

# BILLY BURNS OF TROOP 5



I. T. THURSTON





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Billy Burns of Troop 5













“ IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO SEE THEM AND NOT TRY TO HELP ”  
(P. 140)



# Billy Burns of Troop 5

*I. de* *revell* BY  
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Author of "The Bishop's Shadow,"  
"The Big Brother of Sabin Street,"  
Etc., Etc.

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NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON AND EDINBURGH



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\$1.00

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue  
Chicago: 17 N. Wabash Ave.  
Toronto: 25 Richmond St., W.  
London: 21 Paternoster Square  
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street

OCT 16 1916

© Cl. A 445172

no. 1.



DEDICATED TO  
REV. CHARLES WOOD, D.D.  
PASTOR, FRIEND  
AND MOST KINDLY CRITIC







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## I

### TROUBLE FOR BILLY

**B**ILLY BURNS balanced the bookshelf on his shoulder as he went down the street. The bookshelf was of oak and heavy, but Billy was a sturdy boy, and he carried it lightly. When he reached the house where Barney Doyle lived, he climbed the stairs slowly, for it was quite dark in the narrow hall—climbed a second flight, and stopped before a door under which shone a line of light. The corner of the shelf bumped against the door as Billy fumbled for the knob, and a voice from within sung out sharply:

“Who’s that?”

“Just me—Billy.” Billy pushed open the door and, with a little breath of relief, deposited his burden carefully on the table.

Barney stared at it. “What you luggin’ that thing ’round for?” he demanded.

“It’s for you—I made it,” Billy answered.

“For—*me!*”

Barney stood up, the better to view the shelf. He ran his hand slowly over the smooth surface, examined the work with growing admiration, finally exclaimed:

“Billy, it’s great—that is. It’s just *dandy!*”

Billy’s plain face brightened, but he said noth-



ing—only gave the other boy a glance full of warm friendliness.

After a moment's silence, Barney spoke again, slowly. "D'ye know, Billy, that's the first thing I ever had gave to me—really gave, ye know. I ain't countin' drinks an' smokes, an' that kind o' stuff, but a—a present. That's what this is—a present. I reckon you don't know what a lot it means to me—that——"

Not sure what it was meant for, he could not name it, and left his sentence unfinished. Billy's face was fairly shining now. Barney *was* pleased.

"I made it for ye myself in the manual-training class," he explained. "An' I've brought the hooks an' screws to hang it with. Now where'll you have it, Barney"—his glance swept the bare walls—"on this side or that?"

They decided on the best place, and Billy, mounted on a chair, pulled a screwdriver out of his pocket, screwed the hooks into the wall, and hung the shelf from them.

"There," he said in a tone of satisfaction, as he stepped down and backed off, the better to see the effect, "that'll hold all your——" Then suddenly his face changed, and he cried out, "Well, of all the boneheads! To make you a *bookshelf* when you've not got a book to put on it! An' I never thought of that till this minute."

"But I ought to have some books an' I'm a-goin' to, Billy. I'm goin' to get some right away," Barney exclaimed hastily. "A—a fellow ought to have books."



But Billy's joy in his gift was gone. "Me to be such a fool!" he muttered, and would not look again at the shelf, nor speak of it. Turning his back on it, he sat down and began to speak of something else.

"Jim Slater and Tom Jones are out again. You seen 'em?" he asked.

Barney nodded. "Once—but they'd nothin' to say to me."

"No, they knew you'd no use for 'em. But—" there was anxiety now in Billy's eyes, "they're up to something, Barney. They'll make trouble if they can."

"An' that's no lie—they're always makin' trouble—them two," Barney agreed.

"I've seen Charlie Duff 'round with 'em two or three times, evenings," Billy went on, "and once I saw 'em with some of the other Scouts—Finnegan an' them that were in the old alley gang. I'm thinkin' they're tryin' to fix up a new gang, Barney."

"H'm! Shouldn't wonder," and now Barney too looked disturbed. He was silent a moment, running over in his mind the names of the boys—now Scouts in good standing—who had once belonged to the "gang" of which he himself had been the leader. "I don't think they'll get hold of any of our troop now, unless mebbe Charlie Duff," he said at last.

Billy nodded. "It's him I'm afraid for. Charlie's too easy—he's got no backbone."

"He's soft as putty," Barney agreed scorn-



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fully. "Anybody can lead him 'round by the nose. He'll not be much loss if they do get him."

"Oh, but, Barney, he's a brother—a Scout-brother! We can't let him drop out—we *can't!*" Billy cried out hastily.

"We can't keep him from doin' it, I reckon, if them two are after him," Barney retorted.

Billy's steady blue eyes brightened, and his square chin was lifted a trifle, while into his voice crept a new note, as he said, "If Charlie's like you say—an' I'm thinkin' he is—it's up to us to help him all the more, just 'cause he can't hold himself straight—ain't it? It's—it's a big 'kindness,' 'stead of a little one, we got to do, that's all." Billy spoke slowly, as if he were thinking aloud.

But Barney's mouth set stubbornly. "He ain't worth it—a feller with no more backbone than Charlie Duff. Might's well let him drop out first as last," he declared.

Billy shook his head, but he did not argue the point. He knew better than to argue with Barney, and Barney knew that the other's silence did not mean yielding. After a little, Billy went on earnestly:

"Say, Barney, why don't you ask some of the troop—all the old gang—to come here, an' you talk to 'em about Tom an' Jim, you know, an' others like them? You can talk 'em into anything—you always could."



Barney's frown lightened a trifle. He knew that Billy was right. There was Irish magic in his tongue, and he could sway the boys at his will; and he knew Tom and Jim—knew that they were bad enough before they were sent to the Reform School, and there was small likelihood that they had gotten any good from their stay in that place. They would spare no effort to form a gang, and especially to get back into it the boys who, like Barney himself, had climbed to a higher place in the community since they had joined the Boy Scouts.

"They like to come here—all the fellers do," Billy went on. "You could have something to eat, like Mr. Marshall does—peanuts an' lemonade, mebber—an' give 'em a right good time, an' then just a little talk, but a hot one, before they go. Ain't nobody but you can do it, Barney. 'Cause you used to be boss of the gang you've got more 'pull' with the fellers than anybody else. They know that *you* know jest what you're talkin' about, an' they'll listen to you."

"I ain't ever done that," Barney said slowly, "asked 'em here so, I mean, an' give 'em a feed, an' a talk."

"That's no reason you shouldn't. An' I'll pay for the feed, Barney. I got more money to spare than you have. I can't talk like you can—they wouldn't listen to me—but the payin' will be my part. Do it, Barney. I saw Charlie Duff with Tom an' Jim only last night, an' I'm afraid he'd been in Owen's saloon with 'em. They'd like to



pull down one of our troop just to spite you, Barney."

Barney's eyes kindled, and unconsciously he struck the table with his clenched fist. "I'll do it!" he declared between set teeth. "They sha'n't get Charlie nor any other Scout."

"Bully!" shouted Billy. "I'll get word to the boys for you. When'll you have 'em—Saturday night?"

Barney considered a moment, then nodded, and Billy rose.

"All right. You'll hold 'em, Barney, an' Mr. Marshall will be mighty glad when he knows," and, perhaps a little fearful that Barney might reconsider, Billy abruptly departed.

Twenty minutes later he knocked at the door of the Scout Master, who gave him a cordial welcome, and waited for him to tell his errand. All the boys of Troop 5 were at home in the Master's rooms, but Billy, although he did not suspect it, was perhaps the most welcome of them all.

Billy went straight to the point. "Mr. Marshall, I want to buy a book for a fellow that ain't got any, an' I thought you'd know what one I'd better get."

"How old a boy?"

"'Bout eighteen."

"Barney," said the Scout Master to himself—and aloud, "Does he like to read?"

Billy wriggled in his chair with an embarrassed grin. "I reckon, not much," he said.



“But he—he’s had a bookshelf gave to him, an’ he says he’s goin’ to get some books to put on it. An’ I want to give him one—or two.”

Mr. Marshall went across to the shelves which lined two sides of the room, selected a volume, and put it into Billy’s hands.

“That is a life of Abraham Lincoln,” he said. “It is a very fine one, and I think most boys of eighteen would find it interesting. If your friend has no books, he probably is not much of a reader, and may find it a little difficult at first, to get interested in a book like this, but if he will read it through—even if he is a long time about it—I’m sure he will like it, and be willing to take up another of the same sort. That is an extra copy—I mean I have two—and I’ll be glad to give you this one and you can keep it or give it to your friend, as you please.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Billy, turning the pages and reading a sentence here and there. “I guess he’ll like this.” He rose to go—was tempted to stay and tell the Scout Master his fears in regard to Charlie Duff and the two boys who were after him—but concluded to wait a little. So he said good-night and went away.

“He had something on his mind. I wish he had told me about it,” Alan Marshall said to himself, listening to Billy’s footsteps on the stairs.

Billy went to the public school; but from three-thirty to six-thirty he was employed by one of the large department stores, as a special delivery messenger. He lived at the Selden Home,



a comfortable place, in charge of a good, kindly couple with whom he was a great favourite.

The next evening, Billy, on his wheel, delivered Barney's invitation to the boys. Not all the troop was invited—many of them were boys whom Tom and Jim would never think of approaching; but those to whom Billy went, all promised to be on hand on Saturday evening—this was Friday—and Billy turned homeward, feeling that he had done all that he could for his Scout "brothers." But as he went, he was thinking of Jim and Tom. They were not Scouts, but after all weren't they "brothers" just the same? And wasn't it possible that they too might be helped up, as he and Barney and the other South End boys had been? Billy was wishing that he had talked with the Scout Master about those two, last night. Maybe he would have thought of some way to get hold of them, to save them from spoiling their own lives and the lives of others.

Half unconsciously, he turned into the street where he had several times seen Charlie Duff with Jim and Tom. Yes, he was standing on the corner now, in front of Owen's saloon, but this time he was alone. Billy sprang off his wheel and joined him.

"Say, Charlie, come on up to the Avenue," he said. "There's some good films on at Poli's this week. My treat."

"Aw—no—don't believe I will," Charlie answered, with a swift backward glance.



At the same moment a man who was standing in the doorway of the saloon came quickly across to the two boys, and laid a hand on Billy's shoulder.

"*Billy Burns!*" he exclaimed. "Ain't seen you in a month of Sundays. Seems like you've gone back on your old friends, Billy." The kindly reproach in his tone brought the colour into the boy's face, and he answered quickly:

"'Deed I don't go back on my friends, Jack. I'll never go back on you or forget you."

"Then why don't you ever stop in to see me?"

"I—I can't, Jack," Billy stammered. "Scouts can't go in—in saloons, you know. But I never forget how good you was to me when I was a little kid with no home but the streets. Many's the meal you gave me when I'd 'a' gone hungry but for you. Think I could forget all that, Jack Owen?"

The man's face softened. "I'm glad to hear you say that, Billy," he answered. "I've been hearing things about you—— But we'll drop it. I see you're the same old Billy. Come in now and have a glass of—of lemonade—in memory of old times. You can't refuse that. I know it's no use to offer ye anything stronger."

"No," Billy said, a troubled look in his eyes, "an'—an', Jack—I can't go in your place, even for lemonade. I told you why."

"I'm not askin' you to," Owen retorted quickly, "not in the saloon. I'm askin' you just



to drop into the little back room—you remember the little back room? You've been in that many a time. You know I serve no drinks in there."

"I—know," Billy answered slowly. What should he do? He felt that he owed Owen a heavy debt of gratitude for his many kindnesses in the old days. It would hurt him sorely to refuse what he asked now.

"All right, Jack," he agreed finally, "I'll come."

"Right-o! Come on, Duff," said Owen, and led the way to a side door, the boys following.

It was a comfortable little room with a home-like atmosphere, into which he led them. A narrow hall separated it from the saloon, and Owen, drawing forward some chairs, told the boys to wait and he'd be back in two minutes. But five minutes and then five more passed while they waited, listening to the noisy clamour from the saloon. Billy was trying to make up his mind to go, when a big fellow came hurrying in with two glasses of lemonade on a tray. It was Jim Slater, and he looked at Billy with a grin that was both malicious and triumphant, as he handed him one of the glasses.

"Owen said to tell you he's sorry, but he's got some rough customers out there," he nodded towards the saloon, "an' he can't leave 'em. He fixed this fer ye, an' he wants ye to come again."

He set the second glass before Duff, winked at him, and went out.



"It sure is a noisy crowd out there," Duff said. Then as he sucked the lemonade through a straw, he added, "I say, Billy, this is good stuff, all right."

Billy tasted it—it was good, and icy cold. He was thirsty and he drank it all. Then setting his glass down he said uneasily, "I don't think Owen's coming back, an' I can't wait. You tell him I had to get home, will you? It's most ten."

Charlie nodded.

Billy repeated slowly, "I—must—go." But he did not go. Instead, he settled slowly down in his chair, his eyes half closed, his head nodding sleepily, while Charlie stared at him curiously. Presently Billy's head fell against the chair-back, and he was asleep, breathing heavily; and then Jim Slater and Tom came hurrying in. They paid no attention to Duff.

"Quick! We must get him out before Owen comes back," Jim said in a whisper.

"What—what you goin' to do? What's the matter with Billy?" Duff demanded anxiously.

"You hold yer tongue. What you don't know ye won't tell," Jim answered roughly.

They were carrying Billy out to the street. A little further along in a shadowed spot was a pushcart with an old rug in it. The boys dumped Billy, none too gently, into the cart, pulled the rug over him, and set off pushing the cart before them. Charlie followed, asking anxious questions.

"Say—you've just got to tell me what



you're going to do with him!" he cried out finally.

"What's it to you—'t isn't your funeral," Tom flung back at him. "But if you must know we're jest givin' Mr. Burns a free ride—that's all."

Charlie glanced back towards the saloon and, seeing Billy's wheel where he had left it, ran back and mounted it. As he rejoined the others, he cried with a sudden flash of understanding—"I believe you put dope in his lemonade. That's what made him so sleepy."

The others laughed. "Bright boy, Charlie," Slater taunted him. "Took you some time to find that out, didn't it?"

"It's a dirty trick you've played on him—the two of you," Duff declared. "You'd no business to do it."

"You hush up!" Slater stepped close to him and spoke in a threatening tone. "You can't prove nothin'. If you accuse us we'll swear we saw you put in the dope yourself. We both saw him do it, didn't we, Tom?"

"Sure we did," Jones lied promptly.

"Billy won't believe I did it." Duff was almost crying now.

"Huh! *Billy!* We'll learn Billy a lesson—one he won't fergit," growled Slater.

"You takin' him home?" Duff questioned anxiously.

"Sure we be. We'll dump him on the piazzzy. He'll be nice an' cool there till mornin'," said Jim.



Tom stopped short. "I've got a better one than that," he chuckled. "What d'ye say to dumpin' him on the piazzy of the house where that swell kid lives—the one Duff says Billy swears by—Jack Harding? How's that, eh?"

Jim slapped his knee and crowed delightedly. "That's a bully idea. You've got a head on you, Tom Jones. It's a long push up there, though."

"Who cares if 'tis? I guess the Harding kid won't be so thick with Billy Burns after he sees him to-morrow mornin'. Come on—help me push."

"Oh, say—that's *too* mean! Don't take him up to Harding's. Leave him at the Home," Charlie pleaded, fairly blubbering now.

But the two only jeered at him, and at last he left them and went home, full of anxious forebodings.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when the other two came to the Harding house, and the windows were all dark. Taking care to make no noise, they carried Billy up the steps, laid him in the darkest corner of the side piazza, and hurried off, chuckling over the success of their scheme. They had not only punished Burns for trying to keep Charlie Duff away from them, but they had struck a heavy blow at Barney Doyle at the same time, for it was an open secret that Barney and Billy were firm friends.



## II

### THE GATHERING AT BARNEY'S

**J**IM had given Billy a heavier dose than he realised, and the boy lay unconscious and motionless all through the night. A maid coming out to sweep the piazza early in the morning, found him there, and ran to tell Mr. Harding.

“It—it looks like that Billy Master Jack thinks so much of, but I guess it ain't him,” she ended.

“Oh, no, it can't be *Billy!*” Mr. Harding exclaimed, as he hurried out to see.

But it was Billy, and Wilson, who had followed his father, cried out in disgust as he looked down at the huddled figure in the stained and dirty uniform, half covered with a yet dirtier rug.

“Why, he's—he's *drunk*, father!” Wilson cried, bending over him; and added hastily to the maid, “Don't let Jack out here.”

But Jack was already in the doorway, demanding to know what had happened. His face whitened as he looked down at his friend.

“Oh, what—what is it?” he whispered. “Is Billy *dead?*”

“No, he isn't dead,” retorted Wilson. “You go on in, Jack. This is no place for you.”



## THE GATHERING AT BARNEY'S 23

But Jack was kneeling beside Billy, brushing back his hair, and looking into his soiled face with infinite compassion.

“Oh, *poor* Billy!” he cried, his voice choked with sorrow. “Father, you aren’t going to let him lie here? Why don’t you take him in and get the doctor? He’s sick—dear old Billy!”

At sight of the anguish and compassion in his young brother’s face, Wilson turned quickly away. “To think that Jack should care so much for a beast like that!” he muttered.

But Mr. Harding spoke quietly. “Jack, run and ask your mother to come here.”

Jack obeyed instantly. “Father,” Wilson protested, as the boy disappeared, “you aren’t going to take him into the house—with Jack?”

“Yes, Wilson, I am. There may be something in this we do not understand, and anyhow, Billy is Jack’s friend, and because of that we must make no mistake in this matter. If Billy is to blame—we can keep Jack away from him hereafter, but meantime the boy is evidently sick, and we must do what is right by him.”

“*Sick!*” muttered Wilson; but his mother came just then, and he turned away in silence. Evidently Jack had been pleading for his friend, for, after one quick glance at Billy, Mrs. Harding said to her husband:

“I will get the hall bedroom ready for him, and you’d better telephone for the doctor.”

“You understand——” Mr. Harding began,



but his wife, with a quick glance at Jack's anxious face interrupted gently:

"I understand. We'll have the room ready in ten minutes."

So presently, for the first time in his hard life, Billy was undressed by tender motherly hands, his white face bathed; and then, lying on the fresh, fragrant linen in the room that had been prepared for him, he no longer looked repulsive, but—Mrs. Harding thought—infininitely pathetic, in his helplessness.

They telephoned the Scout Master, and he came just before the doctor. Jack flew to meet him. His face was almost as white as Billy's, and his blue eyes were full of tears as he caught Alan Marshall's hand.

"Oh, Mr. Marshall," he cried, "you don't believe that Billy got drunk, do you? Oh, say you don't! *Say you don't!*"

"Of course I don't, Jack," Alan Marshall returned hastily. "We know Billy better than that. Now stop worrying or we shall have you sick, and think how Billy would feel then! He's going to feel badly enough about this anyhow. You and I must be ready to help him through it."

Jack drew himself up and tried to smile, but his fingers clung nervously to the Scout Master's. "Yes," he said, "I'll—I'll help. I don't mind—so much—now, 'cause you and mother and I all believe in Billy."

"Here's the doctor," Alan Marshall said.



"Now, Jack, you wait here, and I'll come and tell you, presently, what he says."

Jack obeyed without a word. The doctor's verdict was what Mr. Marshall had anticipated. The boy had been drugged—a heavy dose. It might be hours yet before he recovered consciousness. He suggested a hospital.

But Mrs. Harding would not have Billy moved. "Jack would grieve himself sick," she said. "Let the boy stay where he is."

"It is better so," the doctor agreed, knowing Jack and his delicate nervous temperament. "The boy will probably be all right in a day or two—at least well enough to go home. He looks a sturdy lad."

"He is," Mr. Marshall said, "a good lad too, doctor, in spite of appearances." Then he went to relieve Jack's anxiety.

It was on the evening of this day that the boys were to meet at Barney's. Barney was a bit nervous about this meeting. Boys singly and in groups were often in his room, but never before so many, by special invitation, as on this occasion. And where was Billy? He had sent peanuts, apples, lemons, and sugar, but he had promised to come early and help make the lemonade, and here it was eight o'clock, and he had not come. The others came, every one, even Charlie Duff. They came in a merry mood (all but Charlie) and for an hour they had a jolly time. Then, greatly wondering, and vaguely uneasy over Billy's unaccountable absence, Bar-



ney brought out his refreshments, and, when these had been disposed of, he began to talk in the old compelling fashion; but now he talked of what splendid chances they had, to make the best of themselves. He spoke of the old days when the gang was their sole interest, and then he went on to speak of Tom and Jim, and the difference between their lives and those of the Scouts. Billy had enthused him to some purpose. The words came hot from his heart and the boys were held by them. Only Charlie Duff (Barney recalled it afterwards) seemed restless and uninterested. He jumped almost out of his chair when there came a knock at the door.

Barney sprang to open the door, and stared in surprise when he saw the Scout Master standing there. The words seemed to say themselves as he looked into Alan Marshall's eyes.

"Has anything happened to Billy?"

The Scout Master nodded gravely as he stepped in, the boys all rising as he entered; and quite unconsciously he responded to their salute. Then he turned to answer Barney.

"Yes, Billy——" At that instant his glance fell on Charlie Duff, and he left the sentence unfinished. Charlie was cowering in his chair, his face chalk-white, his eyes full of fear and anxiety. The Scout Master took a step towards him.

"*You know* what happened to Billy!" he exclaimed sternly.

Instantly the boys crowded around with ques-



tions and muttered threats. Charlie's eyes swept the crowding faces, and cowering before the hot anger he saw in many of them, he put up his arm as if to ward off blows.

"I—I—didn't do it. I—couldn't help it," he stammered, beads of perspiration starting out on his forehead.

The Scout Master waved the boys back. "Be quiet, all of you," he commanded. "Let Duff tell his story. He will tell the truth."

"Oh, I will—honest, I will," the boy whimpered. "I didn't know they meant to dope Billy. I thought they just wanted to get him into the saloon—because he never would go, even a step inside the door, though Jack Owen was good to him when he was a kid—Billy said he was. And I didn't know that Jim was going to put any stuff into the lemonade they gave him—there's no harm in lemonade," he hurried on, eager now to tell all, and see those threatening eyes soften. But they did not soften as the Scout Master, by a few keen questions, drew out the details of what had happened. When Charlie told where Billy had been left, Barney sprang at him with uplifted fist, his face flaming with anger.

"You—you——" he cried out, fairly choking with rage, and it would have gone badly for Charlie Duff if the Master had not stepped between him and the other boy.

"Doyle," Alan Marshall cried, "you forget yourself! I'll attend to Duff."



“But—but——” Barney spluttered, too angry to speak clearly, “it’s Billy they done that to, Mr. Marshall—*Billy!* Of all places in this town to take him there—where Jack——” Again he would have fallen upon the trembling figure in the chair, but for the strong hand of the Master, who whirled him aside as he said sternly:

“If you cannot control yourself, Doyle, you must leave the room.”

Barney caught his breath, and the look in his eyes reminded Alan Marshall of his first encounter with the leader of the alley gang. For a breathless moment the eyes of the two met in a clash of wills, then slowly Barney’s fell, and he turned sullenly away and was silent.

“Oh, Mr. Marshall, I’d never have helped ’em do Billy like that if I’d known,” Charlie went on. “I tried to make ’em take him home—to Selden’s—honest, I did. I like Billy. I wouldn’t do a thing to hurt him. You all know I like Billy?” He cast an appealing glance about the silent group, but found friendly sympathy in no eyes except the Master’s. He did find it there; and suddenly dropped his face on the back of his chair and began to sob.

At that some of the boys grinned, and others turned away with scornful shrugs or sneers. “Blubberin’!” one muttered with a gesture of contempt. To boys like these, tears were evidence of a weakness they found it hard to comprehend. But the Master, his hand now on



Charlie's shoulder, faced the others, and spoke gravely.

"You see that Duff is not greatly to blame in this matter. He should not have had anything to do with such boys as Jones and Slater—he should not have hung around the saloon—that's all. And you can see for yourselves that he is sorry for what has happened to Billy. He will suffer quite as much as Billy for this affair."

"You bet he will!" Barney breathed the words so low that only the Master caught them, and he let them pass—for the moment.

Then Mr. Marshall told them that Billy was being cared for in the Harding home, and would probably be out in a day or two. Finally, he said slowly, his grave eyes passing from face to face, "Boys, you all like Billy, and you know how he cares for every boy in the troop. You know how much the honour of the troop means to him. If—because of what has happened to him—any boy in the troop should say or do what no Scout can do 'on his honour'—you know how that would hurt Billy. It would hurt him far more than anything that could happen to himself. I want you all to remember that. This thing is not really going to do Billy any harm—his friends love and trust him too much for that." He turned to the boy whose face was still hidden.

"Come with me, Charlie," he said, and with a grave "good-night" to them all, he went away, Charlie following him with drooping head.



### III

## UNDER THE STARS

**I**T was late in the afternoon when Billy stirred, and looked with wide, bewildered eyes at Jack's mother, who rose and went to him as she saw that he was conscious.

"Feeling better, Billy?" she asked quietly.

"Have I—been sick? Where—am I?" he asked, his swollen tongue making speech difficult.

"You are in Jack's home. Yes, you are sick, but you'll soon be well."

He lifted eyes full of dumb appeal, his dazed brain working with painful slowness. "T-tell me," he begged.

"Not now. I'm going to bring something for you to take, and then you must sleep. You'll feel better when you wake again," Mrs. Harding said, leaving the room. She returned with something hot in a bowl and Billy drank it obediently as she lifted his heavy head, and presently he slept. He was sleeping when Jack came and stood silently looking down at him, infinite love and pity in his eyes; and when the Scout Master came, and he too looked down with love and pity at the white face on the pillow. Billy Burns, with not a relative in all the world, so far as he



knew, was rich, with two such loyal friends as Alan Marshall and Jack Harding, to say nothing of Barney and the rest of the troop.

Jack tiptoed in again at bedtime. He did so wish that Billy would wake, just so that he could give him the Scout "grip" and smile into his eyes, so he'd know that he—Jack—understood and believed in him no matter *what* had happened. But Billy slept on.

When he awoke again, the pale glow of early dawn was just beginning to drive away the night shadows. There was a dim light burning in the hall, and Mrs. Harding, who had watched beside the boy during the first part of the night, was lying down in the next room. She had not meant to sleep, but she was very tired, and sleep caught her unawares. Remembering that she had told him that he was in Jack's home, Billy began slowly to think back, groping his way to the truth. He remembered going to Barney's—recalled the talk about Slater and Jones—ah! Those two names, like a lurid torch, flashed a sudden light into the thick darkness that had held him, blotting out a night and a day. It all came back to him now—Charlie, Jack Owen, the lemonade that Jim Slater brought into the little back room—the lemonade that was so cold and refreshing, yet had too, a little queer tang at the last—the strange, heavy numbness that would not let him get up and go home—it all came back to him clearly now. He could see again the expression in Charlie's eyes as he looked over his



glass, half curious, half frightened. But how had he come here—here to Jack Harding's home? Who had brought him here? But what matter who had done it? The dreadful thing was, that he had been brought here from Owen's place—drunk! Yes, that was it of course. Slater had put something into that lemonade—he knew Owen would never do anything like that. Slater had done it, or Jones, and then somehow he had been brought here, and probably Jack had seen him so—*Jack!* He buried his face in the pillow and groaned in misery. What if it wasn't his fault? He had brought shame—disgrace—into Jack Harding's home—the one place in all the world he would have avoided. Oh, Jack would believe nothing against him, he knew that; but that did not alter the fact that he had brought something unspeakably dreadful into Jack's beautiful home. Well, there was only one thing to do. He must get away at once—now, while they were all asleep—get away from everybody who knew him, until he could live down the shameful memory, and others might forget it. He sat up in bed. His head felt strangely heavy, and he could not reason clearly. Only the one thought buzzed and rang in his brain, "Get away, get away—get away quick!" The big clock in the hall ticked "Get away!"—he heard it plainly; and then instead of striking three, it struck—"Get away quick!"

By the hall light he saw his Scout uniform neatly folded and laid on a chair, his shoes and



stockings on the floor beside it. He dressed very slowly, his hands were so shaky, but he got into his clothes somehow and, with his shoes in his hand, crept silently down the stairs. Once outside, the night air refreshed him and cleared his head a little. He sat down on the steps and put on his shoes, and then turned up the street. He swayed as he walked, and sometimes his head felt light as a feather and again it felt heavy as lead, and his knees wobbled strangely under him; but he went on, slowly at first, more rapidly as the cool night air steadied him. He must get away—get away—he seemed still to hear the tall clock ticking off the words.

The Hardings lived on the heights, and it was not far to the open country. Billy had no idea where he was going—no thought of anything but to get away, so that his shame should not shadow Jack. Of course Jack's mother would not want him to have anything to do with a boy who had been drunk. They would think that was what was the matter with him. Wilson Harding never had liked Jack to be with him—Billy knew that. He'd hate it now.

So on and on he went, his feet dragging more and more wearily as the light grew stronger in the east. He was very tired—only once before in his life had he felt such a benumbing weariness, and that was—was—he could not remember how it was, only it seemed as if then, too, he had been wandering aimlessly along country roads as he was doing now. The strange



odour that clung to his clothes sickened him, and he was dizzy from want of food and from the effects of the drug, but he did not reason that out. He did not think clearly of any one but Jack—of anything but getting himself away from Jack, for Jack's dear sake.

So, stumbling on, he came to an empty shed with some dry grass in one corner, and dropping down there, fell instantly into a heavy slumber. It was noon when he awoke. His head was clearer and now he wanted food. He felt in his pockets—they were empty. "Yes," he muttered, "they would be, of course—trust 'Light-fingered Jim' for that." Then he remembered a tiny inner pocket in which Mr. Marshall had advised him to carry always a little money for an emergency. Had they found that too? He felt for it with his shaking fingers. No, they had not discovered it. He drew from it a two-dollar bill. So at the first house he came to, he asked for something to eat, and offered to pay for it. The woman refused his money, but gave him bread and meat and a glass of milk.

