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catch his breath, "is putting in dynamite enough to blow up the whole mine. He's attaching a long fuse, so he can get out before the explosion comes. We tried to get down far enough to choke off the fuse, but couldn't do it. In just about another minute, you'll hear something like a Fourth of July celebration!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE SIGNS IN STONES

"We thought he'd send the shot off before we got up the ladders!" exclaimed Dick. "We're expecting to hear the roar of it every minute now!"

"Perhaps something went wrong," suggested Will.

"What part of the mine is he in?" asked Jimmie.

Tommy explained the location of the cross cutting and Jimmie gave a whistle of dismay. In a moment he asked:

"Was he cutting into one of the pillars?"

"Yes," was the answer, "he was getting ready to blow it down with dynamite. It's a wonder we don't hear the explosion!"

"If the spot where he's working is the place I think it is," Jimmie continued, "the gink stands a pretty good chance of finding something. We've been searching in that chamber, and just before you boys showed up tonight we thought we were on the right track. Whether the money is there or not, it is a sure thing that the walls of the chamber have been tampered with. We think, though, that the money is there!"

"Then we mustn't let Ventner get it!" exclaimed Will.

"It won't do him any good to get it after that stick of dynamite explodes!" exclaimed Tommy. "It'll blow him to Kingdom Come."

"Well, why don't we go down and see about it?" asked Will

"Not for me!" exclaimed Tommy.

"He may blow his own head off if he wants to," Dick put in, "but he can't blow off mine, not with my consent. I've got only one head!"

"I don't believe there's going to be any explosion at all!" exclaimed Elmer. "He wouldn't be apt to lay a fuse that would burn fifteen or twenty minutes, and you've certainly been that length of time coming up here, to say nothing of the time we've been talking!"

"All right!" Tommy exclaimed. "Perhaps he was loading up that pillar with dynamite just for the fun of it!"

"It would be a nice thing to have him blow that money out of the

pillar and get away with it, wouldn't it?" scoffed Will.

"Come on, then," shouted Tommy, "I can take you to the firing line in about a minute. If you want to see an earthquake in a coal mine, just come along with me! You'll see it, all right!"

The boys left the old tool house without spending any more time in conversation, and hastened down the ladders to the lower level. On the way down the last gangway they heard some one moving about in the darkness, and then came a cry of warning.

"Stand clear! Stand clear!"

"That's Ventner's voice!" exclaimed Will.

"There's a blast going off in a minute!" the voice came again.

"Now we've gone and done it!" exclaimed Will. "After all the trouble we've taken to make that fellow think we've left the country, we've let him bump right into us. I wonder if he really has fired the fuse?"

"Stand clear! Stand clear!" shouted the voice. Almost before the words had died out, the explosion came, tearing more than one pillar out of position and dropping a great mass of slate down on the floor of the cross-cutting.

For a moment the gases which filled the chambers were overpowering. The only wonder was that they were not ignited. The electric lights carried by the boys shone dimly through the smoke of the confined place.

"There goes Ventner," whispered Will, pointing to a figure moving swiftly through the half-light of the place.

"He's going to see what the shot brought down!" suggested Tommy.

The Boys rushed forward in a little group. When they gathered at the scene of the explosion, the detective was not there.

"If he got hold of the cash, he knew what to do with it all right!" exclaimed Tommy. "He got away with it before we got a chance to see what he had. Now we've got to catch him!"

"May as well look for a needle in a load of hay!" grumbled Sandy.

"Look here," Jimmie exclaimed. "There's away to keep him shut up in the mine if we do the right thing. This cross-cutting runs out to a gangway on the north, and that, in turn, leads, of course, to the shaft. Now, one of you boys duck out to the shaft and see that he doesn't get up. You'll have to go some on the way there, because a man with two hundred thousand dollars in his pocket will put up some running match!"

"I'm off!" shouted Tommy. "I know I can get to the shaft before he can! He's too fat-bellied to run, anyway!"

Tommy started away at a swift pace, and the other boys closed in on the gangway, Will alone stopping at the scene of the explosion.

"This gangway," Dick explained, "runs back into the mine for some distance, but there are no cross passages. I guess the coal wasn't very good here. At least, they never spread out the drive."

"Then we've got him bottled up unless he got out of the shaft!" declared Sandy. "We'll soon know whether he got out or not!"

"I don't believe he would try to get out," suggested Elmer. "The chances are that he'd make for the back of the mine, thinking to hide away with the plunder, provided he had any plunder to hide away with."

"I'm afraid he found the hidden money," Will said, taking a scorched ten-dollar bill from a pocket. "I found this back there, where the pillar fell. I guess he found the cash all right!"

"And that's a nice thing, too!" exclaimed Sandy. "You boys kept saying that Ventner was helping you find the coin. You were right about that, for he did find the coin. And now the trick is to get it away from him!"

"I'd like to know whether Ventner got up the shaft or not," suggested George, "and I believe I'll take a run up there and see."

"That's a good idea!" advised Will. "If he didn't get up the shaft he's surely imprisoned in the gangway. He may be between this cross-cutting and the shaft, or he may have gone further in!"

"It'll take a long time to find out about that," suggested Jimmie.

Directly Tommy and George were heard returning from the shaft. They came through the gangway flashing their lights in every direction.

"He never went up the shaft!" Tommy exclaimed as they came near. "We've got him canned in the mine all right. If he's got the money, we'll take it away from him! He wouldn't know what to do with it anyway!"

"First," suggested Will, "we'd better make sure that the fellow got the money. The bank note I found may have never been in the possession of Mr. Carson. And even if it was, it may be the only one to be blown out of its hiding place by the explosion. It strikes me that we'd better give the place a thorough search before we waste much time looking for Ventner. If, as Tommy says, he never left the mine by way of the shaft, we've got him blocked in, all right!"

The boys now began a careful examination of the cross-cutting where the explosion had taken place. As has been stated, more than one pillar had been blown out. There was a great heap of debris on floor, and this the boys attacked with a vim.

Tommy and George were now standing guard at mouth of the cross-cutting so that no one could pass down the gangway toward the shaft.

"Suppose that fellow did get the money?" asked Sandy, as the boys cleared away the heaps of slate, "what then?"

