# LOLA THE BEAR

## HENRY MILNER RIDEOUT

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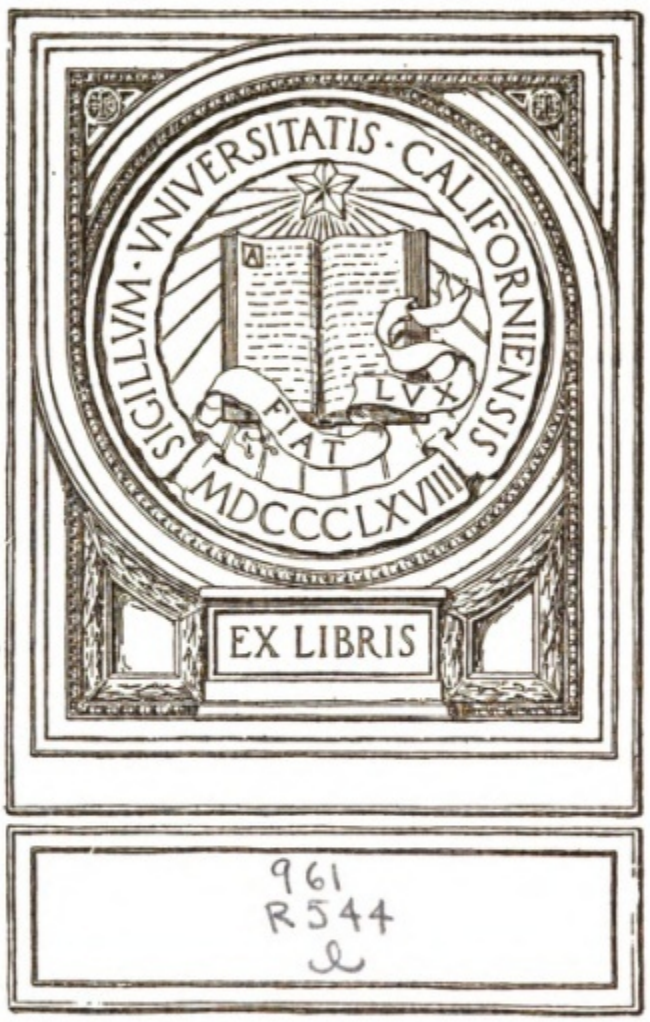


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A strange man stood and looked down upon them gravely, as if he had been standing there all the time.
*(see page 51)*

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# Lola the Bear OF CALIFORNIA

*A Tale for Men and Boys*

*By*

HENRY MILNER RIDEOUT

*Illustrations by*

LYND KENDALL WARD

DUFFIELD & COMPANY

*New York 1928*

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For My Son Henry

*A reminder of the river, the canoe, and the one who taught him how to dip a paddle.*

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**By the same author :**

*The Key of the Fields*
*The Footpath Way*
*Tin Cowrie Dass*
*The Siamese Cat*
*The Winter Bell*
*The Far Cry*
*Man Eater*
*Dulcarnon*
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# ILLUSTRATIONS

A strange man looked down upon them gravely, as if he had been standing there all the time *frontispiece*

The mist, like smoke in a draft, blew faster and faster in their faces . . . . *opposite page* 44

He went head foremost against a pair of blue overalls, seized them, tackled and fell *opposite page* 80

"Stop where you are!" shouted Mark *opposite page* 154

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## CHAPTER I

### SHERIFF HARDY'S MAP

"MAPS!" cried a bass voice at the front door. "Maps for Judge Boswell!"

The voice rang through the fore part of the house like a cheerful song.

Mark Boswell was lying in an arm-chair. For the past fortnight he had been a rather sick boy, and this was his third day downstairs. He raised himself to listen. A voice like that could proceed from only one man. Mark's face had lost a good deal of sunburn, but now it went from pale to red, as he sat up, excited and hopeful, running his fingers through his yellow stubble of hair.

"What kind o' maps?" retorted the



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sharp, inquisitive voice of Hazel, the "hired girl."

"Don't you fret!" laughed the other. "Maps. That's all you need to know, my dear. In a gen'al way, Maps. They ain't handsome to look at, not pretty like you, young woman; but I guess they'll serve the Judge fast enough. He ast me for 'em. How is he, anyway? And how's his boy?"

Mark smiled to himself. Only one man would have called Hazel pretty or young, in such a loud, generous, warming fashion.

"Mr. Boswell ain't to home." Her voice was not half so fretful as before. "Mr. Boswell's be'n away over three weeks. I've worried 'most to flinders. That boy Mark, he's laid abed sick, and tain't like his father to do so: we ain't had word nor scrap from the Judge since he went a-fishin'. . . ."

"Dear Land!" cried the visitor. "I'm sorry to hear that!"

Mark rose to his feet, though he found



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them still rather tottering objects to stand on.

"It must be Sheriff Hardy," he said. "O Hazel, ask the Sheriff to come in. I want to see him more than anybody."

A clatter of hob-nailed boots resounded through the hallway, and Josephus Hardy stood in the library door. A big, brown, shaggy man, more than six feet tall, who carried lightly under rough clothing some two hundred pounds of bone and muscle, he pulled off his dusty straw "cow-break-fast" hat and made a bow into the Judge's library.

"Well, I'm tol'able easy to see, they tell me, when there ain't no trees round," he declared, grinning. "How are you, boy? Be'n fallin' off any more o' them ridge-poles lately? What's happened to your father?"

Mark's face grew pale again, and tired, and disappointed.

"I was hoping you'd tell me that," he replied. "Father went fishing three weeks



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ago Wednesday. I came down sick the next Friday, and was out of my head for a while. Father sent word by Tommy Cody, just about then, that he was going in deeper to try a new place. We haven't heard anything more. I was hoping you'd run across him."

The boy sat down, looking miserable. Sheriff Hardy came forward cautiously until he stood on the library rug.

"Gosh, they *are* treach'rous!" he muttered. "Hope I hain't defaced 'em with my boot-nails. Jest like a hen on ice. Awful treach'rous, them hardwood floors."

He shied his hat under the table, and sat down timidly on the edge of a chair, facing Mark. His brown face, heavy as a buffalo's, wore a grimy coating of dust and unshaven beard; but his eyes twinkled bright and clean. The Sheriff was a good man; and as he perched there, looking so awkward and so much too large for any indoor space, he seemed a great comforter.



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"But father," said Mark, "never went into the woods to stay so long, without . . ."

"Shoo-fly!" cried the Sheriff. "Never you bother *your* head, son. I guess Judge Boswell he knows the four carnal points o' heaven. Shoo-fly! He'll come homin' back like a old belfry pigeon, to-morrer, trust him, or next day, maybe. Never you lose no sleep about *him* in the woods."

This had a reassuring sound; but Mark observed that Mr. Hardy's eyes failed to enforce it, and went wandering instead round the book-shelves, along the treacherous floor, then out at window into the bright August sunshine.

"You didn't see father anywhere?"

"No," replied the Sheriff, staring now at a bowlful of choke-cherry branches in the fireplace,—green leaves jewelled with dark-red pendants. "No. That's a fact. I didn't."

"Things can happen," said Mark, "in the woods, to a man all alone."

Josephus Hardy's wandering eyes came



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back with a snap. He nodded his big dusty head.

"And *that's* a fact, too," he admitted. He faced the boy squarely and honestly. "I know that. Things do happen in the woods. Not always, though. Not often."

Mark waited for him to continue; but the Sheriff began staring again at the choke-cherries in the fireplace, and nursed his right fore-arm. The clock ticked, then struck eleven, then went on ticking louder than before.

"Must be a change comin' in the weather," quoth Mr. Hardy. "My old arm smarts, kind of, this mornin', where they cut that bullet out of her. A man mistook me for a deer. Least, a man *said* he did. Terrible ee-roneous feller. His eye-sight might 'a' been better if I hadn't put him in jail onct afore."

"Look here!" demanded Mark. "What do *you* think has happened to father?"

The Sheriff puckered his lips under the heavy, brown, piratical moustache.



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"Nothin'," said he. "Your father's all right. Nothin'."

The boy moved impatiently in his chair.

"But he's been three weeks away."

Hardy appeared to be chewing upon this fact. "Yeah," he grumbled. At last he spoke.

"Where did Tommy Cody allow he seen him?"

"Up the river, on the middle fork; two miles this side of Tinderbox Hill."

"Humph!" growled the Sheriff. "Thought so, maybe."

He turned on the edge of his chair and, raising his voice, sent a jovial roar echoing through the house.

"Young woman! Oh, young woman! Bring us back them maps, will ye?"

Hazel must have been listening in the hall, she appeared so promptly. Her crabbed old face was wreathed in smiles; and as she handed the Sheriff a roll of untidy papers, no girl could have acted more bashful and simpering.



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"Bless your pretty heart!" cried Hardy. "That's them. Many's the thanks to *you*, my dear! Now I won't trouble you no more."

Hazel, in great embarrassment, withdrew. Her flatterer sat waiting, papers in hand, till the sound of her footsteps retreated, and a distant door closed after her. Then he winked at Mark, solemnly.