"You're a Boy Scout," she said. "The Scouts never steal our fruit when they pass this way. You are welcome to this."

He felt much stronger when he had eaten, but still his head was leaden-heavy. The woman advised him to go home. "You look sick," she said kindly. He thanked her and went on.

All that afternoon he walked, stopping often to rest by the wayside, and at sunset he reached



a village where he bought some bread and bacon and a few potatoes. He did not want lodging—Billy loved the open, and instinctively knew that it was better for him now to be under the stars than under any roof. So he passed through the village and came to a stream tumbling noisily down a hillside. He liked the noise it made—it sounded cheerful and friendly. Billy turned off the road and followed up the stream. There was a higher hill behind the first, and the stream tumbled down over small rocks there. He came at last to a ledge that rose high above the stream on one side. There was a big flat rock that seemed to have slipped down across two others, forming a little cave-like place. It looked good to Billy. "I'll stay here to-night," he said to himself. "It's still. Seems as if I can sleep here an'—an' not hear that clock telling me to get away." He sat down before the little cave, suddenly again conscious of great weariness. "I'll make a fire soon an' broil some bacon," he thought, but he did not stir. He sat there as motionless as the rock against which he leaned, while the sunset faded and twilight fell, and one by one silver stars pricked through the velvet blackness of the night sky. He did not sleep—he did not think. The drug he had swallowed seemed to have bound his senses anew.

After a time something suddenly pierced through that numbness. Billy stirred uneasily and looked about him. *Had* something moved over yonder or was it just a shadow? He had



a feeling of some living creature near him, though he could see none.

"I'm a fool," he muttered. "Ain't a thing there—'course there ain't." But still his eyes looked this way and that, seeking the thing he denied. Something *was* moving yonder—it surely was. A stray sheep maybe—he had passed a flock a while back—or a rabbit. His eyes watched the shadow. Surely it moved—crept now slowly—very slowly—towards him. With a listless curiosity Billy watched it draw nearer, inch by inch. Finally he laughed a little and held out his hand.

"Poor fellow, come along. I'm a stray dog, too," he said, and the dog, divining a welcome, came up and licked his hand; then with a sigh of satisfaction that was almost human, lay down close beside him.

Billy roused himself then and ate some bread, sharing it with this new friend. He was too tired to make a fire and cook the bacon. "We'll have that for breakfast," he told the dog, slipping the provisions into a crevice in the rocks. "Reckon I want sleep more than anything else." So he crept into the little cave, stretched himself out, and slept, his arm over the dog that, snuggled close against him, seemed to warm his lonely heart as well as his shivering body.

It was early when he awoke. He was lame and stiff, for his rock bed was a hard one, but his head felt all right now. He could think, and he had many things to think out. But breakfast



first. He set off to gather wood for a fire, and found plenty of dry stuff in a pine grove near by. The dog, a rough-haired mongrel with eyes as honest as Billy's own—stuck to him like a burr, tagging close at his heels. Billy made his fire, baked a couple of potatoes in the ashes, and toasted strips of bacon on a pointed stick. He was hungry and so was the dog, and they ate in contented fellowship.

“I never had a dog before, but I'm going to keep you if I can,” he said, looking into the intelligent brown eyes. “You've got no collar, so I guess nobody owns you. Want to be my dog?”

The dog wagged his tail and did his best to say “yes.”

“All right then,” said Billy. “I'll call you—Pal. How do you like that, old Pal?”

The dog wagged his tail harder, licking the hand that was patting his head, and so he was christened.

Then Billy sat for a long time very still—thinking. And as he thought his eyes grew troubled. “I've been a fool again,” he told himself moodily. “'Twasn't my fault—what Jim an' Tom did to me—I couldn't help that. It was mean as dirt for them to leave me at Harding's.” He shuddered with shame and disgust as he thought of Jack and Mrs. Harding and Wilson seeing him so. “But Jack wouldn't believe I was to blame for that, an' the Scout Master wouldn't either. Mebbe—Jack's mother would—but if she



did, it was all the nicer of her to put me in that clean bed an' take care of me. An' then for me to sneak off in the night the way I did—like a thief—an' never stop to say 'thank ye' for all she did for me——” The hot colour flamed in his cheeks. “Aw, what did I do it for, anyhow? Why didn't I have sense enough to stay an' tell 'em just how it happened? An' now Jack'll be worryin' about me, an' Barney too, an' the Scout Master——”

Suddenly the dog pricked up his ears and gave a short, quick bark, and Billy, pricking up *his* ears, thought he heard voices. He got up and went around the ledge, and looking back the way he had come the night before, saw a company of boys in khaki climbing the steep path. At sight of him there was a chorus of shouts and yells, and one Scout—the smallest—darted ahead, crying out, “Billy—*Billy!*”

Billy stood quite still and silent till Jack, too breathless to speak at first, flung his arms around him and gave him a “regular bear hug,” his face beaming with happiness. Then he turned and beckoned his comrades, crying impatiently, “Oh, come on—come *on!*” and presently they were all there—the Scout Master and all the troop except two. Wilson Harding had refused to come, and Charlie Duff had not been allowed to, in spite of his pleading—the others in his patrol would not have him. Barney caught Billy's hand in a grip that hurt, but he said nothing—nor needed to. The other South End boys—neigh-



bours of Barney and Billy in the old days—crowded about, a score of questions trembling on their tongues. But it was Billy who asked the first question.

“How did you find me?”

Jack laughed and pointed to the fire. “We were watching for smoke,” he said. “We hunted yesterday, but we took the wrong road. “You will go back with us, Billy?” he ended anxiously.

“’Course I will.” Billy’s hand dropped on the little fellow’s shoulder and rested there, as he faced the others. “It was mighty good of you—all to come after me, but I should have gone back to-day, anyhow. I’d never have cleared out so if my head had been right. When I woke there in the night, and remembered what had happened, I—I could only think of one thing, and that was that I’d brought shame into Jack’s home. No, Jack”—as the boy broke into quick protest—“I don’t mean that you felt I had, but that’s the way it seemed to me then, an’ I jest *couldn’t stand it*—I couldn’t! I had to get away. You see, my head was muddled—I couldn’t think straight, and—and—so I jest had to get out.

“I’m all right now, an’ I know I wasn’t to blame—except for clearing out so—an’ I’m going straight back to tell Jack’s mother how it was, an’ to—an’ to, thank her——” But here Billy’s voice suddenly failed him, and he turned aside abruptly.

“We understand all about it, Billy,” the Scout Master said quickly, “and Mrs. Harding will



understand, too. She was anxious because she knew you were not fit to walk. Charlie Duff told the whole story."

"He didn't do anything mean—Charlie didn't," Billy said, and turned quickly to Barney. "You mustn't take it out on Charlie," he urged.

"I sha'n't trouble him," Barney flung out, but his mouth was set in a grim line, and Billy shook his head. He knew Barney.

"Suppose we stop and have breakfast—we started early," the Master suggested. "Have you had yours, Billy?"

Billy nodded. "But I could take some coffee," he added, as one of the boys pulled a coffee-pot from his knapsack. He brought out the remains of his provisions, and soon they were all gathered about the fire, enjoying bacon and bread and coffee. Pal was at once adopted as the "mascot" of the troop. He was very friendly with all the boys, almost wagging his tail off to express his good will, but he always went back to Billy.

An hour later the boys were swinging along the road to the nearest trolley line. Billy was very quiet on the way back, and he left the car with Jack.

"I got to see his mother," he explained briefly to the Master.

"All right, Billy. I'll see you to-morrow," the Master said, giving the boy a grip that Billy understood and appreciated.



## IV

### A GOOD BEGINNING

**T**HERE came a Friday when Troop 5 set off for a week-end at a place owned by a friend of Alan Marshall's who had invited the boys to his house for supper. The next day being a legal holiday, the boys who worked were free, and all were on hand in gay spirits. Their camp equipment was carried on a handcart which the boys took turns in pushing or pulling. They started early so as to have time to set up the tents before dark, and reached the Virginia farm in good season. Their host's two little sons, Fred and Dick Houston, were watching for them, and were immensely interested in the troop. They watched with fascinated eyes the process of making camp, and when all was done, led the way to the big, old-fashioned mansion.

In the large dining-room of the Houston home the table had been stretched to its utmost dimensions, and smaller tables set on the wide porch, all loaded with the most bountiful of Southern suppers.

Supper over, a whispered suggestion passed from one Scout to another till it reached Mr. Marshall, who voiced it in an invitation to Mr.



and Mrs. Houston and the boys to attend the council fire at the camp. The invitation being promptly accepted, the boys departed to make ready. In nearby woods they found plenty of dry stuff for a fire, and selected a safe place for it down on the river bank where there were no trees. A bundle of long, pointed sticks was made ready, and two pails full of lemonade.

When the guests arrived, the troop received them with honours. To his immense delight, Fred was allowed to light the fire, and all gathered about it for the regular council, followed by an hour of music and story-telling. The drum and bugle corps did its best and all the boys joined in the singing. Then Mr. Houston told of an experience of his own in a bear hunt—a story that was full of delightful thrills and scares that made little Dick snuggle close to his mother's side.

But the climax of the evening came when the Scout Master announced that Mr. Houston was going to give the site for a troop camp, and the material for a log-cabin to be built on it. At that, every Scout was on his feet, and the cheer that went up must have startled all the wild things in the woods. Even the river caught it up and echoed it back from its further bank. In their excitement the boys almost forgot to toast their marshmallows and pass around the lemonade—almost but not quite.

Finally Mr. and Mrs. Houston and Dicky—who by this time was too sleepy to hold his eyes



open—went back to the house, leaving Fred, to his intense delight, to spend the night at the camp, Jack having offered to share his bed with the little fellow. Soon the troop bugler sounded “taps,” and a little later the camp was dark and silent, and every boy in it sound asleep—all but Fred Houston. For an hour or more he lay wide-eyed in the darkness, little shivers of mingled terror and delight creeping over his spine. He was going to be a Boy Scout *sure*, as soon as he was twelve; but meantime he was glad that he could hear Jack’s even breathing close beside him. But soon Fred, too, slept till the silver-sweet bugle call aroused him, and he tumbled sleepy-eyed out of bed, and ran down to the river with the others for a morning plunge.

Then came breakfast, with some fish that the Scout Master had caught before any one else was awake, fried potatoes, and hot cornbread baked, Southern fashion, before the fire—with coffee for those who wanted it.

“Tastes lot’s better’n our breakfasts at home,” Fred declared, his cheeks puffed out like a squirrel’s. But there was no loitering over breakfast this morning—the boys were too eager about the log-house they were to build. They wanted to begin it at once, and come out every Friday till it was completed.

Mr. Houston appeared early—perhaps he guessed that the boys would be impatient—and a site for the cabin was soon selected. Then, with a twinkle in his eyes, Mr. Houston pointed



to a patch of woods at the bottom of a steep, sloping bank.

"You're welcome to all of that timber down in the hollow if you can find a way to get it up here," he said.

"Fer the love of Mike, how'll we ever get it up?" muttered Finnegan in Barney's ear, and for a moment there was a dismayed silence, but only for a moment.

"We'll find a way to haul it up," one boy declared stoutly, and at once an eager group had heads together discussing ways and means. Presently one boy asked Mr. Houston if he had any old waggon-wheels that they could borrow.

"Probably," he answered. "There's a lot of old stuff in a shed near the big barn. Fred will show you the way. You can have anything you find there, and welcome."

The boys thanked him and half a dozen of them raced off with Fred. Mr. Houston went back to the house, leaving the Scout Master with the rest of the troop, discussing plans for the new house.

"We'll feel like pioneers," one exulted. "Won't it be jolly to do it *all* ourselves!"

"We'll have to have saws and axes," Wilson reminded.

"Gee! I wish we had some here now. I want to see that cabin going up," cried Frazer. "Mr. Marshall, do you know how to build a real log-cabin?"

"I must admit that I never have actually built



one. We must have the help of some one who has, for we want to make a good job of this," the Master replied.

Then Dick Houston piped up, "I reckon our Uncle Moses could show you. He built the log-house he lives in."

"Lead us to him—lead us to him, kid!" cried half a dozen eager voices, and Dick started on the run, the Scouts at his heels.

They came back in a little while, followed by an old, grey-headed negro whose wrinkled face was one big grin as he answered the questions with which the eager boys pelted him.

"Yes, suh; yes, suh, I kin show you-all how to build a sure-'nough log-cabin," he told the Scout Master. "I done helped build a-many, an' I kin build 'em right."

"Axes? You-all don't need bring no axes an' saws—we got a-plenty," he said, when some one spoke of needed tools, "an' Mahster Houston he say you'm to have all what ye need fer build-in'. An' we kin grind dem axes too, an' make 'em right sharp. I reckon Mahster Houston'll let me he'p build dat cabin, en I sure would enj'y it. I didn't spect to build no more log-cabins in dis world."

"It would be fine to have you help," the boys assured him, at which the old fellow's smile stretched nearly to his ears.

The other Scouts and Fred came back with two waggon-wheels, old, but still strong, and a heavy framework resembling a waggon-tongue.



"See," Frazer cried, "we can put a log on this thing, and some of us pulling and some pushing, we'll yank it up that slope in a jiffy."

"Yes, I believe that will do the work," the Master agreed.

Then followed another discussion of plans, which one boy, who aspired to be an architect, put into shape for a rough working drawing. With the help of Uncle Moses they estimated the number of logs that would be needed, and marked the trees to be cut. For the chimney there was plenty of loose stone and rock along the river bank, and clay in abundance for the digging.

For the next week the log-cabin was the engrossing subject of conversation whenever two or more members of Troop 5 came together. They were all wild to begin the building.

They set off Friday afternoon, and found the Houston boys watching for them, each proudly wearing a Scout "uniform" as they called their khaki suits.

"We can't be *really* Scouts till we're twelve, I know, but we're going to be learning. Papa's got us the Scout book," Fred announced, as he dropped into step beside Jack, whom he claimed as his special friend and comrade.

The next morning work began in earnest. Old Uncle Moses was on hand bright and early, and, as soon as breakfast was eaten and the camp in order, the tree-felling began. It was real "pioneer" work this—hard work, no play about it. But the boys quickly caught the knack of





“ IT WAS FASCINATING TO SEE THOSE WALLS GO UP ”







swinging the axe in the most effective fashion, and the old darkey grinned as the trees toppled over. Then they must be trimmed, cut to length, loaded on the tongue-and-wheels, and pulled up the slope. It was a man's job—raising those logs. The boys puffed over it, but nobody shirked.

When enough logs for a beginning had been brought up, part of the boys continued the cutting and hauling while the rest, under old Moses' direction, began the building. The logs were carefully measured, and "nicked" in such fashion that the corners fitted perfectly. The clay had been prepared beforehand, and now the logs were fitted together, and the walls actually began to rise. After a while the two "squads" exchanged work, those who had been felling trees and hauling, taking their turn at the easier and more fascinating task of building up the walls. It *was* fascinating to see those walls go up. The boys worked so enthusiastically that the Scout Master had to hold them back rather than urge them on.

"You see, Mr. Marshall, we've got so little time, we *have* to work fast," one of them said, voicing the general sentiment.

And they did work fast—so fast that, when darkness stopped them the four walls of the cabin looked like a little stockade.

"Gee! But I hate to stop," Don Frazer exclaimed, as he reluctantly clambered down from the top of the wall. "To think we've got to



leave it that way a whole week!" he lamented.

"Yes, it's fierce! I'd like to stay and work to-morrow," Nolan said, but Frazer shook his head.

"No go. Scout Master won't stand for Sunday work, you know."

There was no lingering over supper with a seven-mile walk between them and home, and before it was fairly dark they were on their way—this time unhampered by camp impedimenta, as Mr. Houston had told them to leave it all in an empty loft of his. So they travelled "light," and, with the help of lanterns and flash-lights, made good time, and were at home before ten o'clock.

The "pull" of that troop-house was so great that, the next week, several of the boys who worked, took a holiday without pay, that they might share in the fun. Barney Doyle was one of these. Barney was one of the biggest fellows in Troop 5, and one of the most dependable workers.

"Barney's got the muscle—he'll help a lot," Billy confided to Jack.

They pushed on rapidly, eager to show those who had not been with them the previous week, what had been accomplished, and to talk over what was still to be done.

"Just around that next turn and we'll see it," Jack cried out to Billy and Barney, at last. "I want to *run*, don't you?"



Billy nodded, but he kept step steadily with the rest. But when they swung around the bend, a look of bewilderment swept across every face, and with one impulse the troop halted for a moment, then broke ranks and dashed forward on the run, staring with flushed faces and angry eyes at the place where their walls should have been—for no walls were there. The logs they had fitted and laid so carefully were scattered about, some near by, some flung off into the underbrush, some, as they discovered later, even rolled down into the hollow.

“By *jingo*, this is fierce!”

“It’s a beastly shame!”

“*Gee!* But I’d like to get hold of whoever did it!”

So half a dozen cried out, and Jack turned to the Scout Master saying, “Who could have done it, Mr. Marshall—who *could?*”

Billy stood for a long minute, utterly still and silent. Then his eyes and Barney’s met, and both nodded.

“It’s them—Tom an’ Jim—bet yer life it is,” Barney muttered in Billy’s ear.

Charlie Duff, catching the low-spoken words, flushed scarlet. “If it’s them——” he began, and then fell silent, his weak lips, for once, set in a firm line. But nobody was paying attention just then to Charlie Duff, for Fred Houston came racing towards them, Dick tagging at his heels.

“Ain’t it the *meanest?*” Fred cried out. “They did it that same night—last Sat’day



night. Dick and me found it so when we came here Sunday evening."

"What does your father think about it, Fred?" the Master asked.

"He said he didn't know what to think. He doesn't believe anybody living 'round here would do it, an' Unk Moses says he *knows* the darkies wouldn't."

Barney spoke across Fred's head, to the Scout Master. "I reckon it's some of their spite-work—Jones and Slater's. It's like them—nobody else would be so mean."

"If it is, they must have been somewhere about while we were at work here last week."

Barney nodded. "Likely they followed the troop out from town—or they might just 'a' been prowlin' 'round out here an' happened on the camp. Either way, I bet ye they done it."

Nolan flung himself down on the ground. "All our hard work gone fer nothin'!" he grumbled. "No use doin' anything if fellers like them are goin' to spoil it all."

"Huh, we don't give up that easy," Billy declared. "We'll build the house and find a way to make them let it alone too."

"That's right, Billy—we'll do that," Alan Marshall returned cheerfully. "Come, boys, no more grumbling over what has happened." He gave orders for making camp and preparing supper, and went off to consult Mr. Houston. The boys obeyed orders promptly and well, and had everything ship-shape when the Scout Master



returned. Meantime old Uncle Moses came limping through the woods to condole with the boys, and prophesy all manner of misfortune on the evil-doers, whoever they might be.

“Ain’ no Ferginny niggers done dat trick, I tell ye, suhs,” he declared. “H’it’s some low-down white trash from de city done h’it. Dey’ll git dey comeuppence, suah. We-all gwine ter keep watch next time twel de clay is sot, den dey have dey han’s full ef dey onder-take ter fling down our cabin agin.”



## V

### NIGHT ADVENTURES

“**N**OW, boys,” the Scout Master said as they sat down to supper, “let the matter drop for the present. Has anybody a funny story to tell? We need a good laugh for a digester.”

A thin, grave-faced boy—nicknamed “Skinny” Langston—drawled out a story that brought forth shouts of laughter, and Mr. Marshall capped it with a comical experience of his own. So the supper was a merry one, and everybody felt better after it.

“Now then,” the Master said when, supper over, they gathered about the campfire, “while we hold our council, we want to be sure that there are no eavesdroppers, so we will post guards about the camp. I call for four volunteers for guard duty.”

Instantly half a dozen boys volunteered—though every one of them wanted to take part in the discussion. The Master selected four, and posted them just out of hearing. Then he began:

“It is no small undertaking to build a good log-house—we’ve found that out already. It means a deal of real hard work, and we’ve seen that it may all go for naught. What do you say



—shall we give up the plan of building a troop-house here?”

“No, *sir!*” a chorus of voices answered.

“In spite of what has happened, then, you want to go on with the building? A standing vote, please. Those in favour——”

Instantly every boy was on his feet.

“The ayes seem to have it,” said the Master, his eyes alight. “Boys, I’m proud of you. I should have been greatly disappointed if you had given up because of this reverse. We will build the house, and it will not be disturbed again, I am sure.”

Then Sidney Hart spoke. He was assistant scout master of the troop, and one of the oldest of the boys. “Mr. Marshall, I move that we make sure that it will not be disturbed by leaving several boys on guard over Sunday.”

“Me fer one of the guards!” shouted Barney instantly.

“And me.” That was Billy.

“And *me!*” Finnegan’s shrill voice yelled.

“That’s a good idea, Hart,” the Master returned. “By Sunday night, the clay filling will have hardened so that it would be difficult to tear down the walls.”

“Bet ye the fellers that did it that time had a tough job,” put in Finnegan, with a chuckle. “Must ‘a’ worked as hard as we did.”

The Scout Master went on, “You, Barney, Finnegan, and Billy Burns, who have asked for the duty, may remain on guard. You can make



your own arrangements for the night. Barney, I put you in charge—the others to obey your orders.”

“Wish I was in that squad,” sighed Carter.

“I too,” cried Jack. “Mr. Marshall, can’t you add just one to Barney’s squad?” he pleaded.

“No, Jack, no more volunteers,” the Master answered. “Three are enough.”

There was no disputing Alan Marshall’s orders, but there was some grumbling among the boys, as they realised that the lucky three might have an exciting time, if those who had done the mischief should attempt to repeat it.

Taps sounded early that night, as there was to be an unusually early breakfast; and every boy was out of bed the next morning at the first note of the bugle. A good hot breakfast was prepared, but it was speedily dispatched, and the camp put in order in record time. Then the boys were divided into three squads—one to collect, and roll or haul back the scattered logs; the second to haul up again those that had been pitched down into the hollow, and the third, composed of the younger boys, to run errands or help, in any way, the older workers.

Old Moses appeared before the work was fairly under way. He was jealous of his reputation as a log-house builder, and eager to direct the work. And how the boys *did* work! In an amazingly short time the logs had been brought back, and the rebuilding began. That,



too, went better than before, because the boys had learned what they had to do, and how they best could handle the heavy logs. One of them covered himself with glory by rigging up a tackle with which the logs could be lifted to the required height as the walls went up.

"Golly! Nevah did see no cabin go up so fast," the old darkey muttered more than once. "Mos' all I kin do to keep up wid ye."

As a matter of fact, he could not keep up with them, though the boys gaily assured him that it was he who kept them hustling. The smaller boys were the cooks that day, and never was the call to dinner more reluctantly obeyed.

"'D rather work than eat," Barney growled as he dropped down from the wall where he had just settled the top log into position. Then he lifted his face and sniffed. "Great Scott! Something smells mighty good. What is it? I'm hungry as a bear."

Others were sniffing that appetising odour, and realising that they were ravenously hungry. "It" was found to be a rich, hearty stew of veal, chicken, and vegetables that Mrs. Houston had sent down, piping hot—a stew that filled her great preserving kettle to the brim. The hungry boys broke their pilot bread into it, and feasted royally.

"Jumping *cats*, but that was good!" exclaimed Carter, scraping his dish after a second helping. "Say, Mr. Marshall, can't we get



the recipe for this and make it the 'best ever' of Troop 5?"

"Maybe. We'll find out about it later," the Scout Master answered, "and we'll give Mrs. Houston proof of our appreciation of her kindness, when our cabin is ready for guests."

"You bet we will!" shouted one of the smaller boys, licking the last drops of gravy from his spoon.

Back the boys went with fresh vigour and determination, and merrily the work went on. Sometimes they sang, sometimes they whistled, sometimes they lifted and sawed and pounded in silence—but they never stopped until the call to supper rang out. They were not so reluctant now to quit work, for even the strongest of them were tired. They ran down to the river for a dip or a wash, and came back with sleek, wet heads, and hands and faces shining clean.

"*Ginger*, but this is good!" Miller exclaimed, stretching his tired young body on the grass. But he sat up promptly when Jack Harding brought him a plate heaped with baked beans and brown bread, and a cup of steaming coffee.

"I could eat pine-cones to-night, Jacky, I'm that hungry," he said, "but I like beans and brown bread better."

"Lucky we brought plenty," Jack grinned, "if they're all as hungry as you are."

"Me? I'm not a circumstance to Barney Doyle. He's begun on his second plate already," laughed the other.



They took supper in leisurely fashion, with an hour's rest after it, before the buglers blew the call "to the colours" and the flags came down. Then "taps" sounded and the tents fell. Swiftly the camp outfit was carried back to the farm, and then the boys set off on their way to the nearest trolley line, as the Master thought that a seven-mile tramp would be too much after such a strenuous day's work.

Barney, Billy, and Finnigan set off with the others, but dropped out after going half a mile.

"I do wish I could stay with you, Billy. It would be a real lark," Jack sighed, as Billy stepped aside. "Good luck and a lively time to you."

The others did not stop—only the Scout Master waited for a last word to Barney—then the troop swung on, and the three left behind retraced their steps in silence. They had replaced their shoes with moccasins, and they moved as noiselessly as possible. They had left some blankets hidden away in the bushes, and had made their plans during the day—dividing the night into three watches, Barney and Billy taking the first watch.

Finnegan found the blankets and wrapped himself in them, but at first he was too excited to sleep. He had worked hard that day, however, and before long he began to blink, and in half an hour he was sound asleep. The other two sat silent in the darkness, eyes and ears alert. Barney was sure that Jim and Tom had



been somewhere near all day—sure that they would not have failed to be there to enjoy seeing the Scouts do all that hard work over again. But they were no fools—they would suspect that precautions would be taken to prevent a repetition of their destructive work, and they would be careful. Still, they couldn't tumble off those heavy logs without making a noise. Barney's strong hands clenched—he longed to get them on to those two. It was not only for this latest exploit—it was even more because of what they had done to Billy Burns, that Barney longed to get hold of them.

The minutes dragged slowly by. It was not still—the night was vocal with small, mysterious sounds, and even under the trees it was not quite dark; when the eyes of the boys grew accustomed to the dim light—they could distinguish darker shadows in the dusk. They could hear each other's quick breathing, and a restless movement now and then, as tired muscles demanded change of posture. Time passed more and more slowly. Billy caught himself nodding, and straightened up with a jerk. Then suddenly he felt Barney's hand on his with a warning pressure, and he was wide awake in an instant, straining his eyes and ears through the blackness. Something surely was moving over near the cabin. The boys held their breath, every nerve and muscle tense.

“There *is* somebody.” Barney barely breathed the words into the other boy's ear. “Get up—



don't make a sound." As he spoke, he rose silently to his feet, and crept forward, inch by inch, Billy following. The cabin stood in an open space and, by the light of the stars the boys made out a dark figure in front of the wall. In a moment it vanished.

"Gone inside," Barney whispered again in Billy's ear.

Then came a muffled thud—a log knocked off, of course. Barney waited no longer. "Come on," he said, and dashed forward and through the open doorway, Billy at his heels. He could see something dark in one corner, and he made a dive for it, but as he did so, a strong hand caught his clenched fist, and another clutched his throat. He tried to call out—to warn Billy; but then he heard a gurgling cry, and realised that Billy too was in trouble.

"You-all keep still now er I'll brain yeh sure 'nough," a savage voice warned him.

Barney was quite willing to be still—for the moment—if only his throat could be freed from that strangling grip. Instinctively he let himself droop limply against his captor, and at that the strangling clutch loosened a little.

"You're—choking me," he gasped out.

"An' chokin's too good fer yeh—low-down white trash," the soft, thick voice muttered. "Sam, yeh got the other one?"

"Uh-huh—got *him* all right," answered answered another thick voice from the opposite corner.



But Barney had had time to get his breath and, with a sudden swift movement he freed his right hand, and gave his captor a vicious blow on the jaw. For a moment he was free, but only for a moment. Then his hands were caught again, and deftly tied behind him.

“There now, I reckon you-all won’t bust no mo’ walls down ter-night,” said the thick voice in a tone of satisfaction.

Now Barney began to realise what had happened. “You big fool!” he cried. “We’re Scouts. They left us here to keep guard to-night.”

“Huh! Tell that to yer granny!” retorted his captor scornfully. “Got the other one tied, Sam?”

Sam said he had.

“All right then, we’ll run ’em over ter the lock-up. Come on, you!” He gave Barney a yank. “Ef yer don’ come erlong ’thout no fuss I’ll squeeze yer windpipe ag’in.”

“But look here—take us to Mr. Houston—he ’knows us. He’ll see we’re Scouts,” Barney urged.

The negroes laughed. “Scouts nothin’,” returned Barney’s captor. “Yeh kin tell that story ter him in the mawnin’. Ain’ goin’ ter wake him up this time o’ night fer no cabin-busters like you-all.”

“All right then—just you wait an’ see what Mr. Houston will have to say to *you*, in the morning.”



Something in Barney's voice and manner evidently impressed the other man, for he said doubtfully, "Ye don' reckon they *is* Boy Scouts, George?"

"We sure are. Here—put your hand in my left pocket an' you'll find a match-case. Strike a match an' you'll see our uniforms," said Barney.

"Mebbe yeh better, George," the other man advised, "but don' let go a-hold of him."

"I ain' lettin' go," the other responded grimly; but Barney's quick ear noted a change in his manner. Barney spoke again in a tone of authority.

"Strike a match quick—you! You're a pair of blunderin' fools. Mebbe you want to go off with us an' give the fellers you're after a chance to pull our walls down again—while you're gone."

"Say, George, mebbe it's like he says. Better strike a light an' see," came the warning voice again.

And still keeping a firm hold of Barney, his captor struck a match. As its light fell on the khaki uniform, he exclaimed:

"Golly ef it ain' so. He sure is got on de Scout clo'es."