"Then we'll have to take it away from him."

"We'll catch him first."

"We've got him blocked in, haven't we?" asked Sandy.

"Oh, we know that he can't get out," Dick cut in, "but we know, too, that there are a lot of shallow benches along that gangway. We can't walk in and pick him out in a minute. Besides," the boy continued, "when we find him, we may find his pockets empty."

"That's just what we will do!" Elmer agreed. "He'll hide the money in another place, and swear that he never found it!"

"I wish we'd kicked him out of the mine!" exclaimed Sandy.

The boys continued the search until daylight, and then, leaving Tommy and George still on guard, they went up to the old tool house for breakfast. The lads were by no means elated over what had taken place. They believed that Ventner had succeeded in finding the money, and were certain that, even if located in the mine, he would deny any knowledge of it.

"I guess we got you boys into a mess by insisting on having the detective roaming around," admitted Elmer, as the boys were eating a hastily prepared breakfast. "I guess we should have listened to you in regard to that. There is no knowing how much trouble we have made!"

"He may help us find the money after all!" laughed Will.

"Yes," cut in Sandy, "it may be easier to get it away from him than to find the place where it was hidden."

"Oh, yes, if we could lay our hands on him and order him to give up two hundred thousand dollars, and he, would say: 'Yes, I've been waiting to find the owner,' that would be all right, too! But the thing isn't likely to turn out in that way! He'll hide the money, and swear he never found it! Then, when everything quiets down, he'll sneak back and get it!"

This from Jimmie, who seemed to take a rather gloomy view of the situation. The boys remained at the old tool house only a short time. Their minds were fixed so intently on the work in hand that they hardly knew whether they had had any breakfast at all.

As they passed down the ladders to the lower level, they heard something which resembled a shot, and almost tumbled over each other going down into the gangway. Will and Elmer were first to reach the cross-heading where the explosion of dynamite had taken place.

They called to Tommy and George, but received no answer. They walked for some distance down the gangway without hearing any sound indicating the presence of their companions, or of any one else.

"Now that's a funny thing!" exclaimed Will. "I don't see why those boys should go rambling about the mine at a time like this just for the fun of the thing!"

"They never did!" replied Elmer. "You remember the shot we heard?"

"It might not have been a shot!" suggested Will.

As the boy spoke he bent over and pointed to stones lying on the floor of the gangway.

"There!" he said. "The boys have left a record. They not only point out the trail, but warn us that there is danger in following it!"

CHAPTER XVIII

TWO HOLD-UP MEN

"That's Boy Scout talk all right!" exclaimed Elmer.

"Yes, the three stones, piled one on top of the other, mean that there is danger in following the trail. I don't understand exactly what kind of danger can be threatening us, and so the only thing we can do is to go on and find out," Will said with a glance backward.

The other boys now came up and a short consultation was held. It was decided to leave Sandy and Dick at the point where the explosion had taken place, while Will, Elmer and Jimmie followed on down the gangway.

"Now whatever you do," warned Will as the two boys were left behind, "don't leave this gangway for a minute. If Ventner isn't out of the mine now we don't want him to get out. He may have money or he may not. That is one of the things no fellow can find out at this time, but whether he has or not, we want him to give an account of himself before he leaves the Labyrinth. He's got several important questions to answer."

The boys promised to watch the passage faithfully, and the others passed on down the gangway, flashing their lights in every direction and making no pretense of moving quietly.

"Look here," Jimmie said after they had proceeded some distance into the mine and discovered nothing of importance, "I have in my possession a great idea! Want to hear about it?"

"Sure!" laughed Will.

"We're making too much noise."

"Making too much noise in order to attract the attention of a couple of lost youngsters?" asked Elmer.

"They're not lost!" insisted Jimmie. "They've been lured away or dragged away! We don't know how many men were in the mine with Ventner?"

"Well, produce your idea!" Elmer exclaimed.

"Well, my notion is that I ought to go on ahead of you boys, walking

as quietly as possible and without a light. If there are people waiting to snare us, they'll naturally think we've bunched our forces and are all coming along together. Then, you see," he continued, "I'll be right in among them before they suspect that we have a skirmish line out."

"That's an all right notion, kid!" answered Will.

"Then I'll be on my way," Jimmie replied. "And if I need help at any time, I'll give the call of the pack!"

"But you mustn't do that unless you have to," Wilt cautioned, "because, the minute the cry is heard, everybody within eighty rods would know what's going on. Have you matches with you?"

The boy felt in the pockets of his coat and nodded.

"Well, then," he said, "if you want to signal, wet your hands and rub the phosphorus off the matches. Turn your hands, palms in our direction, so no one can see from the other side and wig-wag."

"That will be fine!" exclaimed Jimmie. "I've got this wig-wag system down pat. I guess this Boy Scout training is pretty poor, ain't it, eh? The darker it is, the better we can talk!"

Jimmie darted away, while Will and Elmer remained stationary for a short time in order to give him an opportunity to get out of the range of their lights. Directly they heard him whispering back and listened.

"There's another stone cairn here!" he said. "I guess I knocked it over, for I can't tell exactly what it is. You can learn that when you come up with your searchlights! I think there are three stones."

"All right!" Will whispered back.

When the boys came to the spot from which the voice had been heard they found three stones lying side by side on the floor of the gangway. It was plain that they had been placed one on top of the other, and so they accepted them as another warning of danger.

"I wish we had some intimation of the kind of trouble we are likely to get into," Elmer suggested, as they passed along. "I don't like this idea of boring a hole in the darkness with a little bit of a light and anticipating an attack at any minute."

"I don't like it a little bit myself," replied Will. "A person so inclined might shoot us down without ever showing himself," declared Elmer. "In fact, the only protection we have lies in the fact that Jimmie is on ahead, and would not be likely to pass any one lying in wait for us. Bright little boy, that!"

"There he is now!" exclaimed Will. "He's using the phosphorus, all right, and I can begin to understand what he's trying to say? There's a 'W', and an 'A', and an 'I', and a 'T'. That means that he wants us to stay where we are. The system works fine, doesn't it?"

