and the professor put up at a hotel almost on the verge of the great chasm, storing the airship in a big open shed, sometimes used for autos.

“Snake Island!” exclaimed the clerk, when Jerry asked him about it. “Never heard of the place. Don’t believe there’s an island in the whole stretch of the river. But there are some guides around here. You might ask them.”

Which Jerry and his chums did, but with little satisfaction, for it developed that few of the guides had been farther than the regularly traveled routes taken by tourists, and this had not brought them to the more inaccessible parts of the mighty river.

“Snake Island?” repeated one grizzled guide, when Jerry had put the question to him. “If anybody knows whether or not there is such a place, it’s old Hance Stamford. Hance give up guidin’ long ago, but in his prime there wasn’t a better one at it. He’s gone in places no one else dared, and if there’s a Snake Island he’ll know about it.”

The boys sought out Hance the next day. He lived in a little cabin, not far from the hotel, being cared for by his son, who was employed as a waiter. Hance was indeed old, being past eighty. Yet his dull eyes opened quickly when Jerry put to him the question that meant so much to the motor boys.

“Snake Island!” exclaimed old Hance. “It’s been many years since I heard that name. Many, many years.”

“But is there any such place?” asked Jerry.

“Is there? Bless you, I don’t know, son. I’ll tell you as much as I can, however. It must have been forty years ago, and there weren’t many tourists in them days. Mostly Indians. I was making my way along the canyon with an Indian, for in them days I had a notion I’d like to discover things. Well, as you know, the canyon is narrow and steep in places, and when it rains you want to make tracks, for the river sometimes rises thirty feet in a short time. If you’re caught where you can’t climb up, well—it’s good-bye for yours.

“A thunderstorm came up while the Indian and I were in a narrow part of the canyon, where the river rushed along between black walls like a mill stream down the flume. We knew we’d have to make tracks out of there, and we did. But the rain came faster than we’d calculated on, and we had to climb. Then came a fog that nearly did for us. We managed to get some distance down the

stream, and then climbed up the steep sides of the chasm until we came to a niche in the wall. There we stayed until the river went down, and we were there a day and a night, with nothing to eat.”

“But about the Snake Island?” asked Jerry.

“The island. Oh yes. Well, when we were hiding there in the hole in the wall, there came a rift in the fog. I happened to be looking down stream, and I saw something big and black rearing up, right from the river it seemed. I poked the Indian in the ribs—he was half asleep, you know—Indians’ll sleep anywhere if they think they’ve got to—anyhow I poked him, and he grunted and woke up. I pointed to the tall, black, wiggling thing, and the Indian said: ‘Snake Island.’

“‘Snake!’ I yelled. ‘Who ever see a snake as big as that?’ Then he grunted some more, and went on to say that there was a sort of stone island in the middle of the river. It had been pretty well worn away except a big hill and a tall thing, like a tower, that stuck up in the middle, like a church steeple. It was this tall tower of black rock that seemed like a snake. Of course the fog made it indistinct, and the motion of the mist made it appear as if it was wiggling about. So that’s all I know about Snake Island. I never went there, and I never heard of anyone getting on it.”

“There was a party of college men——” began Uriah Snodgrass.

“Oh, yes, I heard about *them*. But they never got there, and one of their number was lost. I tell you Snake Island is in a bad part of the river.”

“But just where is it?” asked Jerry.

“As near as I can tell, between here and Bright Angel Trail,” replied the old guide, as he nodded in slumber again. “I wouldn’t go there, if I were you.”

“Well, we’re going,” said Jerry softly, as he bade the old man good-bye.

Saying nothing to anyone in the hotel about their plans, the boys made an early start the next morning, and were soon gliding down over the great chasm in their airship.

Below them rushed and foamed the great river—below in its chasm trough, with walls of vari-hued marble, of sandstone that rivaled the rainbow in tints, while in other places, near the water itself, were black rocks, of flinty hardness.

“And to think that it’s seven thousand feet from the top of that gulf to the water,” spoke Bob in awed tones. “I wouldn’t want to fall.”

As they went on they could see fogs and mists arising, while, as the sun rose higher and higher, it made a scene of indescribable beauty, the tints on the walls of the canyon changing every moment.

It was about noon, and Jerry had calculated that they had made about half the distance from Grand View, when Ned, who was looking at the rushing, foaming river below them, as it dashed along over a gorge filled with rapids, cried out:

“Jerry, do you see anything down there?”

The tall lad looked through the plate glass window in the bottom of the airship. Then he snatched up the binoculars and focused them.

“It’s a boat!” he cried. “A boat in those awful rapids! They’ve lost control of her, and she’ll be dashed to pieces!”

“Anyone in it?” asked Bob.

Once more Jerry looked carefully.

“Three persons!” he exclaimed. “Well, it’s all up with them. That boat can never make the passage.”

And, as he spoke, the frail craft was lost to view as a curtain of mist rolled down and hid the rushing river from sight.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### STRANGE GHOSTS

“Did you see that!” cried Bob.

“They’re drowned!” gasped Ned.

“What was it, an accident?” asked Professor Snodgrass.

“It would be hard to say,” remarked Jerry. “Certainly the boat looked as if it was going to overturn in the rapids, but I can’t really say that it did. The fog rolled up just then and hid everything from sight. I hope those in the boat weren’t lost, but their chances were slim.”

“Can we do anything for them?” asked Bob.

“Nothing, I’m afraid,” answered the tall lad. “We can’t even see them, and it would be useless to descend into that canyon of fog now. Besides, the current is so swift that the boat must be a good way from here by this time.”

The airship was slowly floating along over the Grand Canyon, which, at this point, wound in and out among the many colored cliffs, like some great serpent. Jerry had shut down the machinery until it was barely turning the propellers, and, had not the gas bag sustained the craft, she would have settled down, for the motion was not enough to keep her afloat as an aeroplane.

“Well, what are we going to do?” Ned wanted to know. “We must be nearly at Snake Island, if there is any such place, and if we’re going to get that radium fortune it’s time we got busy.”

“And I haven’t seen anything of that two-tailed toad, either,” spoke Professor Snodgrass. “I had hopes of finding a specimen—even if a small one—before now, but fate seems against me.”

“Wait until we get on the island,” suggested Bob. “There may be toads there, as well as snakes.”

“What makes you think there are snakes there?” asked Ned. “Didn’t the old guide say he thought it got its name because the tall cliff in the middle seemed to wiggle like a serpent when there was a fog?”

“Yes, he did, and if we put on a little more steam, Jerry, we may get to Snake Island now, in time to see that same thing. I say let’s move faster,” went on the stout lad. “We ought to be nearly there.”

“But we might pass right over the island in this fog,” objected Jerry. “It’s better to go a bit slow, I think.”