"Now, let us go, *blockhead!*" Barney cried out angrily. "Who sent you here, anyhow?"

"Mr. Houston. We wuk fer him an' he tol' us to watch an' see de walls ain' frew down ag'in



ter-night," one of the men explained. "We shore is sorry. Never once 'maged any Scouts staid roun' yere."

"It's all right, Barney—they ain't to blame," Billy interposed. "They were obeying orders same's we were."

"You're right," Barney admitted, reluctantly, for his throat still ached from that strangle-pressure. "What's the matter with *you*?" he added, as Sam dropped to the ground with a groan.

"H'it's my shoulder. I reckon I done sprained it tryin' ter hol' this feller. Get the lantern, George, an' light h'it."

With evident reluctance, George let go his hold of Barney and went off. He came back with a lighted lantern.

"Untie my hands," Billy called, and then to the other man, "Take off your coat an' let me see your shoulder." And as the man shrank away from him, muttering something about a doctor, Billy added, "I know a little about doctoring—all Scouts do. Pull off your coat. Barney, you hold the lantern."

The shoulder bared, Billy lifted the arm and gave a quick pull and twist that brought from the man a sharp yelp of pain.

"There—it's all right now. 'Twas out of joint, that's all," Billy said.

The man moved the arm carefully two or three times; then his mouth stretched in a wide grin. "Golly, boss, you suah is some doctor,"



he said. "Never knew Boy Scouts could do sech tricks."

"Boy Scouts know a little of everything—have to," Barney said. "Now, do you want to take us over to Mr. Houston's?"

"Great Moses, *no!*" cried Sam. Then in a wheedling tone, "You-all won' say nuffin ter Mr. Houston 'bout this? H'it was jes' a mistake. Might anybody mek a mistake—in de dark, yeh know, suh."

"All right, we'll forget it," Barney replied. "And now you can clear out. We'll keep watch the rest of the night. If anybody's been around they'd have been scared off with all this rumpus, anyhow."

"Yer right—dey sure would," the men replied. and with apologies and good-nights they vanished.

"Wonder why Finnegan didn't come to see what was going on," Barney said then to Billy. "Le's go find out."

They found out—for they found Finnegan sound asleep in his blankets.

"Well, I'll be—battered—if he ain't slept right through it all!" chuckled Billy, as Barney shook the other boy into wakefulness, none too gently.

"Wh-what's the matter?" Finnegan grumbled. "Le' me 'lone, can't ye?" Then, with dawning realisation, he sprang up. "Say—have they come again?"

The other boys shouted with laughter while,



in the darkness, Finnegan rubbed his eyes with growing anger. When, however, they told him what had happened, his mood changed.

"To think of me sleepin' through all the fun!" he lamented. "I'm a bloomin' guard, I am."

"It's all right, Finnegan," Billy assured him. "You wasn't on duty. You'd a right to sleep."

"You're on duty now, though," Barney added. "Billy, you turn in, an' I'll keep him awake if I have to stick pins in him."

"All right. Wake me when time's up," said Billy, and in two minutes he was sound asleep.

"Ain't much use us keepin' watch now," Barney said in a low tone. "If there was anybody hangin' 'round that rumpus would have scared 'em off. They'd know we were watchin' fer 'em."

"Then why can't we turn in an' get some sleep?" questioned Finnegan with a yawn.

"*Sleep!*" growled Barney. "Scouts obey orders, don't they? Scout Master ordered us to watch, an' we're goin' to watch till mornin'."

"Oh, all right. Keep yer hair on!" retorted Finnegan gruffly, and for a while no more was said.

Three hours later, Barney took his turn sleeping, and Billy joined Finnegan on guard.

"All foolishness—us watchin' the rest of the night," Finnegan grumbled towards morning.



"Nobody'd come now when it's almost daylight."

Barney opened his eyes then and stretched himself with a laugh.

"Of all the sleepy-heads!" he exclaimed. "Flopp down then, an' *sleep!* I've had enough," and he sat down beside Billy.

Long fingers of light were showing now among the trees, and in silence the two boys watched them brighten, while roosters flung their challenges over wide spaces, and the hoarse cawing of the crows sounded across the river.

Finally Barney dug an elbow into Billy's ribs, and pointed to Finnegan sitting bolt upright against a tree-trunk, sound asleep. "Look!" he said. "Wouldn't he win first honour as a sleeper?"

Billy grinned. Then, "Me for a swim," he said, and was up and away, Barney following, to the river.

Later, two coloured men appeared, big, husky fellows, bringing fresh eggs and a loaf of home-made bread.

"Hope you-all ain' none de worse fer las' night," one of them said, with a laugh that showed a set of perfect white teeth.

Barney grinned as he looked the man over. "Reckon I needn't be ashamed that I couldn't get the better of you," he said. "You've got arms like a blacksmith's."

"Yes, suh; that's w'at I is," the man laughed,



“but you shore did keep me hustlin’ to hol’ yer, there’n the dark. You clawed like a wildcat.” He touched a long scratch on his face.

“Arm all right?” Billy was asking the other man, who answered:

“Jes’ a little stiff, that’s all. My ol’ woman sent yer this fresh bread.”

“An’ yere’s some aigs right outen the nest,” the other man added.

“Thanks. We’ll have a bully dinner,” the boys told them. Then they all went over and examined the log walls.

“Good an’ hard now. Couldn’t get them logs off ’thout usin’ crowbars er axes on ’em,” the men declared.

The boys thought so, too. “But Sunday’s the day fer prowlers,” Barney said, “so we’ll stay ’round till towards night. Do you live near here?”

“Jes’ over the hill yondeh,” George answered, and Sam added, “We’ll listen out ter-night, an’ ef we hear any ’sturbance over yere, we’ll come an’ divestigate it sure.”

“Good. Wish you would. And some night after we get the house done, we’ll invite you over,” Barney said, which promise sent them off highly delighted.

The day passed quietly—a little heavily after a while. In the afternoon, Mr. Houston came down with the boys, Fred and Dick bringing some chocolate cake and plum turnovers which the boys greatly appreciated.



"We're livin' high to-day," Finnegan said, when their visitors had departed.

Later several groups of men or boys strolled through the woods and along the river banks, and some stopped to ask questions about the log-cabin, but no suspicious characters appeared. At sunset the three boys set off for home, stopping at their troop-hall when they reached the city, to post on the bulletin a notice that all was well at the country camp.

But later Jack coaxed his brother to fix up an alarm at the cabin. Wilson was interested in electrical experiments, and so was Sidney Hart.

"You might have an alarm that would ring at Mr. Houston's," Jack said.

"Oh, Mr. Houston wouldn't want to be bothered with it," Wilson returned.

"Well then, have it ring at Sam or George's," Jack suggested. "They'd like to have it—and like the fun of hunting up the prowlers."

"That's more like it," Wilson replied. "We'll see them about it, and maybe we can fix it up."

Sam and George were found to be more than willing to have the alarm in either house. Sam's was nearer the cabin, so it was decided to have it there. "But," Wilson said, "it will mean a lot of work—laying an underground wire all that distance."

Jack scoffed at that. "Work!" he cried. "It won't be much for so many of us. The fellows will all be glad to help and so make sure



that there'll be no more mischief done when we're not here."

There was no trouble about the work—all the boys were ready to help. And the plan was carried out without delay.

Each Friday night thereafter, the Scout Master, with as many of the troop as were free on Saturday, went out to work on the cabin. Their enthusiasm grew with the house. The cabin, when completed, was a piece of work of which the boys had a right to be proud. There was an outside chimney of stone and clay, with a big fireplace inside. Mr. Houston had assured the boys that they could have all the firewood they chose to gather or cut in his woods, and he furnished boards for the flooring and other purposes.

"You see, boys," he told them one day, "I thought I had stumped you when I offered you all the logs you wanted from the hollow there. I hadn't an idea that you would consider that offer. When you did, I was curious to see if you would stick to it and carry the thing through. I didn't believe you would. But you passed the test, and I consider that you all deserve special honours for doing so. Anyhow, I want the privilege of furnishing all the lumber you need for inside work."

"Three cheers for Mr. Houston!" somebody shouted, and the cheers were given with a will.

"There is only one name for this camp," Sid-



ney Hart exclaimed. "I move that we christen it Camp Houston."

It was so christened on the spot, and one of the boys who had considerable skill in burnt-wood work, brought out the next week a panel on which he had wrought the name in beautiful letters; and this was set over the fireplace.

The cabin completed, the boys made the furniture—a table with benches, a few chairs, and a bookshelf. They also put up a shelf for a mantelpiece, and three for a corner cupboard, and built in half a dozen sleeping-bunks for use in an emergency. The windows were covered outside with strong wire netting as a protection to the glass.



## VI

### TREASURE TROVE

**T**ROOP 5 was spending a week-end at Camp Houston. This was their very own, and it had a charm for them that no other place had, so most of their hikes began or ended at the camp. The Scout Master had been thinking this over, and one day he suggested, "Boys, wouldn't it be a good idea for us to learn all we can about this corner of Virginia? There was fighting hereabouts in the Civil War, and there are still remains of earth-works here and there. Since this is our own camp, I'd like to know all that there is to be known about the neighbourhood, wouldn't you?"

"It would be a fine way to study history," Sidney Hart agreed, his eyes full of interest.

The Master went on, "I've found, at the library, some books that will help us, and I think we shall all be interested in locating historic spots. Probably there are still a few old people to be found who lived hereabouts during the war, and we may get some first-hand stories from them."

"Old Moses lived right here in his cabin then," Sidney said. "He told me a little about



the war one day. I think your plan is fine, Mr. Marshall."

"What is it, Jack?" the Master inquired. "Did Uncle Moses tell you war stories, too?"

"Not about the fighting"—Jack's face was full of eagerness, "but he told me an awfully interesting story about the family he lived with then. He said all the men were in the army—Confederate, of course—and he was left to look after the women and children. And the night before his master went away, he and Moses buried all their silver—a great lot of it—in the woods. Afterwards, the house was burned down and part of the woods, and after *that*, they couldn't find the place where the silver was buried—and it never has been found. Oh, Mr. Marshall, I *wish* we could hunt for that silver! Don't you think we might? Uncle Moses could help us locate it." Jack's voice was so impressive, and his eyes so wide and earnest, that he held the attention of all the group; but a ripple of laughter followed his last words, and two or three voices called out:

"A treasure hunt. Jack's hankering for another treasure hunt."

"Yes, but this would be a real one—and just think how fine it would be if we could find that silver and send it to the owners. Uncle Moses says there are just two old ladies left now, of all the family, and they're awf'ly poor."

"But, Jack," the Scout Master said in his kindest voice, "Moses and others must have



searched many times for that silver. Probably somebody else found it and carried it off long ago. Remember it is nearly half a century since the war."

"Yes," Jack admitted, "but—but we *might* find it, you know. And, anyhow—it would be fun to hunt—for *real* treasure——" He flashed a laughing glance at Sidney Hart, recalling another treasure hunt that Sidney's father had planned.

"No harm in hunting, if the kid wants to," Sidney said. "I'm willing to help, Jack."

Jack gave him a grateful smile.

"And I."

"Me too," a dozen voices echoed. Jack was the troop favourite; not a boy in it who would not do anything he could for Jack Harding.

The Master looked about the group with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Very well, if you all want another treasure hunt, I have no objection," he said.

"Oh, *good!*" Jack jumped up with a happy little skip. "To-morrow, Mr. Marshall?"

"Yes, to-morrow, if all agree."

There was no objection—indeed, the Scout Master noted with some amusement that there was a very general interest in the plan.

"Say—I'll run over and get Uncle Moses to come and tell you about it—how they hid it, and all," Jack suggested breathlessly. "It's a good yarn, and he likes to tell it."

"You bet he does—and adds new trimmings



every time he tells it," Wilson said in a low tone to Sidney Hart.

"Very well, Jack, you and Burns can go for Uncle Moses," the Scout Master answered, and the two went off, Jack's slender figure dancing along beside the heavier and slower one of Billy Burns.

They came back presently with the old darkey limping along behind them, vastly delighted at the opportunity of repeating his oft-told tale to such an interested audience. The boys found a box for a seat for the old man, and the firelight shone on his dark, wrinkled face under the thick white hair, his sunken eyes gleaming beneath shaggy, grizzled brows. He told his story well—did old Moses—and the boys listened spell-bound, and when the tale was told, bombarded him with questions.

It was agreed that he should go with them and direct the search, which he was more than willing to do when he was assured that, if the treasure should be found, it would all be given to the original owners.

So the next morning, as soon as breakfast was over and camp duties done, the treasure hunt began. The old man led the way to a big stretch of woods about half a mile from the camp. He showed the boys the site of the old mansion, where crumbled brick and stone in the grass-grown hollows corroborated his story. Then he followed, as nearly as he remembered it, the path he and "Ol' Mahster" had taken on



that long-ago night, carrying the silver between them in a basket. They had located the spot where they buried it, by a big gum tree and three great oaks, but the flames that destroyed the mansion had kindled a forest fire that burned for days, and when, at last, rains extinguished it, the oaks and the gum tree had vanished; and since then, a new forest had sprung up.

"Hum! It's the needle in the haystack, sure enough," Sidney Hart said as he looked about. "The stuff might have been buried anywhere within a quarter of a mile, so far as old Moses knows."

"Or dug up any time in the last fifty years," Wilson added.

The old darkey interposed quickly. "No, suh; no, suh! Ain' nobody done dug h'it up. I done kep' too close watch fer dat."

"Watched every night for fifty years, I s'pose," snickered Miller in Wilson's ear.

"Kid—this is a wild-goose chase," Wilson said, his arm across his young brother's shoulders.

"Oh, Will, don't back out!" Jack implored. "We *might* find it, you know—and, anyhow, with so many of us, it wouldn't take so awf'ly long to dig up all this part of the woods."

"Wouldn't, eh? Wait till you try," Wilson retorted. "It won't be easy digging among all these roots." But at that Jack looked so disappointed that Wilson instantly relented. "All right, kid, pull up the corners of your mouth,



and bring me one of those picks. We'll give the thing a try, to please you."

Old Moses had brought over a miscellaneous collection of pick-axes and spades and shovels, and now the boys set to work, digging at random within the limits marked by the old man. He limped from group to group, entertaining the boys with war stories which, Wilson declared, were manufactured for the occasion; but Jack had the utmost faith in them all.

"Why, he *lived* right here all through the war. He couldn't *help* seeing and hearing things about the soldiers—could he, Billy?" Jack said, to which Billy answered in noncommittal fashion:

"I reckon." But nobody dug more steadily than he.

At noon they stopped work and ate the lunch they had brought with them. By this time, the interest and enthusiasm of the boys were waning. The digging was hard work, as aching backs and blistered hands testified. When Miller declared that he didn't believe that the stuff was there, anyhow, he voiced the general opinion. But Jack and a few others were still unwilling to give up.

Part of the boys went back to camp after lunch, but most of them stayed and continued to dig, though with less and less interest and zeal as the hours passed, and no discoveries rewarded their hard labours. There was a little stir of interest when Miller picked up some



stone arrowheads, and when Finnegan unearthed a broken pistol—rusty and useless though it was—he was regarded with envy. That old pistol had a history—perhaps. Every boy in the group coveted it.

But the buried treasure, if there was any, remained securely hidden, and old Moses and Jack Harding were about equally disappointed. There was no happy shine in Jack's eyes as the tired boys trooped back to camp at sunset—no radiant smile flashing a quick response when any one spoke to him. Billy cast troubled glances at the younger boy's grave face.

“Say, Jack, we won't give it up,” he said in a low tone. “Next time we come, we'll have another try at it—you an' me.”

Jack brightened a little at that, and slipped his hand over Billy's arm. “Oh, will you, Billy?” he said. “Somehow I can't bear to think of those poor old ladies never having what belongs to them. I don't suppose really, there is much chance now of finding it, but I'd like to try again.”

“We will—don't you fret,” Billy replied, and was amply rewarded by seeing the shadows disappear from Jack's eyes.

It seemed as if the day's fruitless search had settled, once for all, the question of the buried war-treasure, as indeed it had for all but Jack and Billy. Billy Burns did so hate to give up a thing that he had undertaken, and he hated yet more to have Jack Harding disappointed.



So the next time that the troop went to Camp Houston to stay over Saturday, Jack and Billy planned another search. Jack reluctantly admitted that it was rather a hopeless undertaking, for how could they two expect to succeed where so many had failed?

"But we might happen to find the silver, Billy—we might just *happen* to, you know," Jack said.

"Yes, we might," Billy agreed gravely, but not hopefully.

They were on their way to the woods, pick and spade over their shoulders—over Billy's shoulders rather, for he had insisted upon carrying both—and Pal was playfully circling about them. Pal loved these days with the troop.

All the morning they searched, digging here and there, but always with the same result. In the middle of the afternoon Jack suddenly decided that it was useless to dig any more.

"I reckon somebody must have found the stuff," he said disconsolately, "or maybe Uncle Moses has forgotten what part of the woods it was buried in, anyhow. The fire must have changed the woods a lot—I mean the new trees that grew up after it. I'm tired, Billy, and you must be too. Let's rest a while before we go back to camp."

They stretched out on the grass and rested for a little.

"Billy, it seems good to have you without that Duff tagging along as he generally is. How



did it happen he didn't come this time?" Jack said after a little silence.

"Got an uncle visiting him."

"Huh! Hope he'll stay a year," returned Jack. "Billy, I get real mad at you sometimes when you let him tag you all the time so—times when I'm wanting you."

"But you see, kid, nobody wants Duff—that's the trouble. How would you feel if nobody wanted you, an' you got left out of everything?"

"I—that would be pretty tough," Jack admitted frankly, "but—but you don't have to be with him all the *time*."

Billy repeated his familiar formula, "He's a Scout-brother, Jack. Somebody's got to help him make good."

"Oh, I suppose so," Jack agreed, "but—Hark, somebody's coming! I hear voices."

"Some of the fellers, I reckon," said Billy.

"Let's hide," Jack suggested gleefully. "Let's climb that big old oak—they can't see us up there in the branches."

But the voices sounded more faintly, and presently were heard no more.

"Had our trouble for our pains, didn't we?" Jack laughed. "They've gone on, whoever they were, and I'm getting hungry. Come on down."

As he spoke, he began to descend, a little carelessly. His foot slipped, and as he crashed down, the limb on which he landed gave way under him, split from the main trunk, and fell to the ground.



Billy called out anxiously, "You all right, Jack?"

"Yes, all right," Jack returned. "I've got hold of this other limb. But it's lucky I didn't slip down inside the trunk. I believe it's hollow all the way down." He broke a piece of bark that was hanging loose and dropped it into the opening. Then the boys exchanged startled glances.

"*Jingo!*" shouted Jack. "Let's get down quick—*quick!*"

"No hurry. Be careful," Billy warned, but already Jack was scrambling hastily to the ground, and the next minute Billy was beside him there.

"You heard it?" Jack questioned breathlessly. "It—it sounded as if it struck metal."

"It sure did sound—queer," Billy admitted.

"We'll break open the trunk. It won't be much trouble, it's so rotten." Jack ran for the pick.

Billy took it from him and struck the tree-trunk a heavy blow. The pick stuck fast in the bark, and as he pulled at it, a great piece of the trunk fell away, disclosing a cavity big enough to hold both boys. It held something else—a big basket covered with a piece of sack-  
ing.

The boys stared at the basket and then at each other with incredulous eyes.

"It isn't—it couldn't be—— That was *buried*," Jack stammered.



" Might have been dug up, an' hid here afterwards," Billy suggested.

" But—but it looks too new—the basket—doesn't it?" Jack cried, too excited to know what he was saying.

" We'd better look—maybe it's not silver at all, Jack."

But it was silver. Under the sacking they found a large bag full of silver, big and little pieces. There were three gold watches, too, and some jewels. Jack was wildly excited.

" We've found it. We've found it, Billy Burns—we have! We *have!* Isn't it *bully?* Gee! But I'm glad we tried this once more. Can we lug it back to camp? *Won't* the boys be surprised!"

" We could, but we might meet somebody who'd take it away from us," said Billy cautiously. " Maybe it's worth a lot, you know. Let's put that big piece of bark back like it was, and I'll stay here an' keep watch while you run back to camp an' get two of the big fellows—or Mr. Marshall—to come back with you," was Billy's suggestion.

Jack was the swiftest runner in the troop. Without another word he was off, and in a very short time was back with Barney Doyle and the Scout Master.

" Jack tells me that you have found the lost treasure," the Scout Master said. He was rather incredulous about the " find."

They lifted out the basket now, and examined



its contents more carefully than Jack and Billy had done.

"It is hidden treasure, sure enough," the Master admitted, "but not the war-treasure you were hunting for. See—this watch has the date 1901, and this silver cup is dated 1905. I fancy you have discovered some thief's hiding-place."

"Oh, what a shame! Then it won't help those old ladies a bit," Jack lamented.

"I'm afraid not, but some other people may have reason to thank you, boys. Do you remember some months ago, there was a series of robberies in the city? I remember reading about it in the papers. I shouldn't wonder if this is some of the loot."

"But why would it be left here?" Jack questioned.

"The thief may not have dared to dispose of it—or he may have been caught."

"Well—what shall we do with it?"

"I think we will ask Mr. Houston to keep it till we can communicate with the police. They can probably find the owners—or some of them. If there was a reward offered, you and Billy will get it, of course."

"We don't want any reward," said Jack, and Billy added, with a laugh, "We had the fun of finding it."

"You could turn the reward into the troop fund," was Barney's practical suggestion.

"Or maybe, find some way of sending it to



those old ladies, Jack," the Scout Master added; at which Jack brightened.

The silver was carried to the camp, where the rest of the boys looked it over with the liveliest interest, and then it was left in charge of Mr. Houston. Jack and Billy were the heroes of the day. They had found "real" treasure and about the campfire that night they had to tell all the details of their discovery, and answer a score of eager questions. Old Uncle Moses was among the most interested of the listeners. It was a bitter disappointment to him that it was not the silver of the family he loved so loyally, but he found consolation of a sort.

"You-all done foun' *somefin*, anyway," he said, "en where dere's some, dere may be more. I ain' giv' up hopin' yet."

"That's right, old scout. Keep hoping and hunting, and I bet you'll stumble on that treasure yet." So Miller encouraged the old man.

The Scout Master's surmise proved correct. The police found the owners of the silver. The reward of one hundred dollars was turned over to Jack and Billy, and the Scout Master found a way to put it into the hands of the two old ladies—which was some consolation to Jack and Uncle Moses.



## VII

### TWO "GOOD TURNS"

"I HARDLY think I need remind you that 'Boy Scout week' begins to-morrow," the Scout Master said with a smile, at the close of the first February meeting of the troop. "We want Troop 5 to make a fine showing, and I know that every boy belonging to it will do his best. As many as possible meet me here to-morrow morning at ten-thirty and we will march over to the stone Church, where seats will be reserved for us."

"At *our* church—isn't that jolly!" Jack leaned over to whisper in Billy's ear.

The Master went on, "There will be no hike to-morrow, since this will be such a full week, but I hope you all will be here for the anniversary meeting on Monday night. We shall want to hear about as many of the 'special kindnesses' as we have time for. And now we must decide what shall be our troop 'good turn.' Has any one a suggestion to make?"

Several suggestions were made by the older boys before the Master called on Jack Harding.

"You look as if you knew of some particularly fine 'turn.' Do you, Jack?"



“Yes, sir—I think so, anyhow,” Jack replied eagerly. “I wish we could go to the children’s hospital. There’s a lot of boys there. A few of them are Scouts and I reckon they’d all like to be.” A laugh went around the room at that. Jack hurried on, “Couldn’t we march over there and give them some music outside, and then go through the wards and just shake hands with them? I go there sometimes, and they always seem to like to see me.”

“I should think they would,” was the Master’s thought, as he looked into the happy blue eyes. Aloud, he said, “What do you think of Jack’s proposal, boys? Any objection?”

There was no objection.

“Anybody prefer one of the other plans proposed?”

“I don’t think we can improve on Jack’s suggestion,” Sidney Hart said, and arrangements were made to carry it out.

“Say, Billy, walk on a little way with me,” Jack coaxed, slipping his arm through Billy’s as they left the troop-hall. “I want to tell you what I’m going to do for my special ‘good turn.’”

“Wish I could, kid,” Billy answered, “but Charlie’s waiting for me over there—see?”

Jack flung away with an impatient scowl. “I’m sick of the sight of that Charlie Duff. He’s *always* in the way when I want you. Go along with your old Putty Duff then!”

Billy hesitated a moment. It was so seldom



that Jack got "mad" like that. He was usually so good-natured and thoughtful!

"You know I'd a heap rather go with you, Jack," Billy protested, "and—and you know why I can't."

"Don't either," Jack snapped, turning his back, and he went off without even a "good-night."

Billy looked after him wistfully for a moment, then joined Charlie Duff, only to be greeted with a gruff, "Why didn't you keep me waiting all night?"

A sharp reply trembled on Billy's tongue. If everybody—even Jack—was in an ugly temper to-night, why should he alone keep the peace? He opened his mouth, but before the first word was spoken, swift steps came behind him and Jack's hand slipped into his.

"Good-night, old Billy Burns. I was a beast—forget it, *please*," Jack whispered in his ear, and was gone.

"What 'd he say?" Duff demanded sulkily.

Billy ignored the question. "What you going to do for a 'special kindness' to-morrow?" he inquired.

"Huh! How do I know? Any old thing I can think of—likely."

"What's the matter, Charlie?" Billy asked the question in a quiet, friendly tone.

"How would you like it yourself to be treated like I am?" Charlie burst out. "The fellers all give me the cold shoulder. You know your-



self they do. None of 'em speak to me if they can help it."

"Oh, come, Charlie—you know that ain't so," Billy remonstrated.

"'Tis so, too. Ain't one in the troop but you ever comes near me."

"Well, I do, so you needn't take it out on me."

"*You* don't do it because you want to. You don't like me any better than the rest of 'em do—you know you don't, Billy Burns."

"Yes, I do, Charlie."

"You don't either," Charlie snarled.

"Oh, well, if you want to give me the lie——"

"I'm sick of it—sick of the old Scout business—sick of everything!" Charlie flung out, his hands in his pockets, his mouth drooping at the corners.

"What makes you so blue to-night?" Billy asked. "Anything special?"

Charlie did not answer. When he spoke again it was to say, "I've 'bout made up my mind to drop out of the troop, anyhow."

"Oh, no, Charlie! Billy flung an arm across the other boy's shoulders. "Don't say that."

"It's no use," Charlie went on drearily. "I'm tired an' sick of digging the way you want me to. What'll it all amount to, anyhow?"

"Lots," Billy answered quickly. "It would be a shame to give up now when you've worked so hard all these weeks. You're sure to win honours if you keep at it a little longer—sure."



And, listen—I heard Sidney Hart say that the president is going to give the honours next time. It would be fine to get yours from him, wouldn't it?"

Duff manifested but a languid interest. "Huh, I don't know as I'd care much," he answered.

"You're way ahead of the rest of us in bird-study—unless, maybe Miller—an' I know you'll win honours for that; an' if you'll dig a bit harder for a while you'll get others. It'd be a shame to give up now when you've almost won," Billy urged.

"Aw—well," Charlie yielded, "I s'pose I can hang on a while longer, but——"

"That's a good fellow," Billy said heartily. "If I knew as much about birds as you do, I'd stick to it till I knew every bird in Maryland and Virginia. You know a lot more of 'em than I do a'ready."

"Huh—birds!" grumbled Charlie. "You beat 'em all in first aid—you know you do, an' in physical development, too."

"Oh, that," returned Billy. "I had to learn them—those, I mean—'cause——"

"'Cause what?" Charlie's curiosity was stirred by Billy's abrupt pause.

Billy coloured—he had not meant to tell Charlie Duff the hope that was growing in the depths of his soul. He had not told that even to Jack. Only the Scout Master had guessed it.



“ ’Cause what? ” Charlie persisted obstinately.

“ What you going to work at when you grow up? ” Billy asked.

“ I d’know. I’m askin’ you—’cause what? ” Charlie repeated.

“ Well, ” Billy felt the hot colour in his cheeks and was glad that the darkness hid it from his companion. “ Well, you see, I’d like to be a doctor. Maybe I never can be, of course, but that’s what I’d like best. That’s why I’ve got my honours in first aid—seem’s like that kind o’ thing comes easy to me. ”

“ You a doctor—*rats!* ” Charlie shouted with laughter at the idea.

In the darkness Billy shrank away from him, muttering, “ I was a fool to tell you that. ”

“ What’d you say? ”

“ No matter! ” returned Billy shortly.

“ Needn’t get huffy. ”

“ I ain’t huffy. ”

“ Sounds mighty like it, ” retorted Charlie. He felt better now that he had wormed Billy’s secret out of him. He would pass it round among the fellows, and some of them would plague the life out of Billy. Charlie chuckled over the idea.

In many churches the next day seats were reserved for the Scouts, and some of the pastors spoke especially to them, and of their organisation and its work.

On Monday as many of the boys as were free



went to the Children's Hospital. At the first notes of the bugle call, the front windows of the long building were crowded with young faces—thin white faces, most of them—some haggard and lined with pain. There were girls as well as boys at the windows, and all the faces brightened, and tired eyes smiled as the drum and bugle corps played. Finally the superintendent, standing in the doorway, said, "The children are asking for 'Dixie.' They like that best of all."

So the corps played the gay, rollicking tune, and the children laughed and clapped their hands, some joining in the chorus.