The question now was as to whether the lads should extinguish their lights. That, of itself, they understood would be suspicious in case

they should be in sight of their enemies. It would simply proclaim their knowledge of the danger they were in, whatever it was.

"I think we'd better keep the lights going until we hear something more," said Elmer. "Jimmie will talk again in a minute."

The boys waited patiently for some moments, and then the wig-wag figures came again. Will read slowly:

"There's a 'V', and an 'E', and an 'N', and a 'T', and an 'N', and an 'E', and an 'R'," he said. "Now the boy's starting it again. He says, 'Ventner is here.' Now wait a minute, there's more coming!"

"The next words are: 'With two others.'"

"It's only a question of time when that detective will get next to the wig-wag game," Elmer declared. "This gangway smells like a match factory already. I wonder how far Jimmie is away from them."

Directly Jimmie began talking the wig-wag tongue again. This time he said that Tommy and George were not in sight, and had evidently been surprised and taken prisoners. He advised Will and Elmer to come on softly with their lights out.

The boys did as requested, but they had advanced only a few paces in the darkness when Canfield, accompanied by Sandy and Dick came running up, showing both lack of breath and profound excitement.

"Boys," Canfield called. "Boys!"

"Will!" yelled Sandy.

"I guess they're going to bust up the whole combination!" declared Will rather sourly. "I wish I had them by the neck!"

"They may have important news," suggested Elmer. "Anyway, we'll have to turn on our lights and meet them. If we don't, they'll keep on yelling all down the gangway!"

Canfield and the two boys came up as soon as Elmer showed a light, and stood for a moment looking cautiously about.

"I don't think you boys ought to go any further into the mine," Canfield exclaimed, breathing heavily from the long chase down the passage. "I have just received word that two of the most desperate hold-up men in the country have taken refuge here. There's no knowing how they got over to the mine, but it is a sure thing that they did get here, for couple of breaker boys saw them climbing into the breaker."

"What time was this?" asked Will.

"Oh, I don't know," replied Canfield. "The matter was reported to me early this morning. I couldn't find you before, or you should have had the news sooner. It isn't safe for you to go into the mine!"

"Your information," grinned Will, "comes a little bit late, but it's all right, just the same. Ventner is in there, and there are two men with. It's a mystery how they made their way in without being

discovered, but it seems that they did so."

"What are you going to do?" asked Canfield.

"We're going on into the mine."

"In the face of my warning?"

"It's just this way," answered Will. "We left two of the boys on guard in this passage, not so very long ago, and they have disappeared. We suspect that Ventner and the two men to whom you refer have good reason to know something of their whereabouts."

"They won't injure the boys!" pleaded Canfield.

"We don't mean to give them a chance!" insisted Elmer. "We're going to jerk those boys out so quick it'll make their heads swim!"

"But it's positively dangerous!" urged the caretaker.

"If there wasn't an element of danger in the situation, we wouldn't be here!" replied Will, "I don't see as we need to run away from two hold-up men, anyway," the boy went on. "Here are five boys and one full grown man in the gangway. We ought to give a pretty good account of ourselves, in case some one starts anything!"

"Where's the fifth boy?" asked Canfield. "It seems to me that you're getting quite an accumulation of boys in here!"

"Two of the boys are Jimmie Maynard and Dick Thompson!" answered Will. "You know you informed me quite positively not long ago that the two lads were hundreds of miles from this place by that time."

"You might barricade the hold-up men and starve them out," suggested Canfield, "that is, if you're sure they're in there!"

"We have just had a wireless from the interior," Elmer answered. "There are three men in there, all right!"

"Well, it won't take any longer to starve three out than it would one!" declared Canfield.

"Yes," Elmer cut in, "and about the first time the hold-up men got good and hungry, they'd be sending out Tommy's ears or one of George's fingers just as a warning to us not to meddle with their appetites."

Before long Jimmie began wig-wagging again, but before any words could be formed the waiting boys heard a distant scuffle, a short, quick cry of alarm, and then the phosphorus-covered palms disappeared from sight.

"They've got Jimmie!" Elmer said in a tone of dismay.

"Well, what are we going to do?" demanded Sandy. "We've got to do something right away, and that's no story out of the dream book!"

"I don't suppose it would be of any use to rush them," suggested Elmer.

"They'd mow us down like rats!" declared Dick.

"It strikes me," Sandy said, "that we'd ought to get back further and keep out of sight until we can decide upon some definite plan of action."

"I've got an idea wandering around in the back of my brain," Will said. "If the situation is exactly as I think it is, we may be able to get the best of those hold-up men after all."

CHAPTER XIX

THE MONEY IN SIGHT

"Not while they have possession of the boys," Canfield declared dolefully. "They'll murder those boys if we shut off their supplies!"

"Oh, I don't know about that!" suggested Dick. "We've been mixed up in a great many awkward situations but we always managed to save our necks. We'll get the boys out in some way!"

"Look here, Mr. Canfield," Will said, "how well do you know this mine?"

"Every inch of it!" was the reply.

"Every inch of every level," asked Will.

"Yes, sir!" replied the caretaker, rather proudly. "I can go into any part of it without a light!"

"Then look here, Dick," Will directed. "You chase back to the old tool house and bring back a long rope. And when you return, stop at the second level. Some of us will meet you there."

"I hope you don't expect to pull these boys up through fifty or a hundred feet of shale?" asked the caretaker.

"I don't know whether my scheme will work or not," Will answered, "but it's worth trying! We have to leave at least two here, well armed and take the others with us. You'll have to act as guide, Mr. Canfield, and we'll meet Dick when he comes down to the second level with the rope. As soon as we get the boys out of their trouble, we can leave the three outlaws in full possession of the mine. If we watch the shaft at the old tool house, they can never get out without our knowing it!"

"I don't understand what you have in mind," faltered Canfield.

Leaving Sandy and Elmer in the gangway from which the wig-wag signals had been shown, the others hastened up the ladder to the second level. Then Dick ran away to bring the rope, while Will questioned the caretaker regarding the fall between the two levels.

"You remember the old shaft, cut through years ago, and doubtless deserted when the vein ran out, which at one time connected the two levels, don't you?" asked the boy of the caretaker.