However, the problem was soon solved for them, as, when they had proceeded a little farther the mist lifted and they had a clear view of the stream as it foamed along below.

“But I don’t see anything of the boat, and the three men who were in it,” observed Bob, peering downward through the window in the cabin floor.

“No. Either by this time they have been carried many miles down the river, or they are—drowned,” spoke Jerry softly.

“Well, then let’s keep a lookout for Snake Island,” suggested Ned, and, knowing that they must be within a comparatively short distance of the place, if it was there at all, they all watched eagerly, even Professor Snodgrass laying aside his note-books.

Bob served dinner and the watch was resumed. It was about two o’clock when the stout lad, who had just finished getting the galley in order, looked over the port rail on the bow of the air craft. No sooner had he glimpsed the river below him than he called out:

“Here we are, fellows! There she is! We’re here at last! Now for the radium! There’s Snake Island. We’re right over it!”

“Say, you’re as bad as Andy Rush!” cried Jerry as he hurried out of the pilot house, to join his chum.

“Well, if it’s true, we’ll forgive him for making such a fuss,” suggested Ned. “But say, I believe he’s right, after all!”

“And if it is the island, oh! how I hope my two-tailed toad may be there!” cried the professor.

There could be little doubt but that they were looking at Snake island. Down below them, in a comparatively calm stretch of the river, was a long and rather narrow strip of land, low on the edges, and rising abruptly in the middle. There was a big mound, like a great hill, covered with trees and bushes, and, in the center of this was the tall, curiously shaped tower of rock about which the guide had spoken.

“That’s Snake Island all right,” agreed Jerry, “though I can’t say that the rocky tower in the center looks much like a serpent.”

“Maybe it does from some other view,” suggested Ned. “Then, too, there is no mist now. I’d rather believe the place got its name from that, than because there were snakes there. Well, are we going down, Jerry?”

“I guess so. I was just looking for a good place to make a landing. Let’s drop down to the lower end, and we can take our choice.”

As they sailed slowly down the length of the curious island they noted that it was about four miles long, and about half a mile in width. The river here was quite broad, contrary to the usual character of the Colorado, and a glimpse over the surrounding territory showed it to be so wild and desolate that it is doubtful if it had ever been visited by a white man.

The cliffs, too, at either side of the stream, where the island divided it, were so high, so rugged and precipitous, that it was positive that no one had ever descended them. And, had even the most daring explorer managed to get down, he never could have gotten up without a balloon. For that reason it was plain why the existence of the island was practically unknown.

“Well, I don’t see but what the upper end of the place is the best to land on,” remarked Ned, after a circuit had been made.

“Guess you’re right,” agreed Jerry. “We’ll go down there.”

The *Comet* was sent about, and, a little later, she began settling slowly down in the great chasm, at the bottom of which flowed the river.

It was getting well on in the afternoon, and the sun, sinking in the west, no longer cast its beams into the great gulf. There was a twilight darkness hovering over it, a stillness broken only by the murmur of the foaming river, that cast a spell of gloominess over our friends. For a time no one spoke, and then, as the airship was about to settle down on a smooth strip of sand, near the upper end of the river, Jerry exclaimed:

“Say, what’s the matter with us all, anyhow? Anyone would think this was a funeral. Wake up, you fellows!”

“All right! Wow! Let’s be jolly!” cried Ned in a loud voice.

There was a sound like thunder, and then, from that vast gorge came a mighty voice, repeating in solemn tones:



“Let’s be jolly!”

“Bless my soul!” gasped Mr. Snodgrass. “It’s an echo.”

“Echo!” came back in a voice like a bull’s bellow.

After that they spoke in whispers, but even then their words were flung back at them from the sides of the cliffs in murmurs and trills that produced an uncanny feeling.

“This sure is a strange place,” remarked Jerry, as he brought the airship to a stop.

“Strange place!” howled the echo. Jerry had spoken louder than he thought. He laughed, and a giant’s chuckle was tossed back to him. The boys looked at each other, startled, until Bob said:

“Oh, don’t let’s mind this. It’s only an echo. Let’s get busy, have a supper and to-morrow we’ll get the radium.”

“Radium,” mocked the echo, but now they were beginning to get used to it.

“Say, it looks as if there was a tide in this river,” remarked Ned, as he noted a sort of high-water mark, where sticks and driftwood were piled up on shore.

“No, that shows where the river rises when there’s a flood, or too much rain,” explained the professor. “The Colorado rises rapidly at times, because the cliffs are so steep that the water from the clouds is almost instantly all poured into the stream. We had better get the ship above flood mark, Jerry, as there may be rain in the night, and we don’t want to go floating down.”

Accordingly the *Comet* was wheeled farther from shore. Night came on early, in the depths of that gloomy chasm, for they were over a mile below the upper rim of the steep cliffs. But when the big gas lamps had been set aglow, making the circle about the airship one of radiance, and when they were gathered in the cozy cabin, they were all more cheerful.

“Well, we’ll start on a radium hunt the first thing in the morning,” suggested Jerry. And, being inside now, the echo was not so noticeable.

“And I will seek the two-tailed toad,” said the professor. “I wonder if I could not have a look now? Toads come out at night, and if I take a light I may succeed in finding one.”

Supplying himself with an electric torch, the scientist let himself out of the airship. The boys heard him walking about outside, and then they began talking

of their trip so far, and speculating as to how it would end.

Suddenly, in the midst of the discussion, there came a cry from outside.

“Hark!” exclaimed Bob.

“It’s the Professor,” said Jerry.

“Maybe he’s found his toad, and it’s bitten him,” was Ned’s contribution.

“Boys! Boys, come here!” called the professor, and the three lads rushed from the cabin.

“What is it?” asked Jerry. “Where are you?”

“In front of the ship,” came the answer. Then they saw the gleam of his light, and hurried toward him.

“Look!” exclaimed the scientist in a whisper, and, as he pointed toward the middle of the island, whence arose that curious pinnacle of rock, the three chums saw several tall and ghostly shapes swirling slowly at them. Curious shapes they were, like tall beings wrapped in trailing clothes, with their long, thin arms raised as if in warning, and about them seemed to cling, like an enveloping haze, a weird, purplish light. The strange shapes seemed blown onward by the night wind.

“What—what are they?” gasped Bob in a whisper.

“Ghosts, I guess,” answered Jerry, with a half-hearted laugh. “The ghosts of Snake Island.”

“Ghosts of Snake Island,” came back the echo. And then, as suddenly as they had appeared, the “ghosts” vanished, leaving the boys and the professor staring into the darkness.

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## CHAPTER XXV

### A NEST OF SERPENTS

“What—what do you think they were?” asked Bob, after a few moments of silence. He spoke in low tones, so that the weird echo would not repeat his words.

“I give it up,” said Jerry.

“Maybe they were the ghosts of the three men in the boat, who may have been drowned around here,” suggested Ned.