Then the boys went in, for, as Jack explained, "Some can't get out of bed, you know"—and passed from cot to cot in the long, sunny rooms, answering countless questions. At one cot, every Scout looked down with grave eyes and a dumb, aching sympathy. The little creature on that cot, with his great, sorrowful eyes, his blue-white skin, and hands like bird-claws—was a boy like them, but a boy who had been starved and neglected and beaten by his own parents—so the nurse told them. He was too weak and ill to speak, and there was no interest in his hollow eyes until Billy Burns looked down at him and took one of the claw-like hands in his two big and warm and strong ones. It almost seemed as if Billy breathed some of his own strength and vitality into this pitiful little "brother," for, after a moment, the bony fingers clung weakly



to Billy's and the pale shadow of a smile wavered across the pallid lips. That was all, but the nurse looked delighted.

"That's the first sign of interest he has shown in any one or anything since he was brought here," she whispered in Billy's ear. "I wish you'd come again."

"I will," Billy promised.

Jack had given one glance at this cot and turned quickly away. "I couldn't help him, and I was afraid I'd cry," he said quite simply to Billy as they left the hospital. "I didn't suppose any boy *could* look like that—and live."

They were all very sober when they left the hospital, until Don Frazer reminded them of the other children. "They sure did enjoy 'Dixie.' The nurse said some of them danced to the music," he said.

"Look here, boys," Jack Harding cried out. "I—I can't get that poor little kid's face out of my mind. I want to show you all another chap—not like that one. He's over at the Incurables. *He* won't make you choke up inside. He's the bravest fellow I know, and it would please him awf'ly to see us all and have us play and sing a bit to him. Will you go—with me?"

"Oh, I say, we've done our troop 'kindness'—one's enough," Miller protested.

"Take so long to go over to the Incurables!" Carter objected with a scowl.

"Not so very long," Don Frazer said, seeing the shadow of disappointment on Jack's face.



"No longer for the rest of us than for Jack. He goes there often," added Billy.

"I'm not going," Charlie Duff declared, stopping short on a corner.

"I'll go, Jack," Billy said quietly, and Don Frazer added, "So will I."

The other boys hesitated for a moment, then fell into line behind these three, leaving Charlie sulking alone on the corner. Jack swung along, his eyes once more sunny and happy, talking of the boy they were going to see.

"He's just about my age—most fourteen—and I think he ought to have a hero medal for bravery. Last summer he was as well and strong as any of us. Then he was run over by an auto, and now the doctors say he never can walk again. He gets around in a wheel-chair, and he's just as bright and jolly—never says a word about himself if he can help it; but he's just *hungry* to see other boys and hear 'em tell what fun they have. You'd think that would make him glum, wouldn't you? But it doesn't. You just ought to have seen him when I told him about our building the log-house, and our treasure hunts and everything."

"What's his name, kid?" asked Frazer.

"Grant Wilmer."

"Hasn't he any folks?"

"Just a father—no mother, and no brothers or sisters. His father is a government clerk. He's"—Jack's happy voice wavered a moment as he went on—"he's learning all we Scouts



learn as fast as he can—Grant is. Mr. Marshall has been over two or three times to see him. He thinks the Master is the finest ever!”

So Jack rattled on till they came to the hospital. Some of the boys half wished they had not come, now that they were there. The hollow eyes and cheeks of the little creature they had just seen were still so fresh in their minds! But Jack led the way, and they could not back out now, so they all followed.

“Hello, Grant,” and “Oh, hello, *Jack!*”

They heard the quick, glad interchange of greetings, and then Jack was proudly introducing his “hero” to his troop. No hollow eyes nor thin cheeks here. Grant Wilmer’s brown eyes were shining with pleasure, and his cheeks were flushed with joyful excitement. He sat in a wheel-chair, a rug covering his helpless limbs, and greeted his visitors with a smile as joyous as Jack’s.

“Oh, this is *great!* It’s—it’s bully of you all to come and see me. You must be Miller and I’m sure *you’re* Billy Burns.” He grasped a hand of each. “The rest of you I’m not sure of, though I know the name of every Scout in Troop 5.”

“Now, I wonder how that happens?” remarked Miller drily, with a passing glance at Jack, and they all laughed.

“The way Jack brags about you all!” Grant added. “He thinks there never was a troop like Troop 5.”



"No 'think' about it—I know Troop 5 beats the band!" Jack retorted gaily. "Say, Tubby, give Grant a lesson in signalling, won't you?"

Miller looked around gravely. "Don't see any flags," he said.

Jack plunged a hand into Miller's pocket and brought out two red and white flags. "Knew he had 'em. He sleeps with 'em under his pillow in case he should want to signal in his dreams," Jack laughed.

Not even Jack himself was ever more intensely interested in all that pertains to scouting than was this boy who never could hope to share its delights.

"Tell me some more—oh, come on, tell more," he begged as, gathered close about his chair, one after another told of some camp happening.

"Say, haven't some of you chaps a camera?"

Don had one, and Miller and Carter.

Grant looked at them with pleading in his brown eyes. "Then you must have Scout pictures—heaps of them. I'd like mighty well to see some of them. Got any of that log-cabin?"

"Sure," Miller told him. "I'll bring some over next time I come."

"*Next* time!" Grant looked at him with shining eyes. "So there's going to be a next time? Say, make it soon, won't you? But no—I won't ask that. Come any old time if you'll only come. This is anniversary week, isn't it? What's the 'troop good turn'?"



The fun and laughter died swiftly out of the faces of the Scouts, and there was a moment's silence before Frazer said gravely, "We—we went to the Children's Hospital and played for 'em."

Grant's eyes flashed over the drums and bugles. "Gee, they must have liked that—poor little chaps," he said.

"Yes," Don answered soberly, "they did—most of them," and then in a very few words he told of the one who had too little life in him to enjoy anything.

Grant's eyes filled. "*George!* That's hard lines," he muttered; then flashed a smile as bright as any of Jack's about the group. "That was a splendid troop 'kindness'—and here you are doing another one. Troop 5 ought to take Anniversary Day honours—if you ask me!"

"Ho!" laughed Jack. "It isn't a 'kindness' to come and see you. It's just good fun, isn't it, boys?"

"The best kind," two or three voices declared.

Grant smiled back at them; then he pulled out a copy of "Boys' Life," and turned to the "Lonesome Corner."

"That's my 'good turn' for Anniversary Day," he told them blithely. "Read that letter? It's from a little fellow that lives way up on a mountain in New England. He's wild to be a Scout, but can't, because he's too lame to get up and down the long mountain trail. Too bad,



isn't it—and he such a bright chap—must be, or he couldn't write such a fine letter. I've been writing to him to-day. Of course he won't care half as much for my letter as he would if I were a Scout, but I've told him some of the things Jack had told me about you all, an' I bet he'll like that. Say—when I was lying awake last night, I thought maybe, after I've learned a lot more of the scouting—what Scouts have to learn and do, I mean—I thought maybe, we might get up a shut-in troop—all the members to write each other regularly as a troop duty since they can't do the outdoor things—and keep each other posted on all the Scout events. What do you think? Would it work? Suppose I could possibly start the thing, and keep it going?"

"I think it's a splendid idea," Jack cried out, "splendid, Grant."

The other boys thought so, too. They talked it over, making various suggestions, most of which Grant eagerly accepted.

"I'll supply you with as many photos as I can—Scout photos," Miller promised, and Don added:

"I, too; and I'll get some from others in our troop that have cameras. You might pass 'em along, you know."

Then Don sprang up. "That's five o'clock. We've been here over an hour!" he exclaimed.

"Seems 'bout ten minutes," Grant said, and he added earnestly, "It's been the happiest hour



I've had since—since I've been here. Well, I won't beg you to stay, nor even to come again, but if any of you *do* come, you'd better believe you'll be welcome."

They all promised to come again.

"If you—if you don't mind pushing this limousine of mine out on the piazza, I can see you a bit longer—as you march down the street," Grant said.

They wheeled him out on the big piazza. Then Jack whispered to Don:

"Wait just a minute," and ran back into the house. He came out again, his eyes shining as they always did when he was planning an especially delightful "turn" for somebody.

"Can't we stop and play a bit for Grant? He'd like it so!" he whispered again to Don. "I asked, and they said it wouldn't trouble any of the sick people here."

Don nodded and passed the word along, and the boys, having bade Grant good-bye and started off in fine marching order, suddenly wheeled and, facing him, gave the bugle calls of the camp; then two of their favourite songs.

Grant's face flushed and paled and flushed again, and when they ended with "taps," saluted, and then swung off down the street, Grant clapped until his hands smarted.

"Isn't he one of the finest *ever*?" Jack cried as he turned to wave his hand as they reached the corner.

"He's a hero for true," Billy said. "Nothin'



a fellow could *do* would be so hard as sitting there not doing—anything——”

“And no hope of anything else,” Miller added. “I couldn’t take it with a laugh as he does.”

“He made me forget all about it,” added Carter. “Honest, I did forget it while he was buzzing questions at us a mile a minute. He’s plucky all right.”

Suddenly Miller turned and shook his fist in Jack Harding’s face.

“See here, kid—don’t you wheedle us into visiting any more of your shut-ins. If you do we sha’n’t have time to eat, and I’m so hungry this minute that I could eat a porcupine, quills and all—*raw!*” he said.

That was the beginning of happy days for Grant Wilmer. Jack went on his wheel to see him every week, and Billy went as often as he could get the time, which was not very often, since he was still labouring with Charlie Duff. The other boys went occasionally, and they all became good friends with the brave little fellow whose cheerful acceptance of the hard conditions of his life made them ashamed oftentimes, of their own fault-finding over small trials.

But this Anniversary week was crowded to the limit. On Monday evening every member of Troop 5 was in his place in their assembly hall, all eyes watching the clock. As the hands pointed to eight-fifteen the boys were on their feet, standing at attention. They gave the Scout salute, and then together repeated the Scout



oath. A moment of utter silence followed, and every boy had a swift vision of the thousands of Boy Scouts of America, all joining with them in this expression of loyalty to Scout ideals.

Greetings from the Chief Scout were read, and reports given of the troop "good turn," for the benefit of those who were unable to take part in it, and of the special anniversary "kindness" of individual boys. Those who had been at the Incurables gave an enthusiastic account of Grant Wilmer which aroused general interest in the troop—an interest that deepened as they heard of Grant's plan for a Shut-in Troop. That touched the generous hearts under the khaki. A shut-in troop—missing the fun of hikes and camping and all the good out-of-doors life—lacking the vigorous *life* itself that sent the blood tingling to their finger-tips as they tramped and worked and frolicked!

"I reckon it's up to this troop to help out that chap," one boy said, and at that Don Frazer spoke quickly.

"I move that we appoint a committee to have charge of that and keep us all up to time—I mean, to plan it out, giving each fellow in the troop something to do for that shut-in troop, and to keep after us and see that nobody forgets or neglects his particular job. We don't any of us mean to forget or shirk, of course, but there are so many things to think of!"

This proposal met the approval of the troop,



and the committee was appointed, with Don as chairman.

"That's more than I bargained for," he grumbled, "but I'll do the best I can."

Thursday was the great day of the week for the Washington Scouts. On that day there was a meeting of the National Council, and a reception by the President at the White House, where Eagle badges were awarded to six boys. The Eagle badge marks the highest rank a Scout can attain. Two boys only in Troop 5 were so honoured—Sidney Hart and Don Frazer—but a number of boys in the troop were working hard for this honour, among them Billy Burns and Jack Harding, both of whom hoped to receive it on the next anniversary.

In the evening came the great rally at Convention Hall. The immense auditorium was hung with flags and troop banners. The platform for the speakers was at one side, and seats for the audience were so arranged as to leave all the centre of the hall for the boys. For weeks they had been drilling for this great occasion, and now an endless procession of boys in khaki poured into the hall—from little fellows who looked no more than ten, though they must have been twelve—to big brawny chaps like Barney and Nolan. Some had the right sleeve half covered with badges and medals. Drum and bugle corps were much in evidence.

There were skill tests of all sorts, from tying the various knots to scaling rope and pole work,



tower work, and human pyramids. There were semaphore drills and setting-up drills, and races, including an equipment race, first aid demonstrations with bandages and stretcher drills, etc.

Then came troop "stunts." A suburban volunteer fire troop gave a drill, the bicycle corps a demonstration, and one troop formed a human compass. The boys of Troop 5 appeared with a bundle of long, slender poles which they bound together with ropes and smaller poles, spreading them out, wigwam-fashion at the bottom. Jack Harding, who could climb like a monkey, went up one of the slender poles, and bound them all securely together where they crossed, about a third from the top. Dropping one end of a string, another boy tied to it a bit of board half a yard long. Jack drew it up and secured it between the ends of the long poles, and stepped lightly up on it. Again he lowered the string and a flag was tied to it. That Jack lashed to one of the poles, and under it the troop flag. He looked a gallant little figure as he stood erect on that slight support high above the floor, the flags over his head. As a burst of applause greeted him, he began swiftly untying the ropes, and before the applause died out, he was sliding down to the floor.

After that there was an address by Dan Beard, and then the great day was over, and the streets around Convention Hall thronged with Boy Scouts and their friends. Charlie Duff as usual,



was close beside Billy as they left the hall. Half a dozen boys were talking at once about the stunts and exhibitions. Billy, as was his wont, said little, but lent a ready ear to those who wanted to talk. Charlie was grumbling because some other troops had won more applause than Troop 5.

"We did better than half the others," he said, "but they didn't clap us—only just when Jack Harding got up there with the flags. That wasn't much. I could have done that as well as he did, but everything that Harding does—goes."

"I couldn't have done that—I'm too heavy and slow," Billy replied.

"Oh, *you!*" Charlie's tone was scornful; "you don't need to do much—you're sure to get the honours, anyhow."

"What d'ye mean by that, Duff?" Barney demanded, overhearing the words.

"I mean," Charlie glanced over his shoulder to see who was within hearing, "that Billy can get honours without any extra work. Scout Master'll see to that. *Ouch!* Le' me 'lone, Barney Doyle." For Barney had seized Duff's ear and given it a vicious tweak, and Barney's voice spoke low in that same ear. "You're a liar an' you know it, Duff. Billy gets what he earns an' no more, same's the rest of us do. An' listen to me, Duff—you're findin' too much fault with things lately—too much fer your own good. You're a quitter—that's what *you* are—an'



there's no place in Troop 5 for a quitter. Now, put that in your pipe an' smoke it. If I hear any more snarling out of you, you'll wish I hadn't, that's all. Come back here, Billy, I've got something to say to you. Come on."

Billy hesitated, then joined Barney. "He'll get mad an' leave the troop, Barney," he said in a low tone.

"An' a good thing fer the troop if he does," retorted Barney. "I tell ye he's no good. You're wastin' time tryin' to pull him up, Billy."

Billy sighed. "I d'know what ails him lately. He didn't use to be so grouchy."

"Let me catch him at it again—that's all!" Barney growled. "He's the limit."

"If he drops out of the troop he'll go all to pieces," Billy protested. "You know that, Barney—and he's got on a lot lately. He ought to get some honours at the next examination."

"Huh—honours! It's you he'll have to thank if he does," Barney answered; "an' he won't thank you, either. He'll jest swagger 'round an' act as if he'd done it all himself."

"Oh, well, what if he does? I don't care, so long as he wins. Don't you see, Barney," Billy's voice was very earnest, "he's a brother, even if he is a—a——"

"Yes, 'a—a,'" Barney mocked, "a quitter an' a skulker—that's what he is. Brother or no brother, I'd like to kick him out of this troop if fer nothin' else, jest fer the way he treats you."



Billy laughed and rubbed his shoulder against Barney's broad one. "As if I cared how he treats me! *You'll* never go back on me, Barney. What do I care if a chap like him does? And besides, I'm sorry for him. Nobody likes him an' he knows it—that's what sours him."

"It's his own fault," Barney returned. "You can't make me sorry for Putty Duff. He's worse than Slater an' Jones, if you ask me, fer I don't believe they would go back on a friend, the way Duff goes back on you."

Billy passed that by. "Seen 'em lately—them two?"

Barney shook his head. "They'll take good care to keep out o' my sight unless they're huntin' fer trouble," he said shortly.



## VIII

### MARCH THIRD IN WASHINGTON

**J**ACK HARDING knocked at the Scout Master's door one evening in late February, and entering, straightway told his errand.

“I want to find some place for a troop of Boy Scouts to stay Inauguration week. Father says every boarding- and rooming-house will be packed, and the boys better stay at home. But they'll be so awf'ly disappointed if they have to do that!”

“Who are the boys? How did you hear about them, Jack?”

“Why, I met one of them—Jimmy Hunter, his name is—up in the mountains last summer. You know, we have a summer cottage in Jackson, New Hampshire, and Jimmy's aunt lives up there, and he was staying with her. He's a real nice boy. I liked him first-rate. 'Course I told him all about our troop, and he said he was going to join the Scouts when he went home, and he did. He'd set his heart on coming here to Washington for the Inauguration, and he got the rest of his troop interested, and they've been working and saving up all winter. And now, at the last minute, they've heard that



they can't possibly find quarters here—that every house is engaged full up, with cots in the halls and everywhere, and they're *desperately* disappointed!" Jack ended, his face as serious as if he himself were one of the desperately disappointed ones. He added in a little coaxing way he had, "Wouldn't it be a fine Scout kindness, Mr. Marshall, to help them—when they've worked so hard to earn their money?"

"It would, Jack," the Scout Master agreed, "but I really do not see how it is to be done. Probably all the rooms *are* engaged, for an unusually large crowd of strangers is expected this year."

"I know," Jack agreed sorrowfully, "because this will be the first Democratic inauguration for years, so all the Democrats want to come and see their President go in. I don't blame them, but I do *wish* that we could help those boys. I just can't bear to write Jimmy that there is no place for them. Seems as if twenty-four boys might be squeezed in *somewhere*, doesn't it?"

"It does—but, you see, they would want to be together, and twenty-four is a large number for one house."

"Seems as if they might let them camp in the schoolhouses or—or the churches, doesn't it? Oh, I've got an idea—I *have*! I'll come back and tell you if it works," and with a swift salute and a beaming smile, Jack was gone.

Boarding a street-car, he was presently ringing a door-bell, and then waiting in a large,



pleasant, book-lined room before an open fire. But he paid no attention to his surroundings that night. His ears were strained for approaching footsteps, and when he heard them, he flew to meet his pastor.

"Oh, Dr. Wright, I'm so glad you were in!" he cried. "I've come to ask a very special favour. You *won't* say 'no,' will you?"

"Not if I can help it, Jack," the minister answered, with the look in his eyes that Jack met so often in the eyes of his friends.

"It's—it's—I'm afraid you'll think it's a funny thing to ask, and maybe you can't do it," Jack said with an anxious look. "When I first thought of it, it seemed as if it was *just* the right thing, but—but I'm not so sure now."

"Suppose you tell me all about it and we'll see what can be done," the minister said, drawing his chair and Jack's close together before the fire.

So Jack, his blue eyes shining and his cheeks flushed with excitement, told again the story of Jimmy Hunter and his comrades, and the bitter disappointment that seemed unavoidable.

"Too bad, too bad!" Dr. Wright said. "Boys who want so much to come ought to have the chance, but I don't see how I can help in this matter. What is the 'funny' thing you wanted to ask of me, Jack?"

Jack tipped his head with a sidewise, upward glance at once doubtful and imploring. "Why, I just thought of all the churches—so big and



empty—all except on Sunday—and I wondered if one of them couldn't be used for these boys. Oh, Dr. Wright—*couldn't ours?*”

The great question was out. Jack, half-abashed at his own daring, waited breathlessly, as he watched his pastor's face.

At any rate, the minister did not say “no” straight off. He looked surprised—even a bit startled, at first—then he sat staring at the fire and thinking. Jack almost held his breath now, for hope was growing in his heart. Maybe—oh, *maybe*—the minister *would* say “yes.”

He didn't, but neither did he say “no.” He said, “Wait a minute, Jack,” and went to the telephone in the next room. In a few minutes he came back and sat down again, smiling into the boy's eager eyes.

“I'm not sure, Jack, that we can do what you ask. I've 'phoned for Mr. Calton, and he'll be here presently. We'll talk it over with him and see if he thinks it possible. You see, it would mean extra work for him, and we don't like to put extra work on him—he has enough to do, anyway.”

“Yes, and he's such a nice man! I like Mr. Calton.” The people whom Jack “liked” were legion.

The minister kept the boy interested until the engineer appeared. Then he said, “Jack has a proposition to make to us, Calton. I'll let him tell his own story,” and, for the third time Jack told it, and for the third time anxiously awaited



an answer. Mr. Calton considered the matter even longer than Dr. Wright had done. Finally he said to the minister:

"Of course, sir, it isn't for me to decide this."

"No, but since it might make extra work for you—probably would—I wanted to know first how you would feel about it."

Mr. Calton looked at Jack—met the imploring gaze of the blue eyes, and yielded to their pleading.

"If they are nice boys, who would be quiet and orderly——" he began.

"They are *Scouts!*" said Jack, as if to be a Scout meant to possess all the virtues and none of the faults of ordinary boys.

The minister's eyes twinkled. "Since they are Scouts, then, Jack, you would hold yourself responsible for their good behaviour?"

"Why, of *course!*" Jack replied instantly. "And I'm sure, if they should hurt anything—damage anything in the church—my father would pay for it, though," he hastened to add, "you know I haven't said a word to him about this. I never even *thought* of using our church for the boys before I left home. It's my own idea, not father's *at all.*" He was anxious to assume the whole responsibility.

"I quite understand that, Jack."

"And maybe father wouldn't like it," the boy added.

"Maybe not. We shall have to let the trustees of the church decide the question of course,



and your father will have an opportunity to vote against it—and you—if he so pleases,” Dr. Wright said; but he did not look as if he anticipated any such action on the part of Mr. Harding. He turned again to Mr. Calton.

“The cushions from the pews could be laid on the chapel floor and would answer for mattresses. And for bedding——”

“The boys will bring their blankets, you know,” Jack interposed.

“Of course. I forgot that. Then I see no reason why we should not send the boys an invitation from the church. I will vote for it gladly, Jack.”

“Oh, thank you, *thank* you, doctor!” Jack cried, his face all aglow with unselfish delight, “and thank you, Mr. Calton. If there is any extra work on account of the boys, I’ll help you—I and some others from Troop 5. Oh, I’m so glad I can hardly wait to write to Jimmy Hunter. That troop will vote for you when you’re up for president, Dr. Wright,” he added with a gay little laugh, “and so will Troop 5. I’ll see that all the Scouts in this city know how nice you’ve been about it, and I’ll be just *proud* if our church does such a splendid thing! How soon can I know—about the vote of the trustees, I mean?”

“I’ll call a meeting to-morrow evening, and your father will let you know the result.”

“We-ell—I suppose I can wait, but it will



seem just *ages* till I know—and can write to Jimmy Hunter,” Jack said.

“A fine little chap, that,” Mr. Calton declared when Jack was gone.

“Indeed, he is. I couldn’t bear to refuse him, and really, Calton, I see no reason why our church should not open its doors in this fashion. Probably other churches would have done the same if it had been suggested to them.”

“If they had had a Jack Harding to think of it,” added the other.

The hours of the next day seemed to Jack Harding twice as long as hours usually were. He did not say a word of the matter to his father, though it required superhuman self-control not to do so, when, at the dinner table, Mr. Harding mentioned a special meeting of the trustees at Dr. Wright’s. Jack hoped that that meeting would be a brief one. He began a letter to Jimmy Hunter, but gave it up. It was impossible to write about anything but the Inauguration, and impossible to write about that until he knew. At nine o’clock the ’phone rang, and Mrs. Harding, answering it, said, “Jack, some one is calling you. It sounds like Dr. Wright’s voice.”

Jack seemed to reach the ’phone in two steps. In a moment his mother heard his voice ring out happily.

“Oh, thank you—*thank* you, Dr. Wright, and please thank the trustees, too, for me—all of them!”



“What in the world is it all about, Jack?” his mother asked, and then Jack poured out his story again. He made it shorter this time, for that letter to Jimmy Hunter must be written and posted before he slept.

Jack was not more fond of letter-writing than are most boys, but this time his pen fairly raced over the paper as he told the good news, and sent the cordial invitation of the church to Troop 19 of Germantown, Pa.

Later Jack had a talk with Mr. Calton about the arrangements for the troop in the chapel, to make certain that nothing was forgotten. He had written Jimmy Hunter that he—Jack—had made himself responsible for the good behaviour of the visitors. “But I knew that that would be all right, because Scouts would be all right, anyhow,” he had added. Jimmy read that letter to Troop 19, and the troop, to a boy, pledged itself to do honour to Jack’s trust in them.

Jack was at the big station when the boys arrived two days before the Inauguration—Jack and as many of Troop 5 as could be there—to welcome the visitors, and escort them to the church. Troop 5 was very proud of Jack Harding for having managed this matter so well. It was not the first time that the troop had been proud of its youngest member; and it now considered these Germantown Scouts as its own special guests during the five days of their stay.

Mr. Calton was at the chapel when the boys reached it, and they were shown the arrange-



ments that had been made there for their comfort, and told just what they had to do and when they were to be back—before they started out sight-seeing under the guidance of some of Troop 5. If there was anything worth seeing that those boys did not see in Washington, it was not the fault of the Scouts of Troop 5. But for the Washington Scouts, the great day—the day that was simply crammed with excitement for them—was not the Inauguration Day, but the one before it.

The third of March had been selected by the suffragists for a great spectacular parade over the historic Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the Treasury building. Most elaborate preparations had been made for this parade by the women interested, and the costumes to be worn, though simple, were beautiful, and would have been most effective, had the affair been carried out as proposed. Always at Inauguration times, Washington is crowded with strangers, but on this occasion innumerable toughs and hoodlums poured in from other cities, and thronged the streets. Strong ropes were stretched on either side the street, between the Capitol and the White House, to keep people on the sidewalks from pressing forward and interfering with the parade, and policemen were stationed at intervals to preserve order. The Boy Scouts of the city, also, were on hand, alert for any opportunity to “do a kindness,” and along with Troop 5 were the twenty-four boys



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from Germantown. It was not expected that the Scouts would have any serious work to do, as the women had asked for special police protection during their parade. Whether somebody blundered, or whether somebody in authority was unfriendly to the suffragists, certain it is that adequate police protection was lacking. Just before the procession started, Mr. Wilson arrived at Union Station, and a body of police met and escorted him to his hotel. This, and the fact that the Washington police force is too limited to meet unusually large demands, were afterwards given as excuse for the failure to give the women the protection for which they had asked. At any rate, hardly had the procession started from the Capitol before the thousands of men and boys that packed the sidewalks began to surge out into the wide avenue, defying ropes and scattered policemen, and crowding upon the women in their beautiful costumes of blue and pink and cream colour. Some even snatched at their banners and their dresses. In some parts of the avenue, the crowd closed in so that the floats and carriages were obliged to stop, and the horses, frightened at the tumult, backed and reared, and in some cases, endangered the lives of their riders or others. The police made futile attempts to preserve order, but it was claimed afterwards that some of them stood by without interfering, even when they saw women roughly handled by young hoodlums.

Troop 5 and the Germantown Scouts under



charge of Alan Marshall were stationed at the upper part of the avenue where Fifteenth Street cuts through it at the Treasury building. Here the crowd was very dense, for after the parade the women were to have tableaux on the wide steps of the Treasury, and many waited to see these.

As the procession approached this point, the crowds in the streets increased—on the sidewalks they could not increase, for there people were packed solid, and none could come or go. Finally Alan Marshall spoke to a policeman. "There is going to be trouble here. This is an ugly crowd and there aren't enough of you to handle it. Can't you turn in a call for help?"

The man answered with a scowl, "Mind your own business. I ain't takin' orders from you."

Seeing that there was no help there, the Scout Master turned to Sidney Hart. "I'm afraid there's going to be serious trouble here," he said. "I'll see if I can get word to Fort Myer. I leave you in charge—I'll be back as quickly as possible. Tell Wilson to look out for Jack. I wish he and the other younger ones were out of this."

The boys were doing their utmost to hold back the surging crowd with their staves, and keep open a space for the approaching procession, but it was exceedingly difficult work. Again and again, strong, rough hands pushed aside the staves or flung the boys bodily out of their way.





“ THE BOYS WERE DOING THEIR UTMOST TO HOLD BACK  
THE SURGING CROWDS ”







Jack was not as strong as the older boys, and he was not used to rough handling. He never flinched, but Billy Burns saw how white he was, and slipped in front of him.

"Stay right here by me, Jack," he said. "Keep behind me, for if they fling you down you'll be trampled half to death, sure." He drew a breath of relief as Wilson Harding pushed his way along to Jack's side. Billy did not often speak to Jack's brother, who, he felt, was not his friend, but now he thought only of Jack as he said to Wilson, "Can't we get the kid out of this?"

Jack's quick ears caught the words, and he cried out before Wilson could answer, "I'm not going to get out of it! We're all needed here today."

"We couldn't get him out now, anyway," Wilson answered Billy. Then to his brother, "Keep close to us, Jack, and don't lose your footing. Keep cool, kiddie, it will soon be over."

Suddenly a woman screamed, "Oh, my bag! Somebody's got my bag!" She was standing in front of Billy, and instantly his hand fell on the arm of a big fellow with a scar on one cheek.

"I saw you snatch it. Drop it now!" he cried, giving the arm a twist that made the fellow howl and drop the bag.

"Ouch! I'll fix you!" he yelled, as Wilson caught the bag and handed it to its owner, while



Barney's big fist intercepted the blow that was meant for Billy.

"If I knock you down you'll never get up again in this crowd, and I'll do it, too, if you don't make yourself scarce," Barney growled. The thief measured him with a glance, then with a muttered threat he disappeared, forcing his way roughly through the throng.

Barney moved up close to his friends, adding his staff and the strength of his brawny arms to hold back the crowd that was growing every moment more ugly and threatening. As the mounted heralds leading the procession drew near, the crowd suddenly closed in between the approaching column and the Scouts, sweeping aside two policemen. There was a wild outburst of hoots and yells and taunts flung at the women. One man sprang up on a float, tore a beautiful silk banner from the hands of two girls, and flung it over the heads of the crowd. A score of hands snatched at it, and in half a minute it was torn to ribbons. The sturdy little band of Scouts, caught in that sea of crowding, yelling roughs bent on mischief, had a hard time of it for a few minutes; but the big fellows protected the younger ones, and, as the crowd pushed and struggled to get nearer to the head of the procession, the pressure lessened a bit at the place where the boys stood. It was then that Jack cried out:

"Look, Will, there's a White House carriage trying to get through."