"I found a wild bees' nest onct," he declared, "on top that old granite quarry to Beaver Lake. Honey was all an-oozin' down over a busted slab o' rock. I guess your girl Hazel ain't us't to smilin', much. That's what she made me think of, right away—honey a-tricklin' over granite. Don't she?"

Mark laughed as he had not laughed for many days. Hazel, the kindly tyrant of his childhood, had done her best for a motherless boy; but there was a funny side to Hazel, and the Sheriff, with his big, staring gray eyes, had seen it.

"Now, that's right!" declared Hardy.



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"That's right, boy! A good laugh is a good starter." He pulled his chair up to a corner of the table, on which he unfolded his papers. "A long face don't buy the baby no boots, I always found. Let's come right squat down to figgers."

He spread out a crumpled fragment of brown paper bag, darkened with oily spots, and scrawled upon with rough pencil-tracks.

"Map," said he. "Map o' the brooks and branches beyond Tinderbox Hill, up as fur as the Red Logan. There she is. Ain't many city folks could have drawed her, boy. She might look neater, but I had to wrop up a lump o' putty I was carryin' to Widow Johnquest. Broke a pane o' glass in her shop. Maybe that's why I never seen your father; because the Widow she's kind o' feeble nowadays, and couldn't git her hay in single-handit no more, so's I stopped and mowed it for her; else I'd 'a' prob'ly gone furder. You know her. She farms it all alon' and keeps a store, right



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under the aidge o' the big hemlocks. She's a fine woman, too, Miss Johnquest. A lot o' trouble in her life. That's why, maybe."

Discoursing thus, Hardy flattened the scrap of greasy paper, and began to follow pencil lines with his thumb-nail. The map —so far as it resembled anything—resembled a child's drawing of some thin, leafless tree, among the branches of which hung circles, half-formed letters, criss-crosses, blots, and smouches, like strange fruit or the nests of untidy fowls. Mark found it altogether mysterious. But the Sheriff explained it as if reading aloud from a book.

"Here's where your father went. Tinderbox Hill, see? Place where the putty oiled her a little, shape of a dog's nose. That's the neighborhood Tommy Cody seen your father in, fortnight ago." The Sheriff beamed. "Now then. Here comes Deadwater Brook a-wrigglin' in, so black and still everybody takes her for a swamp-hole and gives her the go-by. Finest fishin'



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stream in this world, though, if you puss-avere up to the quick, past Hardhack Pond, where all is rocks and rips and wild country. There's your father, this livin' minute, right under my thumb. A grand lonesome spot. Why, gorry, I can *see* him now with his old gray hat on, a-snakin' out fish beneath them falls, though it's no season o' the year to bite!"

And Mr. Hardy beamed again, like a sunburnt buccaneer who had sighted a prize. Mark Boswell caught something of the man's enthusiasm, it was so welcome.

"Do you think that?" he explained. "Honest now, do you, Mr. Hardy?"

The Sheriff nodded.

"Bet I do. Judge and me was lately talkin' about that very same brook. Judge says, he'd fish there his next time. So I drawed the map, you see."

Mark hoisted himself out of his chair. He felt steady on his feet now, for his mind was resolved.



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"Then I'm going to Deadwater Brook," he announced.

Josephus looked up at him thoughtfully.

"Why so, my boy?"

"Because," replied Mark, "something must have happened."

"Poh!" said Hardy. "What could?"

"Suppose father took sick, or broke his leg, alone in the woods. . . ."

The Sheriff bent down, reached under the table, recovered his old straw hat, and twirled it on his knees, meditating.

"Might, might not," he responded. "I guess you wouldn't do no harm."

"I'm going," said Mark.

Hardy wagged his head.

"You been a pretty sick boy," he objected.

"I can't wait any more. I want to find my father."

"Yes, yes. There, there," mumbled the Sheriff. "Course ye do."

Mark took up the map from the table.

"I mean to go," he affirmed, and folding



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the bit of oily paper, thrust it into his pocket. "You know, Mr. Hardy, as well as I do, that somebody ought to go hunt for father. I'm going."

His burly adviser rose, and looked him straight in the eyes. There was no more loose talk or evasion between the man and the youngster.

"All right, Mark," said Josephus, frankly. "If you feel that way, I guess you better. I wan't none too easy about your father, myself."

Mark went to the library door and called.

"Hazel! O Hazel!"

The housekeeper came presently and stood before them, her shrewd old face wearing yet some trace of Mr. Hardy's influence; but no sooner had Mark declared what he meant to do, than the honey was gone from her look, and nothing remained but good New England granite.

"You ain't a-going!" she snapped. "Not out o' *this* house!"



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"I am," said Mark.

"You ain't," said Hazel. "You can't hardly stand up this minute. Let 'em ring fire-bells and roust out the whol' town, way they did when the Pettengill boys got lost and Chub froze to death. Let 'em do that again. I don't care. You're not a-goin' one step."

The Sheriff put in a mollifying word.

"Guess you better allow him to, my dear," he ventured.

"Who *is* your dear?" Hazel turned upon him savagely. "I ain't, anyhow. And while the Judge is gone, I keep the say of it. You can talk jest as smooth as you want to. Mark don't go one single step!"

Whenever Hazel grew indignant, she pulled her chin down tight against her throat, interlocked her fingers at the top of her apron, shook her head primly, then stood quivering all over. She did so now. It meant that she knew herself to be in the right, and would stay there, inflexible. Mrs. Rhadamanthus, the Judge used to



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call her, when describing this attitude. Mark, who recognized it only too well, was on the point of losing his temper.

"I'm not a baby!" he began.

"That's so!" retorted the housekeeper. "Babies have some gumption. Babies know when they're sick."

How this unseemly argument might have ended, it would be hard to say. But just then the front door-bell rang, and the ringer, waiting in the vestibule without, gave a fine, deep, sonorous cough. It was the Doctor, of course. Dr. Hale, the beloved physician of all that town and country, was known, before he appeared in sight, by the welcome noise of his great, outdoor cough. He had cured many troubles of body and soul, but never that personal annoyance. Perhaps he had never the time to cure it, or the thought to spare on himself. Two generations of anxious men and women had heard and blessed it, when, in snow or rain, glaring dog-days or blind zero weather, at noon or midnight,



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it proclaimed that the Doctor was arriving, cheerful, wise, kind, ready to shoulder another household burden or fight another mortal enemy for his friends.

Hazel and Mark were so angry that they gave no heed to the interruption.

"Oh," mumbled the Sheriff. "Just so. Yes."

With a sudden turn, silent, instantaneous, cat-like—extraordinary in a man of his bulk—he slipped from the room and was gone.

Hazel woke to a lost opportunity.

"Here!" she exclaimed. "You wait! *I* want to see the Doctor first!"

She ran pell-mell into the hall. Mark, following, saw her catch at the door-knob just half a second too late. The Sheriff was outside, already talking in the vestibule. Through the old-fashioned frosted glass of the door, two big dark shadows glimmered, two voices rumbled in consultation. Hazel yanked and twisted at the knob. It would not budge, for the



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Sheriff's hand, outside, lay heavy on its mate.

"Oh, these men!" wailed the housekeeper, struggling in vain. "They walk right over you!"

Then the door suddenly opened, and let her go staggering back.

"Well, well!" laughed the Doctor, entering. He loomed even larger than Mr. Josephus Hardy. The sunlight seemed to follow him indoors and cling round his massive white head like a sign of all the human benedictions wished upon it throughout many years. "Good morning! Good morning! What's this I'm told?"

Hazel the tyrant stood conquered and smiling.

"Here's an awful bad boy, Doctor," she replied.

"Well, well!" said Dr. Hale, putting down his hat. "Of course he is. Of course he is. His father was. Come in here, boy, till I take your pulse and look down your throat again. You want to run wild in the



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woods, do you? Hazel, go get me a table-spoon, like a good girl. Come here to the window, Mark. My eyes are growing a little old. A little old, like everything else."

Whatever their age, the Doctor's eyes were very blue and full of sagacious twinklings, as he pressed the silver spoon upon Mark's tongue and peered in after it, by the light from the library window.

"Ho!" he murmured. "Ha. Thrown off. Pretty well. The constitution fairly tough, Mark. Yes, yes. All your mother's people were given the same way, but they lived long and well, God bless them. There, there. . . ." The Doctor turned slowly toward Josephus, who sat on the corner of the table, lost in admiration. "I think you're right, Sheriff. If this boy wears good light woollen next the skin, and avoids the night air off the rivers . . . You'll take care of him, Josephus?"

Hazel started forward to make a protest, which nobody heeded.



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"I'll take care," boomed the Sheriff, "so fur as I can. If I can't, I'll give him in charge to Lola."

"You mean Lewie's grandson?" The Doctor puckered the lids of his wise blue eyes, and seemed to be calling back the appearance of some far-off person. "You mean Lola the Injun?"

Hardy nodded.

"Sure," he answered. "Lola's the best man up there, case o' trouble."

Doctor Hale patted Mark on the head as if he had been much younger.

"Couldn't choose a better man myself than Lola," said he. "I vaccinated his grandfather and all the camp, one day, knee-deep in snow. All right, Mark; don't you forget the woollen underwear."