“Nonsense!” exclaimed the tall lad. “Don’t be silly, Ned.”

“Well, I was only joking.”

“Pretty poor joking,” commented Bob. “I’m going inside. It’s chilly out here,” and he shivered.

“Yes, I guess it is more pleasant inside,” agreed Jerry. “Did you see anything of your toad, Professor?”

“No, not a thing, but I got several other valuable specimens, so my evening was not wasted. I guess I’ll go in with you.”

“What do you think those queer shapes were?” asked Jerry of the scientist, when they were once more in the cabin.

“Well, it would be hard to say,” spoke Professor Snodgrass. “Of course none of us believe in ghosts, and yet there are queer manifestations, sometimes, that even science cannot satisfactorily explain. My honest belief is that this was some effect of the fog, or night vapors arising out of the damp ground.”

“But they looked—er—just like men wrapped in sheets,” spoke Bob with a shudder.

“Yes, I dare say they did. And, if you tried hard enough you could imagine almost anything. Probably it will be easy to explain. To-morrow we will look at the place whence they seemed to arise from the ground. It may be that there is a hot spring there, and that the ‘ghosts’ were only wisps of steam vapor.”

With this explanation the boys contented themselves, and they were soon in bed. Nor did they sleep any the less soundly because of the queer manifestation. For they were sensible and healthy lads, and it took more than a so-called “ghost” to disturb their rest.

In the morning, accompanied by the professor, they made a careful examination of the place where the queer wraiths had been seen, but it afforded them no clew. The ground seemed no different from that in other spots on the island.

“Well, there’s no use bothering over that any longer,” suggested Jerry, after a bit. “We can try and solve that problem later; maybe to-night. What I think we’d better do now is to explore the island, and see if we can find any of that radium. What do you think, Professor?”

“I agree with you, and yet I am in two minds about it. You see, boys, while I want to help you find the treasure, which may or may not be here, it is very important that I look for that rare toad. Now what I am going to propose is this:

“You go off by yourselves, and hunt for the radium. I’ll tell you in what sort of rock it is likely to be found, and you can collect specimens, and bring them back with you. At night I’ll test them. But you must mark, in some way, the exact location of each bit of rock specimen you take. Then, in case there are evidences of radium, we can find the spot again.

“In the meanwhile I’ll be looking for the toad. I can soon tell if there are any on the island, and if I find there are none, or no traces of any, I’ll join you in the hunt for the radium treasure. Or, in case I do get what I am looking for, I will be satisfied, and in that case I will also join you.”

“That’s a good plan,” agreed Jerry. “Come on, Bob and Ned, and we’ll look for the radium, while the Professor is toad-hunting.”

Uriah Snodgrass had already told the boys much about radium, and the various forms in which it might be found. He only reminded them, now, of the main points to be remembered, and the three chums set off.

With eager eyes Jerry, Ned and Bob scanned the various kinds of rocks as they passed along, making their way toward the lower end of the island. As they advanced the land gradually rose until they were quite a height above the river that flowed on either side of them. Across the stream could be seen the mighty cliffs; black near the water, and of various colors as the top was approached. There was the glow of the sun overhead, but, only in the middle of the day, did

the beams penetrate to the bottom of the titanic canyon.

Specimen after specimen of rock was picked up and cast aside, as none of them showed the characteristics of radium. Noon came, and the quest was unsuccessful. They ate their lunch on a shelf of rock, looking down into the wonderful river that had carved out such a channel for itself. Most of the afternoon was spent as fruitlessly, until finally Bob remarked:

“Fellows, don’t you think we’d better get back? It’s getting dark all of a sudden.”

“I think we’re in for a storm,” spoke Jerry, with a glance toward the clouds that hovered over the chasm. “And it looks as if it would be a bad one. The river is sure to rise, and I’m not altogether satisfied with the place where we left the *Comet*. She ought to be anchored higher up. Let’s get back and make her more secure.”

They hurried to such good advantage that they were almost at the place where they had left the *Comet* when the rain came down. Professor Snodgrass had already returned, without his toad.

“Boys!” he cried, “it’s going to be a deluge! There will be a lot of water, and the river is sure to rise very high. I think we had better get in the airship, and go up until it’s over. There may be air currents down here so powerful that we can’t make headway against them. My advice is to go up.”

The others thought this good, and so, in the midst of the pelting rain, and against a current of air that every moment grew stronger, the *Comet* arose out of the canyon. Of course they did not escape the rain by going up, but they were in less danger. All night the storm continued, but the adventurers were in comfortable circumstances, for they had anchored in a little shelter of rocks, securely tying down their craft.

“Well, now to see if there is any of Snake Island left,” remarked Jerry next morning, when the sun came out to dry up the dampness. “We’ll have another try for the radium.”

Instead of stopping at the same place where they had made the first landing, Jerry sent the airship toward the lower part of the island.

“We’ll begin there for a change,” he remarked.

It could easily be seen that the river had risen considerably, and, had they remained anchored at the spot where they had seen the “ghosts,” they would

have been in grave danger. Though the water was now going down, it had lodged on the upper part of the island many big trees and piles of driftwood.

“Look at that!” suddenly cried Bob, as they were hovering over the lower end of the island, looking for a suitable landing place. “There’s a hut on the side of the hill that I didn’t notice before.”

“That’s right,” agreed Jerry, gazing at a rude structure of logs built under a sheltering bluff, about a quarter of a mile from the shore. “We passed over this place in the airship, too, but I didn’t see that. We must see what it means. Maybe there is some one living on this island. Perhaps——”

He did not finish, but they all knew whom he meant—Mr. Bentwell, the missing scientist, might be there.

Ned took the binoculars, and directed them toward the hut.

“I can’t see anyone there!” he cried. “But say—Oh, look! look!” and he almost screamed. “The snakes! The snakes! There’s a regular den of them, right in front of the hut! A nest of serpents! Look!”

With trembling hands he passed the glass to Jerry. As the tall lad looked through the binoculars his face paled.

“No wonder they call this Snake Island!” he murmured. “There must be thousands of them! I’m glad we didn’t stay on the island last night. Oh, look at those big snakes!”



## CHAPTER XXVI

### LIVE WIRES

“Where do you think they came from?” asked Ned, when all, including the professor, had viewed the snakes through the glass. Literally there were hundreds, if not thousands, of reptiles.

They were wiggling and squirming, in and out among the rocks and brushwood, just above the mass of drift débris brought down by the flood. All about, in front of the hut the snakes writhed, seeming to be out of their usual haunts.

“The water must have brought them out from their nests, or dens, or whatever it is that snakes live in,” decided Bob.

“Do you think so?” asked Jerry, of Professor Snodgrass. “Why would water bring out snakes. I thought they liked heat.”