"There is such a place," replied the caretaker.

"Can you find it?"

"Of course I can."

"Does the fall open into the system of chambers in the center or to the north? You understand what I mean! Is it possible to enter any of the benches or chambers connecting with the north gangway on the lower level by means of this deserted shaft?"

"I am not quite certain about that," replied Canfield, "but my idea is that the north benches and chambers can be reached by means of that opening. I am glad you thought of that," he went on.

Dick now returned with the rope, and the three proceeded down the second level until they came to a confusion of passages and benches which would certainly have bewildered any one not familiar with the mine.

"Unless I am very much mistaken," Canfield went on, "this passage, the one straight ahead, runs almost directly over Tunnel Six. If I am right in this, the deserted shaft is here."

"And Tunnel Six is the haunted corridor, isn't it?" asked Dick.

"That's where the lights have been seen!" replied the caretaker.

"You never believed in the ghost stories told about Tunnel Six?" asked Will. "I should think you'd begin to see now that the alleged ghosts were pretty material things."

"Well, I don't know about the ghosts," replied the caretaker, "but I really was getting a little bit nervous when you boys arrived. You know," he continued, "that we all feel a little shivery when we butt into anything which we can't understand."

"Well, suppose you follow this passage to the end and see if you discover anything like the deserted shaft," suggested Dick.

"You're not going to venture into the lower level again, are you?" asked Canfield. "I don't blame you boys for wanting to rescue your companions, but, at the same time, I don't want to see you throw your lives away. Those are desperate men in Tunnel Six!"

"If my idea is worth anything at all," replied Will, "we'll get the boys out without ever letting the hold-up men know that we are within a mile of them. You know we had very little difficulty in getting out of the chamber where we left the boat."

"Trust you boys for inventing ways of doing things!" exclaimed Canfield.

"Of course," Will said hesitatingly after a time, "it may be that this deserted shaft doesn't connect with Tunnel Six, but even if it doesn't,

we'll find some way of getting to our friends from the new position. We can only try, anyway!"

"I'm pretty certain that it connects with Tunnel Six," replied the caretaker. "But you mustn't show your light when you approach the old shaft," he went on, "because if it does connect with the chamber we seek, and the chamber in turn connects with the north passage, the robbers will see what we're doing."

"That's a valuable suggestion!" replied Will.

"I'll go on ahead," Canfield continued, "and find the old shaft. Then you can follow on with the rope, and one of you boys can drop down and see what can be discovered."

"It's dollars to apples," chuckled Dick, as the boys trailed along after the caretaker, "that we, find the three kids trussed up like a lot of hens ready for the market in the chamber where you came so near getting wet. I hope we do, at any rate!"

"There's one thing we overlooked," Will said as Canfield whispered to them that he had found the deserted shaft, "and that is this: We should have directed the boys in the gangway to have attracted the attention of the outlaws by a little pistol practice while we are communicating with our friends. They may be all packed away in the chamber together."

"Yes, we should have attended to that," replied Dick. "Perhaps I'd better go back now and tell them to get busy with their automatics."

"We may as well investigate the situation here first," the other answered.

The boys heard the caretaker creeping about in the darkness, and presently a piece of shale or coal was heard rattling down the old shaft.

"We'll have to get that blundering caretaker away from there," whispered Will. "If we don't, he'll notify the hold-up men that we're getting ready to do something! I've heard that about three-fourths of the people in the world object to doing anything unless they can take a brass band along, and I guess it's true."

"Say," Canfield whispered, calling back to the lads, "when that stone dropped down, I heard something that sounded like a paddle slapping down on the water. That room can't be wet yet, can it?"

"The Beaver call!" whispered Will.

"Right you are!" replied Dick. "The boys are there, all right!"

"Now the next thing to do is to find out if those highwaymen are watching them," declared Will.

"I'll tell you that in a minute," Dick whispered.

As the boy spoke, he passed one end of the rope to Canfield.

"Hang on to it, whatever takes place!" he whispered, "and I'll drop

down and see what's going on."

"You must be very careful," warned Canfield.

"That's all right," answered Dick, "but we can't stand here all day figuring out precautions. We've got to know right off whether there's anyone in that chamber watching the boys!"

"What a joke it would be to put on a ghost in Tunnel Six!" laughed Will in a decidedly cheerful frame of mind now that rescue seemed so near.

"Don't try any foolishness!" advised Canfield. "Let's rescue the boys if possible and make our way out of this horrible place."

Will crawled to the edge of the shaft with Dick and whispered as he lowered him into the dark opening below:

"Remember, that Ventner may have discovered the money. If so, we must secure it before we leave the place! It will be just like him, to stow the bank notes away in some chamber like the one you are about to enter. When you strike bottom, if there is no one in sight except the boys, turn on your searchlight and take a good look over the interior of the chamber.

"We were in there not so very long ago, but at that time we weren't thinking of making a search there for hidden money. You'll have to use your own judgment about turning on the light, of course. The outlaws may be out in the gangway, some distance from the entrance to the chamber, or they may be within six feet of where the boys are held as prisoners."

"Tommy ought to be able to tell me the minute I strike the heap of shale whether the outlaws are close by or not!" Dick suggested.

"Of course!" answered Will, "if he knows. If the men are not in sight, and he doesn't know where they are, you'll simply have to take chances. If you get caught in there, you'll have to shoot, and shoot quick!"

Dick dropped down into the old shaft and directly the anxious watchers above heard the rattle of shale as it dropped from the pyramid under the opening. Will, still clinging to the rope, lay on his stomach and peered downward, watching with all anxiety for some show of light, or some sound which might indicate the situation below.

Directly Will felt a soft, steady pull at the rope, and knew that one of the boys was ready to be hoisted to the top.

Dick came up first, chuckling as he landed on the edge of the break in the rock, and was immediately followed by Jimmie.

"Where's Tommy and George?" asked Will in a whisper.

"They're down there looking for the money!"

"Looking for the money in the darkness?"

"Sure!" was the reply. "You see," he went on, "those ginks tied us

up, good and tight, and then threw the money around promiscuous like!"

"So the money is there?" asked Will.

The news seemed too good to be true!