And Mark, filled with delight, gratitude, and expectation, knew that he was going to look for his father in the woods.



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# CHAPTER II

## BAD SILVER

"I WILL say," observed Hardy, "that for a fellow your size you ain't altogether a slouch."

The Sheriff's plump little bay mare, a brisk and cheerful roadster, had gone tugging forward with great energy, rattling down one hill, scrambling up the next. Now, at the sound of his voice, she cocked her ears and started on afresh, as though rebuked. Her master had broken the drowsy afternoon silence on this country road.

"No, you ain't no slouch at all."

Mark knew this for a high compliment. The Sheriff, half turned on their seat, was looking down into the tail of the wagon, where lay the two bundles which Mark had made ready for his expedition.



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"You done them inside half an hour," said Josephus, approvingly, "for I timed you. You done 'em up neat, with nothing but what the's a necessary need for. Blankit, stockin's, change o' wool, hatchet, fry-pan. . . ." He completed the catalogue in a whisper, nodding as he counted, and bending down the fingers of one big, sunburnt hand. "Lots o' grown men don't know how to go into the woods. You're all there in a two-fist grab, and all right, Mark." He returned to his reins, laughing. "Ho, quiet, Milly, ye can't uproot the whiffle-tree, ye fool girl!"

Milly the red mare did her best to contradict him, and stepped out faster than ever.

"Her walking gait," ventured Mark, "is better than some trots."

The Sheriff nodded solemnly, as if his companion had sounded the depths of human wisdom.

"I love willin' folks, that pull snug up into the collar, and go for'ard handy.—



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Horses is folks," he added. "Milly don't gorm along, nor soldier. Patchen.blood."

And so, pleased with each other, with the horse, and with the whole sunshiny aspect of the world, they drove onward in friendly silence. The road wound and loitered sunken between banks like a stream, not of water, but of yellow earth, flowing through quiet, endless variety. Alders bordered it closely for a time; then ledges of gray scarred granite, tumbling rail fences, also gray, and the furred stalks of mullein; then raspberry patches, thick and sultry, where a locust filled the air with his music, dry, brittle, yet in good keeping with the scent of berries and warm vines; then fir woods, in which green darkness and bronze light, mingling, comforted not only the eyesight but the mind. Mark sat watching it all, listening to the energetic beat of Milly's hoofs, and thinking how good it was to be outdoors again, to feel the woods increasingly surround him, to wear old clothes and breathe balsam.



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The Sheriff must have read his thought.

"Bein' pulled through a knot-hole ain't so bad, hey, Mark, when you find all this on t'other side?"

"No," said Mark. "Yes. I mean . . . Well, Mr. Hardy, you can't guess!"

Hardy chuckled.

"I kin too guess!" he declared. "The woods. Gorry!"

They fell silent again. The sun went down behind trees. When they had climbed a long hill, the road suddenly plunged downward to its end, the firs gave way once more to alders, and Milly was tugging the wagon through a narrow, swampy lane where the wheels bumped over many a rock, stuck in mud-holes, or trundled softly on trackless meadow-grass. Twilight gathered.

"Nigh the river, we are now," said the Sheriff. "Widow Johnquest lives beyond the next bend. We'll sleep in her hay-mow to-night."

They splashed through a shallow brook,



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and rattled round a sharp turn of the alder lane. There, all at once, a wide field opened, slanting hollow toward the glow in the sky, against which ran black billowy hemlock tops, with a curl of chimney smoke wandering above. The house became visible last of all, banked under the hemlock darkness, and so gray that it too might have been smoke, melting and mounting spirally at its gable.

A dog barked. Echoes of his barking rang from the woods behind, as though an unseen pack answered the cry.

"Hallo, Jowler!" hailed the Sheriff.

The dog ran forward, a black and white thing frisking down hill.

"Well, well! Good hound!" said Hardy. The dog, hearing his voice, barked again with a difference, to say that a friend had come.

Two patches of lamplight appeared through the front of the house, a window, and a door in which stood the lean silhouette of a woman.



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"Who is it?" called a gentle old voice.

"Me! Only me!" bellowed the Sheriff. "Goin' to put up in your barn, ma'am. Me and Judge Boswell's boy!"

The dog, still capering obscurely, followed them round the house and into the cavern mouth of a barn, that was pitch-black, and sweet with late-mown hay. They unharnessed Milly in the dark, led her into a stall hidden like a grotto under the hay, shook down half a bagful of feed into her crib, and returned by starlight to the widow's door.

"Come in," said Mrs. Johnquest. "Your supper's 'most ready."

She stood by a stove, at the far end of the room, bending over some cookery which gave out a warm and hospitable smell. Mark found that he was hungry, and had been so for weeks, without knowing what ailed him.

"Judge Boswell's boy, did you say?" The widow, busily stirring a long iron fork under the lid of a pan, spoke over her



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shoulder. A thin, small, muscular woman, dressed in brown calico, she seemed to fade among shadows; for the room was dark, and hung with many mysterious things which made it darker still—clothing, boots, knitted woollen, tin pots, homely merchandise of every kind—more than the one oil lamp on the supper table could begin to show.

"Yes," replied Mark. "We're going up to find father. You haven't seen him, have you?"

"No," said the widow. "Not lately. I don't see many folks here. You've got your mother's way of speaking. You can't remember her, can you? She died when you was the baby, and there ain't any more women like her now. Least, not on earth. —Why in all tunket don't my fire burn? This mess o' pottage don't look right yet; not by a long ways to tempt Esau."

She spoke like one who had lived so much alone, that thought and speech were grown identical, demanding no replies. Hard



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work had bent her back like a piece of barrel hoop. Never once did she turn to greet her visitors. But Mark, as he sat down with the Sheriff by the lamp, felt somehow that a keen pair of black eyes had flashed at him and taken his measure. When supper was ready, she brought it silently to the table, and, retreating, sat in the far corner, her arms tightly folded. The old black-and-white dog made a hassock for her feet—a hassock that snored or now and then comfortably stretched.

"So you ain't had no cloud o' customers here?" Hardy broke off a lump of steaming blueberry cake, buttered it, looked upon it with loving eyes, then took an ogre's bite. "You would, ma'am, if they knowed the taste of your cookin'. Wouldn't she, boy?"

Mark agreed. The Sheriff halved a platterful of fragrant omelette; and though each half buried a plate, it did not seem enough.

"We're goin' to buy our provisions from you, ma'am," continued the Sheriff, talk-



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ing as heartily as he ate. "We'll buy 'em to-night, so's to make a start afore bird-song-in-the-mornin'. We can sleep in the hay, s'pose, no objection?"

Mrs. Johnquest's eyes twinkled out of the darkness.

"I do object to gre't tramps a-hulking in my hay-mow," she replied. "But seeing you don't smok', Josephus, and there wouldn't 'a' *been* hay at all if you hadn't cut it. . . ."

"Shoo-fly!" cried her benefactor, and blushed rosy-pink through his tan. "Shoo-fly! I guess my mother and you was friends, wan't you? Onct?"

"We was always," replied the widow, quietly; and she paid no further embarrassing compliments to her guest.

When they had cleared the supper-table and put the dishes away, it seemed very late at night, though somewhere, from a pond far off among the woods, a loon still laughed and hooted over his evening joke. Carrying the lamp with them, they moved,



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all three together and the dog at heel, round the orderly confusion of the widow's room. A small glass case held fish-hooks, thread, needles, bright-colored candies, Woodstock pipes of heavy clay, linen fish-lines reeled flat on cardboard. Alongside, four barrels—pork, sugar, "Injun meal," and flour—stood ranged to form a counter, over which dangled a row of home-knit stockings. Two shelves, behind, exhibited the gaudy labels of tinned fruit and vegetables. These, with plug tobacco, cards of matches, a bin full of hard-tack, a jug of sharp-scented vinegar, and a few odds and ends, composed the "store"—a last humble effort of commerce at the edge of the wilderness.

"I call that a rale rig-out," declared Josephus, when their supplies were bought. "Good goods, all complete. Now, about change. Here we are. *And* one dollar more squares us." He laid Mark's money and his own on the glass case, then caught up one bit of paper again, in disgust.



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"Foh! No! Gorry 'tis, another o' them Canada four-dollar bills! Consarn! When will the Blue-noses outgrow the 'lucination o' printin' four-dollar scrip? Can you break four dollars, ma'am?"

Mrs. Johnquest nodded complacently.

"I've got abundance o' change," she answered, with a funny little air of pride. "Great abundance. My last customer, him that came Wednesday, broke a bill for me. Little though I liked his looks. . . ."

She pulled a drawer from under the shelves. In coming out, it rang a quiet and rather musical bell, at the sound of which the dog barked, and continued barking until his mistress bade him stop.

"I learnt him to do that," said the widow. And the dog, hearing himself praised, beat a tattoo upon the flour barrel with his tail. "You always give your grandmother warning, don't ye?"

Mark laughed.

"Nobody could rob your till, Mrs. Johnquest, with him round."



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The old woman smiled.

"Tain't that so much," she replied, as she gave the Sheriff a handful of silver. "It's more to amuse me. Old folks, children, fools, and dogs, a little goes a long ways to entertain.—That right, Josephus? —Oh, no. Everybody round here is honest."