“They do,” answered the scientist, who was eagerly looking at the snakes through the glass. “But in this case I think the water brought them *down*, instead of bringing them *out*.”

“How do you mean?” asked Ned.

“Why, I think the rising river inundated some place along the canyon walls, where these snakes lived. They were washed out, carried down stream by the flood, and deposited here—stranded, so to speak. I think it has been done often before, in years past, and that is why they call this Snake Island.”

“I believe you’re right,” agreed Jerry. “And I don’t think the big stone pile in the middle had anything to do with the name, though it may look like a snake at times. Probably the Indians, in years past, saw snakes brought down in the flood, and they named the island after the serpents.”

“Well, I’m glad they’re not at the other end of the island,” spoke Ned, who disliked snakes. “We’d better go back there and start over again on our search for the radium. The river is going down fast.”

“There may be snakes where we were before,” suggested Jerry. “We didn’t look very closely.”

“Don’t mention it!” cried Ned with a shudder. “Let’s get away from here, anyhow. I can’t bear to look at ’em.”

“Um,” spoke the professor musingly. “I think I should like to go down there.”

“What! Among those snakes?” cried Ned.

“Yes, as far as I can make out they don’t seem to be poisonous, and, though there are some good-sized ones there, I don’t see any of the constrictor variety. I think it would be perfectly safe to go down.”

“But what do you want of snakes?” asked Bob.

“I don’t want any snakes, but, where there are serpents, there may be toads, and I might find my two-tailed specimen. Of course if you boys don’t want to go down you can let me off at some spot where there are no snakes, and I can walk to this place. I’m not afraid.”

“We’ll go down with you!” exclaimed Jerry stoutly. “I think——”

But he never finished the sentence. At that moment the door of the hut, in front of which the serpents were writhing, was swung open, and three figures, each armed with a club, stood in the portal, waving their hands to our friends in the airship.

“Look!” cried Bob.

“Quick! The glasses!” demanded Jerry, and when he had them he focused the binoculars on the trio in the hut on Snake Island. Then the tall lad uttered a cry of wonder.

“It’s Noddy Nixon!” gasped Jerry. “Noddy Nixon, and Bill Berry! And the other man is that dishonest professor! How in the world did they get there?”

“Are you sure it’s them?” asked Bob.

“Sure!” answered Jerry, and, a moment later, the airship having approached closer, it could be seen, without the glasses, that those in the hut were indeed the bully and his cronies.

“Help! Help!” cried Noddy, waving his hands in appeal to the boys whom he had treated so meanly. “Help, or the snakes will kill us.”

“They’re not poisonous,” shouted the professor. “Go at them with your clubs.”

“Yes, they are poisonous!” answered Noddy. “There were some jack rabbits washed down with the snakes, and some of the serpents bit ’em. The rabbits died



right away. They're poisonous snakes, all right! Help us!"

"That makes it different," said the professor seriously. "I didn't think they were poisonous, but they may be. I wonder what we had better do?"

"Help! Help!" cried Noddy again. A mass of the serpents seemed to be advancing toward the hut. Bill Berry threw a stick at them, and the reptiles wiggled off in another direction.

"How did you get in the hut?" asked Jerry.

"We came down the river in a boat. We were wrecked, and cast on this island. Oh, we're nearly starved, and if you save us we'll never bother you again!" promised Noddy. "Save us from the snakes!"

"Shall we do it?" asked Ned of his chums.

"For the sake of humanity we can't leave 'em there," said Jerry. "We've got to save 'em; but how? We can't go down there among all those snakes."

There was a pause, while the airship hovered over the hut on the island, in the midst of the snakes. The three conspirators eagerly watched the motor boys.

"Those were the three persons we saw in the boat in the rapids," said Bob in a low voice, and his chums nodded.

"Can we save them?" inquired Jerry.

"Yes!" cried the professor. "There is only one way."

"How?" demanded the tall lad.

"By live wires! Take some uninsulated electrical wires, Jerry. Attach them to the dynamo, let them dangle down from the airship, and then sail over the mass of serpents. The wires will hit the snakes and electrocute them. It's the only way!"

"Then we'll do it!" cried Jerry. "Come on, boys, and we'll drop the live wires, and save Noddy Nixon!" A moment later several coils of copper conductors, each one carrying a deadly current, were being dropped toward the surface of the island.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE TRANSPORTING OF NODDY

“Just a little lower down, Ned. That’s it. Now to the left, there’s a big bunch of ’em there. No, that’s too much! Back up a little. Whoa! Hold me there!”

Jerry was in the motor room, working the connections to the dangling wires by means of which it was hoped to electrocute the serpents that had made prisoners of Noddy and his cronies in the hut on Snake Island. Ned was in the pilot house, directing the course of the *Comet*. The professor and Bob stood by, ready to lend whatever assistance was needed, while the prisoners in the hut, standing in the door, ready for an instant retreat, watched with anxious eyes the preparations for their rescue.

“Are you going to try and electrocute every snake?” asked Bob of his tall chum.

“As many as we can, Chunky.”

“But that will take quite a while, to drag the wires across every one.”

“We won’t have to do that,” replied Jerry, as he looked through the plate glass window in the floor of the motor room, one hand on the switch that controlled the electrical current, while in the other he grasped a speaking tube, by which he gave orders to Ned in the pilot house. “You see, Bob, the snakes’ bodies are moist, and moisture is a good conductor of electricity. So if I can drag a live wire over a bunch of snakes, and only touch one, the current will go through all of ’em, and kill the whole lot. They’ll help to kill themselves.”

“I see!” exclaimed Bob.

“Watch now, we’re going to begin!” cried Jerry, and his chum, looking down, saw the wires carrying the powerful current writhe and twist about, almost like snakes themselves. From the exposed ends there shot out a shower of blue sparks.

Suddenly one of the conductors touched a mass of snakes, that seemed tied in knots. A moment before the snakes had been twining in and out, hissing stridently. The next instant they were as if turned to stone, for they had been

killed at once.

**SUDDENLY ONE OF THE CONDUCTORS TOUCHED A MASS OF SNAKES.**

“That’s the way to do it!” cried Bob.

Again a wire, twisting and turning, was dragged over a mass of serpents, and the life went out of them. Time after time this happened until the writhing snakes were more than half destroyed.

“That’s a new and wonderful way to kill snakes,” said the professor, as he looked on. “I hope you aren’t killing any two-tailed toads.”

“They’ll be just as good for specimens,” remarked Jerry as he turned on more power, sending the wires that dangled from the airship, swirling about, carrying death and destruction.

At length, so great was the slaughter, that the snakes became terrified at the unknown power, and with angry hisses, they began crawling away in the crevices of the rocks, and under the bushes.

“I guess that’s enough,” announced Jerry, when he could see none but dead serpents. “You can come out now, Noddy!” he shouted to the bully, for the airship was close to the hut. Jerry began pulling up the wires, the current having been shut off.