"Oh, I guess not, kid." Wilson's glance followed Jack's gesture. "Wouldn't be any White House carriage out in this mob."

"But it *is!*" Jack persisted. "Don't you see—that's Helen Taft—and her mother."

Wilson looked again. "By George, you're right, kid," he exclaimed, and passed the word to Sidney. "We must help them if we can. Those horses are getting unmanageable."

Sidney's quick order was passed from Scout to Scout, and the troop, forming a wedge, forced its way, slowly but steadily, through the throng.

"It's the President's carriage. Make way—make way, and let it pass," they shouted.

The crowd yelled and hooted. They did not believe that it was the President's carriage. There were only women in it—a couple of white-faced women. But the Scouts pushed forward—big, steady-eyed fellows in front, and those horses were plainly about ready to bolt. Nobody wanted to get under their heels—so slowly and reluctantly the crowd fell back as the Scouts advanced, leaving a perilously narrow passage for the carriage. But the coachman did not lose his head. He held the horses with strong, steady hands, and at last took the carriage safely past the danger-point and around into the White House grounds.

Sidney drew a long breath of relief then. "That was a narrow squeak," he said in a low tone to Wilson. "I wish we could get Jack



and the other youngsters out of this. It's the ugliest crowd I ever saw in Washington. It's dangerous."

"I know it," Wilson agreed, his eyes full of anxiety. "We were mighty lucky to get that carriage through. I wish the Scout Master was here."

"Probably couldn't get back," replied Sidney. "I wish he were here, too. I don't like to be responsible for the boys in this crowd. Thank heaven, *there he is!*"

He waved his hand, and the Master nodded, and worked his way, inch by inch, till he reached them. He looked very anxious as he asked quickly:

"Are you all right? Anybody hurt?"

"No, but I'm mighty glad you're here," Sidney answered, feeling as if a load had fallen from his shoulders. "Mr. Marshall, those women are really in danger. I never saw a crowd like this here before—so ugly and threatening."

"Nor I," the Scout Master replied. "The police are either unable or unwilling to do their duty. Some of them probably are not regulars—just 'specials' on duty over Inauguration. But there'll be help here soon now. The troops are on the way from Fort Myer."

"That's good news!" cried Wilson. "Mr. Marshall, can't we break the crowd over there and let the procession through? They can't hold the horses there much longer."



“We must try. Small boys in the middle—remember.” He gave rapid orders which were promptly obeyed, and again the troop began to force its way through the densely-packed mass, this time towards the procession which was now in a deadlock between pushing, howling throngs on either side, and an impassable crowd in front. Barney Doyle had pressed forward to the Scout Master’s side, pushing Sidney Hart aside with the brief explanation, “My fists will do more damage than yours. You look after the kids.” Two other big, brawny fellows of the Tiger patrol got behind Barney and the Master, and others followed close, Sidney and Wilson and two other older boys falling back to the rear, for the protection of the younger boys of the troop. Progress again was slow but steady. Alan Marshall was wont to be obeyed—*expected* to be obeyed—and, willing or unwilling, those in his way obeyed him now, until at last the way was opened. And none too soon, for, by this time, all along the line the horses were frightened and restive, and the riders were, many of them women or young girls unaccustomed to riding.

As the last of those blocking the way were forced back on either side, the Scout Master called aloud to the heralds at the head of the procession:

“Come on now, slowly. Troops are on the way from the fort. They’ll be here very soon.”



"Oh, thank *heaven!*" one frightened girl cried out at that.

"Soldiers! They're bringin' the soldiers to trample us down!" a dark-faced rascal yelled. "Soldiers fer these fool women!" He ended with an oath, and struck the girl's horse a sudden heavy blow across the head.

The horse snorted and reared, throwing his rider, and pawing the air with his forefeet; and for a few minutes there was wild confusion, horses backing into the crowd and into each other, the frightened cries of their riders mingling with the shouts and oaths of the mass of men and boys falling back on those behind to get away from those threatening hoofs above their heads. The Scout Master had caught the girl as she slipped from the saddle, and put her into a carriage behind the heralds, and the troop behind him took advantage of the opportunity as the crowd fell back, and again held it back with their staves and their strong arms to brace the staves.

Then from the distance came the ringing sound of galloping hoofs and the Scouts sent up a glad shout, "The soldiers—the soldiers are coming!"

The crowd caught the sound, too, and echoed the cry, but sullenly and with dark faces.

"The soldiers! They've ordered out the troops!" while the white-faced women took heart, the terror died out of their eyes, and the



procession at last began again to move slowly forward.

Barney had slipped back along the line, and was adding his strength to help Billy and Wilson hold the crowd back. Suddenly Nolan yelled:

“Look out, Doyle!”

Barney turned like a flash and faced the fellow with the scar on his cheek.

“You’ll git what’s comin’ ter you, anyhow, ’fore the soldiers git here,” the fellow cried, and struck viciously at Barney. Instinctively, Barney dodged the blow, and it would have fallen on Jack Harding who stood behind him, but instantly Billy Burns threw himself between the two. The heavy fist struck his head a glancing blow and landed with full force on his shoulder.

“Jest as well. I owed him one, too,” the fellow cried. Barney grabbed at him, but he wriggled from his grasp and was gone.

“Quick—a stretcher!” the Scout Master ordered, and two Scouts slipped off their jackets, fastened them across their staves, and Billy was laid gently on the improvised stretcher. The crowd fell back now—no one disputed the way for a boy, limp and motionless—perhaps dead or dying. Eyes a few minutes before full of hate and malice, gazed now curiously, even regretfully, at the white face of the lad in khaki whom they themselves would have beaten down so short a time before.



The galloping horses were coming down by the White House now, and their riders were armed with other weapons than the slender staves of the Boy Scouts. The crowds in the streets pressed sullenly back—back—unheeding the cries and protests of those behind them, and a way was opened where, a few minutes earlier, one would have said that to open it thus widely was impossible. The soldiers made way for the stretcher—one of the officers summoned an ambulance, and Billy was borne swiftly to a hospital. The Scout Master sent Wilson with him, and, yielding to the pleading in Jack's wide eyes, let him go, too.

"Come back and tell me about Billy as soon as you can, Wilson," the Master said, and added in a low tone, "Send Jack home if you can."

Wilson nodded silently and the ambulance went off, the clang of its gong drifting back to the sober-faced boys left behind. The Scout Master spoke reassuringly to them.

"I don't think that Billy is seriously hurt," he said. "The blow on his head stunned him. That fellow must have had an iron fist."

"He had that—knuckles," replied Nolan briefly.

"Did you see them, Nolan?" the Scout Master asked quickly.

Nolan nodded. "Yes, sir—iron knuckles. I seen 'em. An' I'd like to crack his bean fer him with them same," he muttered under his breath.

Billy's accident had left a heavy cloud on



Troop 5, and the Pennsylvania Scouts were full of sympathy. They all watched with but half-hearted interest as the long procession with its floats and banners, and its varied costumes, passed on, through the now unobstructed way. The crowd looked on, mostly in sullen silence, broken only by hisses and taunts now and then—occasionally by cheers, sometimes friendly, sometimes derisive. The friends of the suffragists were mostly in seats back of the sidewalks, and their cheers and clappings floated over the close-packed heads between them and the procession.

“Any of you who like can go over yonder and see the tableaux on the steps of the Treasury,” the Scout Master told the boys, but none of them seemed eager to go.

“We’ll wait here till Harding gets back,” Barney said gruffly. “I don’t want to see their tableaux.” Barney was saying to himself again and again, “Billy got what was meant for me.”

“But our guests ought to see the tableaux. They will be well worth seeing, I think,” the Master said; and so part of the troop went over with the Germantown boys and found standing-places—as only boys could find them in such a crowd—where they could see the exhibition. The others waited where they were for Wilson’s return. It was not long delayed. It needed but a glance at his face to lift the load from the hearts of those who loved Billy Burns, for it was plain that he brought good tidings.



“Broken collar-bone, that’s all,” he cried out, waiting for no question, “except a big lump on his head. Doctors wouldn’t believe that that rascal hit him just with his fist.”

“No more he did,” muttered Doyle. “He had iron knuckles—Nolan spotted ’em.”

“If he’d hit you with them, Barney——” Wilson left the sentence unfinished.

Barney nodded. “I ain’t fergettin’ what I owe Billy.”

“Nor I,” said Wilson, with a shudder. “But for Billy, it might have been—Jack—up there in hospital.”

“Billy would not have hesitated to do what he did if he had known that it would cost him his life,” the Master said, and Wilson answered gravely:

“I’m not going to forget, Mr. Marshall.”

“I’ll go tell the others—about Billy,” Miller said, and slipped off to worm his way through the crowd in the rear of the Treasury. But the throng there was so dense now that even a boy could not get through. Miller could see the boys, some of them perched on tree-boxes, some on the foundation of the Sherman monument, one clinging precariously to a telegraph pole.

“I can’t get through—have to wait till the show is over,” Miller told himself. He had not yet given a glance at the “show” himself. Then suddenly he grinned, cast a hasty glance around,



and began to climb a tree where two other boys were perched.

“Always room for one more,” one of them said, moving along to make room for the newcomer. “Some show, ain’t it?”

“Is it? I haven’t had time to look at it yet,” Miller replied. Then pulling a red and white flag from his pocket, he fastened it to the end of his staff, and began to wave it.

In a moment came an answering signal with a handkerchief. Then Miller slowly wigwagged, “Not bad. Better soon,” at which there was a glad “hurrah” from the other boys across the sea of heads.

The two on the tree were greatly interested. “That’s wigwagging, ain’t it?” one questioned. “Say, what did you tell those fellers over there?”

Miller explained—then he condescended to give his attention to the tableaux and dancing of the suffragists.

“Sufferin’ cats!” exclaimed one of the small boys on the tree. “They’re dancin’ *barefoot!* Wouldn’t that faze ye—cold as ’tis, too?”

“Aw—women’ll do all kind o’ fool tricks!” retorted the other. “Think o’ them dancin’ on cold stone steps this time o’ year—*an’ then want-in’ to vote!*”

Miller chuckled. “I take it you don’t favour votes for women,” he remarked.

The youngster grinned, a big dimple showing among the freckles on one cheek. “No, sir-ee!”



he answered. "Us fellers 'll 'tend to the votin', but I don't mind the women havin' percessions an' shows like that." He flung out a freckled hand in a broadly tolerant gesture. "It's good fun for *us*, ye know."



## IX

### INAUGURATION DAY

**T**HE next day was the great occasion to the Germantown boys, who never before had witnessed an Inaugural parade. The boys of Troop 5 had seen several such parades, but the eager interest and enthusiasm of their guests gave it a new zest even for the Washington boys. Sidney Hart's father had given the troop permission to use, for the day, a second-story room in a building he owned on Pennsylvania Avenue. It was an excellent place from which to watch the endless succession of soldiers, sailors, and citizens, passing along the wide avenue.

"Gee, but it's different from yesterday!" one of the Germantown boys exclaimed. "The police *can* keep the crowd behind the ropes, it seems. Why didn't they do it, yesterday?"

Miller shrugged his shoulders. "Reckon they didn't want to. It's another story to-day. This is an inaugural parade. The other was—suffragists."

"Hm!" said the other boy. "Suffragists or not—they had a right to parade, hadn't they? It would have been a show worth seeing if they had had a clear field on this wide avenue yes—



terday. I don't think it was fair to the women."

"They don't either," answered Wilson Harding. "I heard that they are going to make a big row about it."

"Wouldn't blame 'em if they did," Jimmy Hunter declared.

"Here they come," Miller cried. "See—there's 'It' and the 'Has Been'—Wilson and Taft. Taft won't be President many minutes more."

"Must be kind o' rough for the out-going President to ride down the avenue like that with his successor," one thoughtful boy said.

"Worse when they ride back," retorted Frazer. "Taft is President now—he won't be, then."

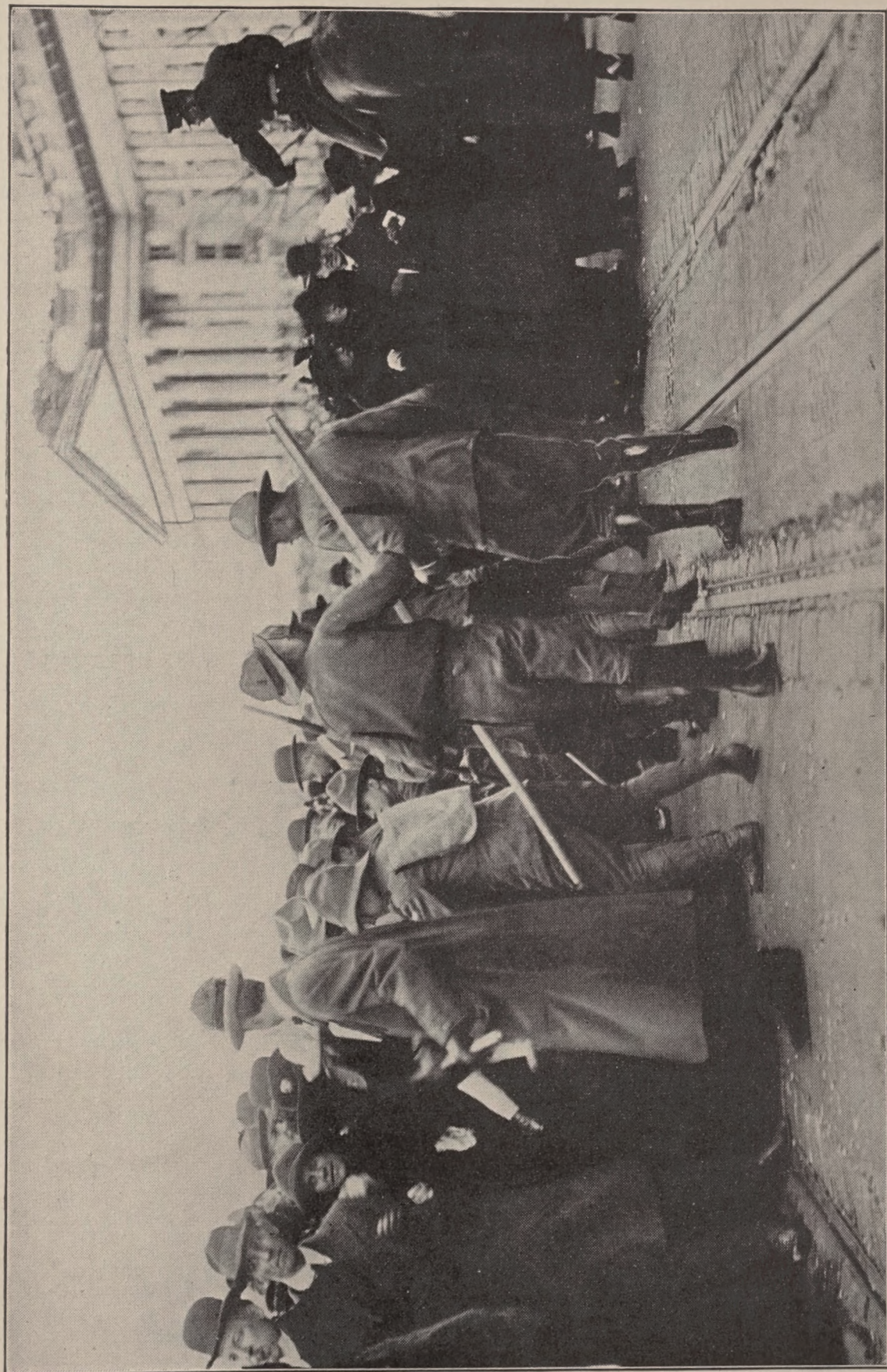
"Say—let's race down to the Capitol and see Wilson take the oath of office," Miller suggested.

"Oh, can we?" questioned two or three of the visitors eagerly.

"Of course—if we can get within a mile of the steps. You can see it done, anyhow, even if you can't hear."

In a moment the room was empty. Through deserted streets the boys raced, and around to the east front of the Capitol. The big plaza was a solid mass of people, but somehow the boys managed to find places where they could see, and even catch a few words of the new President's address.





“SOMEHOW THE BOYS MANAGED TO FIND PLACES WHERE THEY COULD SEE”







Then back they hurried to the room where they found the Scout Master and Jack Harding with a generous luncheon, awaiting them.

"Lucky we decided to stop here. We'd half a mind to go right up to the White House to see the review," Don Frazer said.

"Time enough for that after you've had your lunch—and you needn't hurry it, either," the Master returned.

"Heard from Billy this morning?" Barney inquired anxiously.

"Yes, he's getting on all right. Jack and I went up to inquire before we came here," Alan Marshall answered.

"The doctor said Billy was feeling fine," Jack added. "I'm going up to stay with him at visitors' hour this afternoon."

The luncheon eaten, the Germantown boys were impatient to be off, and most of Troop 5 went with them; but Barney Doyle and Nolan remained to help clear up after the lunch, and later, Barney went with the Master and Jack to the hospital.

"To-morrow's our last day," one of the boys sighed, that night, as they were arranging the pew cushions on the chapel floor. "I wish we could do it all over again, don't you, Hunter?"

"Sure I do. We never could have a better time."

"And that's the truth!" Dick Farliss exclaimed. "Gee! Won't we make the home crowd sit up and take notice when we get back?"



"You bet!" came the response from more than one voice.

"Wish we could do something for Dr. Wright and Mr. Calton," Jimmy Hunter said, as he settled himself comfortably under his blanket. "How much money is there in the crowd—to spare? I've got two dollars left."

"He's a regular John D.," called Farliss. "Don't believe I've got fifty cents."

"I've got a dollar."

Each boy called out a sum, greater or smaller—mostly smaller—and Jimmy added them up in his head. The total was eleven dollars. Jimmy sat up excitedly.

"That's enough to get something for Mr. Calton anyhow. He's been so fine to us I'd just like to do it. What do you all say?"

Jimmy's sentiment was unanimously approved, but further discussion of it was cut short for the time being, by the announcement that it was ten o'clock. Ten o'clock meant "taps." In another moment lights were out, and silence reigned in the chapel.

The next morning the Germantown boys were up early, and when Mr. Calton appeared, he found the chapel in immaculate order. Not only had the cushions been carried back to the pews in the church, but the boys had found brooms and brushes in the basement, and had thoroughly swept, dusted, and aired the chapel. Everything was in order, and no one would ever have imag-



ined that twenty-four boys had spent four nights there.

The surprise and pleasure of Mr. Calton delighted the boys. "We have done everything we could think of," Jimmy Hunter said. "If we've forgotten anything, I wish you'd tell us. We don't want to leave a thing for you to do."

"Indeed, you haven't," he told them. "You've saved me the job of sweeping the chapel, which I should have done to-morrow if you hadn't slept in it. I'm sorry your time's up, boys. Wish you could stay longer."

"So do we!" the boys shouted. "We've had the best time *ever!* We're going to send a vote of thanks to Dr. Wright and the church when we get home."

Then they all shook hands with Mr. Calton, and he stood on the steps and watched them as they marched off, their blankets on their backs, their staves in their hands, their troop banner floating in the morning breeze with the Stars and Stripes, while the drum corps played the *Star Spangled Banner*.

"They're a fine lot of boys," he said aloud, when the last khaki-clad figure had disappeared.

The vote of thanks, signed by the twenty-four boys, was duly received by Dr. Wright, and to Mr. Calton came a scarfpin with a tiny diamond, as a "Thank you" from the boys.

Some time later there came a day when Troop 19, Germantown Scouts, had a great surprise. A registered package came to Jimmy Hunter,



and with it a letter from Jack Harding. This is what Jack wrote:

“Dear Jimmy, I’ve got an awful lot to tell you. I’ve just got back from a meeting at the Cosmos Theatre, and *didn’t* I just wish you and all Troop 19 had been there! Representative Hobson of Alabama—You remember what he did in the Spanish war?—well, he made an address, and you just ought to have heard what he said about the Boy Scouts and what they did on March 3rd. He sure did cover us all with honey. Then he told some stories about officers in the Spanish war, and the gallant things they did—*dandy* stories! Wish you’d heard ’em. Then the wife of another representative—she’s a suffragist—presented medals to all the Washington Scouts that were on duty that day—I mean the day of the parade. The medals are bronze, and it says on them, ‘In grateful acknowledgment of duty well done’—but I needn’t tell you when you’ll see them for yourselves. Our Scout Master gave in the names of your troop—Isn’t it lucky I remembered them all?—and he’s sending your medals by registered mail. I hope all you fellows will be pleased. We are. Only I think Billy Burns ought to have an extra medal or something for that crack he got—don’t you?

Greetings to Troop 19, Germantown, from Troop 5, Washington—and good luck to you all.

Your friend,

JOHN EVERETT HARDING.



P. S. I forgot to tell you that President Wilson is honorary president of the Boy Scouts of America. They announced it at the meeting.

J. H.

P. P. S. Here's the latest yell. Some Scouts made it up at Camp Archibald Butt:

'Rickety swats, rickety snats, jumpin' howlin'  
sufferin' cats.

Bumpety bing, bumpety bang, the rest of the  
world can just go hang,

We're going to stay—we're going to stay in old  
Camp Butt!

Hip, hip hooray!'

Isn't it great?''



## X

### GETTYSBURG—1913

**I**N May Troop 5 began planning to go to Gettysburg in July. Mr. Harding and his sons were going with Mr. Hart and Sidney, and the Scout Master was going, too. The boys pored over Civil War histories and their enthusiasm grew. In the end, sixteen of the troop accompanied the Master.

The journey seemed long to Jack, even in the swift-rolling car; he was afraid that his troop might arrive before him. The city was thronged, cars and carriages and an endless procession of men and women filing through the sunny, dusty streets. The heat was intense. As they passed the station Jack stared in amazement at the throng of old men that swarmed about it.

“Why—why, they’re *veterans*, father! See—they’re wearing the blue and the grey? And they look so—so *old!*” His voice faltered over the last words. To his young eyes, many of these men looked pitifully old and feeble. He had not realised, as he had read of charges and battles, that those who took part in them, if living, must now be old. He choked up at sight of these ancient men—many with canes or crutches, some



with empty sleeves, some blind. Jack's heart swelled with pity and sympathy.

The first sight of the great field with its long rows of tents—flags flying, bands playing, United States soldiers on guard, officers in uniform and old men in blue and grey wandering through the "streets" between the lines of tents—all this dazed Jack a little. There was so much to see!

At Scout Headquarters, he learned that Troop 5, D. C., had not yet arrived, but help was needed there, and Jack put himself at the service of the man in charge. But whatever he was doing, he kept on the watch for Troop 5. He was beginning to get anxious and fear some accident when at last he caught sight of the familiar troop banner waving above the crowd in the "Long Lane," as the main street in the tented city was called. In a flash he was in the throng, worming his way through incredibly narrow openings till, with a shout, he joined the troop, and fell into step beside Billy.

They registered at headquarters, and the Scout Master found out where their tents were to stand. He gave his orders promptly.

"Things are in considerable of a muddle here yet. It seems that we must go over and get our tents." He named a dozen of the older boys. "You come over to the freight office with me. The rest of you wait here."

The boys left behind dropped down on the shady side of a tent. There were very few trees



here, and the sun poured down mercilessly on the tents and the crowded, dusty lanes between them.

"Great Scott! It's hotter'n blazes!" Miller said, fanning his moist face with his hat.

It was a long time before the Scout Master and the boys returned, but those left behind found plenty to interest them. Through the "lanes" between the tents poured an endless procession of veterans and sightseers. The boys forgot the heat and their weariness as they watched and listened.

"Here comes another batch from the South," Miller exclaimed, as the strains of *Dixie* rose jubilantly above the farther sounds, and down the Long Lane came a straggling band in grey, while out from the tents ran other old men in grey, and many in blue, to fall in behind the newcomers and swell the procession.

"Jee-rusalem!" cried Carter, after they had counted nine of these impromptu parades, "where will they all sleep?"

"Where we will if Scout Master doesn't get our tents—under the stars," replied Miller.

"Reckon I'd prefer to be under a blanket. It'll be chilly after sundown," another remarked.

"Chilly? That sounds good to me," Miller said, mopping his face.

"Here, you Scouts—I've a job for you."

The boys were on their feet in an instant.

"Ready for orders, sir," said Frazer, saluting the officer who had stopped before them.



“I want some tents set up. Can you do it?”

“Yes, sir,” Frazer answered for them all.

“Come with me, then.”

“Jack, you and Carter wait here and tell the Scout Master where we are,” Frazer said, as he and the other boys followed the officer.

Carter scowled. “Don’t see why we have to do the waiting,” he grumbled, “any more’n Frazer an’ the rest of ’em.”

“Suppose somebody has to do it,” Jack said cheerfully, though he, too, would have liked to set up those tents. “But we can set up our own,” he added.

“No fun in that—that’s just duty.” Carter was determined to find fault.

The Scout Master and the older boys returned at last with the tents, and, having set them up, the Scout Master suggested that they go and see if the rest of the troop needed help.

“But we don’t know where they are,” Jack objected.

“I noticed some Scouts setting up tents over this way,” the Master said, and the boys followed him. They found the others, under Frazer’s direction, still hard at work, and very glad of assistance.

“We’d got ’em all set up,” Miller grumbled, “and then they found they were in the wrong place, so we had to pull ’em down and begin all over again.”

“Hard luck,” the Master said, “but think what a lot of work you saved somebody else.”



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That did not seem very comforting to the boys, but with the help of the Master and the strong-armed older boys, the task was soon completed.

"Here comes the captain," Frazer said, as the last stake was driven.

The captain and another officer inspected the work; then the latter turned to the captain.

"You say these youngsters set up these tents?"

The captain said, "Yes."

"Don't believe it—that's the work of regulars," retorted the other. "Maybe the boys helped some," and he strode off without a word to the boys.

Miller turned to his comrades. "Wouldn't that jar you?" he cried indignantly.

The Scout Master laughed. "Never mind, boys—your work is approved, if you don't get credit for it, and Scouts don't work for credit—not here, anyhow. Now come to supper," he added.

"We were lucky to get our tents," one of the boys said, as they followed the Scout Master. "You never saw such a mess as that freight room—piles and piles of stuff dumped in any old place, and everybody grumbling because they couldn't get their own."

After supper the Scout Master suggested that they all make the rounds of the camp together, to learn where everything and everybody was—and see the sights, all that were to be seen.



“To-morrow we go on duty,” he said, “and it will be work, not play—you can see that.”

So he led the troop down the one long street, and then back and forth through the short ones that crossed it, locating the various army headquarters, state headquarters, hospitals, rest-stations, cook-tents, etc., so that the boys would be able to answer questions and direct strangers on the morrow.

The streets of the camp were brilliant with electric lights, and still thronged with soldiers, veterans, and sightseers. Street fakirs and vendors of all sorts of souvenirs, shouted and held up their wares to passers-by, while refreshment booths and peanut stands did a flourishing business. The boys filled their pockets with peanuts, and went along cracking the shells and munching, as nine out of ten around them were doing. Every few minutes, the sharp clang of a gong cut through the jumble of noises, and everybody made way for an ambulance to pass.

“One thing you are to remember, boys,” said the Master. “You must take things moderately to-morrow, no matter how many calls you have to answer. It won’t do to race around in a hot place like this when the mercury is over a hundred, as it was to-day. Remember, moderation and common sense will give best results in the long run. I know no boy in Troop 5 will shirk, but I don’t want any in hospital either.”

The boys saw the reasonableness of this, and, had they needed any proof of its wisdom, they



had plenty before they returned to their tents to turn in; for about the railroad station, they saw many weak, weary old men in faded uniforms still hanging around to watch the trains that came in at intervals until daylight—every train bringing more old men with grey-white faces and blinking eyes—many who staggered as they tried to walk, and begged passers-by to show them their state headquarters, or get them food or blankets. Some had been travelling all day without food—some had been several days on the way. Some were jaunty and merry, eager to show that they were still as good as the best, but the weight of years was too heavy on most of them, and they gave way under the long strain of heat and fatigue and excitement.

It was impossible for the boys of Troop 5 to see these things and not try to help; and, having begun, it seemed impossible to stop. At ten-thirty, however, the troop call brought them all together. The Master's keen eyes looking them over, saw that many of them were already very tired.

"Wilson," he ordered, "I put you in charge of the troop for the night. Go back to the tents and to bed as quickly as possible." He looked at the older boys, and added, "I want eight volunteers—no one under sixteen—and no one who is tired—to help here for an hour or two more."

Every boy of the age named stepped forward without a moment's hesitation—all except Duff. He was the last to volunteer. The Master se-



lected eight. Billy Burns was not among them, and his face showed his disappointment.

“I’m sixteen an’ I’m strong as any of ’em,” he urged.

The Master’s hand touched his shoulder and rested there as he answered, “You will have a hard day to-morrow—all of you will. Scouts obey orders, Billy.”

Billy nodded and turned away without another word. As he marched off with the others, Jack dropped into step at his side.

“Hard lines, Billy, wasn’t it, to get sent back to bed? Wilson’s cross as a bear, ’cause he has to go back with us and Sidney doesn’t. I don’t blame him, either. I don’t feel a bit tired, do you?”

Billy shook his head, but he noticed Jack’s flushed cheeks and the weary droop of his shoulders. “It’s all right, though,” he said. “I reckon we’ll need all the sleep we can get. I heard one officer say he wished there were twice as many Scouts here—they’d all be needed to-morrow.”

Meantime, the Scout Master’s glance swept over the eight big fellows he had selected. They all looked fit, except possibly Sidney Hart; but he was assistant Scout Master of the troop, and had begged so hard to be allowed to help that Alan Marshall could not refuse. He put four of the boys under his direction.