"Or tries to 'pear so." The Sheriff corrected her, while counting the change, poking among the coins with a stubby forefinger. His big face glowed in the lamplight. Then, all at once, Mark saw his expression change, his gray eyes harden and grow thoughtful, as if he had found something wrong, or met a disagreeable surprise. But glancing up again, he spoke as before, quite free and easy. "Don't happen to have any more half dollars, do ye? I'd like to keep some on hand, if you could spare 'em."

The widow peered into her open till.

"No. Not there, least. I'll go look inside my bedroom."



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"Thank ye," said the Sheriff.

He waited until she had gone into the other room of the house, where they heard her strike a match before shutting the door. Then a strange thing happened. The Sheriff made a sudden gesture, commanding silence and secrecy.

"Look here, Mark," he whispered. "Don't you talk. Don't say a word. Listen."

From the silver pieces in his hand he chose two half-dollars. These—after pocketing the rest—he held close to the lamp.

"See anything?" he inquired, still under his breath. "Quiet. I don't want *her* to know. She'd be for takin' them right back, and she can't afford it."

Mark stared, but saw nothing, except the fact that Hardy was much excited by two ordinary coins.

"May not be. But . . . You listen."

Balancing one half-dollar on his fingertips, Josephus lightly struck it with the



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other. There was a faint, dead clink of metal.

"Dunno!" he whispered, staring doubtfully. Then with his quick, silent habit of motion, he was across the room, and bending over the stove, from which, next moment, he had removed the lid and scooped out a shovelful of red-hot embers. Their glow revealed his face, dark, angry, and perplexed. Mark and the dog stood watching him.

"Soon tell!" he muttered; and like a conjurer doing a trick, he placed one of the half-dollars among the brightest coals. Nothing happened, at first. The coin lay still. But after a time, by degrees, imperceptibly, then all at once in a whiff of magic, it bent through the middle, crumpled round the rim, melted into a dirty gray liquid and was gone.

"Thought so!" said Hardy.

He poured back the contents of the shovel into the fire, replaced the lid, and



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was sitting carelessly over at the table when Mrs. Johnquest opened the door.

"I can't find another *one*!" she complained, with disappointment. "Not one! I *am* awful sorry, Josephus."

The Sheriff yawned and stretched, as though more than half asleep. Mark, seeing those yawns, felt almost that he himself lately had been dreaming.

"It don't make no odds, ma'am." Hardy appeared to have forgotten the errand he had sent her on. "Not the least odds." He roused himself with an effort. "So you 'ain't had company but us two since last week, I understand?"

The widow sat down in her corner and folded her arms again, to enjoy this rare treat of conversation.

"Company?" Her eyes snapped. "I call you company, but I don't him! A customer, he was. And a tough customer, too."

"That a fact?" inquired Mr. Hardy. "Didn't like him, then, I guess?"



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"Like him? Say not!" their hostess retorted. "He'd been drinking, to begin with. A mean-looking fellow, fit to sell rum to an Injun. Stranger, he was. Least, I never saw him before. A red-headed fellow with one eye, and that eye terrible mean."

"A river-driver, p'raps," mumbled the Sheriff, nodding drowsily.

"River-driver, this time o' year?" Mrs. Johnquest laughed aloud. "Josephus, you better go to bed. You don't know high water from drowth, nor river-driving from snow-sledding, this very minute. I counsel you to go make up your sleep, before your head falls on the floor."

Hardy yawned again, and rose reluctantly.

"You're right," he drawled. "Come on, Mark. Let's tumble in for an early start."

They gathered their bundles of provision, and bidding Mrs. Johnquest a good night, went out under the stars. Crickets were singing everywhere down the field,



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a hillside chorus bounded only by the blackness of the woods. Into the barn this music came; and when Mark and the Sheriff lay rolled in their blankets on a slope of hay, the trilling continued for a long time, mingled with an odd snore now and then from Milly the mare, standing fast asleep at her manger.

"Do you suppose we'll find father up there?" said Mark. "We can't pass him on the way, without knowing, do you think?"

Mr. Hardy was awake, after all.

"Of course we'll find your father," he grunted. "That don't pester me one bit." He rolled over, with a restless, rustling noise, lay quiet, then spoke like one who has been thinking hard. "No, boy, we'll overhaul the Judge all right. Lucky, though, that I never carry fire-arms in clos' time. Hot-tempered fellers ought to make it rule never to. Because, if I meet that skunk, that red-headed man with one eye. . . ."



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The Sheriff groaned.

"Think of cheatin' a poor old woman with bad silver."

Mark suddenly understood; and with a bunch of dry clover-blossom for a pillow, lay thinking, as he was bidden to do. It was a nasty, perfidious bit of low cunning; he shared his companion's anger and disgust. So he thought, and dozed, and thought again; until the snores of the mare, the trill of crickets, and the perfume of hay became lost altogether among stars that faded beyond the barn-door, glimmering.



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# CHAPTER III



"BIRD-SONG in the morning" was not just one of Hardy's phrases. Mark dreamed of music, woke with music in his ears, and sitting up, wondered where he had come to life. The dry, sweet smell of the hay-mow presently told him. By the darkness, it should have been midnight; or so he thought until, looking roundabout in bewilderment, he found that the music came pouring through the barn-door along with a cloud of morning mist. He had never known that birds could utter a sound so magically various, of such volume; it was not harmony, but something better,—a confusion of mounting notes, calling, answering, and interweaving. It was only birds in the widow's orchard. It seemed a heavenly orchestra tuning before the



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mysterious curtain should rise upon a wonder.

Mark listened to them, lying in his own warm nest. After a time, however, he heard footsteps go back and forth, outdoors. The Sheriff was up and waiting.

The boy rose. It came hard to leave such a bed, for the mist felt cold as winter. Wearing his blanket, he stumbled out of the barn.

"Mornin', boss!" Hardy, a big steamy shadow, came toward him in the twilight. "Ready for breakfast? Time we was off, but I hated to spoil your sleep, you looked such a puddle o' comfort."

He gave Mark a tin cup, filled it with cold tea from a bottle, then handed over a lump of dry bread and a morsel of chocolate.

" 'Twill put heart into you," said he.

Cold fare at a cold hour, thought Mark; but as he ate and drank he found himself enjoying it, his courage rising, and his blood flowing more awake. The mist grew



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pink and woolly under the apple boughs, thinned, and began to brighten. The birds broke off their chorus, with a few scattering bursts of melody from tree to tree. Then all became still, as if waiting for the sun.

"You lug them," commanded the Sheriff. "I'll take the rest. Milly the mare we don't fret about. Mis' Johnquest has the use and care of her till we come back. Shoulder arms! We must git first on the river, so's nobody can pass down by us unbeknown. For'ard, march."

Lifting a double armful of bundles, Hardy led the way down hill. Mark followed, with two smaller bags and a pair of varnished paddles. It was now daylight, but a cold, shimmering daylight; and the wet stubble underfoot shone silvery, as though coated with frost.

"Here," called the Sheriff, plunging among alders, "here's my Old Girl, if the porcapines haven't et her."

His Old Girl was a battered green can-



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vas canoe, lying bottom-up on a pair of cedar trestles. He dropped his bundles, ran round her, thumping and inspecting, then in his great arms lifted her bodily and carried her through a gap among the leaves, where a bank of denser mist swallowed them both, man and canoe.

"Fetch on your cargo, boy!" his voice called.

Mark, obeying, almost fell down a rocky shore. Hardy caught and saved him, with a laugh. They stood beside the canoe, which lay half grounded, half floating, on a dark brown water covered with round cakes and curds of white morning foam. Beyond her, a blankness of gray-green fog moved in the same direction with the clotted foam, but somewhat more quickly. This was the river.

"Get aboard careful," said the Sheriff. "Don't hop round."

Mark climbed into the canoe properly, and knelt, ready to use the bow paddle.

The Sheriff chuckled.



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"I take it all back. You've been there before like a Mohawk."

He stowed the last bundles neatly, shoved off, and before sitting down, sent the Old Girl with one powerful curved stroke gliding up against the current.

"Paddle jest enough to warm you," he advised, "but don't try puttin' forth your He-curlean stren'th. Mind you been sick. Go easy. Now I'm a-goin' to talk all the time, and holla, and carry on loud, so's anybody passin' down river can hear us and sing out."

With that, paddling steadily, he began to sing "The Year of Jubilo"; then let forth several whoops and catamount-calls, which were echoed along the unseen boundaries of the fog, close by; then fell to narrating a long nonsense-legend of the border logging-roads,—how Tommy Cody, a famous thin man, fell through a sled-stake hole and was lost in the snow. Mark listened or not as he chose. His work as bow paddler seemed light and pleasant. There



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*The mist, like smoke in a draft,*
*blew faster and faster in their faces.*

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was no danger that his father would pass them unawares, while the Sheriff maintained such a marvellous hullaballoo. And presently he could see ahead where they were going. The mist, like smoke in a draft, blew faster and faster in their faces, went aloft, and vanished, leaving the brown water and the cakes of froth to meet the bow of their canoe in a longer and longer vista. Shadows of pointed trees, on either hand, appeared as though drifting. Then the sun rose, warm and red, astern; and Mark saw the whole river flowing toward him down a ragged lane of granite boulders and dark firs.