"It was there when we were first thrown into the chamber," replied Jimmie, "but I have an idea that Ventner sneaked in and removed it so as to prevent his mates getting any share."

A light flashed out from below, followed immediately by a pistol shot!

CHAPTER XX

SANDY IS DISCHARGED

Elmer and Sandy, guarding the gangway variously called the North section and Tunnel Six, presently heard voices coming from the direction of the shaft, and the latter moved back a few paces in order to inspect the new-comers. In a moment he saw three rather pompous looking men approaching him, their footsteps being directed by a man clothed as a miner.

"Here, boy!" shouted one of the pompous men. "Can you tell me where Canfield, the caretaker of the mine may be found?"

"He's up on the next level," replied Sandy.

"I was told he was down here," growled the speaker, who was very short and fat, and very much out of breath.

"He was here a little while ago," answered Sandy.

"What's the meaning of this show of firearms?" demanded the fat man, after glancing disdainfully at the automatic in the boy's hand.

"We've got three robbers cooped up in the mine," replied Sandy.

"That's the old, old story!" exclaimed the fat man. "I don't know that I ever knew of a mine that wasn't haunted, either by ghosts or robbers! Mysteries seem to breed in coal mines!"

Sandy walked back to the place where, he had left Elmer, and the three men and their guide followed him. When Elmer caught a view of the fat man's face and figure, he gave a sharp pull at Sandy's sleeve.

"That's Stephen Carson!" he said. "I guess I'd better keep out of sight, because I don't care about getting into an argument with him. He's the most contrary person I ever saw in my life, and never fails to get up an argument about something or other with yours truly."

"You seem to know him pretty well," whispered Sandy.

"I ought to," returned Elmer, "he's my Uncle!"

"The two tall men in the party are my father and the cashier of the Night and Day bank. I'll take a sneak, and that will shorten the session."

Accordingly, Elmer strolled along the gangway and came to a halt some distance from where the three men had drawn up.

"My boy" Carson went on, looking condescendingly at the youth, "will you kindly run up to the second level and tell Mr. Canfield that his presence is required by the president of the mining company?"

"I'm not allowed to leave this place, sir," replied Sandy, taking offense at the man's air of proprietorship.

"All persons in and about this mine," Carson almost shouted, "are subject to my orders. Run along now, you foolish boy, and don't make any trouble for yourself!"

The man's manner was so unnecessarily dictatorial and offensive that Sandy found it impossible to restrain his temper. He was not naturally a "fresh" youngster, but now he had passed the limit of endurance.

"Aw, go chase yourself!" he said.

"You're discharged!" shouted Carson.

"You didn't hire me!" retorted Sandy. "You haven't got any right to discharge me! I'm going to stay here until I get ready to leave!"

"If you don't get out of the mine immediately, I'll have you thrown out!" shouted Carson. "I never saw such impudence!"

"If I do get out," replied Sandy with a grin, "you'll wish I hadn't!"

Carson turned to Elmer's father and the bank cashier, and the three consulted together for a short time. Then Elmer's father came closer to where Sandy was standing.

"Why do you say that?" he asked. "Why do you think we will wish you had remained in case you are sent out of the mine?"

"Because I was left here to prevent robbers getting out of the gangway. They're further in, and have captured three of my chums."

"All nonsense!" shouted Mr. Carson breaking into the conversation impatiently. "These breaker boys never tell the truth!"

"Are you Mr. Buck?" asked Sandy, speaking an undertone to Elmer's father. "Because if you are, you'll find Elmer just a short distance ahead. He's on guard, too. He didn't want his uncle to recognize him, because he says he's always getting up an argument with him."

"I'm glad to know that Elmer is attending to his duty," Mr. Buck answered. "Somehow," he continued with a smile, "Stephen Carson always rubs Elmer the wrong way of the grain."

"What's he butting in here for?" asked Sandy, while the cashier of the

Night and Day bank and the miner stood by waiting for the peace negotiations to conclude.

"Why, he came in to get his two hundred thousand." replied Mr. Buck. "He thinks he knows now right where he left it."

"Does he often get foolish in the head like that?" asked Sandy with a grin. "If he does, he ought to hire a couple of detectives to keep track of him when he is wandering out in the night!"

"Oh, Stephen is usually a pretty level-headed sort of a fellow!" replied Mr. Buck. "He is out of humor just now because he has always denied that he visited the mine during his two weeks of absence. He is one of the men who dislike very much to be caught in an error of any kind."

"So he knows where the money is?" asked Sandy.

"He says he can find it if he can secure the services of Canfield, the caretaker. He remembers now of getting in the mine, and of hearing footsteps in the darkness. His impression at that time was that robbers had followed him in, so he unloaded the banknotes in a small chamber which he is now able to describe accurately but which he cannot, of course, find."

"Was the money hidden on this level?" asked Sandy.

"Yes, on this level."

"In this gangway?"

"He thinks it was hidden here."

"Right about here, or further on?"

"Right about here," was the answer, "he seems to remember something about Tunnel Six. He thinks he hid the money there! As soon as he finds Canfield, the caretaker will probably be able to tell him exactly how Tunnel Six looks."

"It looks all in a mess right now! I can tell you that," grinned Sandy.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that there's been doings here!" replied Sandy.

"Are there really robbers in there?"

"Sure, there are robbers in there!"

"Then perhaps we'd better bring in a squad of deputies."

"If you'll just let us boys alone," Sandy said, "we'll bring the money out if it's anywhere in the mine, but if this man Carson goes to butting in at this time, he'll have to dig out his own money. He won't believe there's any robbers in there, and he wants to fire me out of the mine, so I guess we'd better let him go his own gait a little while."

"He'll do that anyhow no matter what you say!" replied Mr. Buck.

"Look here!" shouted Carson, starting forward with his stomach out and his fat shoulders thrown back, "what's all this conversation about? Why don't some one go up and get Canfield, and why isn't that young rowdy thrown out of the mine? I won't have him in here!"

"Say," Sandy broke in, "Mr. Buck says that you're looking for Tunnel Six. If you are, I can show you right where it is!"

"Do so, then!" shouted Carson.