“Oh, take us away! Take us away from this awful island!” begged Noddy. “We won’t bother you again. We’re sorry we ever followed you; aren’t we, Bill?”

“I am,” replied Noddy’s crony, thoroughly cowed.

“But we have as good a right to stay and hunt for the radium as they have!” put in Dr. Belgrade sharply.

“Then you stay!” cried Noddy. “I’ve had enough! I’m going back home.”

“And desert me?” asked the renegade professor.

“I don’t care anything about you! I wish I’d never come on this trip. Oh, Jerry, I’ll never bother you again, as long as I live if you only set me on the main land. We can’t get to shore unless you help us, because the current is too swift.”

“What shall we do?” asked Jerry of his chums.

“Transport him,” suggested Ned. “We want the island to ourselves, if we hunt for the radium treasure. This is an easy way to get rid of Noddy.”

The others agreed to this, and accordingly the airship was let down in front of the hut. The professor began searching among the dead snakes for a two-tailed toad, but did not find any.

Noddy lost no time in scrambling aboard the *Comet*. Bill Berry followed, and Dr. Belgrade much against his will, did likewise. He scowled at the boys and the professor, but they took no notice of him. As Jerry had said, the less they had to do with the plotters the better it would be.

Noddy was hysterically thankful to the motor boys, but they well knew he might, at the first chance, play some mean trick on them.

“How did you come to get to the hut?” asked Jerry.

Noddy briefly told his story. He did not mention taking the airship, nor the other unfair things he had done. He said he and his cronies had managed to reach the canyon, and, in spite of the advice of guides, they decided to try to float down the river in a boat. They took provisions with them, but were wrecked in the rapids. They managed to reach the island, and some of their provisions floated ashore. They had landed near the hut, which they found easily, and took shelter in there, hoping against hope for a rescue. They were at the opposite end of the island from where our friends had first landed.

“Well, we’ll give you some provisions, and you’ll have to get to civilization the best way you can,” said Jerry to the bully and his cronies, as they were landed on top of the bluffs, and supplied with food and water. “You’ve made trouble enough for us.”

“We left some of our food and things in the hut,” said Noddy, as Jerry and his chums were about to sail away. “After the flood which brought the snakes down, we didn’t dare go out. There was some stuff in the hut when we reached it. I think someone had been there just before we were.”

“What?” cried Jerry. “Someone had been in the hut recently?”

“I’m sure of it,” spoke Noddy. “There was food in some boxes when we took shelter there. And some books, and papers with writing on. But we didn’t see anyone while we were there until you came, and we were never gladder to see anybody than you. We couldn’t find any radium. I’m sorry I treated you so mean, and——”

“Well, never mind,” interrupted Jerry, in whose brain many thoughts were whirling about. “Are you sure someone had been in the hut recently?”

“Positive. You can ask Bill Berry.”

But Jerry had no desire to do this. He preferred to look for himself. Bill was sullen and angry, and so was Dr. Belgrade. Both knew that the game was up. But no attention was paid to them.

With no very hearty good-byes, our friends watched the trio of unpleasant ones depart. They could reach civilization in a day or so, and they had enough to eat and drink for that time.

“Now come on!” cried Jerry to his chums. “Come on, Professor,” for the scientist was chasing after a new kind of bug.

“Where to now, Jerry?” asked Ned.

“Back to the hut on Snake Island. I’m going to see who has been living there, and what has become of him.”

“Then you think it might be——”

“I’m going to make sure before I say anything,” interrupted the tall lad, as he sent the airship aloft.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE RISING FLOOD

“Well, I don’t see much here to help us,” remarked Bob.

“No, not much that tells anything definite,” agreed Jerry.

“Except parts of what seem to be a journal, or diary,” added Ned.

“But those same leaves from the journal tell a sad story,” spoke Professor Snodgrass.

The three boys and the scientist were in the hut on Snake Island. It was the day after they had taken Noddy and his cronies off, and they were seeking for traces of the person who, according to the bully, had been in the hut before they arrived. They found some preserved food, older than any Noddy could have brought, and scattered pages of a diary.

“It is evident that someone—most likely a man—lived here for a time,” went on the professor, “and that up to recently, he kept an account of his day’s doings, for here is the last entry we can find, dated about a month ago.”

“What does it say?” asked Bob.

“The same thing as for many days before. ‘Searched for it, but could not find it.’”

“What do you suppose ‘it’ can be?” asked Ned.

The professor was silent a moment, and then he said quietly:

“Radium.”

“What!” cried Jerry. “Do you think someone has been here ahead of us, looking for the radium treasure?”

“I am sure of it,” said Uriah Snodgrass, “and what is more, I believe it was Mr. Bentwell.”

“Then where is he now?” demanded Bob.

“That I don’t know,” and the professor’s voice was solemn. “Probably he is dead. He must have been here on this lonely island nearly a year. How he lived

in that time no one can tell. When he and his companions were wrecked there must have been some food saved. Or, he may have been able to trap, or kill, small animals that are on the island, or that were brought down by the floods. He may have caught fish. At any rate, we know that someone was alive here up to a month ago, for the date in the book tells us that. Where he went to, we can only guess.”

“The snakes,” suggested Ned in a low voice.

“Yes, the snakes may have killed him,” agreed the professor. “It is a sad ending to the life of a noted scholar, alone on this terrible island. I shall preserve this record he has left, for his family.”

“But where is the rest of it?” asked Jerry. “There are only a few pages here.”

“The others were destroyed, somehow,” replied Professor Snodgrass. “The same agency that made away with Mr. Bentwell may have destroyed the record of his uneventful search, or Noddy and his cronies, not understanding the value of the book, may have used pages of it to light a fire with, for on the hearth you can see where a fire has recently been kindled. It is too bad, for a scientific person, like Mr. Bentwell, probably made valuable observations of what took place in this wonderful canyon of the Colorado.”

“Well, it isn’t doing us any good to stay here,” spoke Jerry. “It’s only making us more gloomy. I vote that we get out, and make a careful search for the radium. We won’t be bothered by Noddy and his crowd now, and there isn’t likely to be another flood, right away.”

“I agree with you,” said the professor. “We will be better off by doing some active work. I’ll take charge of what is left of the journal, and we’ll begin our search. What food is left we’ll pack away in the hut. Who knows but what some other daring adventurer, who seeks to navigate the river, may be wrecked here? It may save his life.”

The food was carefully put away, and it was likely to keep for some time, since there were no evidences that the waters had ever risen quite as high as the hut. Then our friends began their search.

It was kept up for several days, and, as thoroughly as they could, they covered every part of the island, beginning at the shore and working back toward the big mound in the center, with its tall pillar of sandstone rock.