He peeled off his coat, and rested.

"I hear a noise like water boiling," he said.

"Course you do," quoth Hardy. "That's Tea-kittle Rips we're comin' to. Hence the name."

The noise increased, hissing louder and louder, till the canoe swung laboriously round a bend, and hung arrested in "quick



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water," at the foot of tumbling rapids, all yellowish-white cascade and rainbow spray opposite the morning sun.

"Here's our first carry," said Hardy. "Better eat here and warm our hides, afore goin' furder up."

So on a rocky bank, with the full roar of the Teakettle about them, and the yellow-stained waves leaping down alongside, they built a fire, ate a hot meal, and lay basking in great content. When they had "carried" round the Rips, and re-launched their canoe above, the sun rode high, the brown river lay still and gleaming before them, and they stole upward, stroke after stroke, into a milder and more silent country. Fir woods here and there showed the lighter green of birch or poplar among them; granite ledges gave way to more and more open stretches of marsh, with cow-lilies and pickerel weed encumbering the water.

"Good fishin' ground," the Sheriff pronounced it. "We won't stop to ketch any,



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though. I want to see if Lola's to home. If he is, you and me part company, boy. I must go up the main branch and . . . and inquire about your father there. Lola, he'll take you up the east branch; so doin', we waste no time nor lose our pains, ye see; and the likelihood of mucklin' on to the Judge is jest about doubled. Thribbled, I should say, for Lola makes three of us, if not more."

Mark saw that the plan was good, but still he did not welcome it. To leave the Sheriff, was to leave an old friend. Somehow the notion of travelling through these woods with a stranger made the expedition seem far more uncertain than before, the chance of success more doubtful and remote. He said nothing, however, and when his friend commanded him to cease paddling "for fear of bein' overdone," he obeyed, and sat quiet, rather downcast.

They had travelled a long way up and up the slow current, when he was sur-



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prised to hear the Sheriff answer the very thoughts he had kept secret.

"No, sir. Nor *I* don't want to leave *you*, neither. But there it is. The river'll come to a fork, soon. We must divide, and cover the country all to onct. I'll be back with you inside o' three days. And you'll find Lola good company."

"How did you know," cried Mark, astounded, "when I wasn't talking?"

Josephus laughed. His paddle dipped and dripped a few times before he spoke again.

"Talk ain't the ōnly thing," he answered. "Sometimes when a man keeps still, you can foller him all the better."

Mark pondered on that saying. It was a truth he had never known, a new lesson to be learned; and in the noonday calm of woods and river, where nothing sounded but the plash and trickle of the paddle, he sat learning it deeply, over and over.

Early in the afternoon, they slid forth on a little bay or widening bend, where the



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current divided to follow on either hand a bank of tawny meadow-grass, while in midstream rose abruptly a dark, bold, narrow hill, covered with pine woods. Like the bow of a high ship, this evergreen hill clove the river in two.

"Here we are," Hardy declared. "Part-in' of the waters. Main branch goes up to the left; east branch to the right."

He steered into the east branch, where shadow and sunlight by turns poured over them. Soon afterward he called, in a tone of satisfaction:

"There! The Luck's with us. Do you see her?"

He pointed with his glittering paddle blade.

Underneath a slant pine bough, and drawn half out of water on a pebble beach, there rested the long gray body of a birch canoe. Dingy and worn, but graceful, she bore along her gunwale a rough ornamental drawing, scratched into the brown of the bark; at the bow, a sign somewhat like



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the figure four upside down; amidship, men shooting deer, women running from a dog or bear; and at the stern, a long name in sprawling letters.

"Nattaweckoeg," read the Sheriff. "'The Sea Rider' is her name. Well she earned it, too. That birch has tasted salt water all the ways from Point Lepreaux down beyond Cape Cod.—Which some folks would be skeered to do in a three-masted schooner. Lola's bo't she is, the Nattaweckoeg."

So saying, he brought the canvas flank of his "Old Girl" alongside the birch canoe, and stuck his paddle into the river-bottom.

"Ah, wa-wa-wa!" he shouted. "O Lolo Lola!"

The pine woods, above, echoed like an empty house.

Hardy shouted again.

The shout went echoing upward as before among the pine trees. Then came silence. Mark could have sworn they were alone; the loneliness troubled him, for he



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thought that somehow in this place where nobody lived, his father might have met almost any kind of misadventure. Then a sound as of a light wind stirred some leaves; the bushes parted; and by the roots of the overhanging pine trees a strange man stood and looked down upon them gravely, as if he had been standing there all the time.

"Hallo, Lola," said the Sheriff.

"Joseepha," replied the strange man.

He was very strange indeed, yet also very commonplace—a drooping figure, from head to foot as brown as a tree-trunk. His broad face, calm almost to the point of stupidity, was brown and wrinkled; so were his old shirt, his faded, rusty trousers, his oil-tanned moccasins. There appeared no other color about the man, except in his eyes, which were glistening black, and in the handkerchief—a stringy piece of blue cotton—which hung knotted below his throat.

"Lola," inquired the Sheriff, "can you



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take this boy up the east way a piece for me? He wants to find his father, Judge Boswell. Have you run acrost the Judge, maybe?"

"No," said Lola, in a quiet murmur devoid of interest. "I hain't. Um. Yea-ah. Tha's so."

He spoke as to himself, and began looking slowly up and down the stream, with mild, unexpectant eyes.

"Well," began Hardy once more, after long waiting. "Will you take the boy up as fur, say, as Red Logan? We're kind o' jealous the Judge may ha' got lost."

He explained carefully the nature and reason of their search. The brown man stood motionless, like a sleepy animal, in brown chequered sunlight under the pines. He could not have listened. His face expressed a far-off meditation upon some general subject, perhaps the weather.

"Um. Jesso," he droned at last. "What's the boy's name?"



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"Name's Mark," replied the Sheriff. "And I tell ye. . . ."

Lola began staring thoughtfully at the evergreen branches overhead.

"They's a crow's nest up there," he reflected, aloud. "All gone now, they be. Some folks is foolish. Yea-ah. Some folks says young crows hain't good eatin'. White woman donno how to cook, mebbe. Um. Guesso." With eyes turned still aloft, he added: "You got a loomerum tea-kittle?"

Mark thought this question might be addressed to the pine needles, or the departed crows, until he heard Sheriff Hardy answering for him.

"No, he don't carry any such article."

"You," continued Lola, turning to examine the top of another tree, "you got a loomerum tea-cups?"

"No," replied Mark, wondering.

"Or mebbe," said the Indian, over his shoulder, "five hund'ed dollar gun, she pump the shot so fast a bird hain't got no



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chanst? 'And readin'-book, mebbe, for tell me what to do?"

"No," Mark repeated.

Lola sighed, and turned to face them once more.

"Last feller hed," he stated mournfully. "Um. Yea-ah. Last feller he come f'm city. Yeller mus-tash. Rich man. Sunburn keeped him awake all night. 'Ast questions. Hardware store fer to carry; hund'ed pound bags; fancy hatchet, no cuttin' aidge. Tha's so. He ast me questions, then knowed better 'n what I tolt him. Yea-ah. Gimme headache, that feller. Guess I don't take nobody agin. No."

The Sheriff burst out laughing.

"Mark ain't that kind," he cried. "You try him. You see." And he added many strange words in an unknown tongue.

The Indian turned his steady bright eyes upon Mark. A slow grin flickered across his wrinkled cheeks, and faded. Mark saw that he was being joked about, and laughed.



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"Well, mebbe," grunted Lola. "Um. Yea-ah. I guesso."

This remark, though vague, satisfied Hardy at once. He began lifting out Mark's bundles, and stowing them over-side in the birch canoe. Mark climbed after them.

"Wait till I go git my pole," murmured Lola, and disappeared as quietly as he had come.

The Sheriff plucked out his paddle from the mud, so that the "Old Girl," released, went swinging slowly into the current; but not before he had shaken Mark's hand, and said good-bye.

"Mind you, boy, we'll meet inside o' three days. Don't you fret about nothing. You're in better hands than mine, now."

Lola, returning with a long iron-shod pole, stepped into the "Nattaweckoeg" without a word, and shoved off. The two canoes hovered close for a moment in mid-river.

"Keep a good look-out," cried Hardy,



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as they parted company. "Remember the boy's been sick, Lola. Take care of him. Good luck to ye. So long!"

He waved his paddle, and was lost behind a jutting pine bough.

Lola, without effort, sent his long birch flying up the eastern river.

"Um. Yea-ah," he grumbled. "Guess yōu'd like to see the Juds. Mebbe."

Something in his tone gave Mark a new hope, an access of confidence which was needed sorely now that the Sheriff had gone.

"You think you can find him?" asked the boy.

"Kin if he's alive," came Lola's answer; and the words, though grim, sounded honest and encouraging, like the speech of a man who would rather do than promise.

The Sea Rider went sliding without a ripple through reach after reach of wood-land, all empty, where nothing else moved but the crinkling flow of the water, and high summer clouds that towered like



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snowy Alps afloat in the sunshine, with deep reflections whitening the river.