"Go straight ahead," Sandy directed, "and when the robbers begin to shoot, you command them to throw down their weapons in the name of the law! They'll probably do it, all right, if you tell them to but you'll be lucky if they don't throw them down your throat!"

"Do you mean to tell me," screamed Carson, "that there are actually robbers here, and that they have taken possession of Tunnel Six?"

"That's the idea," replied Sandy.

"Why, that's where I put my--"

"That's where you put your money, is it?" Sandy went on.

"I never saw such impudence!" roared Carson.

"Well, go on and get your money!" advised Sandy. "Just go straight down the gangway until you come to a face of rock and then switch off to the left, and you'll find yourself in a chamber used at present by robbers and hold-up men as a winter resort."

"Oh you can't frighten me!" declared Carson. "I believe that you're here in quest of the money yourself!"

"That's right!" admitted Sandy. "Go on in, now, and tell the robbers to give up your hoarded gold! Just butt in, and tell 'em what you want them to do! They'll probably do just as you tell them to!"

"I never saw such imprudence in my life!" roared Carson, wiping his perspiring forehead with a large red silk handkerchief.

"I don't see where the impudence comes in!" replied Sandy. "You said you wanted to find Tunnel Number Six in order that you might locate your money. I'm telling you where it is, and what to do to get it!"

"Old Stephen never took a bluff in his life!" chuckled Mr. Buck. "Now see if he doesn't go stalking down that passage and declaring himself in the name of the law!"

The banker did exactly what Mr. Buck had predicted. He went storming down the passage, giving notice to all intruders to walk out of his mine in a peaceable manner. Mr. Buck followed along until he came to where Elmer was standing with his back against the wall, and then the two paused and entered into conversation. The cashier of the Night and Day bank and the miner started back toward the shaft.

"What's the matter?" shouted Sandy. "Why don't you stay and see the fun? There'll be shooting here directly!"

The miner and the cashier now took to their heels and were soon out of sight. Every moment the boy expected to see a flash of fire in the gangway. Carson was now very near to Tunnel Six, and it seemed certain that the outlaws must soon open fire on him.

"Come back, Stephen!" shouted Mr. Buck. "Don't make a fool of yourself!"

"This is all pure bluff!" shouted Carson. "There are no robbers here at all. This is a scheme to keep me out of Tunnel Six, where I believe my money to be hidden!"

They saw Carson halt in his rather clumsy passage down the gangway, and draw an automatic from his pocket.

There was a quick shot and the banker rushed ahead!

CHAPTER XXI

"I TOLD YOU SO!"

Directly Elmer, Sandy and Mr. Buck heard the banker shouting at the top of his lungs and dashed on toward the mysterious tunnel.

"He'll get his head shot off in there!" exclaimed Sandy.

"I don't care if he does!" declared Elmer.

"Your uncle isn't such a bad old fellow, after all," Mr. Buck exclaimed. "He has plenty of courage, at any rate!"

"But I don't understand why they don't open fire on him!" exclaimed Sandy. "The robbers certainly were in there not very long ago. We heard the scuffle when they geezled Jimmie."

"Who fired that shot?" asked Mr. Buck.

"Uncle Stephen did," replied Elmer. "I saw the flash spring out from the spot where he stood!"

"Well, what do you know about that?" exclaimed Sandy. "The old chap is actually making his bluff good! He's getting into Tunnel Six single handed and alone! I guess we'll have to advertise for those three outlaws if we find 'em in here! He's a nery old fellow, isn't he?"

The three now followed fast on the heels of the banker, and soon came to where he stood swinging his searchlight at the end of a short drift which ended, after sliding under a dip, in a chamber which, at first glance seemed to be piled high with a with a mass of shale.

While the three looked on, Carson dropped on his knees beside a

crevice in the wall and began an eager exploration of the opening.

Directly he sprang to his feet with rage and disappointment showing on every feature of his face. He raved about the cluttered chamber for a moment, almost dancing up and down in his anger and chagrin, and then sat limply down on the pile of shale.

"It's gone!" he said. "The money's gone!"

"So it wasn't hidden back there in that cross cutting at all?" asked Sandy. "We thought sure we had a cinch on the coin several hours ago!"

"It was hidden here in this chamber!" declared Carson wearily. "The minute I entered the place I remembered where I had hidden it. And now it's gone! I've had all my trouble for nothing."

As he ceased speaking, he glanced suspiciously at Sandy. And Sandy, in turn, made a most provoking face.

"I believe you know something about my money!" Carson said.

"Sure I do!" replied Sandy.

"Then where is it?"

"The robbers got it!"

"That's a nice story to tell," howled Carson. "If you think I'm going to be defrauded out of my money in this way, you're very much mistaken!"

Without paying any further attention to the threats of the banker, Sandy stepped over to Elmer's, side and pointed up the deserted shaft.

"There's where the robbers went," he said, "and they doubtless took Carson's money with them. I don't understand why Will didn't stop them."

"Will and George probably released their friends and went away," complained Elmer. "I don't think they showed very good judgment in doing that, either. The result is that the money has disappeared entirely. A short time ago, Uncle might have reclaimed it."

"We don't know whether the money has gone beyond recall or not," replied Sandy. "I don't believe Will and George ever left the old shaft unguarded. They are still somewhere in this vicinity!"

Carson now blustered up to Sandy and pointed an accusing finger into the lad's face. Sandy regarded him with indifference.

"Now that your story of the robbers has been disproved," Carson shouted, "you may as well tell me who took my money. If I had not the courage to make this investigation in person, that cheap story of the robbers would have held good for all time!"

"That's a horse on me, all right!" admitted Sandy. "I don't know where the robbers are, unless they went up through that old shaft, and it doesn't seem as if the boys would permit that!"

"Too thin! Entirely too thin!" declared Carson. "A moment ago you tried to tell me that the money wasn't hidden near Tunnel Six at all, but was hidden back there near the cross-cutting."

"We had good reason to believe it was hidden there!" replied Sandy. "We found a burned ten dollar banknote there just after a dynamite explosion had taken place."

"That would naturally lead to the supposition that the money had been hidden there!" Mr. Buck exclaimed.