“I guess we’ll have to make a record in our notebooks, the same as poor Mr. Bentwell did, ‘nothing doing,’” remarked Bob one day, after nearly a week of

searching.

“Well, we’ve got all that hill to explore yet,” replied Ned. “And that’s the most likely place for the radium; isn’t it, Professor?”

“No, I can’t say that it is,” was the reply of the scientist. “I think, if we find it at all, that it will be on comparatively low ground. But it begins to look as if our hunt for the treasure was likely to result in failure.”

“And you haven’t got your two-tailed toad yet,” said Jerry.

“No, but I have hopes, boys,” and with that the professor, leaving the three chums to search for traces of radium, went off by himself to look for the specimen he so much wanted.

All that day the two searches were kept up, but without result. At night they assembled in the airship, which had been anchored on a level piece of high ground, near the upper end of the island, above the hut.

“Well, we’ll put in a few more days,” suggested Ned, as they arose from the supper table, “and then I think we’d better get back home, and admit that we’re beaten.”

“I don’t like to give up,” said Jerry.

“Neither do I,” came from the professor. “And yet I think we had better get ready to leave. I don’t like the looks of the weather, and the barometer is falling more rapidly than I care to see it.”

“Do you think a storm is brewing?” asked Bob.

“I do, and a bad one, too. I think we had better stay here one more day, and then move. I’ll have to look in some other place for the rare toad.”

When they went to bed that night there was a low muttering of thunder, and fitful lightning, and Jerry insisted on his chums helping him make the airship more secure by ropes attached to trees.

“We don’t want to be blown away in the night,” he said.

They all slept so soundly that they did not notice the increasing roar of the river, as it rose in flood, due to heavy rains above Snake Island. The river was always roaring, as it tore past the black cliffs, and split in twain at the island, and, though the rain added to this noise, it did not awaken the adventurers.

It was not until early morning that Ned, sitting up in his berth, was conscious



of an uneasy, bobbing motion.

“Hello!” he cried, hopping out. “What’s the matter? Why did you start, Jerry? I thought you were going to stay another day.”

“Start! I haven’t started!” cried Jerry. “What are you talking about?”

Then, as he leaped out on the floor, he nearly lost his balance, as the *Comet* pitched and tossed. Jerry gave a hasty glance out of the window.

“Boys,” he cried, “we’re afloat on the biggest flood the Colorado ever had, I guess! We’re still anchored, but the trees are under water! The ropes are holding us!”

“But how can we float?” asked Bob.

“On the hydroplanes, of course,” said Jerry. “You know we’ve been resting on them, instead of the bicycle wheels, for I wanted to take the weight off the tires. Lucky for us that I did, or we wouldn’t float. And now we’re on the surface of the river, and it’s still rising!”



## CHAPTER XXIX

### IN THE CAVE

Steadying themselves against the swaying motion of the anchored airship, our friends crowded to the windows to look out. They beheld a terrifying and wonderful scene.

Almost the whole of the island was under water. Only the high middle part, with its tower of rock, was out of the flood. Securely held by the anchor ropes, the *Comet*, as light as a chip on the surface of the waves, floated on the bosom of the flood. Her very lightness, due to the fact that the gas bag was partly filled, and the strength of the anchor ropes, had saved her. Then, too, the fact that she rested on hydroplanes, or pontoons, was in her favor. These were a new feature of the airship, which had only recently been added.

“Say, it’s lucky you thought to let the hydroplanes down,” spoke Bob, as he looked out at the flood sweeping past them.

“If he hadn’t, we’d probably be wrecked by this time,” was Ned’s opinion. The hydroplanes, I might explain, were light hollow boxes, made water tight, and attached to the *Comet* by long toggle-jointed arms. They could be raised or lowered at will, and allowed the *Comet* to float on the surface of water. If you boys have ever seen a water-spider, or bug, skimming along on the brook or lake, as you doubtless have, you will get a good idea of how the hydroplanes worked by recalling to mind the insect.

“Well, what are we going to do?” asked Ned, as he looked at the flood sweeping past. On the surface of the water floated all manner of débris, including much driftwood, and even whole trees. “We can’t stay here,” went on the lad, “for we may have a hole punched in us any minute.”

Even as he spoke there was a grinding sound, and a log scraped along the side of the *Comet*.

“Yes, we’d better get out,” agreed Jerry.

“I’ll get breakfast right away,” said Bob briskly, “and then——”

“No, you don’t!” cried Ned. “No breakfast until we’re out of danger. Why, we

might be wrecked, and then I'd like to know how we could ever get out of this canyon," and he looked up at the towering cliffs on either hand—cliffs that no mortal could scale. On each side—all around them—was the raging flood, in which no craft, save one as light as an airship, could have lived for a moment.

"It all depends on the airship," agreed Jerry. "We must get away while we can."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before there came a crash, and the craft trembled from end to end. There was a splintering noise, and Jerry sprang toward the stern.

"What's the matter?" asked Ned.

"We've been hit! One of the hydroplanes is smashed and a bicycle wheel crushed! We've got to go up right away! Start the gas machine, Ned. Bob, you come in the pilot house with me, and help. Professor, you see that the motors get plenty of oil; will you? We'll need all the power we've got."

Instantly the interior of the *Comet* was a scene of activity. The effect of the damage was at once apparent, for the craft had settled on one side. But as soon as the gas began flowing into the bag she began to lift, until she was once more on a level keel.

"All ready now?" called Jerry to Ned, in the motor room.

"All ready—let her go! But what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to land on the high ground near the tower of sandstone. I can see a good level place there, and the water can never get as high as that. Besides, I want to make some repairs before we try to make the mainland, and we can make 'em there. We'll stay on top of the hill until the flood goes down. Give me full speed, Ned. Tell the Professor to use lots of oil."

As Ned turned to convey the request to the scientist, Uriah Snodgrass, who had been looking from a side window out on the flood, uttered a cry of delight. The next instant he caught up a small fish net, attached to a long handle, and thrust it out of the window, into the swirling water. Then he cried:

"I've got it! I've got it! Oh, you little beauty! I've got you almost at the last minute, when I least expected you. Oh, what a rare find!"

"What is it?" cried Ned.

"The two-tailed toad! I saw it floating down on a log, and I made a grab for it.

I have it!” and holding out the net he displayed a queer-looking object—a hideous toad, covered with “warts,” but having two unmistakable tails.

“Ugh! What a creature!” cried Ned.

“A most valuable acquisition to science,” declared the professor proudly.

There came a shrill whistle through the tube leading to the pilot house.

“What is it?” asked Ned.

“Aren’t you going to start?” Jerry wanted to know. “The river is still rising, and more logs are coming down! Get a move on!”

“Aye, aye!” answered Ned, and he yanked over the electrical switch. Instantly the propellers whizzed around, and the *Comet* strained at the mooring ropes.