“Belated trains will be coming in all night,” he said, “and they will bring hundreds more



of these tired old men. Some of them will be sick, and none of them probably will know where to go or what to do. Take them to their state headquarters, of course, when there is any one in charge there, but"—he named several states—"it's no use taking the men there. The only thing to do for any coming from these states is to get them something to eat, and some blankets. They'll have to sleep on the ground tonight. You all know where food and blankets are to be found?"

"Food part's all right," said Barney, "but I just heard a man say that the blankets had given out. More veterans than blankets now."

The Master frowned impatiently. "Bad management somewhere," he said. "There'll always be somebody to blunder, but it's not the army officers this time." He scribbled a line on his card and gave it to Sidney. "If you find any old men you can't provide for at their state headquarters, go to Major Normoyle for blankets. They have a few that they are holding for emergency cases. And remember, Hart—you are all to go to the tents and to bed at two o'clock. You understand?"

"I understand," Sidney replied, and the Master turned away with Barney, Nolan, and Don Frazer. "We must look after some of the old men down in the town," he said. "Saloons are open everywhere, and some of them, I am told, are selling the vilest kind of liquor to these poor old fellows. Boys, you'll see in this town



to-night what liquor does to men—young and old. The time is coming when the Boy Scouts of America can help put an end to the liquor traffic, and the end will mean an enormous decrease in crime and poverty. Look at that.”

They were on a street where there seemed to be little but saloons—at least, every place that was open had glaring liquor signs. All were brilliantly lighted, draped with flags, G.A.R. and Confederate symbols; and “Welcome to Veterans—the grey and the blue,” or some similar greeting was in every window.

“Gee! They sure are doin’ some business!” muttered Barney, as, through the open doors, he saw places crowded with men, shouting, laughing, or swearing at the bartenders, who could not supply their wants fast enough.

“Isn’t it a shame!” Don Frazer cried. “Some of these old men look so feeble!”

“It’s food and sleep they need—not drink,” the Master said. “Here’s trouble.”

A little further on three men were struggling, one calling for help.

“What’s the matter here?” the Master demanded, as he came up to them.

An old man’s weak voice answered. “He’s taking our blankets away from us—that man there.”

“They’re my blankets. I put ’em down fer a minute an’ these old thieves stole ’em,” the man declared boldly. “Let go there, you——”

“Barney, I’ll hold this man. You get the



blankets," the Master said. "And, Don, whistle for the police."

Alan Marshall saw the man's face change at mention of the police, and then Barney's fist, hard as a flint, came down on the clutching fingers with a blow that made the man yell and loosen his grip on the blankets. With an oath, he twisted himself free of the Scout Master's grasp, and vanished into a dark alley. One of the old men was sobbing. The other explained, "We got our blankets, but we've no place to sleep yet, so we had to lug the blankets round with us. He's ninety," he indicated his companion, and spoke proudly, "an' I'll be eighty-one next January. He's blind—my friend here—been blind since '64."

"Since '64—forty-nine years blind," said Don Frazer under his breath.

"You'd better come back to camp," the Scout Master said. "The town is no place for sober, honest men to-night. We'll find a place for you to sleep."

The old man turned at once. "You a soldier?" Evidently his eyes, too, were dim. "We'll obey orders. Obeyed orders fifty years ago, didn't we, Sam?"

Sam gave a cackling laugh, as he clung to his friend's arm. "Did so," he agreed. "Say, cap'n, Jim an' me was in that fight up yonder, an' we wanted to see the old field again. We've come 'way from Colorado, an' this'll be our last march, I reckon."



“Maybe you’ll tell us about the battle tomorrow,” Don Frazer said, slipping the blind man’s hand over his arm.

The old fellow tried to straighten his back, bowed under the weight of almost a century. “I’ll tell ye—I’ll tell ye,” he promised. “I ain’t fergot it in all these years. Lord—Lord, the times I’ve fought that battle over—I—I reckon—I got to stop—a minute. I’m so—tired——”

“Quick, Barney, Nolan—he’s fainted or—We’ve got to carry him,” Don cried out.

“He ain’t dead—Sam ain’t *dead!*” the other man cried out, his chin quivering as he reached for the skinny wrist of his old comrade.

“No, he’s not dead. I think he has fainted from exhaustion,” the Master said. “Best get him to the hospital as quickly as we can.”

There was no ambulance in sight, so with swift, experienced hands, an improvised stretcher was made with one of the blankets stretched across two staves, and the Scouts started for the hospital, the other old man leaning heavily on the Master’s arm. He was quite silent now, his head drooping, his feet stumbling wearily over the sidewalk. It seemed a long way to the hospital, for they could not hurry him, and he would not let them carry his friend ahead.

“No, no,” he protested, “Sam an’ me’s been comrades for fifty years. We—we gotta hang



together now to the end o' the—the campaign," he ended under his breath.

"Exhaustion," was the verdict at the hospital.

"Will he—will he——?" the other old man questioned. His trembling lips could not form that other word.

"He'll come through," the doctor answered cheerfully, his own face haggard with fatigue. "But," he warned, "you old soldiers must be mighty careful. You can't stand what you could fifty years ago—see?"

"He, he!" the old man chuckled in his relief, and threw back his shoulders, "I'm stronger'n Sam—a heap stronger. I'll look out fer him. I—I'll come for him in the mornin' 'fore breakfast."

The doctor gave him a keen glance that noted the grey drawn skin, sunken eyes, and shaking hands, and motioned to an attendant.

"You'd better stay here to-night, too," he told the old man. "Your comrade might worry when he comes to, if he found you gone."

"I—mebbe that's—best," agreed the old soldier, and quite forgetting the Scouts, he tottered away with the attendant.

"If he lives through the next four days, he'll be lucky," the doctor said to the Scout Master. "Poor old chaps—it's pathetic to see these old, feeble ones."

The boys left the hospital with sober faces. "Say, I didn't think it was goin' to be this way,



did you, Frazer?" Barney inquired, as they turned again towards the town.

"Never imagined it. Didn't realise how old most of the vets must be. Scout Master says the average age is seventy, but lots of 'em are older than that."

When, an hour later, they approached the station, Don exclaimed, "*What* a crowd! Twice as many as when we started out. Wouldn't you think these old fellows would have sense enough to get to bed? See, the regulars are trying to drive them away."

"They are like children—so excited that they don't realise how tired they are," the Master replied. "You must remember that this semi-centennial is a wonderful event to them. They are going to live over again the four years that loom largest in their lives, meet comrades whom they've not seen in fifty years. There will never be—*can* never be—another such occasion for these old soldiers. It's no wonder that some of them are a bit unbalanced by it all."

"That's true, of course," Don admitted. "It's a great sight. I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

"You'll think that many times before the next three days are over," the Master told him. "Come now."

Reluctantly Don turned his back on the great throng that stretched far on either side of the station. Innumerable voices mingled in a medley of sound that had something strangely thrill-



ing in its discords, and bugle notes and the muffled beat of drums sounded from every direction. Trains drew in every few minutes, and from them poured more tired, sleepy, bewildered men in faded grey or blue, to be greeted with shouts and cheers, outstretched hands and snatches of song; while over all, at intervals, the voice of the officer in charge, hoarse from long hours of such use, directed through the megaphone the landing of these belated special trains.

"*Fifty* special trains in to-night!" Don said as they passed on. "I pity Captain Justus—he won't get any sleep, I guess."

"Nor any other army officer here," the Master replied. "They all have their hands full. That extra five thousand on the way, complicates things badly."

At five o'clock next morning, somebody sounded a long bugle blast, and at once the tented city was all astir. The boys of Troop 5 turned out, some sleepy-eyed and yawning, but most of them ready for what the day was to bring; and out of the tents poured the boys of '61, as eager as any Scout of them all for what this new day held in store.

"Gee, but this is some sight!" Jack's eyes, wide with eager interest, were taking it all in. "Say—*everybody's* out already."

"Of course. I'd like to strangle the fool that blew that bugle. Might have had another hour's sleep as well as not," grumbled Don Frazer.

But, breakfast over and the tents in order,



the boys were ready for work. It was another hot day, and the constant passing of many feet kept the tent streets full of clouds of fine dust that drifted over everything. Most of the veterans were eager and alert this morning. Old comrades met and wrung each other's hands, then settled down to talk of the old war-times, and fight their battles over again.

But now there was no bitterness between the grey and the blue. There were no foes—all were comrades. The men in grey saluted the Stars and Stripes with love and reverence, and those who wore the blue joined in the enthusiastic cheers that greeted the stained and ragged banners with the Stars and Bars.

The Scout Master assigned the troop to various duties, but all were to meet at headquarters at one o'clock. It is impossible to tell half the happenings of those three days—even those with which the boys of Troop 5 had to do. They all had their adventures, their thrills, their discoveries. They looked and listened, till eyes and ears and brains were as tired as their feet, that travelled countless miles up and down those dusty, noisy streets; they answered endless questions, directed innumerable bewildered old fellows, carried messages and bags, and, when the long, hot days were over, and the cool breath of the hills crept down over the sun-baked streets and tents, the Scouts tumbled into bed too tired to think or speak, and slept as only healthy boys can sleep until the morning.



But though the Scouts lost no opportunity to do a good turn, their quick young eyes took in all that went on around them.

"O look, Billy!" Jack cried out once, "that's Governor Mann—father knows him. See, the greycoats know him. Isn't that great?"

In Confederate Avenue, a body of veterans from Richmond had lined up—near a hundred of them—on either side of the way; and, as the Governor's car passed down the line, the men in grey saluted, baring their grey heads and giving the old rebel yell, while a passing band struck into *Dixie*. Jack found his eyes full of tears, and Billy's were smarting, as that strange wild yell cut through the medley of sounds. The Governor stopped his car, and, standing in it bare-headed, spoke to the old men in grey. "There is no North nor South now—no Rebels and no Yanks. We are all just the one nation," he said. The old men cheered and the Governor passed on. Scores of cars full of sightseers followed his, and every man in them bared his head as he passed between those straggling lines in grey.

"O gee!" Jack choked. "That was great, Billy, wasn't it?"

A moment later it was Billy who cried, "Look quick!"

Jack followed the pointing finger. "What of it? Just a couple of Scouts," he said.

"Did you see their faces?"

"No, only their backs."



“Well I did. One of 'em was Jim Slater—sure's you live it was.”

“Jim Slater? Why, he isn't a Scout, is he?”

“Not unless he's just joined. Don't see how he could get in any troop.”

“Couldn't have been Slater,” Jack declared.

But Billy insisted that it was, and he was vaguely troubled by it. “I'll watch out for him,” he told himself, as Jack inquired:

“Did you know the other one—that was with him?”

Before Billy could answer, they were stopped by an officer.

“I want half a dozen Scouts in the big tent yonder. Can you come—and find some others for me?”

“Yes, sir.” The boys saluted and ran off, hugely delighted.

“Aren't we in luck?” Jack exclaimed. “I wanted awf'ly to be there and hear the speeches, but I didn't suppose there was a chance of it. Oh, I hope we can find Will and some others of our troop.”

They did not find Will, but they did run across four others, and in a few minutes they were all in the big tent. The captain, catching sight of them, made room for them near him. “Stay here, and be ready when you are needed,” he said.

The great tent with its drapery of flags was already nearly filled with old soldiers, and other men, and women. Although the sides of the



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tent were raised the heat was intense, and men mopped their faces and women fluttered fans continually. Billy felt as if he were in a new world. Never before in his life had he been in such a gathering as this. His eyes lingered on that great army of veterans—15,000 of them—all one army now, whether in blue or gray, and he began to *realise* the great conflict about which he had been reading for weeks past. These men had *lived* through it—to Billy they seemed heroes—one and all.

Not only was every seat filled, but old men crowded the aisles, squeezed into corners—any way, any place, so they might only be there.

Governor Tener of Pennsylvania welcomed the veterans, but the orator of the day was Secretary of War Garrison. The boys had seen him when he arrived, and the battery of artillery gave him a thundering salute. They listened breathlessly as he spoke of the three great historic events that, within fifty years, had made Gettysburg forever famous—the battle, unequalled in American history—the deathless words of Abraham Lincoln four months after that battle—and now this wonderful gathering where many thousands, once deadly foes, were together as friends and brothers, loyal Americans all.



## XI

### SCOUTS AT GETTYSBURG

**J**ACK did not hear all the Secretary's address—he was sent off with a message in the midst of it—but Billy did. It was the first great speech that he had ever heard, and, given as it was on such an occasion and in such surroundings, it made a wonderful impression on him. He spoke to Barney about it later.

“Wish you'd been in the big tent, Barney,” he said. “It—it was *great!* I never before could get hold of what it means—all the talk about your country an' loyalty an' patriotism—all that, you know. I thought it was mostly bluff—just talk an' nothin' else. But with thousands of those old fellows right there before me—lots of 'em with empty sleeves, an' crutches an' scars—an' all listening with something—something I never saw before—in their faces—I tell ye, it made me *see* what lovin' your country means. I'll go home different, Barney. I—can't say it—what I'm feelin' in here,” Billy's hand touched his breast, “but I'm goin' home a different chap from the Billy Burns that left Washington, the other day.” He cast a quick glance at his friend. Would Barney laugh him to scorn? But no. Barney's face, too, it seemed



to Billy, had in it something new, and Barney was looking at him with grave understanding eyes.

“Guess I see what ye mean, Billy,” he said, and into his voice crept the gentle friendliness that he reserved for Billy alone. “A feller in Troop 15 was tellin’ me ’bout a meetin’ in the big tent yesterday—he was there. He said there was six women there—all old an’ grey-haired. Fifty years ago, when Buford’s men came into Gettysburg just after the Confederates—nobody says ‘rebels’ here now—Confederates had left—the town went wild—rang the bells ye know, an’ everything to welcome the Yankees—an’ a lot of pretty girls in white flung flowers in the streets fer the soldiers to ride over, an’ they sung war songs an’ hymns—the girls did. Must have been a great time. Well now,” Barney’s voice dropped to a lower note, “them six old ladies are all that’s left of them girls that sung in the streets—think of it! They put ’em up on the platform in the big tent an’ made ’em sing again the same old war songs. Jason said, with that great tent full o’ people, it was the stillest place he ever was in in his life while the women sung—till they got to the chorus, an’ then the old chaps joined in the singing, an’ lots of ’em sat there an’ cried like babies. You jest ought to have heard Jason tell it, Billy.” Barney gave a queer, low laugh. “Say, honest to glory, I most felt like I wanted a hank’chief myself.”



"I know," Billy nodded, a strange light in his eyes. "It's—it's diff'rent in a place like this, Barney. Ye don't feel a fool if you do—want a hank'chief."

"He's havin' his hands full," Barney added a moment later, nodding towards a little fellow in Scout uniform. He was standing in the middle of the dusty highway waving a red flag, and shouting warnings to autos, big and little, as they flew past.

"Go slow! Go slow!" they heard the clear, boyish voice call, and as a big car bore down upon him, he shouted, "Slow up, I say—slow up here! You've got to give the old soldiers room."

Some of the chauffeurs laughed at the plucky little chap, some swore, but very few failed to heed his warning.

Billy smiled, and his head went up with an air that was new in him.

"Gee, Barney," he cried out, "I'm most burstin'—I'm so proud of Washington Boy Scouts! He's from Washington—that little chap."

"He's *some Scout!*" Barney returned, and laughed as he added, "Wouldn't it jar ye to see the way he's holdin' up them big cars, an' him no bigger'n a minute? Bet ye he ain't a month over twelve. I take off me hat to him," and turning, Barney swept off his hat and waved it at the small lad in khaki, who, however, was far too busy to notice a little thing like that.



"Wonder who they are?" Barney pointed to a group of grey-headed women sitting on the porch of a house they were approaching. "See the hats go off to them. Say," Barney asked an old man in blue, "who are the ladies over there?"

"Them? They're war-nurses. Some of 'em tended soldiers on the field here after the big battle, an' some in the hospitals," the man answered. "Ought to wear gold medals, every one of 'em," he added, as he passed on.

"I never thought 'bout *women* in the war," Billy said, "but looks as if they had a good deal to do with it." Then he caught Barney's arm. "Look there, quick, Barney!"

"What? I don't see anything——"

"That Scout—the two of 'em," Billy's voice was full of excitement. "Don't you see who they are?"

Barney stared. "Why, it's *Tom an' Jim!* What—Fer the love of——"

For one startled instant both boys stood motionless on the edge of the sidewalk. The next, they were pushing their way through another fast-gathering crowd. It had all happened in an instant. There was a constant stream of automobiles and wagons passing between the crowded sidewalks, and old men crossing the street had to dodge as best they could, between the hurrying vehicles. One old man had not been quick enough—a heavy car was almost upon him when a big boy in khaki flung himself upon



him, and pushed him into safety. But the boy could not save himself too—he stumbled, and one of the heavy wheels went over his leg.

Billy and Barney got to him as quickly as they could. It was Jim Slater, and Tom Jones was bending over him—Tom and Charlie Duff.

The boys held off the crowd while they sent a bystander for an ambulance.

“He’s—he’s jest fainted, ain’t he?” Tom’s face was as white as his friend’s as he asked the question in a hoarse whisper.

Billy called a passing Scout to take his place while he made a swift examination. “Yes, he’s fainted. His leg’s broke,” he announced.

“Lucky they have ambulances so handy,” muttered Barney as the messenger returned with one. “They need ’em all.”

“I’ll go up to the hospital with him,” Billy volunteered. “You don’t need me, Barney.”

“Where? What hospital?” Tom demanded.

Billy named three. “Whichever one they can take him in. “Say, Tom, guess you can come along, too,” he added, moved by the look in Tom’s usually hard eyes. Without a word, Tom scrambled in and the ambulance rattled off, leaving Charlie Duff gazing vacantly after it. Barney had gone on.

After supper that night Doyle sought Billy.

“How about Jim?” he asked.

“Broken leg—compound fracture,” Billy answered. “He’s in the Red Cross hospital.”



“And Tom?”

“He’s stayin’ to take care of him. They are short of help an’ glad to get anybody.”

“Where’s Duff?” was Barney’s next question.

“Over there.” Following Billy’s gesture, Doyle saw Charlie sitting alone, his hands clasped around his knees.

“Come on,” Barney said, “we’ve got to get to the bottom of this business.”

The two crossed over to Duff. Barney spoke to him in a tone that carried a threat.

“You come on, Duff. We want you.”

With evident reluctance, Duff followed the other two to a place apart. There Barney dropped down on the ground, the others following his example. Barney wasted no words. His eyes were as stern as his voice as he said shortly, “Now, Duff, make a clean breast of it—no lies an’ no tricks. D’ye understand?”

Duff’s colour had faded to a pasty white and his pale eyes shifted uneasily. “I—I ain’t done nothin’, Barney Doyle. You needn’t try to bluff me. I couldn’t help them two comin’ here, no more’n you could yerself.”

“You could help bein’ with ’em,” Barney retorted. “I thought you’d shook ’em long ago. How come you with ’em again, an’ what does it mean—them bein’ in Scout uniform? You tell it all an’ tell it straight, too, if you know what’s good fer ye.” Barney spoke in a tone there was no mistaking, nor was there any mistaking the threatening gleam in his eyes. Charlie Duff



wilted under it, and the bravado faded swiftly out of his weak face. He spoke hastily.

"I'll—I'll tell ye all about it, Doyle, I will, honest."

"Ye'd better." There was no weakening in Barney's voice or eyes. "How long you been runnin' with them two—this time, eh?"

"Not any. I ain't been runnin' with 'em. I jest stumbled on 'em by accident, this mornin'—first I knew they was here."

"Where'd you stumble on 'em?"

"Over there—in Confed'rate Avenue."

"What they in uniform for? They ain't Scouts."

"N-no—it's this way—they wanted to come to this big show, an' they footed it down here. They had khaki pants, an' Jim thought if they got Scout hats they could pass fer Scouts down here—nobody'd notice—there are so many Scouts 'round. So they bought the hats, an' they've been doin' same's we have here—actin' as guides, goin' errands, an' that."

"An' stealin' blankets an' anything else they could lay hands on," Barney added.

Charley flushed. "If they have, I don't know nothin' about it any more'n you do. An' anyhow, I don't see why you're so down on 'em jest now, when Jim's where he is jest fer tryin' to save that old man."

"He's right about that," Billy put in quietly.

Charlie turned to him eagerly. "Couldn't any Scout have been braver'n Jim was about that.



He might 'a' been killed himself—Jim might," he added.

"*That's* true," Doyle admitted reluctantly.

"An'," Charlie hurried on, still speaking to Billy, "an' Tom ain't all bad, either. He's stayin' to help take care of Jim, an' missin' all the fun."

Through Billy's mind flashed the oft-repeated remark of the Scout Master, "No boy is all bad." Here were these two outcasts, one risking his life for a stranger, the other willingly giving up the sights and excitements of this great gathering, to take care of his friend. Perhaps Charlie guessed Billy's thoughts, for he added:

"Might give 'em a chance—them two. Guess they've never had one."

"An' that's true, too," Billy agreed thoughtfully.

Barney's stern face had softened a little—now there was perplexity in his eyes. "I d'know," he said slowly. "Of course a feller ought to have a chance—if he wants it—but I ain't sure whether them two do want it."

"S'pose we ought to give 'em the benefit of the doubt," Billy said.

"You're too easy, Billy." Doyle spoke impatiently. "If they ain't been stealin', an' I ain't so sure 'bout that—they've been lyin' an' cheatin'—makin' out they're Scouts, an' that."

"But doin' 'good turns' same's the Scouts," Charlie put in quickly.

"Mebbe. We've only their word fer that," Barney replied.



“Don't ye think we'd better put it up to the Scout Master, Barney?” Billy suggested. “He'd know what to do.”

“You're right—that's what we'll do. Come on,” and the three went in search of the Master.

He listened in silence to the story which was told by Doyle with only an occasional word from Billy. Charlie spoke only in answer to a question.

“You can leave the matter in my hands, boys,” the Master said. “I'll go to the hospital first thing in the morning, and if the two boys really want a chance, we must try to give them one.”



## XII

### OLD ACQUAINTANCES

**T**HE next morning, the Scout Master called Doyle and Billy aside. "I was at the hospital this morning," he said, "and saw the two boys. They set Jim's leg last night; he seems to have no other injury. And Tom is winning laurels in the hospital. The doctor says he's one of the best helpers they've had there."

Doyle's eyes met Billy's in a glance of surprise. "Wouldn't that jar ye—*Tom Jones!*" muttered Barney under his breath.

The Master added, "They seemed worried about something, I fancied—or, at least, Tom did—but they wouldn't talk to me. They want to see you, Billy."

"Me?" Billy glanced up in surprise.

The Master nodded. "I promised to send you over there. You might as well go now."

Without a word, Billy saluted and was gone. Barney stood a moment, looking doubtfully after him; then he shook his head and turned away in silence. When Billy reached the hospital he found Jim alone, and not inclined to talk, but Tom appeared in a few minutes, and Tom had much to say.



"We served you mean, Burns—I'll own up to that," he began at once, "an' mebbe you'll be glad of a chance ter pay us back now. If you feel so, pitch inter me any old way you want— I ain't squealin'—but I'm speakin' fer Jim here. Don't be hard on Jim."

"No, I won't be hard on Jim," Billy answered slowly.

Tom's troubled eyes cleared. "Ye won't tell on us, then?" he cried eagerly.

"Tell what?"

"Anythin' ye know—that we ain't real Scouts, an' all."

"I ain't tellin'," Billy returned. "But our Scout Master knows. I do' know what he's goin' to do about it."

"What harm's it do—us wearin' Scout togs?" Tom demanded sullenly. "We've worked same's all you Scouts—hard as any of you, I bet."

"Shouldn't wonder," Billy assented, "but—but it was cheatin' all the same."

"Huh!" Tom taunted. "Ye wasn't so per-tic'lar yerself, once."

"That's true enough," Billy admitted quietly, "but I don't cheat nor lie now. Tom, it don't *pay*—doin' them things." Billy put it on the only ground that he felt would appeal to the boys. He went on earnestly, "Look at Barney an' Nolan an' me an' the rest of the old gang. Think we'd drop back again? Not on yer life, we wouldn't. We had our chance an' we took it. You——"



"We ain't had no chance—Jim an' me," the other boy interrupted.

"You didn't want one, did you?" Billy questioned.

"How'd you know we didn't?" Jim broke in with a snuffle. "You never offered us none—you'n Barney Doyle. You went 'round in yer uniforms, havin' yer meetin's an' yer hikes, an' yer campfires, an' never givin' us so much as a nod when you seen us in the street!"

Billy stared from Jim's white face to Tom's sullen one—a look of wonder growing in his eyes. It was a moment before he spoke.

"I been a fool, an' it ain't the first time," he said at last. "I might have guessed how you'd feel, but—I just didn't, that's all—jest took fer granted that you liked to be——" He broke off abruptly to ask, "Did you follow us out to the country an' throw down our cabin walls?"

"No, sir-e-e!" and "We did *not!*" the two boys denied in one breath. Jim added hesitatingly, after a moment, "We did tag you more'n once when you went a-hikin', but we never touched yer walls. I'll swear ter that."

"D'ye know who did?"

"No," both boys declared. "We wasn't ten minutes behind ye all the way into town, that night," added Tom. He chuckled slyly, "Say, Billy, one Friday night, after we found out 'bout that country camp, we got out there ahead of ye an' clumb that big old tree near where you build



yer campfires, 'n' we was roostin' up there all the evenin' till you-all turned in. Heard every word you said."

Billy stared at him, answering nothing. Jim, glancing at Billy's face, added, "S'pose you think 'twas sneakin' ter spy on ye that way, but say, Burns, 'twas all we could get of your good times, an'—an' 'twasn't so awful much, after all. Didn't hurt you fellers any."

"No, it didn't hurt us," Billy repeated half unconsciously. With his way of putting himself in another fellow's place, Billy was thinking of these two homeless outcasts, hiding about in the woods, slinking through hidden pathways, climbing trees—just to watch other boys having good times. It seemed somehow pitiful to Billy. Deep down in his heart, he had held a grudge against these two ever since that dreadful night when he had crept out of Jack Harding's home—out into the darkness, alone and sick. He had told himself many times that he hated Jim and Tom for the shame they had put upon him then—and through him, on Jack—but now, suddenly, he felt that he knew the two boys for the first time, and found them—not evil monsters, but just two lonesome homeless creatures, not so very different from what Billy Burns himself had been—not so very different from what Billy Burns might have been to-day if Alan Marshall had not given him his chance—Alan Marshall—and Jack. Suddenly he looked at the two boys with a frank, friendly smile. "I see how



'twas," he said. "I might 'a' known before, but I didn't—think."

Jim put in, his pasty-white face flushing slowly, "When we got out of the Pen, 'twas all—all dif'rent. The ol' gang was all broke up, you'n Barney an' the rest was Scouts—'cept a few fellers that we couldn't get on with somehow, an'—say, Billy, 'twas mighty lonesome. How would you like it yerself if all your troop should go back on ye, an' act like you was scum when you happened to run across 'em in the street? How'd you like it, eh?"

"Nobody'd like it," Billy replied.

Jim went on, "We stood it fer a while, then one day Barney saw us in the street an' he come down on us like," Jim crowded back the word trembling on his tongue, as a nurse passed, and substituted, "like a thousand of brick, 'cause somebody'd seen us talkin' to Duff. We wasn't takin' any back talk from Barney Doyle, an' he made us pretty mad. 'Twas," Jim stole a swift glance at Billy, "'twas to pay him up we served you that mean trick. We was jest gettin' even with Doyle—see?"

Billy nodded. "Scouts don't *get even*, like that," he said.

"*We ain't Scouts*," Tom's tone was significant.

"N-no," returned Billy slowly. "Would you be if you could—now?" and again with one breath the two boys responded instantly,

"You bet we would!"



“You’d have to be on probation fer a while first——”

“What’s that—pro-bation, d’ye call it?”

Billy explained. “You couldn’t join a troop till you’d shown you was tryin’ to keep the Scout laws, you know.”

“What laws? We can tie sailor knots ’n’ things like that, ’n’ row, ’n’ swim, ’n’ cook,” Tom declared eagerly.

“I’ll give you the Scout book that tells all you have to learn, an’ what you can do to win honours.”

“Honours? Is them the things some Scouts wear on their sleeves?” Jim demanded, his eyes full of interest.

Billy explained about honours, badges, and medals, the two boys listening with absorbed interest. When he rose to go they urged him to come again.

“Jim’s missin’ all the fun, besides the pains he’s havin’ in that leg o’ his,” Tom said. “It’s hard luck fer Jim.”

“An’ Tom’s a-missin’ them same things stayin’ here with me,” Jim added.

“That’s nothin’,” muttered Tom, a shame-faced grin on his rough face as he looked at his friend.

“You know,” Billy said, looking from one to the other, “if you was a Scout, Jim, you’d have a medal as well as a broken leg.”

“Me—a medal—what fer?”

“Savin’ a life,” said Billy. “An’ you, Tom—



I reckon mebbe you'd have an honour for stayin' an' nursin' him these three days."

The two boys looked at each other again, and in their faces were a pride and delight so simple and sincere that Billy felt a lump in his throat.

"Why, why then, we—we're *almost* Scouts now, ain't we, Billy Burns?" Tom stammered, his eyes shining.

Billy talked over this interview with Barney and the Scout Master that night, and both of them listened thoughtfully—Barney in genuine amazement.

"We must find some way to help them," the Master said. "I'll have a talk with Mr. Hart about it."

This, like the previous day, was crowded with "good turns" for the Scouts, who were in constant demand in the city of tents. But as there were several hundred Scouts now on duty, none of them need be on duty all the time, now that those in charge had the situation well in hand; and the boys of Troop 5 had an opportunity to see and hear many interesting things. They saw General Sickles, the only remaining corps commander of the Union army, sitting on the piazza of a house on the field, and holding a continuous reception. Not an old soldier—in blue or grey—passed that house without stopping to shake hands with the old general.