"You hain't got any them a loomerum tea cups?" inquired the Indian. "Glad you hain't. They scalt my lips nigh off my teeth. Um. Yea-ah. Tha's right. Your father says only t'other day. . . ."

He broke off with a grunt. A half mile or so later, he mumbled, as if in displeasure:

"I hain't got learnin'. But I got good head for remember, me. Your father the Juds, he don't carry no high-tone rubbage int' the woods. Tha's what I started fer to say. No, sir. Your father, he's the mos' best man ever live!"

Not only the confusion of these words, but some trick of Lola's voice—a crafty note which was intended to deceive and reassure—caused Mark to give a look backward. It was a glance, no more; but in that glance he caught Lola's brown face as though unmasked. Doubt and anxiety worked in every wrinkle. No wonder the



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canoe shot up-stream so fast, for the man was paddling at top-speed, furiously, throwing himself forward shoulder-first.

Mark sat mystified. He knew better than to ask questions. He also knew, without asking, without even looking back again, that something had gone very wrong. This Indian had made a slip of the tongue. "Your father says only t'other day"—what else could it mean? This Indian had lied to the Sheriff; he knew more about the object of their search than he pretended.

"He *has* seen father lately," thought Mark.

Sunset turned the river to blazing gold, until the blackness of the firs on the left bank stole out across and covered all in twilight. Evening began to fall; but still the long birch went flying onward, her bow shattering the pale reflection of an early star.

"Look here," said Mark, on a sudden.



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"You didn't tell Mr. Hardy the truth about my father. Did you?"

The Indian, in the stern, gave a dog-like growl.

"Hesh up!" he threatened; and the very harshness of his threat had a guilty sound. "Don't you never talk that way to *me!* No, sir!"

The paddle went even faster than before. into the mournful Northern darkness Mark felt himself hurried silently, alone with a queer, taciturn, hostile man, toward some piece of evil-doing: he could almost have been certain of that much: something wrong lay hidden among these fir woods under a starry night. Helpless, and rather scared, he was in Lola's hands. And Lola was lying.



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# CHAPTER IV.



"I DON'T wan' nobody to run pas' us in the dark," said Lola. "Tha's why we're a-goin' quick. Yea-ah. Listen them fallses."

A noise like that of rushing wind had risen beyond the trees, and now, drawing nearer, became gradually the full roar and hiss of tumbling water.

"We're a-gona camp there, right on top the carry."

Lola had regained his composure, and spoke in a voice friendly enough, though pitched high above the rumble of the falls; and when at last the Sea Rider came within view of a tossing white wall and slid into a shower of fine spray, he turned her bow toward the right bank and brought her to land.



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"Wrop up in your blanket," said he, carefully helping Mark to find a stepping-stone in the welter of foam and darkness. "Wrop yourself warm, now, ontell I lit the fire."

He vanished. Mark, waiting, stretched his legs upon a granite knoll, with nothing for company but stars overhead and rushing whiteness alongside. Then a little red flame sprang up near by, and grew into a blaze; and there squatted Lola, encouraging a great camp-fire laid up endwise, wigwam fashion. Beyond his silhouette, past the flames, yawned the open front of a hovel rudely built in green spruce boughs under the tall background of the forest, where slim white birch pillars played a flickering ghost-dance among the innermost shadows.

"You go lay down," grunted the Indian. "I'll git the supper."

Mark stretched himself in the hovel, and upon a dry, springy cushion of new evergreen lay watching Lola and his fire. The



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Indian's broad leathern face shone out, not unkindly, while he crouched above his cooking. Behind him, his shadow wavered enormous on the red obscurity where fire-light blended with river darkness. Sparks, high overhead, went darting like fiery tad-poles through the net-work of green spruce needles. The falls thundered, the fire snapped, and a lazy warmth called forth many balsam odors to fill Mark's com-fortable house.

"Here she come," declared Lola. "Here's your supper. Yea-ah."

He brought a savory dish all steaming, squatted, placed it between them, and handed Mark a spoon.

"You kin eat out o' same dish, mebbe, with a Injun? Or can't ye?"

"Of course I can," replied Mark, and did so with much appetite.

"Well!" Lola watched him, though with what expression of countenance it was im-possible to guess; for the man sat with his



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back to the fire. "I guess you was got the makin's of a feller."

Presently he added:

"You think I was a liar. Didn' ye?"

"I never said just that," Mark answered.

"Mm," grunted the other, and ate in silence. After a while, looking round him with a ruminant air, he made a long-considered assertion.

"I hate lyin'," said he, "wōrse 'n a Babtis' minister hate rum. Yea-ah. Tha's right. I'm a Roma Cathlic, me. Tha's the aligion I belongs to. I hain't got learnin'. But I got a good head." He pondered a while. "I kin tell you when Easter come." And he named the date—correctly, so far as Mark knew. "Some folks reads it on a book, but I keeps it in ma head. I kin tell when the month comes in, and I kin tell when the month goes out. Got good head for remember, me. Tha's kind o' feller I am."

He rose, carried off the spoons in the empty dish, and disappeared to wash them



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among the rocks and foam. He returned bringing the canoe paddles and the pole, which he thrust high into the top of a row of bushes, where, as he explained, "no porcapines can't eat 'em over-night."

"You go to sleep," he growled. "I'll keep the fire bright. You see why we was hurry to git here. Don't ye? So's nobody couldn' past us on the carry. Can't go over them fallses; got to carry round; got to see the fire, then see us. Yea-ah."

So saying, Lola cast an armful of dry wood on the lowering flames. With a gust of sparks, they sprang up again, revived. He stood looking at them calmly, heavily, as sober as an old dog before a hearth.

Warm, well fed, and half asleep, but not yet wholly at ease, Mark lay watching the Indian's face in the firelight. Though hard and wrinkled, it seemed a good face. He ventured to repeat his old question.

"So you think father's up here?"

Lola gave a long, queer stare, then turned away as if angry.



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"Don't you ast no questions," said Lola to the night, "an' I don' tell you no lies."

Mark remembered afterward that he woke more than once in vague alarm, but always dimly to see, through the ruddy gloom of the camp-fire, a drooping figure that stood and listened or moved about like a slow, uneasy animal. He knew Lola was on guard. He fell asleep again.

They started early next morning, "carried" round the snowy tumult of the falls, took the river again, and did not pause for breakfast until the sun was high. Then, as they sat in a warm, quiet clearing among alders, an odd thing happened.

Lola had produced a very old brown box, or canister, of birch bark, which was made, he said, by his grandmother Hannah Neptune. It contained maple sugar. They were sharing a lump of this delicacy, when from somewhere a wasp came buzzing and lighted on Lola's portion. The Indian brushed away the intruder, but it returned again and again.



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"Mm," said he at last, impatiently. "I got to kill that wossip."

A dozen things lay at hand, with any of which he might have killed it. But he sprang on foot, ran down the bank to his canoe, and returned carrying a sheath-knife on a leather belt. He sat down, drew the knife, and very solemnly, with the flat of the blade, struck a mortal blow.

"There!" he sighed, flicking the little yellow body into the grass. "That wossip, he's dead."

"But why," said Mark, "not take your hand to him? Or a stick?"

Lola gravely shook his head.

"Al'ays kill a wossip with yer knife," he answered, "so's nobody can't git the upper hands of ye."

And he buckled the sheath-knife to his hip, as though expecting a whole nest of hornets.

All that morning they paddled up the river, which, as they went, became more still and sluggish. Willows and white oaks



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overhung the water, or gave way to open marsh-land; long grasses lay straining half afloat, rising and sinking gently in the slow brown current; and at last there seemed no current whatsoever, but only a labyrinth of stagnant pools, bordered with wild meadow-hay.

"Now you show me," said Lola, with a provoking chuckle, "now show me Deadwater Brook. She's here. We got to go up Deadwater Brook. Where is she?"

Mark tried his best, looking everywhere about, to find the likeness of a brook. The birch canoe lay motionless, surrounded by meadow banks, above which gleamed the empty sky, and under which lay nothing but a margin of mud, pierced with musquash holes. Here and there along the ooze, a litter of pearly blue clam-shells told where a musquash had eaten his fill.

"I don't see any opening," said Mark. But he continued to search, for into his head returned a saying of Sheriff Hardy's, how Deadwater Brook wriggled in "so



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black and still that everybody takes her for a swamp-hole." He looked again and again, carefully. There could not be an opening in that marsh.

"Oh!" he cried, suddenly. "Is it there?"

And he pointed to a string of lazy bubbles gliding imperceptibly from under matted grasses.

Lola, for the first time during their cruise, gave a laugh.

"Boy, you got an eye like a Micmac!"

With that, he sent the canoe flying toward the bubbles. Mark dodged, and felt the meadow-grass brush over him as it parted to let them go rustling through, like men burrowing into a hay-mow.

"There!" growled Lola, when they slid into sunlight again. "I guess you hain't no fool."