“Now’s the time!” cried Jerry to Bob, who had been provided with a light, keen hatchet, for the purpose of severing the lines. “Cut!”

The little axe came down as the *Comet* lifted her dripping hydroplanes out of the water, and, freed from the holding cables, she soared aloft. Jerry directed her toward the big hill in the middle of the island, where there was room to land. Fortunately there was scarcely any wind to sway the craft, though the rain came down in torrents.

Well aloft now, over the raging flood of the Colorado, the *Comet* was more like herself, and, with Jerry to guide her, there was comparatively little danger.

“You’ve got to be careful how you let her down,” suggested Ned, when, having set the machinery to working automatically, he joined his tall chum in the pilot house. “You don’t want to smash that hydroplane and wheel any more than they are.”

“Sure not. We’ll be down in a few minutes, and then we can get right to work.”

“What about the radium?” asked Ned.

“Oh, we’ll look for that, too, as long as we’re in no immediate danger. I hope we find it. The Professor got what he wanted, and it’s up to us to make good, too.”

It was but a short distance from where the flood had floated the *Comet* to the place where Jerry proposed to anchor, and, a little while after arising, the airship came gently down. It required no small skill to make a landing without further

damaging the broken parts, but Jerry managed it.

“Make fast the ship! All hands out at anchor work!”

The professor rather disliked to leave off making notes about the two-tailed toad that the flood had brought him, but he finally put the specimen away, and joined the boys in the work of making their craft secure.

They had landed on a small plateau, which was, in a manner, cut in the side of the hill. Back of it arose a steep cliff of sandstone, while the surface of the shelf was covered with trees, grass and bushes.

Ned, taking one rope, walked off to the left to fasten it to a big stump that he thought would hold. As he came near it he glanced behind a bush, and, as he did so he uttered a cry:

“Fellows, look here!” he shouted. “Here’s a big cave leading right into the hill!”

Through the rain, splashing over the soaked ground, came Bob and Jerry, the professor following. They stood grouped about a hole in the slope—a hole large enough to permit a man to enter upright.

“Let’s go in and see what’s there,” proposed Bob.

“I guess it’s safe,” came from Jerry. “There are hardly likely to be any bears on this island.”

Together they advanced into the cavern. It was dark, but their eyes soon became somewhat accustomed to the gloom.

“It’s too big to explore without a light,” remarked the professor. “This may be a place for valuable relics. Let’s fasten the airship, and then come back with electrical torches.”

They turned to go, but, as they did so there came a sound which startled all of them. It was the sound of a human voice and, in cracked tones, as if the speaker had not used his vocal cords for some time.

“Who are you? What do you want?” was demanded in hollow accents. And then there came a faint glimmer of light, and in the rays of it they beheld a man—apparently a very old man—with matted beard, tangled hair and hollow, sunken eyes, who stood staring at them from the depths of the cave.



## CHAPTER XXX

### THE RADIUM TREASURE—CONCLUSION

“Bless my soul!” exclaimed Professor Snodgrass.

Bob, with a catching of his breath, and a nervous tremor, started to run in a panic. But Jerry caught him by the shoulder.

“Hold on!” the tall lad cried. “It’s only a man.”

“A—a man!” gasped the fat lad. “I thought——”

“Stop thinking!” commanded Jerry.

The man in the cave advanced, and the boys and the professor saw that he carried a torch made from some resinous wood that burned with much smoke.

“Who are you?” again demanded the man, holding his torch on high. “Who comes here to disturb me? Why can’t you let me die in peace?”

The professor took a sudden resolve. Afterward he said he did not know why he did it.

“Hartley Bentwell!” cried the scientist, “we have come to save you. You are not going to die. We have come to take you away from Snake Island!”

The effect of these words on the unfortunate man was indescribable. He fairly leaped forward, and a cry came from his lips.

“You know me!” he exclaimed. “You have come to save me? Oh, the dear Lord be thanked! Yes, I am Hartley Bentwell, but in a few days more I would not have known myself. I—I fear I was going mad. It was almost the end. Oh, what a life I have lived on this island! Unable to escape! Menaced by the snakes! Not a soul to speak to! In fear of the floods! Oh, even now, my mind is not right!”

“There, there!” exclaimed the professor soothingly, as he would have talked to a child. “You are with friends. You will soon be away from here, and in your own home. We are going to restore you to the world again. You have seen the last of Snake Island.”

“The last of Snake Island! Oh——” but the unfortunate castaway could say no

more, for he had fainted, and would have fallen, had not Jerry and Ned caught him.

“Quick! Carry him to the *Comet*,” directed the professor. “When he comes to, he must find himself in brighter surroundings.”

This was quickly done, and, as the rain soon stopped, and the sun came out, when Mr. Bentwell became conscious, he found himself in a pleasant cabin, surrounded by his new friends. A look of wonder came over his face, and the wild, half-insane stare faded from his eyes.

“Here, drink this,” commanded Uriah Snodgrass, and he held out a bowl of nourishing soup.

And, following a refreshing sleep, that afternoon, while seated in the airship cabin, Mr. Bentwell told his story. He had been with the scientists who, about a year before, had come to search for the radium on Snake Island. There had been an accident, one boat was wrecked, and the unfortunate man was cast alone on the island. His companions escaped, and got back to civilization, believing him drowned.

The cargo of the boat, consisting of a considerable quantity of provisions, stores and tools, was washed up on the island.

He built the hut, and rudely furnished it. Then, having nothing else to do, being unable to escape from the island, he began a search for the radium, as told in his torn notebook. But he could not find it.

Then floods came, there were several visitations of snakes, and, in terror, he fled to the hill, where he found the cave that he made his home, only going occasionally to the hut. He had been away from it for several days when Noddy and his companions took up their abode there. So despondent and gloomy was Mr. Bentwell over his plight that he withdrew to the cave altogether, and stayed there, living on scanty food. He did not come out, and so did not see the airship making trips over the island.

“But now I am saved!” he cried. “Let us get away from this awful place!”

“I am willing,” agreed the professor. “I have my valuable toad.”

“But we haven’t the radium,” said Jerry.

“I do not believe it is here,” said Mr. Bentwell. “I searched all over for it, and found not a trace.”

“Yes, we saw your notes,” spoke the professor. “I saved what were left of them for you.”

The weather soon became pleasant again, and the river went down. But the boys in their airship remained on the hill, as they liked it better there. Jerry asked for three days more in which to search for the radium treasure, and the others agreed to this.

“Well, I give up,” admitted Jerry, on the afternoon of the third day, when, after a wearying search, he and his two chums were returning to the *Comet*. “We’ll start for home to-morrow morning. Mr. Bentwell is well enough to travel now.”

“I sort of hate to go back empty handed,” spoke Ned regretfully. “It’s the first time we ever had a real failure.”