"Come to think of it," Sandy went on, "I believe that was one of Ventner's tricks. I believe he blew down those pillars and burned the banknote for the express purpose of making us search two or three weeks in the wrong place. I guess we have underestimated that fellow's ability. He's a keener man than I supposed!"

"I don't quite see the point to that," Elmer suggested. "When you say that Ventner probably caused you to dig in the wrong place, you admit that he must have known something about the right place. Now, how could he have known anything about where to look for that money?"

"I don't know," replied Sandy. "But when you say that he might have known exactly where to look, you set him down as a fool, because he has been searching a long time and never came upon it until today."

"I think I can understand that," Mr. Buck said. "This man you speak of probably knew where to find the money provided he could discover the right drift, bench, chamber or tunnel. Like Mr. Carson, here, he could doubtless go straight to the cache if directed into the right apartment."

While the four stood together at the bottom of the chamber, their searchlights making the place as light as day, an exclamation came from the shaft above, followed by two pistol shots.

Carson dropped to his knees and began twisting at his automatic, which had in some way become entangled in the lining of his pocket.

"There are your robbers!" he shouted. "Put out your lights!"

"Don't you do anything of the kind!" argued Sandy. "Get out of range of the old shaft and keep your lights burning so you can shoot any one who drops down! I guess we have them hemmed in!"

"It's a scheme to get away with my money!" shouted Carson.

"I wish you had your old money chucked down your throat!" exclaimed Sandy. "I'm getting sick of the sound of the word!"

All members of the party now drew back toward the dip, where they were entirely concealed from any one in the old shaft.

Directly there was a rattling of shale and slate, and then the lights showed the figure of Tommy sitting astride the peak of the pyramid.

"What are you fellows trying to do down there?" he asked.

"We're looking for Carson's money?" replied Sandy.

"Did you get it?" the boy demanded.

"Not yet!"

"That's the boy that's got my money!" shouted the banker.

"Money's a good thing to have!" grinned Tommy.

"What have you done with the highwaymen?" asked Sandy.

"Why continue this senseless talk about highwaymen?" demanded Carson, "when you know just as well as I do that there are no robbers here other than yourselves! Mr. Buck," he added, turning to Elmer's father, "I call upon you to assist me in restraining these robbers until the proper officers can be summoned."

"Where did that fat man come from?" asked Tommy.

"You impertinent rascal!" shouted Carson.

"Sure!" answered Tommy. "But where did you say you came from?"

"I'm president of this mining company!" screamed Carson, "and I'll have you all in jail if you don't produce my money!"

"Is this the gentleman who went batty and lost two hundred thousand dollars?" asked Tommy, sliding down from the slate pyramid and standing beside Sandy.

"That is believed to be the man!" laughed Sandy.

"Believed to be!" roared Carson.

"Does he know where he left the money?" asked Tommy.

"Sure I know where I left my money, you young Jackanapes!" declared Carson. "I pointed out the exact hiding place only a few moments ago!"

"You found it empty?"

"Yes, I found it empty!" roared Carson.

"Then," Tommy suggested, "we've all got to get busy."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Carson.

Before Tommy could reply, Will came sliding down the rope and landed within a few feet of where the little group stood.

"Look here, Will," Tommy said, "Are you sure we made a good search of those three ginks? They've got the money all right!"

"How do you know they did?" demanded Will.

"That fat man over there who looks as if he was about to bust," Tommy grinned, "is Mr. Carson, the man who hid the money and couldn't find

it again. He's just been looking in the place where he concealed it, and it isn't there! We've got to get busy!"

"I don't understand this at all," Mr. Buck interrupted.

"It's just this way," Will said, facing the speaker, "we caught the three men who were wandering about in the mine. We rescued our chums first, and then when the outlaws heard your party advancing they scrambled up the old shaft and took to their heels supposing, of course, that we had lost no time in getting out of the mine."

"And you geezled them all?" asked Sandy.

"The whole three!" replied Will. "All we had to do was to stretch a rope across a passage, trip them up, and do a little winding around their graceful forms before they could catch their breath. They are all tied up good and tight now."

"And you searched them for the money and didn't find it?" shouted Carson.

"And we searched them for the money and didn't find it!" repeated Will.

"I don't believe it!" shouted Carson. "You'll be telling me in a moment, when I ask you to produce your robbers, that they have broken their bonds and escaped!"

At that moment, George's voice was heard calling down the shaft:

"Break for the main shaft!" they heard him saying. "Head those fellows off. They cut their ropes and got away!"

"I told you so!" thundered Carson.

CHAPTER XXII

CONCLUSION

"Bright boys up there!" exclaimed Will, as the unwelcome news of the escape of the robbers came down the old shaft.

"Me for the elevator?" shouted Tommy.

All four boys, Will, Elmer, Tommy and Sandy started in a mad race down the gangway. As they carried their searchlights with them, and as Mr. Carson and Mr. Buck moved at a slower pace, the latter gentlemen were soon feeling their way through the dark tunnel.

"We've just got to head 'em off!" grunted Tommy as the boys passed along at a pace calculated to break the long distance running records.

"I don't believe they'll make for the main shaft anyway," Sandy panted.

"I don't believe they will, either," Will declared, "but if we get to the lift first, we'll be dead sure they don't got out!"

Will was in advance as they swung into the lighted space about the shaft. The first thing he observed was that one of the cages was just starting upward. He sprang to the push button and almost instantly the cage dropped back to the third level again. The power was on in honor of the visit of the president of the company.

"Pile in, boys!" he shouted. "We'll stop at the second level!"

The man at the top responded nobly to the quick signals given to start and stop, and in a very short space of time the elevator stood at the second level. The bar was down, but Will threw it aside and stepped out into the passage. There he saw the bank cashier and the miner standing cowering against the wall only a few feet from the shaft.

"What are you doing here?" asked Will.

"We started to the top," the miner replied, "but stopped here because we thought there might be need of our assistance on this level."

"Why on this level?" asked Will, observing that the miner was pretty thoroughly frightened. "I haven't heard of any disturbance here!"

"But there has been a disturbance here!" insisted the cashier. "We heard scuffling out there in the darkness, but as we had no lights, we could not investigate. My friend, the miner, had a light on the lower level, but he lost it as we made our way out to the shaft."