They had found the mouth of the secret brook. The canoe floated on a little stream lost among tall grasses,—a stream as black and turbid as tea-grounds, and so dead that cobwebs and leaf-dust covered the surface



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with a dry scum. All afternoon they paddled through the windings of this dreary creek, until they reached a place of trees and rocks where the water seemed to flow. Soon afterward, passing among the giant silver-gray bodies of fallen pines, they stole forth on a lake lighted by the sunset.

"I don't say nothin'," observed L'ola. "Here's she's Hardhack Pon'. Mebbe we'll found somebuddy here. Mebbe not. I hain't say nothin'. Yea-ah. Don' you fergit that."

Hardhack Pond lay spread before them, bright in the centre, dark round the western edges—a tranquil, tiny lake where nothing moved but green reeds among the jumbled granite boulders of the shore. An eagle flew over, winging high, as Mark and the Indian rested. That seemed a sign of loneliness. But while the long birch, with way still on her, went lapping through pickerel weed and the pads of water-lilies closed for the night, both man and boy made exclamation.



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"Smoke! Yea-ah!"

"I think—I think we've found him!"

They nodded at each other, and began paddling once more.

Eastward, from behind an evergreen point, thin smoke curled into the upper region of the sunlight, and drifted inland among pines.

"Yes, sir!" cried Mark, exulting. "We've found him."

It seemed a race, but yet a long, slow race, until they could round the point. There, in a little cove deeply hidden by the pines, stood the camp from which the smoke went mounting—a gray hut, close above the pond, with open door facing the full western light. It was not, however, the retreat of a single fisherman. The hill-side bank and the shade of the pine boughs appeared, at a first glance, to be crowded with people. Three men were bending busily over a fire, while a fourth man lounged by the shanty door. Their figures were all gilded by the sunset, like the red



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aisles and columns of the woods behind them, and the trembling reeds in front reflected along the water's edge.

"Ahoy!" called Mark. "Father!"

His cry went echoing upward in those aisles. It had an instantaneous and a very strange effect.

The three men jumped to their feet, stared, hesitated for a moment, said something to one another, and then, seizing from off the fire a large metal pot, carried it stumbling with great haste and confusion into the shanty.

Against all custom of the woods, they gave the canoe no word or sign of greeting.

"Hmm!" said Lola. "Don' like us. No. Tha's so. Don' like our looks, do they?"

By the time he had brought his Sea Rider to shore among the reeds and boulders, out came the three men from their hut. In the same confusion they slammed the door and locked it with a padlock.

"Don' mean us fer to taste none o' *their* supper," murmured the Indian.



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Meanwhile the fourth man, a tremendous lanky fellow in blue overalls and a gray cloth hat, came slouching down toward the water.

"Here, you!" he cried, in a loud, forced, nasal voice. "Who sent for you round here?"

He halted above them on the bank, peering from under his hand.

"You kin clear out," he added, sourly. "What ye after, anyway?"

Lola returned a civil answer.

"We was a-lookin' for Juds Boswell," he murmured. "Tha's all. Jest a-lookin' fer Juds Boswell. You hain't seen him, s'pose, nowheres, hev ye?"

The lanky man stood still for a moment, as if thinking what to answer.

"Naw," said he. "I hevn't, nor I don't want to. You go on yer ways. We can't feed nor house the whole township.—No, I tell ye. There ain't been no such person round this camp."

The speaker lowered his hand. As the



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light disclosed his face, Mark started in surprise. This man glowered at them with a single eye. Its mate was but a pouch of shriveled eye-lids, inflamed and pitiful, like a scar. Under the cloth hat-brim his hair shone red as copper in the sunset.

"He's the one," cried Mark, carried away by indignation, "he's the one that cheated the widow!"

The man's face went suddenly pale.

"Whats' that?" he snarled, and made a step forward. "What did I hear? You say that agin'!"

But Mark was too excited to reply, for he had recognized something more about that red head.

"Oh," he stammered, "you, you, you're wearing. . . ."

The other cut him short with a wave of the arm.

"Clear out, the pair of ye! We don't want no kids a-yallopin' round us, nor no blame dirty Injuns prowlin' about for to steal."



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At these words, Lola rose in the canoe and very deliberately stepped ashore. Mark saw trouble coming. He had no time, however, to be afraid. Out he jumped on the rocks, to follow Lola; and he would have done so had ten such adversaries barred the way; for this red-haired Cyclops was wearing a thing he had no right to. Mark knew the cloth hat for his father's—the shapeless old gray headgear which Judge Boswell always wore a-fishing.



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# CHAPTER V



LOLA dragged the nose of the birch canoe ashore. Mark, trying to help, hauled with him. The tall reeds brushed their faces as they rose to climb the bank; and it seemed a strange thing to walk through peaceful, bending rushes toward a quarrel.

The one-eyed man stood waiting, slouched, his arms akimbo. Lola went quietly up to him without haste. Mark, bubbling over all kinds of accusation, found no breath for words.

"My name's Loy'la Pierpold," began the Indian, plainly. "Injun folks they call me the Bear, sometimes. Wha's your name?"

"Non' o' your farnal business," grunted the lanky man, scowling. "But I ain't shamed of it, comes to the word: my name's Chubbuck."



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Though casual and subdued, their talk rang somehow dangerous in Mark's ears. He stayed close behind Lola. The two men stood face to face, each planted squarely in his tracks.

"Wha's that you says to us down there?" Lola pointed toward the canoe below them. "Sumpn about stealin'. Deef, I was mebbe, didn't ketch the rights of it."

At first the one-eyed man, Chubbuck, disdained to answer; he looked sneeringly down; and with his great height, he seemed to have all the advantage, the power, and the prestige. Tough, bony, long of reach, he towered over the Indian, who stood in his old drooping posture, with knees bent, humble, downcast mien, and eyes meditating some far-off general question.

"I tell ye what I says," drawled Chubbuck, with a conceited grin. In his fist he held a plug of tobacco, which he carried slowly to his mouth. As he tore off one corner with long yellow teeth, his hand was trembling somewhat. "I says, we don't



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want no mangy Injuns a-prowlin' round fer to steal. Nor we don't, neither."

Lola glanced up. By comparison he looked small, round, and flabby.

"That hain't no way to talk," he protested, quietly but severely. "Injun don' steal. I got good rights, good rights fer to be here. Yea-ah. Tha's so. Good rights. My gran'father he own all this woodses one tam, afore Put Lolfe come. Yea-ah. I never stealded. Never took so much as a fox hind-laig outa 'nother man's trap, no sir, me. That hain't no way fer to talk."

Chubbuck slowly began to chew his tobacco. Muscles played along his lean, freckled cheeks, clear up under the roots of his fiery hair.

"Ain't it?" His solitary eye gleamed hard and contemptuous. "Well. You jes' don't need to listen. Pull up your hoofs, that's all you have to do. Clear away, the pair of ye!"

Mark's courage had not failed, but only,



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his voice. He stepped forward between the wranglers.

"Where," he squeaked, "where did you get my father's hat?"

Chubbuck scowled both with his eye and with the red-rimmed socket.

"Git out," said he, curtly. "It's one I bought my own-self. Never seen your haley old father. Git out."

Then Mark recovered his speech.

"It's not true!" he shrilled. "You have! You give me that hat!"

Why he should so desire the hat, as a hat, he never stopped to think and never knew; for Chubbuck suddenly swung forward, and with one bony paw made a sweep at his head. Mark dodged, but caught the slant edge of the blow, and went rolling into a patch of sweet-fern. He was up almost at once, dazed and blubbering with fury. The first thing he saw was Lola's hand grasping behind Lola's back, clutching at a belt, a sheath,—and the knife which had killed the wasp. The next thing



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was the flash of a blade in the light from the burning lake.

"Oh! Stop!" cried Mark, running in. "Don't! Wait! Stop!"

He caught Lola's arm in both hands as it went forward from the hip. Even during the same moment, and while carried off his feet, Mark found time to learn, with wonder, that the Indian's arm was not flabby or fat, as it looked, but solid and heavy as bone.

"Leggo" Lola was panting. "Leggo, boy, ongrab! He's aimin' to fire on us!"

The words meant nothing, had not Mark been whirled ahead by that iron fore-arm until he saw Chubbuck over him, and Chubbuck's eye glaring, and the long, bright shine of a pistol whipping upward in Chubbuck's fist. Whether he understood what was happening and tried to stop it, or whether the force of Lola's wrenching threw him blindly into a useful place, Mark afterward could not tell; but he went head-foremost against a pair of dirty blue over-



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alls, seized them and a pair of knees inside them, tackled, and fell, just as he had often fallen, playing football at school, with a bigger fellow on top. Something cracked —a revolver—so loud that his ears rang.

"Hi, good! Hi, good!" sang Lola.

Mark sat upright in the same patch of sweet-fern as before. A cloud of dust floated golden off the ground. Beyond it shone the bare red head of Chubbuck, who sprawled on the slippery pine-needles, and kicked out, and tried to roll over sidewise toward a glittering object which lay in the midst of the luminous cloud. It was the fellow's pistol, a long, ugly, nickle-plated thing. Mark no sooner recognized it than he, likewise, began to scramble and roll—so fast that he rolled clear over it, and had to reach backward, clawing in sand and pine-needles. Somehow he caught it, evaded a pair of grasping hands, and rose to his feet holding the pistol by the wrong end.