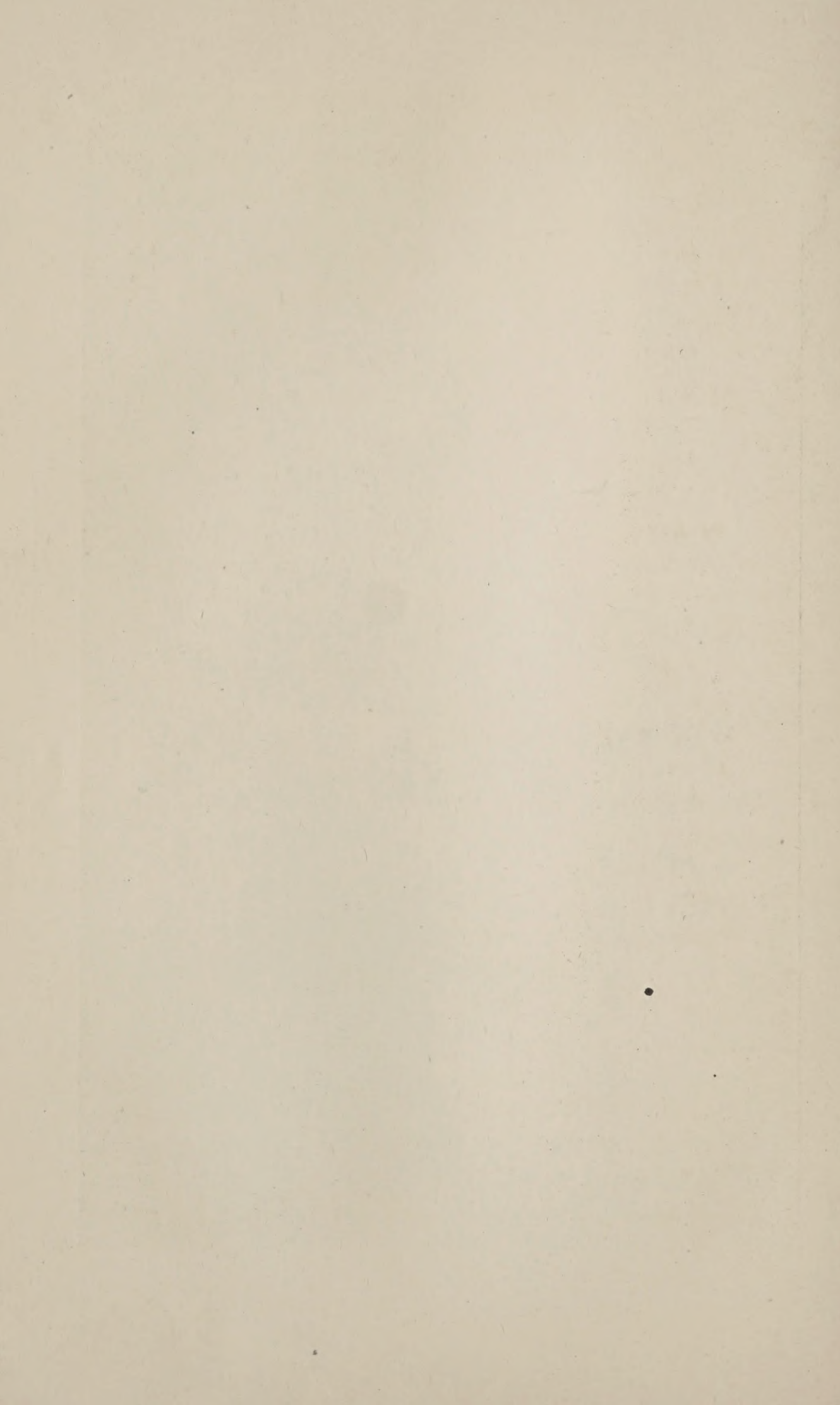
"Say, son," a blue-coated veteran laid a hand on Jack Harding's arm and pointed to a wheat field close by, "that's where General Sickles lost





“ RIGHT ON THAT RIDGE, YONDER ”







his leg fifty years ago—right on that ridge yonder—and he's here to-day—ninety-three years old. Hear 'em—hear the Johnny Rebs givin' him their old yell?" Again the sharp ringing yell rose on the hot summer air, drowning the enthusiastic cheers of the Union men.

"Were you in the battle, too, sir?" Jack asked.

"I sure was, son. I was in it two days. Comrades on each side of me fell, but I got only a clip on my wrist from a spent ball, and a cut in my head—nothing to speak of. But I *was here*, all right."

The old man passed on and Jack drew a deep breath. He and Billy were with Wilson Harding and Don Frazer and a couple of younger boys.

As they went on, they heard a sudden outburst of cheers, shouts, and yells. Louder and louder the tumult swelled, and everybody pressed forward to see what it meant—the boys running with the rest.

"Oh, look—*look!* It's the Stonewall Jackson brigade—see their old battle flag?" cried Wilson. "Say, *boys!* This is a sight worth seeing. I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

The crowd separated to make way for a hundred old men, grey-headed, grey-clad. Some walked feebly, but every head was lifted proudly, and every old face was alight with boundless enthusiasm.

"*Oh!*" breathed Jack, as the last grey soldier



passed, "How they *love* that flag! I wonder who the colonel was—leading them."

An old soldier, overhearing the question, answered it. "That was Colonel Chew. He was Stonewall Jackson's chief aid."

"Thank you, sir." Jack's hand went up in salute. "It's *great* to have seen them."

"Great for lads like you," the old soldier returned, "but you can't know what it is to us. I served under Robert E. Lee—the best soldier God ever made." He lifted his faded old hat—Jack's quick eyes saw two bullet holes in it—and passed on.

It was barely light the next morning when a regimental band went marching down the Long Lane playing in succession, *Yankee Doodle*, *Hail Columbia*, and *Dixie*. Tired men tried to close their ears to the first two, but there was no resisting the alluring strains of *Dixie*. Another band followed the first, and another followed that, playing all the stirring old battle hymns; and after the bands came the drum and fife corps.

Out of one tent after another then, came the old men in grey and blue, falling into step behind the bands, and singing, some one tune, some another, but all helping to swell the tumult of martial music.

With an ever-increasing following, the bands went on to serenade General Liggett, the regular officer in charge. Tired as he was, General Liggett was hardly in a state of mind to appreciate



the honour intended. From his cot he shook his fist at his admirers and bade them begone. But there was no more sleep for any one in camp after that. By five o'clock, near a dozen bands were waking the echoes with the old battle songs, and they kept it up till breakfast time.

Shortly before eleven, there was a rush to the railroad station to greet the President. Every Democrat wanted to have a share in that greeting, and many who were not Democrats helped to swell the chorus of cheers while the guns boomed out a salute. The great tent was packed to its utmost capacity, and with the first notes of *Hail to the Chief*, 10,000 men rose as one to give the President his second welcome, and when he spoke, they listened in a silence that would miss no word, to the inspiring message that he brought them.

The boys of Troop 5 hurried straight from the tent to General Liggett's headquarters, and were fortunate enough to be in good positions near the tent, when, at twelve o'clock, a silver-sweet bugle call floated over the city of tents, and the great field where history had been made half a century before. At that signal, the big silk flag before headquarters slipped slowly down to half-mast. General Liggett, in uniform of spotless white, faced the flag and stood at attention, every member of Troop 5 following his example.

The guns of the battery thundered in salute, and every enlisted man in camp, whatever he



was doing, instantly faced the flag, heels together, head lifted, the war-worn soldiers in blue and in grey, standing likewise at attention. Forty-eight times the great guns boomed, echoing and re-echoing across the old battlefield, while over the silent assemblage fell the hush of peace—a strange, solemn, heart-thrilling silence, full of memories of the past—hopes of the future. For five minutes the silence lasted, and so the regular army paid its impressive tribute to those who died at Gettysburg fifty years ago.

Then once again the bugle notes rang out, clear and joyous this time, the silken flag leaped up the staff, a little breeze catching it, and sweeping it out in beautiful lines against the blue of the summer sky. The silent multitudes stirred, drew long breaths, and turned away to the duties and pleasures of the day. But deep in the hearts of some of the boys of Troop 5 was the memory of a splendid sacred moment that they never could forget. Some of them felt afterwards that those five minutes set the seal to this great occasion—were, for them, the real ending of it—though the hours that followed held much of interest, and brought opportunity for many a kind turn still.

But the old men seemed to fade away rapidly after that—thousands of them crowding the departing trains. They had met old comrades and old foes—who were foes no longer—they had seen again this great battlefield of which they had dreamt through more than half a lifetime.



Some of them had looked, through a mist of tears, upon old battle flags that they had never expected to see again. They had met the President of their country—their *united* country. They were weary with the strain of it all, and now they longed to get back to the quiet home-places from which most of them would journey never again.

Jack and Billy had been helping some of the old men who were going—carrying their bags, and finding seats for them in the crowded cars. When, after many delays, the long train pulled slowly out, the boys stopped on the platform to wave their hands to old men at the windows who leaned out, waving hats and hands and handkerchiefs.

“Three cheers for the Boy Scouts!” one old fellow sung out, and the cheers were given with a hearty good-will, car after car joining in; while other Scouts gathered about Jack and Billy, and all stood bareheaded as they acknowledged the greeting. Some of the boys were laughing, but not the two from Troop 5; they felt more like crying, though they hoped that the others did not guess that.

As the last car passed and the boys turned away, Jack said in a low tone, “Billy, it must be pretty tough to be old—real old—like some of these veterans. I—I never—*sensed* it, don’t you know—till to-day. Everything’s *behind* them now—nothing to look forward to.”

Billy nodded in his dumb fashion, but Jack



didn't mind that his friend had no words. He knew that Billy understood and felt very much as he did.

The boys found the Scout Master in consultation with Mr. Hart and Mr. Harding over the problem of getting the boys back to Washington. As Jack and Billy joined them, Mr. Hart was saying, "There's no possibility of finding seats in any of the trains going out to-day. They'll all be crowded to the limit."

The Master stopped an officer who was passing. "How about it, captain—will there be trains enough to-morrow for all that can't get away to-day?"

"Possibly," the captain answered, "but it is also possible that no extra trains may be run to-morrow. How about these Scouts of yours? Do they march back?"

"Not if there is any other way."

The captain's keen eyes swept over the boys in khaki, and he smiled.

"Troop 5, D. C.," he said. "I believe you are the boys who set up some tents for us the other day—set 'em up *twice*?"

The boys laughed and admitted the fact.

The captain turned again to the Scout Master. "They're peaches—these boys of yours. You've a right to be proud of them. If I had my way every one of them should have a medal for honourable service in this celebration. I can't supply the medals, but—How many are there in your troop?"



“Nineteen here,” the Master replied. “Mr. Hart will take five in his car.”

“Fourteen, then, to be provided for. I think we can manage transportation for that number, and their Scout Master, too. I’ll see about it at once,” and the captain passed on.

Ten minutes later he returned. “Tell your Scout Master,” he said, “that it is all arranged—fifteen seats reserved for you in a train leaving at five o’clock. Be on hand.”

A little later the tents of Troop 5 were down, and carried to the freight station, and the boys separated into groups, some going in one direction and some in another. Jack and Billy, wandering over the cemetery, saw Barney standing before the Lincoln monument.

“Come on over,” said Jack, but Billy drew back.

“No, leave him alone,” he answered.

“Why?” Jack questioned.

“Oh—’cause,” muttered Billy. Then he told Jack about Barney’s first book. “You see he hadn’t ever read a book before—I mean, what the Master calls a ‘real’ book. He had that *Life of Lincoln* a long time before he read it; but one night he took it up and read till mornin’—finished the whole book, and it’s a big one. And he’s been diff’rent ever since. He thinks Lincoln the greatest man that ever lived, I reckon.”

“I’m glad you told me, Billy. I shall like Barney better now,” Jack said gravely.



### XIII

#### WINTER DOINGS IN NEW ENGLAND

ONE day in early October, Billy went to see Jack.

"You'll find him in the library," the maid said, and Billy hurried eagerly to meet his friend. Jack was standing by the library window, his hands in his pockets, looking listlessly out into the street. He turned and nodded as Billy entered, and held out his hand, but he did not speak, and turned again to the window.

Billy stood for a moment, surprised and bewildered. Jack never before had met him in this fashion—what could it mean? He wanted to hurry away, but something kept him from doing that, and he dropped into the nearest chair. After a moment Jack turned and came over to him, and Billy saw that his face was white and grave. He spoke in a low tone.

"Is—is anything—wrong, Jack?"

Jack nodded. "It's my mother—she's sick. The doctor says she must go to Southern France for a year."

Billy caught Jack's hand and wrung it silently. His heart ached for his friend, but he did not know how to express his sympathy. Jack under-



stood, however, and a shadow of his old friendly smile swept over his face.

“I know, Billy,” he said. “I know you’re sorry, but I—I can’t talk about it.” He hurried out of the room then, and Billy went away heavy-hearted.

Two days later Mr. Harding sent for him. Billy found him in the library this time. He shook the boy’s hand warmly, and then sat for a moment, searching his face with keen, grave eyes.

“Billy,” he said, “you know what trouble we are in?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Mrs. Harding and Elsie will sail on Saturday, and I am called to Alaska on business that may detain me for several months. As Wilson is at college, Jack would be alone here with the servants, and, of course, I can’t leave him so. Besides—he is not well. The doctor is somewhat anxious about him, and wants him to live out of doors as much as possible, in a bracing climate, for a year. So I thought of you, and I am going to ask a great kindness of you—for Jack. There is no one outside of the family for whom he cares as much as he does for you. Billy, would you be willing to go to New Hampshire and stay there with Jack for six months or a year? Don’t answer hastily. Think it over.”

“I don’t have to think it over. I’ll be glad to go. There’s nothing I can do for Jack that



I won't be *glad* to do. You—you don't know what Jack's done for me, Mr. Harding. Nothing I could ever do for him would make up for that—nothing!" Billy replied warmly.

Mr. Harding smiled. "It is a great trust I am committing to you, Billy."

"I know," the boy answered gravely, "and—and you *can* trust me."

"I am sure of that. But, Billy, you haven't thought what it will cost you. You will lose a year of school—that means a great deal at your age—and you must give up your work. Besides, you will probably find it very lonely up there in the country all winter——"

"Not with Jack," Billy put in. "But—he'd be lonely with only me, I'm afraid."

"Yes, he would, of course. But Jack is a brave little chap, and he will, I am sure, face conditions bravely, and do all he can to make it pleasant for you."

"Oh, me—that's nothin'. I mean, you needn't worry 'bout me, if only I can make it all right for Jack."

"I won't take time now to tell you why I have to be in Alaska—Jack will explain that. You will stay in our cottage at Jackson, New Hampshire, and John Martin and his wife will be there to keep house for you. I'll make all arrangements for your comfort, and Mr. Marshall will talk them over with you and Jack."

"When shall we go?" Billy asked.

"Next Wednesday. I want to see you off



before I leave." Mr. Harding rose as he spoke, and laid a hand on Billy's shoulder. "You are doing for me—and for Jack—what no one else could do. Jack's mother will be satisfied—she says she can trust you."

"She can. Tell her I'll do my best," the boy answered, his eyes looking straight into the grave eyes of the man.

"I'm sure she can, Billy. You will never be sorry for this."

"Sorry? If 'twasn't for her bein' sick, an' Jack not—well, I'd call it the biggest luck ever, for me," Billy answered.

The next week was a whirl of excitement and work for Billy Burns. He had conferences with the Scout Master, and purchases to make of warmer winter clothing than he would have needed in Washington. Then there were all the Scouts to see and say good-bye to, and Grant Wilmer, and the poor chap at the hospital, who was really beginning to gain a little. Charlie Duff hung around him, grumbling about his going, yet plainly grieving over it, and Barney—Barney said little, but now Billy realised as he had not before, what Barney's friendship for him really was. He was sorry for Barney, and spent with him as much time as he could.

The train left at seven o'clock in the morning, and when Jack and Billy, with Mr. Harding, reached the big station, there was Troop 5 drawn up in line to receive them. Jack choked up at that, and even Billy felt a lump in his throat.



But Finnegan saved the situation with a joke—though his warm Irish heart was heavy just then—and all the young faces under the khaki hats were grave, as the boys stood by the last gate and watched the two walk down the long platform to the car. And afterwards it was Tub Miller (who hated letter-writing) who suggested that each boy in the troop should write one letter a month to the two absent members, and keep them posted as to troop doings.

That journey was like a dream to Billy. If Jack had not looked so white and sad, it would have been a delight to Billy to ride in the Pullman over a route all new to him—to go into the diner for meals—to have new magazines to read when he was tired of looking out. And Jack was brave and unselfish—he tried his best to banish sad thoughts and be cheerful for Billy's sake. At Boston they took a taxi to the hotel, where a room had been reserved for them, and that, too, was a wonderful experience to Billy Burns. He felt as if he must be dreaming. Mr. Harding had told them to stay three days in Boston, so that Billy might see a little of the city, and Jack enjoyed taking him about.

Then came the short trip from Boston to Glen, N. H., where John Martin met them with a carriage for the three-mile drive to Jackson. At the Harding cottage, Mrs. Martin had supper ready, but hungry though he was, Billy could hardly eat.

“Seems like they're callin' me—the moun-



tains," he said, his eyes following the great sweeping lines to the cloud-capped summits.

"We'll do some climbing before long," Jack promised.

But for weeks they did no climbing. Mr. Harding had ordered two horses for them. Jack always rode here in the summer, but Billy had to learn. He learned quickly, however, and then the two had a long ride every pleasant day. Long walks they took, too, but Billy always watched Jack and would not let him go too far. As the doctor wanted Jack to sleep outdoors, John Martin had boarded up one end of the side piazza, the rest of which was screened, and placed two cots there for the boys.

"Seems mighty queer to me—sleepin' out in the cold in frosty weather like this, but that's your father's orders," Martin said, the first night.

"Does feel kind of shivery, doesn't it?" Jack agreed, "but we'll be warm in our sleeping-bags and with these warm wool covers and soap-stones."

Privately, Billy felt dubious. It was all right, of course, to sleep out in camp, in summer, but up here in fall and winter——. However, if it was best for Jack, Billy would have slept on an iceberg without complaint. As a matter of fact, both boys liked the outdoor sleeping. They were warm and comfortable, and awoke in the morning feeling fit for anything, and with real mountain appetites.



"Gee!" Billy exclaimed one morning, "seems like I'm eating for two, these days."

Jack laughed out. "Me too. Sleeping out makes us hungry."

"Reckon I'd better sleep in, then, else Mrs. Martin will have to hire a cook to help her."

"Don't you worry. I c'n keep up with your eatin'," Mrs. Martin said, bringing in another plate of batter cakes. "It's when you don't eat that I get worried."

"Ye haven't had to worry that way 'bout me—yet," Billy replied with a grin. He was happy that morning because Jack was. And Jack was happy because the last letter from his sister Elsie had told him that their mother was already gaining and looked much better.

The boys were always at the box when the postman came. That morning he brought a handful of letters.

"You two chaps sure do get a heap of mail," he laughed, as he handed it out. "Ain't love-letters, be they?"

"Some of mine are—this is," Jack cried, holding up one with a French postmark.

"Yes, I reckon that is," the man replied soberly. Everybody in the neighbourhood knew and loved Mrs. Harding, and they knew why she was abroad now, and why Jack was here.

Their letters read, the boys studied until eleven—then went for a walk. Mr. Marshall had laid out for them a course of study, and was to send them monthly examination papers



to be duly filled out and mailed to him. In this way he thought they might keep up with their classes and not have too much idle time on their hands. In the afternoons they rode or played tennis, or sometimes baseball with the village boys. The evenings were the hardest times for Jack. Billy racked his brains to find interesting things to do or to talk about, so that the grave, lonely look would not come into Jack's eyes. They talked much about Alaska, and tried to picture to themselves the places and people that Mr. Harding was seeing. Jack had told all he knew about the Alaska business—how his father owned a big tract of coal land up there, and of the trouble there had been with one of the great corporations that was claiming some of his most valuable holdings.

“Father's suing the company,” Jack explained. “But they've got some mighty smart lawyers on the job, the kind of lawyers that stop at nothing to win for their clients. But we've good lawyers, too, and father is sure we'll win out because we've got right on our side. There'd be no question about it if the other side would play fair, but that's just what they won't do if they can win by unfair means.”

Billy asked many questions because it kept Jack interested—kept him from worrying about his mother. So, night after night, the two boys discussed “the case,” and pored over a big book about Alaska that they found in the Jackson library. It had a map, and by this they fol-



lowed Mr. Harding from place to place. He wrote often to Jack and always sent some message to Billy. Once he wrote a whole letter to Billy. Billy was very proud of that letter.

So the days and weeks slipped by. As the letters from France continued to tell of slow but sure improvement in Mrs. Harding's health, the anxious brooding look came less often into Jack's eyes, and his thin face took on a little flesh and colour. He could walk farther without being tired, and he began to show interest in things as he had not done before.



## XIV

### A NEW ENGLAND CHRISTMAS

**T**HINGS went well after that. Elsie's letters continued to bring good reports of her mother's condition, and Mr. Harding's were hopeful as to the result of the legal proceedings. He could not get away probably, until spring, but would be in Boston in the early summer, and would surely run up to Jackson then. The first December letter was registered and contained fifty dollars "for Christmas expenses for the two of you," Mr. Harding wrote. Billy's eyes opened wide in surprise when Jack showed him that money.

"*All that*, for Christmas?" he cried.

"Why not?" Jack answered. Then his face grew grave. "We have such jolly Christmas times at home," he said. "Mother thinks of the nicest things. *She'll* miss the home Christmas. I'm going to write her a long letter tomorrow, and one to Elsie, too, to tell her what to get mother for me."

Billy listened soberly, but he brightened up as Jack ran on, "We'll have the jolliest time we can here—everything trimmed up with greens, and all the funny things we can think of. I've got to cram the day *full*, Billy Burns, to help me



forget what it would be if were all together at home. Martin will help us get the greens—the woods are full of them. I wish we could go down to Boston and buy the presents, but I reckon we'll have to order by mail."

Billy was silent. He knew nothing about such a celebration as Jack was planning. When there came a pause, he said, half to himself:

"I've seen Christmas trees in the shop windows, and last year we had one at the Home. It was pretty. There was a popcorn ball and a bag of candy for every boy."

Jack stared at him. "And you never had a home Christmas!" he cried, throwing his arm over his friend's shoulders. "Well, Billy Burns, you are going to, *this* time—bet your life on that!"

Jack wasted no time after that. The December days were too short for all he wanted to do. There was much poring over catalogues, much writing of letters enclosing money orders, much pondering over how to get the most out of that fifty dollars, which to Billy seemed such an immense sum—for Jack's plans grew and grew, until Billy wondered if, in the end, he would not include every man, woman, and child in Jackson, in his Christmas list. There were no "awf'ly poor folks," he said, in Jackson, but there were so many that never had anything but what they couldn't do without—like common food and cheap clothes. Usually they had a Christmas celebration at the village church, but



this time they were not going to—they were going to use the money for a hospital instead, so——

Suddenly Jack sprang up with a shout. “Billy, Billy, I’ve got it. I know what we’ll do. We’ll have a tree for everybody in Jackson, and there it is!”

“Wh-where?” Billy’s bewildered eyes, following Jack’s pointing finger, fell on a great, beautiful evergreen, growing about fifty feet from the windows of the living-room. “You don’t mean to *cut that* down!” he cried, for Billy had become an ardent tree-lover in the past two years.

“Cut it down? Well, I guess *not!*” Jack was a tree-lover, too. “No, sir-ee, but we can use it for a Christmas tree without hurting it a bit. Oh, I wish Will was here—he’d find a way to cover it with electric lights—I know he would. But if it isn’t stormy or windy, I guess we can light it up with candles, all right. And, oh, I hope the snow will last—it will be so much prettier with snow! And we’ll have candy bags for everybody—good candy, too—and a little present for every Scout——”

“Hard on their sisters,” Billy interposed.

“*Oh!* ’Twould be, wouldn’t it? Well, then, I suppose we must have something for the girls, too. Wish Elsie was here to help about that.”

“Can’t Mrs. Martin?”

“She’ll have to. We must count up the girls, and see how much we can allow for each one.”



It took the three of them all of one day to trim the big living-room to suit Jack; but when it was done he was more than pleased. Mrs. Martin said it would be dreadfully mussy in a few days, but she smiled as she said it. There were wreaths in all the windows, and the piazza on the Christmas tree side was like a bit of the woods—so green and fragrant. Martin found three great logs for the fireplace, and had them ready for the Christmas fire, and all the time his wife was busy in the kitchen, from which spicy odours floated in to mingle with those other spicy odours from the greens.

The boys gilded or silvered dozens of pine cones and acorns and strung them on cords, they polished crimson apples till they shone, and made long chains of red cranberries—all these for the Christmas tree. Candies and holders and net bags for candy were sent from Boston, but the holders had to be carefully fastened to the branches of the big tree—a job for Martin, that—and the bags had to be filled. Billy helped Jack wrap the gifts for the girls and boys and tie them with red ribbons, or fasten them with gay little stickers, and write the name on each one. It was a big undertaking for a boy who, always before, had had all this Christmas work done for him—but Jack managed it, and he never guessed how much Billy enjoyed helping with it all.

Jack drew a long breath of satisfaction when the last gift was placed in the big box. "There!"



he said. "That's one good job done. We can't put them on the tree till Christmas Day because you know it might be stormy."

"If it is, hope it'll be snow, not rain," returned Billy.

"Can't rain unless we have a warm spell. A little snow would almost make it prettier, but a heavy one would cover everything up and put out the candles."

"What shall we do to-morrow?" Billy inquired.

"Oh, there'll be lots of last things. It's Christmas Day that will be the hardest—everything done, and all day to wait for the fun. Wish somebody would send us a Christmas box just chuck full of little things that it would take lots of time to unwrap—don't you?"

"I don't mind," Billy returned. "You see, Jack, it's *all* so jolly for me. I like every bit of it, and it isn't lonesome for me, as it is for you."

Jack looked at him thoughtfully for a moment. Then he said, "I'm so glad, Billy, that it's jolly for you, and see here—have you thought what a lot easier it is for me with you here? I"—he choked up suddenly—"I—don't know *what* I'd do without you, Billy Burns!"

Billy did not say a word—he couldn't, but his honest eyes looked the love and loyalty he would have spoken had he known how, and Jack found his silent sympathy very comforting; for it *was*



hard—this first Christmas away from all his own people.

Christmas morning Jack had evidence that his own people had not forgotten him. It seemed that Martin had left orders at the Post Office, and all Christmas packages had been delivered to him, so, after the particularly appetizing breakfast that Mrs. Martin served, her husband brought out a box that had come from France. Jack's mother and sister had evidently thought of some things that he might want. Billy sat by, watching him as he unwrapped one thing after another, and wondered what it would be like to have such a Christmas box from a mother and sister—a box with loving messages, or merry jingles, or greetings, tucked in with each smallest gift. Billy couldn't be glad enough that that box had come for Jack. There were two packages in it for him—one a beautifully illustrated book about that part of France, and the other, a silver watch and chain. It was a pity that the two who had sent these gifts could not have seen Billy's eyes when he looked at them.

When the box was empty, and the boys had gathered up the paper and cord, Jack said: "It was jolly—that box. We've been most an hour over it. Wish we had another to open—to fill up the time—don't you?"

"I've got enough," Billy answered, and then Martin came in and deposited a second box beside Jack.



“Another? Where from?” Jack shouted. “Oh, it’s from Washington! Billy, I bet it’s from the troop. If it is it will be full of fun.” He lifted off the excelsior that lay on top—Martin had removed the cover—and read on the first package, “Billy Burns.”

“Hurry and open it, Billy—*do!*”

“You open it,” Billy said.

“No, each one must open his own,” Jack declared, and Billy broke the string, disclosing a jumping-jack, with Christmas greeting from Tub Miller. The next, marked “A bugle for Jack,” was a red and green horn half a yard long, from Don Frazer. They went on, pulling out the foolish, funny things with a joke or a greeting tied to each one, and laughing over them till they found at the bottom, a big picture of the whole troop—except the two to whom it was sent.

“Oh, that’s *fine!*” Jack cried. “Isn’t the Scout Master’s picture splendid? Looks just like him. And Tub Miller—he’s fatter than ever. And look, will you—at Finnegan’s halo!”

“And his grin,” put in Billy.

“Don’s is good—only awf’ly sober. Gee, that looks good to me, Billy Burns,” Jack cried at last, setting the picture on the mantelpiece. “Won’t the Jackson Scouts like to see that though? ’Twould have been enough if they’d sent nothing but the picture, but it was fun to have all the joke-things, too. I believe that’s all.” He began gathering up the papers from



the floor. "Oh, no, here's one more—for you."

Billy took the little box and opened it with a grin, anticipating another joke; but it was a fountain pen, from Barney Doyle.

"Good old Barney," he said under his breath.

"That's a nice thing to have—it's a good make, too," Jack was saying.

When all the litter had been thrown on the fire, Jack wandered restlessly from window to window until Billy proposed a walk.

"All right, only let's wait till the postman comes. Maybe we'll get some Christmas letters. It's most time for the mail. Come on out and watch for him."

They had not long to wait. Jack's quick eyes caught the first glimpse of the old covered buggy crawling up the steep mountain road.

"He's got a passenger this morning," Billy remarked.

"Uh, huh." Jack was not interested in the postman's passenger. "Wish he'd hurry up that old nag of his."

He waved his hand impatiently as the buggy came around the last curve. The passenger seemed to be an old man wrapped in the postman's ancient buffalo robe. He was huddled against the side of the carriage in a shapeless heap. But Jack had eyes only for the mailbag, and the letters and papers the postman was handing out of it.