"Has any one passed up the shaft?" asked Will.

The miner shook his head.

"Then we're on time all right!" cried Will exultantly. "We have the outlaws headed off!"

The heavy voices of the two men who had been left on the lower level now came rumbling up the shaft.

"What do you mean by leaving us in this plight?" demanded Carson. "Lower the cage and take us to the top!"

"Stay down there and look after your money!" cried Sandy, mockingly.

"I think I know where my money is!" shouted Carson.

"I wish I knew!" returned Sandy.

In the moment of silence which followed, the boys instantly heard the call of the Beaver Patrol ringing down the second level.

"George seems to be alive anyway!" laughed Tommy.

A moment later a snarling sound which seemed to emanate from a whole pack of Wolves reached the ears of the boys.

"Why didn't you tell me there were wild animals in the mine?" shouted

the cashier. "Let me into that cage immediately!"

"Don't be in a hurry," advised Tommy. "All the Wolves and Beavers you'll find in here won't do you any harm!"

While Carson and Elmer's father continued to call from below, and while the Boy Scout challenges rang in the second level, two pistol shots were heard not far away from the shaft.

The cashier and the miner both broke for the cage, but were turned back at the point of Sandy's automatic revolver.

"You stopped here because you thought you might be of some assistance, you know," the boy said. "Now you just remain here long enough to help out."

"But there are people being murdered in there!" cried the cashier.

Two more shots came from the gangway and then the stout figure of the detective came staggering into the circle of light around the shaft. He had evidently been wounded seriously, for he fell as he drew near to where the boys were standing and raised his eyes in a piteous appeal for help. Will stooped over and felt of his pulse.

"You're about done for!" the boy said in a husky tone. "Who did it?"

"Those two hold-up men," was the faint reply.

"Where are they now?" asked Will.

"I fired back," replied the detective with a grim smile, "and I guess they're lying on the floor of the passage!"

Will bent closer over the wounded detective while Tommy and Sandy started down the gangway on a run, closely followed by Elmer.

"Why did they shoot you?" asked Will.

"I found the money," Ventner replied, "and hid it in a crevice in the wall, and they found it. When we managed to escape by cutting the ropes I saw them take the money and disappear in the darkness. I followed on and accused them of the act and they shot me! Then I shot back, and I guess it's a pretty bad mess, when you take it altogether!"

"Where is the money?" asked Will.

"They have it in their possession," was the reply, "if they haven't hidden it again."

Before the wounded detective could continue, George, Jimmie, Dick, Canfield, Sandy and Tommy came running out of the gangway.

"Where's Elmer?" asked Will.

"We left him back there talking with one of the hold-up men," replied George. "They're both badly hurt, and won't last long!"

"I'm not sorry!" moaned Ventner.

A moment later, Elmer came out of the passage with a bill-book of good size in his hand. He lifted the book gaily as he entered the illumination.

"I'll bet he's got the money!" exclaimed Tommy.

"Sure he has!" replied Will, and Elmer nodded.

The voices of Carson and Buck again came roaring up from below.

"Why don't you lower the cage?" Carson shouted. "I'm going to have every one of you arrested as soon as I find an officer! You can't work any of your gold brick schemes on me!"

"We may as well drop down and take them aboard," laughed Will.

Carson was swelling with rage when he stepped onto the platform of the lift. He shook his fist under Will's nose, and announced that would have him wearing handcuffs before night.

"How much reward was offered for the return of that two hundred thousand dollars?" asked the boy without paying any attention to the angry demonstrations of the banker.

"Twenty thousand dollars!" replied Carson. "But you'll never get a cent of it. I hired a party of Boy Scouts to come here from Chicago and look into the case, but they never came near me."

"When you write to Chicago again," Will replied with a smile as the elevator stopped at the second level, "just tell Mr. Horton that the Beaver's didn't succeed in getting the money, but that the Wolves did. Elmer has the money in his possession this minute!"

"Impossible!" shouted Carson.

"Hand him the money, Elmer," requested Will.

Carson snatched the bill book as it was held out to him and began looking through the ten thousand dollar banknotes which it contained.

"The next time you get drunk and fall out of your machine, don't accuse every one you meet of robbing you!" Sandy cut in.

"Are you the boys who came on from Chicago?" demanded Carson.

"Sure," replied Will.

"I guess I'm an old fool!" admitted Carson. "Here I've been roaming around about half a day accusing you boys of stealing my money, when all the time you were planning on returning it to me!"

"Do we get the reward now?" asked Will.

"Twenty thousand and expenses!" replied Carson. "I'll settle with Elmer and his chums later."

"It's a shame to take the money!" declared Sandy, but Will gave him a sharp punch in the back and he cut off any further remarks which he might have had in his mind.

The story ends here because the adventure ended with the finding of the money. The old tool house was deserted that night. The two hold-up men and the detective recovered after a long illness in a Pittsburgh hospital. The detective was permitted to go his way after promising to keep out of crooked detective deals in the future. He never told how or where he received his information about the lost money. The hold-up men were given long sentences in prison.

A few weeks later, when the mining company resumed operations at the Labyrinth, Tunnel Six was walled up. Mr. Carson, the president, declared that it made what few hairs he had left stand on end to think of the experiences he had endured there!

However, there are still stories about the breaker, that on dark, nights, when the wind blows, and the rain falls in great sheets, there are mysterious lights floating about Tunnel Six.

Jimmie and Dick often tell exactly how these lights were made and how they enjoyed themselves down in the bowels of the earth, but superstitious miners still claim that the boys were not responsible for all the lights which burned there!

Dick and Jimmie also have their joke with the Beaver Patrol boys whenever they meet, declared that if they had not finally relented and dropped the string the boys had carried into the mine for their own protection, they would still be wandering around in the Labyrinth Mine.

"And now," Will said as they settled down in their old room on Washington boulevard, "we going to be good boys from this time on and remain in Chicago and stay at home nights!"

However, in three days, the boys were preparing for another bit of adventure, the details of which will be found in the next volume of this, series entitled:

"Boy Scouts in Alaska; or, The Camp on Glacier."

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