“We can’t always be successful,” commented Bob. “Whew! I’m tired. I’m going to have a rest.”

He sat down on a grassy spot. Just below them was the *Comet*, which had been fully repaired, and was all ready for the homeward trip. Ned and Jerry walked on a little way, and then took a seat on a log, for they, too, were weary. They talked over their adventures, agreeing that, even though they had not found the radium treasure, they had had a good vacation.

Bob suddenly jumped up, and rubbed his thigh.

“What’s the matter; sit on a thorn?” asked Ned with a laugh.

“Something like that,” answered the stout lad. “Or else a bee stung me. Well, come on. It’s all over.”

They were packing up that night, ready for the trip home in the morning, when Bob complained of a burning sensation in his leg.

“Better let me look at it,” suggested the professor, who knew something of medicine. “You may have been poisoned by some insect.” But, when he had looked at a peculiar red spot on Bob’s leg he cried out:

“Boys, that’s the most wonderful thing I ever heard of! Bob has solved the riddle for us!”

“What riddle?” demanded Jerry eagerly.

“The radium riddle! That’s a blister caused by emanations from radium!” went on the professor. “Look at it, Mr. Bentwell, and see if you don’t think so!”



The castaway, who had had his hair cut, and who had shaved himself, being attired in a spare suit of the professor's, looked at the red spot.

"That is undoubtedly a radium burn," he said quickly. "How did it happen?"

"It must have been when I sat down to rest," explained Bob. "On the hill out there. I felt something sting me, and——"

"It was the radium!" cried Mr. Bentwell. "Where is the place? Let us go to it at once!"

"We can't find it in the dark," objected Jerry, but the professor and the castaway hurried out on the deck of the airship leading Bob with them.

"Point out, as nearly as you can, where it was," begged Uriah Snodgrass.

Bob raised his hand, and, as he did so, he uttered a cry.

"Look! Look!" he gasped. "The ghosts! The ghosts again!"

There, floating down toward the airship, were tall whitish objects, wrapped in a bluish haze, like the tall forms of willowy beings shrouded in mist.

"The ghosts!" cried Bob.

"Yes, radium ghosts!" fairly shouted Professor Snodgrass. "I understand it now. I wonder I didn't guess it the first time. The ghosts we saw before were vapors, caused by radium. It is the same now. Boys, we have at last found the radium treasure! We will get it in the morning!"

They were up at dawn, after an almost sleepless night. Bob pointed out the spot where he had rested, and digging there, under a thin layer of sod, was found the peculiar hornblende rock mixed with pitchblende, which contained the radium. It needed but a simple test to demonstrate this.

"And the peculiar thing about it is this," said Professor Snodgrass. "Usually it takes tons of rock to produce even a grain of radium, but in this case there is almost pure radium in this sample. We must be careful of it, for, not only is it very valuable, but it may seriously harm us if left exposed."

Accordingly the first sample was put in the lead receptacle prepared for it, and the work of digging the rock for more was begun.

But if our friends hoped to find an enormous fortune of radium on Snake Island they were disappointed. For, after they had dug a little distance down, the rock disappeared, and there was no more of it. Search as they did, there was only

a comparatively small quantity. But that was of great value, sufficient to more than compensate them for the trip, for the radium, being almost pure, commanded an exceptionally high price.

“But there must be some where we first saw the strange ghosts,” suggested Bob. They went to the place, but found nothing. As there was a deep hollow, where before there had been none, they concluded that the flood had washed the precious radium away.

“But we have enough to satisfy almost anyone,” said Jerry, one evening a few nights later.

In the days following Bob’s unexpected discovery of the precious stuff they had searched diligently, but no more was located.

“I think we have all there is here,” was the professor’s opinion, and Mr. Bentwell agreed with him. There was no longer any use in remaining in that desolate place, and so they arose, and left behind Snake Island, and the rushing river cutting its way through the mighty chasm, a mile below the surface of the earth.

Then, with her nose pointed toward Denver, the return trip began. Little worth mentioning occurred on it. Mr. Bentwell continued to improve and after a short stay in Denver, at the Montrose home, nearly all traces of his terrible year on the lonely island disappeared. Of course the story of the boys caused much comment, and they were regarded as heroes.

They received many offers for their radium, but they refused nearly all of them, giving a share of the stuff to Mr. Bentwell, some to Professor Snodgrass, and a portion to Mr. Montrose. The latter was interested in a Denver hospital that very much wanted some of the precious metal for medical purposes.

As for their portions the boys kept some for themselves for future use, and some they gave to the academy they attended. The rest they sold for a large sum.

Nothing more was heard from Noddy Nixon, save that he and Bill got safely home, after much hardship. As for the renegade professor he and Noddy quarreled, and separated.

“Let’s go all the way home by airship,” proposed Bob as they were about to leave Denver. “We can have the auto shipped to Cresville, and it’s much easier to get meals in the *Comet* than at hotels.”

“Bob, if you mention eating again, until we get home, we’ll put you on a

bread and water diet,” threatened Ned, and Bob went off to the galley in a huff. But he was soon heard whistling as he made himself some sandwiches.

The airship trip was voted the best, and accordingly, it was undertaken. All went well, and in due time they were near their home town. At his request, Mr. Bentwell was allowed to leave the ship at a place where he could get a train to his home, for he did not want to take his new friends out of their way. He had telegraphed, at the first opportunity, to his relatives, telling them of his rescue. To say that they, and the world at large, were surprised by his wonderful story, is putting it mildly.

“Well, we got the radium treasure, after all,” remarked Jerry, one day a week or so later, when they were all assembled at his house.

“And I caught the two-tailed toad,” added the professor. “My college has conferred additional honors upon me for that. I am indeed a lucky individual.”

“I wonder what you’ll look for next?” spoke Bob.

“And I wonder what we’ll do?” added Ned.

Those of you who care to know, may learn by reading the next volume of the series, which will be called “The Motor Boys on the Border; Or, Sixty Nuggets of Gold,” a strange tale of the Far West and of Canada.

“Well,” remarked the professor, “I think I will——” He stopped suddenly, sprang to a small table, and clapped his hand down on it so suddenly that he upset a pitcher of lemonade, which spilled all over Bob.

“Ouch! Ugh!” gasped the fat lad. “What’s the matter?”

“I just caught a most rare specimen of a red-winged fly,” answered the professor, pulling out a specimen box and imprisoning the luckless insect.

“But—l-l-look at me!” gasped Bob. “I’m all wet!”

“Never mind, it’s a hot day, and you aren’t the only lemon in the house,” laughed Jerry, as he helped his chum dry himself.

Of course Professor Snodgrass apologized, and made amends by helping squeeze more lemons. And then, sitting about, he and the boys discussed their adventures on the trip after the radium treasure. And now, for a time, we will say good-bye to them.

THE END

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