"One from mother," he exulted, "and Elsie,



and that's from Mr. Marshall—for us both, Billy.” He looked rapidly through the other letters, then cried out, “And not a word from Wilson! I thought *sure* I'd get a letter from him.” He turned away, his face very sober, then whirled about to cry another “Merry Christmas” to the postman. And then he stood still and stared, as the huddled figure in the buggy suddenly straightened up, flung aside the robe, and sprang nimbly out, crying, “Merry Christmas yourself, kid—and Billy, too.”

“Oh—*Wilson!*” Jack cried out, with such welcome in face and voice that Billy turned abruptly, and made a dash for the house. Now Jack would be happy—he had some one of his own to keep Christmas with him. Billy was off for a long tramp before Jack remembered him again. But when he came back at noon, Wilson was very kind and friendly.

“Jack is looking no end better,” he said. “He's been telling me what good care you've taken of him.”

Billy muttered, “I've only tried to keep him from getting tired, that's all—I could do.”

“Much that's all! He's a brick, Wilson—a regular *brick!*” Jack cried.

Mrs. Martin surpassed herself on that Christmas dinner, and the three boys did full justice to it. Then they set to work, trimming the big tree. Wilson entered heartily into all the plans, and worked as hard as any one.

“It's mighty pretty,” he declared, when all



was done. "It was a bright idea to trim it with all those woodsy things instead of tinsel and shop stuff."

"Yes, the shop-stuff wouldn't—wouldn't *fit* a splendid great *growing* tree like this, would it?" Jack replied. "It was such fun, Will, making all those things, and getting the greens from the woods—lots more fun than buying them in a city market. It seemed more Christmas-y somehow."

"Well, what now?" Wilson demanded, as Jack stood looking about the big piazza in its Christmas array. "You can't find room for any more green stuff *there*."

"N-no, but, Will, there's the old flag up attic. I was thinking we might put that up there over the door."

Wilson laughed out, and gave Jack a poke in the ribs. "Oh, you little red-hot-patriot-Scout!" he cried. "Might have known you wouldn't be satisfied without another flag somewhere. S'pose you run that up every morning?" he glanced at the flag waving from its high staff at the front of the cottage.

"Why, of *course*!" Jack returned, joining in the laugh, but holding to his point. "I'm going up to get that old flag."

"He's a great kid, isn't he, Billy?" Wilson said as Jack disappeared, and Billy responded with quick emphasis:

"He's the best ever!"

Jack came back with the flag and Wilson put



it up as Jack wanted it, and then suggested, "If the wind goes down at sunset, we can hang the Chinese lanterns around the porch."

"So we can. I never thought of them. Elsie had a lot for her tennis party last summer. I'll hunt 'em up," Jack returned.

So, with one thing and another, the three boys kept busy, and there was little waiting time before seven o'clock when the Jackson Scouts arrived, announcing that "the girls an' all are comin'—but we came on the double quick to get here first."

The bonfire was ready for lighting outside, but it was not to be lighted at first, lest it dim the glories of the Christmas tree. But when the approaching guests were seen far down the road, Martin and Wilson lighted the lanterns on the piazza (stationing two Scouts with swabs to keep watch of them), and then, as the candles on the tree began to glow, there came a burst of joyous shouts from down the road.

"Oh, I wish Troop 5 was here. We'd all be singing the carols now," Jack cried.

"Can't these Scouts sing?" Wilson asked.

"Huh, not worth a cent—not like our troop," Jack answered, but too low for any ear but his brother's.

"Well, kid, I guess you've got all the youngsters in Jackson here to-night," Wilson whispered, as he went forward with Jack to welcome the guests.

Jack's face was beaming. "Fine, isn't it!"



he answered. "We've got some extra candy bags if there aren't enough on the tree for all."

Not only the youngsters, but many of their parents had come. The boys and Martin set chairs on the big piazza for the women, and the men sat on the steps if they wanted to, but the children wanted to be close to that wonderful tree. In the house it would not have seemed so wonderful, but, indeed, no ordinary room would have held it, with its lofty top and wide-spreading branches. But, standing as it did on the snow-covered ground under the silver gleam of the star-gemmed winter sky, its countless lights glowing and sparkling amid the green branches, lighting up the silver and gold and shining red of cones and acorns, apples, and cranberries, it was indeed a thing of beauty. For a while they were all content just to look at it, but suddenly one little girl held out her hands to two others.

"Let's all take hold of hands and dance 'round it!" she cried.

In an instant a big circle was formed, and 'round and 'round the tree the children danced, singing, shouting, and laughing as they went. When they had tired of that, the candles had begun to die out here and there, so Wilson and Martin began taking down the gifts which Jack and Billy distributed. There was no lack—every boy and girl, big or little, had something, thanks to Jack's careful planning, and, of course, every one had a bag of candy.

As the last gifts were taken down, Martin



lighted the bonfire, and, by its light, gifts were examined and compared, while, with the fragrance of balsam and fir, were mingled odours of peppermint, wintergreen, and chocolate. Then, at a signal from Mrs. Martin, the doors were thrown open, and everybody was invited into the big living-room where the great logs blazing in the fireplace flooded the room with light and heat. At a hint from Jack the Jackson Scouts ranged themselves by the kitchen doors, where Mrs. Martin supplied them with trays of cakes and coffee, with chocolate for the younger ones.

The bonfire was still throwing golden lights across the snow, when Jack's Christmas guests departed. Wilson and Jack stood in the doorway and Billy looking over their shoulders. In the light of the fire the Jackson Scouts suddenly halted, facing the cottage, and gave three vigorous cheers for Jack Harding, and then for Troop 5, Washington, D. C. As they turned to follow the rest of the party, Billy caught the silver bugle from the wall, where it always hung, and thrust it into Jack's hands.

"Play 'taps,'" he begged. "They'll like it."

As Jack stepped out and began to play, with one accord his departing guests stopped to listen. Looking at him standing there, the fireglow falling on his happy face and slender figure, and gleaming on his silver bugle, Billy wondered if anybody ever had a happier Christmas Day than he had had. Jack had been happy, too. Billy could not be glad enough that Wilson had come



to make him so. Yes, Jack had been very happy that day.

He came in, his face glowing. "Glad you thought of that, Billy. The Scouts did like it," he said. "It's been a splendiferous Christmas, hasn't it, Will, even——" But he could not finish that sentence. "I reckon they all had a good time," he ended after a moment.

"They sure did," Wilson answered. "But now bed's the word for you. Say, don't you want to sleep inside to-night? I don't see how you keep warm out there."

"We do, don't we, Billy?" Jack laughed. "Seems smothering now, inside."

"Warm as toast outside," Billy added.

Wilson hesitated. "Believe I'll sleep on the couch down here to-night and keep you company," he said.

"Oh, Mr. Wilson, I wouldn't," Mrs. Martin interposed. "I've made a fire in your room and the bed's all ready. You'll be lots more comfortable there."

"Yes, you will," Jack agreed. "I'm so sleepy I can't hold my eyes open. You aren't used to the cold as we are."

"All right then," Wilson said. "Say, Mrs. Martin—breakfast at nine, not eight, to-morrow—the day after Christmas. We'll need an extra hour of sleep."

"Very well. Nine o'clock it is, then," Mrs. Martin agreed.

Wilson said good-night and went upstairs



yawning, and Jack and Billy were soon in bed, and asleep nearly as soon as they got there. Martin made his last rounds, to be sure that no dangerous embers were left, and silence and darkness fell over the cottage and over the tall green tree with the gold and silver cones and garlands of red berries still draping its great branches.



## XV

### ON THE MOUNTAIN

**W**ILSON stayed over the day after Christmas, but the next morning he departed. Jack and Billy rode to Glen with him, and when the train was gone, they looked at each other inquiringly.

“Seems kind of flat, doesn’t it?” Jack said. “All the Christmas fun over, and Wilson gone! Wish we could think of something real jolly to do to-day.”

“Wish we could,” Billy agreed.

“Say—let’s go for a long tramp—take a lunch and make a day of it.”

“All right.” Billy cast a glance at the sky—it was clear and cloudless. “Looks like good weather,” he added.

“Sure. Fine as silk. Come on.”

The horses were feeling fine, and the boys were soon back at the cottage; but Mrs. Martin looked disturbed when Jack ordered lunch to be made ready at once.

“You ought not to go far,” she said. “We’re liable to have more snow this time o’ year.”

“Snow! Look at that sky!” Jack scoffed. “Don’t stop to talk, Mrs. M. We want to get off *quick*.”



Mrs. Martin knew that it was useless to argue. When Jack wanted to do a thing, he never could see any reasons against it.

"Which way you goin'?" she questioned, when she had the lunch ready and the boys were about to set off.

"Oh, I don't know—over towards Eagle Mountain, I reckon," Jack replied carelessly. "Don't you worry, Mrs. M. I know my way round all these hills—you know that."

"Yes—in summer," she replied. "It's different when everything's covered with snow. I don't re'ely think you ought to go, Jack—not up any mountain, anyway. Wait till to-morrow, an' John will go with you," she urged.

Jack laughed out. "I don't need a nurse," he mocked. "If I do, I'll take Billy. So long."

Mrs. Martin stood in the doorway looking after the boys, and her face was troubled. "I do wish John was here," she was thinking. "Jack's a dear boy, but he is some headstrong—there's no denyin' that—an' Billy would follow him if 'twas to the world's end, I do believe."

Jack was in high spirits, or at least he seemed to be. Perhaps just then he didn't dare to be anything else, for the brief visit of his brother had brought back his homesick longing for the others who were so far away from him. But he was plucky. He didn't mean Billy to guess how heavy his heart was.

It was a glorious morning. The mountain air was like a strong tonic, and the boys walked for



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two hours before they began to be tired. Then it was Billy who suggested a rest—he didn't intend to let Jack overdo.

“Not yet,” Jack returned. “There's a splendid view from a place half a mile further on. We can stop there for lunch.”

So they went on; but Jack was really tired when they reached the place he had named—so tired that he was quite willing to rest for an hour.

“Gee! Mrs. Martin sure does fix up dandy lunches,” Billy remarked, as he opened the box, and examined its contents.

“Sure thing,” Jack agreed, setting his teeth into a chicken sandwich. “Here's enough for most three meals.”

“Maybe, for you. *I'm* hungry,” Billy replied as he gnawed a turkey leg. “Look at that saucy chipmunk.”

“Reckon he's hungry, too.” Jack tossed some crumbs to the little striped thing. “Gee, see him gobble.”

When, an hour later, they started on again, they went more slowly. The snow was deeper as they climbed, and the walking harder. There were places where the snow was covered with a hard slippery crust, and other places in the woods where it was soft and deep. Billy glanced frequently at his friend, and finally he ventured: “Don't you think we better turn back? We're a long way from home, an' it's goin' to be dark early. See—it's cloudin' up over yonder.”



Jack gave a careless glance at the sky. "Clouding up—nothing!" he flung back gaily. "If you think I'm going to back out now, you've another guess coming. It can't be more than half a mile to that old cabin I told you about, and *I'm* going to get there. You can go back if you want to," he added with a laugh. "Our tracks will lead you back to the road." But well enough he knew Billy would not leave him.

"Huh!" was Billy's only response, but he shook his head silently as he followed Jack. Those gathering clouds made him uneasy.

Jack too trudged on in silence. He was really very tired—he knew that he ought to turn back, but there was a stubborn streak in him that sometimes got him into trouble. And because he was tired he pushed on faster now, to get to the place he was determined to reach.

"There's the cabin," he cried at last.

"Mighty glad ter meet up with yer, Mr. Cabin!" Billy exclaimed in a tone of relief.

It was a tumble-down place—a one-room shack with a single window, a door, and a dirt floor. Snow had sifted in through holes in the roof, but there was a good fireplace, and a pile of wood beside it.

"Let's make a fire and have another eat," Jack suggested, dropping down wearily on a box which was all the "furniture" in the place.

Billy had a fire in a few minutes, and its warmth was welcome, for at that height the air



was keen, and a penetrating north wind was beginning to whistle through the woods.

"There's a spring back here. "I'll get some water," Jack said, taking the empty thermos bottle from the lunch-box.

"You sit still—I'll get it," Billy ordered.

While he was gone Jack did not stir, but he spoke cheerfully when Billy came back with the water.

"Wish we'd brought some coffee. There's an old tea kettle yonder."

Billy peered into some tin boxes on a rough shelf. He found some hardtack, a little cornmeal, and some tea.

"That'll do instead of coffee?" he asked, holding out the latter.

Jack sniffed scornfully. "Tea! I hate it—but it will be hot—so we might try it," he said.

Billy looked into the tea kettle and shook his head. "Have to wash it out," he remarked.

They made the tea, and it was hot—that was the best that could be said for it. However, they had plenty to eat, and Jack felt better after the meal.

"I'd hate to have to sleep in that bunk, wouldn't you?" he said. "Looks as if wild things had spent the winter in it."

"I'd rather sit on the box than try it," Billy returned, and added, "If you're rested enough we better be goin'."

"Reckon so," Jack replied. "I know a shorter way back."



"Sure of it?"

"Huh!—sure. Am I sure of my own name?" Jack retorted with scorn. "I've been up here 'bout a thousand times."

"But in summer. It must look different when everything's covered with snow," Billy reminded him.

"Oh, come on—*Mrs. Martin!*" Jack jibed, and started off, and Billy quickly followed.

For half an hour they made good progress; then they found themselves in a gully where the snow was deep and soft.

"Gee—*rusalem!* Look out, Billy—there's water under there," Jack warned as he scrambled hastily back. Then he stood still and looked about him. "I must have got off the track," he admitted reluctantly. "I don't remember any place like this on this path, and I've been over it no end of times."

"Better get back to the cabin and go home the way we came," suggested Billy.

But Jack was not willing to turn back. He spoke impatiently. "Nonsense! It's twice as far that way." He turned to the right and went on. "We can't be much off the path," he declared.

But when, fifteen minutes later, they found themselves in an impassable tangle of snow-laden evergreens, he had to admit that he had lost the trail.

"Don't see how I could be such a fool," he



grumbled. "S'pose we'll *have* to go back and take the long path now."

It was harder going back, for the way was uphill and steep.

"Ugh! What a dismal old place it is!" Jack cried when at last they reached the cabin again. "We can't blunder off this path, anyhow," he added, as they set off again; but Billy noticed that he drew a long tired breath, and his face was very white.

"S'pose we couldn't camp here to-night?" he offered doubtfully.

Jack gave an impatient laugh. "Camp here! Well, maybe you'd like to sleep in that dirty bunk, but none of it for me, thank you. *I'm* going home."

For some time they trudged on in silence. There was no question now about the increasing cloudiness. The sun had disappeared, and though it was yet early in the afternoon, darkness was settling over the mountain. Presently Billy noticed a few scattering flakes of snow, but he said nothing.

Suddenly, without a word, Jack dropped down in the snow.

"Wh-what's the matter?" Billy stammered anxiously.

"I—don't know. I—just—can't—go any further," Jack spoke slowly, between quick panting breaths.

"You're sick," Billy exclaimed.

"No—just—tired. Rest—a bit."



They waited in silence, Billy's eyes, full of keen anxiety, watching Jack's white face. When Jack began to nod, Billy spoke gravely.

"This won't do, Jack. It's too cold for you to sit here. If you can't go on, we must get back to the cabin."

Jack roused at that. "That dirty place? No, *sir!* Guess I can go on now."

But it was soon evident that he could not. He stopped and looked at Billy with bewildered eyes. "I—don't know what ails me, Billy." He spoke almost pleadingly. "I'm—I'm awful sorry, but I just *can't* go on."

"No, you can't. Listen, Jack—we must go back to the cabin—there's no other way. I can carry you that far."

"Oh, no, you can't. It's more than half a mile, and all uphill."

"I can, and I must," Billy spoke gravely. Then he dropped to his knees. "Put your arms round my neck and hold on tight."

Jack obeyed, half giggling and half whimpering. "Oh, dear—it's so silly to be like this. And you can't do it, Billy. I'm too heavy."

Billy did not answer. He got on his feet, holding Jack's ankles, and carrying him on his back. It was a hard climb, though he was strong, and Jack light and slender. Again and again he had to stop and rest. Sometimes Jack stumbled on beside him, supported by Billy's strong arm, and all the while Billy's anxious eyes were noting the gathering darkness. Jack



noticed nothing—said nothing—and this was so unlike him, that it made Billy wildly anxious. When for the third time they reached the cabin it was almost dark inside, for the trees grew close about it, but Billy quickly started a fire, for the cold was increasing. He cleaned out the bunk as well as he could, and going out, cut some spruce branches and spread them in the bunk with his coat on top of them.

“Now lie down there, Jack—it will be more comfortable than that box,” he said.

Jack nodded and clambered into the bunk. Almost instantly he was asleep.

Billy stood for a moment looking down at him; then he ran out and gathered all the fuel he could find. It was hard to find, because of the snow, but the supply in the cabin was small. Fortunately, there was an old axe in the cabin, and Billy hacked and hewed with that as long as he could see, and all the time he was thinking and planning. When he had filled the kettle and the thermos bottle with fresh water, he stood again looking down at his friend.

Jack was sick and he must have help. If he—Billy—should stay there with him, help might be long in coming, for Martin would not know where to look for him. Even if, as Billy hoped, it was simply exhaustion, still Jack must have food, and the cabin was too cold, even with the fire. And more snow was coming—— Billy shook his head in sorrowful perplexity. Then he called aloud:



“Jack—*Jack!*”

Jack opened his heavy eyes. “What is it, old Billy Burns?” he said with his friendly smile.

“Jack—listen.” The grave tone seemed to impress Jack. He sat up blinking in the firelight.

“Jack, I’ve got to go back and get Martin. You are—not well. We can’t stay here with nothing to eat. We can’t keep warm here. Do you understand? I must leave you here and go for Martin.”

Jack was again nodding drowsily. “All right, Billy. Sorry—I—can’t—go——” His voice trailed off into silence, as he dropped back in the bunk.

Billy hesitated. Minutes were precious; but suppose Jack should arouse later, and finding himself alone, wander out in the night? Billy found a pencil and an old letter in his pocket. Rapidly he wrote a message and pinned it to the side of the bunk. He fixed the fire to last as long as possible; then, with a last wistful look at his friend, he went out, closing the door after him. Billy Burns had never in his life done a harder thing than this—to leave Jack sick and alone in that dreary cabin up on the mountain—but he must do it for Jack’s own sake.

Outside it was almost dark. He pushed on as rapidly as he could, but he went carefully. He dared not think what an accident to him might mean for Jack—it would not bear thinking of. Fortunately the path was a wide, well-worn one, and the snow made it lighter. When he was in



doubt, his pocket flashlight helped to show the way. But the time seemed endless as he thought of the possibilities for Jack. Snow was still falling fitfully, and the cold was intense. Billy needed his heavy coat. He tied his handkerchief around his neck and stuffed his hands into his pockets. Once he tried to whistle, but he couldn't keep that up—in silence he tramped on through the darkness, and he drew a long breath of relief when at last he reached the mountain road. He could go faster then, running much of the way, but always with that dark fear for Jack tugging at his big loyal heart. When at last he burst into the cottage, calling wildly for Martin, Mrs. Martin stared at him with white face and frightened eyes.

“Jack?” she gasped.

He explained in few words, and as he did so, Martin himself came in. In breathless silence he stood and listened to what Billy had to say. Then he turned sharply to his wife, and cried out, “Put up food and hot coffee—*quick!* Feed Billy.”

Springing to the telephone, he called up two of his neighbours, and shouted, “Get over here as quick's the Lord will let ye, to go up on the mountain after Jack Harding. *Quick,* I tell ye.”

It seemed as if he was all over that kitchen at the same time, gathering up what he thought might be needed, and shouting orders to his wife, before he flew out to the barn and har-



nessed two horses into the big wagon. By the time he drove to the door, the two neighbours he had summoned were there.

“Tumble in!” he ordered sharply, and as Billy followed them he growled at him, “You ought to stay here, but I know it’s no use to tell ye to.”

Then he sprang in himself, calling back over his shoulder to his wife, “Have that doctor here when we get back.”

Then they were off, to drive to the foot of the steep mountain trail, leave the team there, and climb as swiftly as might be to the cabin.



## XVI

### AN ORDEAL FOR JACK

**F**OR a long time after Billy left him, Jack lay silent and motionless. There was no sound in the cabin but the snapping and crackling of the fire, and that ceased as the fire died down to glowing embers. But outside, the wind whistled and howled, and the cold crept in through chinks in the log walls, and under the heavy door. Through the holes in the roof, the snow dropped silently, making soft white piles here and there on the dirt floor, and a tree at the end of the cabin scratched across the window at intervals, as the wind twisted and thrashed its branches. The wind grew stronger as the storm increased. It rattled the window and shook the door, and the cold grew ever more bitter.

After a long while, Jack stirred uneasily and opened his eyes. He was shivering with the cold, but he felt better—his sleep had refreshed him. He sat up, looking about him in bewilderment. Where was he, or was he dreaming? And where was Billy? His head ached, and he could not remember clearly what had happened. Then he saw the paper that Billy had pinned up beside him. He took it, and crept over to the fire, piled on fresh fuel, and read the message by the fire-



light. Then he remembered and understood. He was too tired to walk, and Billy had brought him back here and now had gone for Martin. He looked at his watch. It was six o'clock. He did not know what time it was when Billy started; but he knew how many long miles he would have to walk, and in the dark he might easily lose his way. Jack groaned. It might be hours yet before he could get back with Martin; and if he should wander from the trail—Jack shuddered. That was a thought that *he* had to put out of his mind. He piled more wood on the fire and crept back to the bunk. The thermos bottle was there, and he drank some water and put some on his head, which was hot in spite of the shivers that ran over him. After a while he dozed again. But suddenly he started up wide awake, thinking that some one was in the room. He could see no one, yet he felt that some living creature was there. He was no longer sleepy—his brain was clear and his senses acute. His eyes searched the room, which was almost dark now. He saw no one—nothing—but there was a sound, somewhere—a rustling, scratching sound—— It ceased abruptly as he said aloud, "A squirrel maybe, or a coon."

He lay down again, and after a little the rustling began once more, and something shook the bunk. In the darkness Jack's eyes widened. He realised where he was now—in the woods up on the mountain. There were wild creatures there, he knew, and some of them were danger-



ous. Jack was no coward, but to be shut up alone in that little place in the dark with a lynx or a wildcat, would be—— Jack's heart beat heavily. If only Billy would come, or Martin! If he only knew what the creature was—*where* it was! If he could reach one of those heavy sticks of wood! The cold sweat started out on his forehead, and his hands were shaking. The creature—whatever it was—must be under the bunk. Perhaps it had crawled through some hole in the wall or burrowed under it. Jack sat utterly still and waited, his wide eyes ever searching through the darkness, for there was now only a glimmer of light from the fire. Then suddenly he saw two fiery sparks close beside the bunk. Instinctively he yelled, and the sparks vanished and all was still. But he *knew* now that the creature was there under the bunk, and he dared not get out. He could only wait in silence. Oh, if Billy would *only* come! The minutes seemed hours—*ages!* Again he heard that soft stealthy rustling beneath him, and once more the fiery eyes were glaring at him. The fire flared up for a moment and showed him the indistinct outline of a dark form. Again he shouted, and once more the thing vanished silently. But Jack was getting exhausted—his head was swimming, and he felt that he could not endure the strain much longer.

“If I only had a gun,” he thought despairingly; and then his thoughts flew to his mother,



and even in that hour, he was thankful that she could not know where he was.

The momentary flare of the fire was over, leaving the room darker than before. Jack dared not get up to replenish it lest the creature under the bunk spring upon him, but he knew that the danger would be greater if the fire went out. Could he get up—*could* he? “I’ve *got* to!” he told himself. “I just *must*!” The room was quite dark now. “I’ll count ten and then I’ll get out.” He counted ten slowly—very slowly. Then cautiously, he drew up his feet and made a dash for the fireplace. As he did so there was a snarling cry, and something furry flashed past him and crouched in the further corner of the room. Jack snatched up a big stick, but in the darkness he could see nothing. It required nerve to turn his back on that snarling wild thing and throw chips on the embers, but he did it—swiftly—and then he whirled about, the big stick in his hand. As the fire brightened, it revealed a great cat crouched in the corner, its wicked-looking teeth bared, its tail lashing, its eyes gleaming like live coals as it spit and snarled at him.

But the fire was blazing up brightly now and the wildcat did not like it. Again and again it crouched for a spring at the slender boy, but he kept close to the fire, and now he had snatched a blazing brand from it, and the wildcat dared not face that. Suddenly it flashed across the room and under the bunk again. It had heard the sound that Jack’s strained ears now caught—



the sound of voices shouting his name. With a glad cry, he flung open the door and dashed out into the storm, the blazing stick still in his hand.

A great shout went up at sight of him, but it was Billy who reached him first—Billy who took the blazing stick from him, and would have led him back into the cabin; but Jack found his voice then, and told what was there. The three men went in, and with lighted brands drove the creature out, for they had no weapons with them. Evidently the great cat had its lair under the bunk, getting in through an opening under the wall. Probably it was there when the boys came to the cabin, but remained hidden, not daring to venture out until the place was dark and still.

“And to think I left you here with—*that*,” Billy cried, when they were all in the cabin again. His face whitened as he thought of it. But presently he said, wonderingly, “Anyhow, Jack, you look lots better than you did when I left you. I thought you were awfully sick.”

Jack laughed a little. “I sure did feel so,” he answered, “but I reckon that beast scared it out of me—whatever it was. I feel all right now—only rather shaky.”

“That’s something new—the wildcat cure,” laughed Martin, “but I guess I wouldn’t exactly recommend you to try it again.”

“And I guess I don’t want to,” Jack answered with a nervous shiver.

Martin handed Billy his overcoat, ordering him to put it on. Then he made Jack take some hot



strong soup out of a thermos bottle that his wife had filled, and spreading in the bunk one of the blankets he had brought, he made the boy lie down there, paying no attention to his protests that he was "all right now."

After that he made coffee and insisted that every one should drink some of it "piping hot" and eat some of Mrs. Martin's lunch before starting out again.

When they at last set forth, Jack, wrapped in one blanket and lying in another, the corners of which were held by the four others, across their shoulders, as if it were a hammock, was carried down the trail to the road where the wagon was waiting.

Jack giggled and fretted, declaring that he could walk all right, and he wouldn't be carried like a pappoose, but Martin paid not the slightest heed to his protests, so at last he was silent, and he was asleep when they put him into the wagon.

Jack always maintained that it was the wildcat, and not the doctor's medicine, that cured him. At any rate, he gained steadily after this adventure, and he and Billy enjoyed to the full the winter sports—skating, sleighing, and skiing—to say nothing of snowball battles with the Jackson boys and ice carnivals at neighbouring lakes.

The New England spring was a delight to Billy, and the boys literally lived out-of-doors, on foot or in the saddle. Billy was so occupied in watching Jack's improvement that he never thought about himself until one day when he



discovered that his clothes were too small for him. Jack looked him over then with slow surprise.

“Well—you’ve sure been doing a heap of growing, Billy Burns. They won’t know you when you get back to Washington. Say, Billy, we’ll run down to Boston next week and get some big-enough clothes. I need some new ones, too,” he said.

It would take too long to tell of that spring and summer—of the mountain-climbing the boys did—of the hikes with the Jackson Scouts, of the coming of Jimmy Hunter and another Germantown Scout to Jimmy’s aunt’s and the way they two (ably assisted by Jack and Billy!) “trained” the Jackson Scouts, and helped them build their troop-houses—one far up on a mountain.

And there was the glorious week that Mr. Harding spent with the boys on his way back from Alaska, after he had won his suit against the land company. Billy learned then what it meant to a boy to have “the right kind of a father.” He considered Mr. Harding exactly the right kind.

And when, in September, Mrs. Harding and Elsie came home, and Mr. Harding and Wilson went with them to Jackson—then Jack felt that he had nothing in the world to wish for, since his mother was well again and they all were together. They would not let Billy go back to Washington until they all went; and when that



time came, Mr. Harding took matters into his own hands—matters concerning Billy, that is. He would listen to no protests. Billy's education was his concern just as much as Jack's, he declared, and there was to be no night work. If Billy wanted to be a doctor—Jack had found that out—he should have every opportunity to prepare himself for that life-work.

The first evening after their return, Jack and Billy slipped away to see the Scout Master; and later, Billy went down to Barney's. He stared in amazement at Barney.

"Why—how *big* you are!" he exclaimed, as their hands met in a firm grip.

"You've been doing some growing yourself in this year," Barney laughed. "You look as if New England agreed with you."

"It did," returned Billy, and then they settled down for a long talk. When Billy inquired about Tom and Jim, Barney answered:

"They're climbin' up—slip back sometimes, of course, but we keep an eye on 'em. Scout Master found 'em work, an' Mr. Hart fitted 'em out with good clothes. They're doin' fine. An' Duff—Billy, I'd never have believed Duff would brace up the way he has. Lookin' after Jim an' Tom has been the makin' of him—but it was you begun it. An' how I nagged you to let him go. I thought you was just wastin' time on him a year ago, Billy."

Billy nodded, and was silent a moment before he asked, "Are Tom and Jim in the troop?"



“Not in Troop 5. There’s a new troop, just organised—South End fellers. They’re in that, and, Billy—I’m the assistant Scout Master.”

“*Good!*” Billy shouted. “You’ll make a dandy one. But—but I’ll miss you, Barney—I’ll miss you a lot.”

“I know, and I’ll miss the old troop—and you, Billy; but I’m gettin’ too big to think only of what I like. I got to help the other fellers a bit,” Barney ended gravely.

As Billy rose to go, he glanced at the bookshelf. It held now a row of “real” books. Under the shelf was a card on which had been carefully lettered these words:

“‘I am not bound to win in what I attempt,’ said Lincoln, ‘but I am bound to be a man, I am bound to be true to the best I know. Any departure from this is contemptible cowardice.’”

“That’s what I’m tryin’ to live up to,” said Barney quietly.



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