"Here, here! This won't do, boys,"



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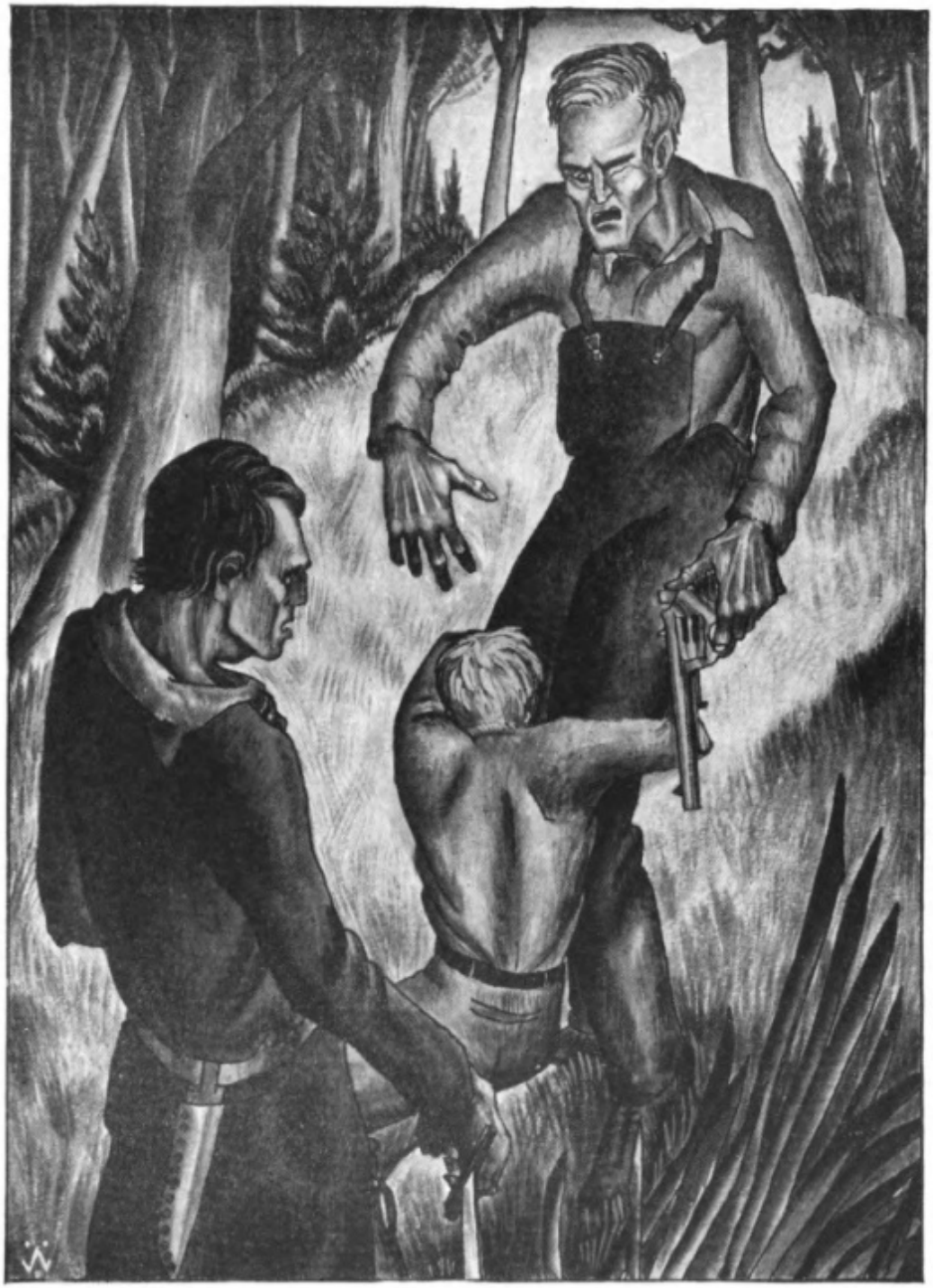

*He went head foremost against a pair of blue overalls, seized them, tackled and fell.*

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piped a little, thin voice. "This won't never do at all. Quit your nonsense. Behave, now. Quit your nonsense. . . ."

The voice ran on, babbling and whining. It had a familiar sound. Mark paused only to get a good working grip of the weapon he had so strangely won; then he looked up, and found the other three men of the camp standing near. Two of them were strangers,—a dark-faced, greasy, foreign pair, who looked like any street loungers. The third, he who babbled and whined, was Tommy Cody.

The fallen Chubbuck meanwhile had risen, slapping dust off his overalls and cursing,—but not like a man who wanted any more fight.

"Who begun this?" quavered Cody, in his ridiculous, timid voice. "Can't hev it. Can't hev fightin' round *my* camp, I tell ye."

No one at any time could feel afraid of Tommy Cody, the village butt and famous thin man. Now, as he chattered, a mere



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thread of a creature in dirty black "cut-away" and limp trousers, he seemed ready to sink through the ground with fright, just as once (according to the Sheriff's fable) he went down through a sled-stake hole. His little hairless yellow face, puckered and pointed like a quince; his mild blue eyes blinking, half silly, half-sagacious; his fragile body tottering there between terror and pomposity; all this was poor old Thomas Cody, the same as always, who never harmed a soul.

"Hallo, Tommy!" cried Mark, feeling almost at home again.

"Hallo," replied the fragile one, mechanically. "Hallo, hallo. How are ye? Who begun it? Can't hev it. Won't hev it. How'd ye git here? Hallo."

"Where's father?" said Mark of the single idea.

Cody blinked several times, looking from one to another of his sullen comrades.

"Dunno, dunno," he gabbled. "Your father, hey? Dunno. Judge Boswell, hey?



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Your father said to me, he was a-goin'— Dunno. He wa'n't here. I hain't seen him."

Chubbuck and the swarthy mutes gathered morosely behind him. They made an ill-favored group to face the glowing sunset. One of them muttered something.

"Yes," cried Tommy Cody, and nodded. "You—you—you look a-here, boy." He put on a feeble air of authority. "You gimme back this gen'leman's pistol. He says you begun it. Boys got no right to go round takin' people's firearms away. Don't belong to ye, neither. You give the gen'leman back his gun."

Lola had neither moved nor spoken, but remained there, quiet, suspicious, bright-glancing, with knife in hand.

"Don' you do it!" he now cried, sharply. "Muckle on, aholt of 'er. Pass 'er to me. Yea-ah. I'll keeps 'er."

With that, shifting the knife to his left hand, the Indian softly put forth his right



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and took the long, nickle-plated pistol. At once the four campers drew back, recoiling.

"I guess," murmured Lola, thoughtfully, "we got the upper hands of 'em. Yea-ah. Um. Tha's so."

A long silence fell. Tiny lake waves plashed and chuckled below, under the resting Sea Rider's flank of birch.

"Dern the whol' business!" growled Chubbuck; and turning away in disgust, he went and sat on a stump by the fire, which had sunk neglected into a broad heap of coals. "Dern the whol' muckin' business!"

Clutching his red hair with tremulous fingers, he stared at the half-burnt cedar tripod which straddled the fire-bed. Like many another coward, this one-eyed man could carry and flourish fire-arms, but not stand up bare-handed before an enemy. The other two men retreated presently to where he sat; and after a few more vague, foolish, distracted questions, Tommy Cody



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sidled over to join them. They held a muttering council round the fire.

Mark looked inquiringly at his friend. Lola stood silent and watchful, as before; but now he slowly gave a nod, which signified, better than words, that they two were the acknowledged masters of the camp. Meanwhile he sheathed his knife, and stuck the naked pistol under his belt, conspicuously in front.

"Wait," he murmured. "Jes' wait. See what they says to us nex'."

And so the Indian began wandering about, ambling onward a few steps, returning, then halting dead to stare at the ground, or the tree-tops, or out across the sunset lake; always with the same vacant thoughtfulness, like a melancholy bear. Once he stooped, took up a white pebble from the ground, stared at it aimlessly, and put it in his pocket. As for Mark, he now spied under a bush—where it lay kicked aside and forgotten—the precious object of



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their quarrel, the gray hat. He pounced on it, then ran to Lola in triumph.

"It *is* my father's hat," he announced.

Stamped on the inner band were the letters "R.B."—the initials of Mr. Richard Boswell.

"Yea-ah," said Lola, looking wise. "Tha's right. P fer Juds and R fer Boswell. Yea-ah. We got 'im."

Mark, as he brushed the hat free of dust and pine-needles, felt his spirits greatly rise. To see and handle this shabby old piece of gray cloth, brought him, by some queer fancy, near to his father, close, as it were, on the missing footsteps.

The voices round the camp-fire became audible; all four men were arguing at once; and though Chubbuck's gleaming head wagged stubbornest, he suddenly ripped out a final oath, and squirting tobacco juice among the coals, sat like a man overcome, hang-dog and sour.

"Hev it your own fool way, then," he sneered.



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"Go on, Tommy," urged the two dark men, with foreign gestures. "Go on, Tommy. Tell 'em."

His little yellow face more puckered than ever, his thin frame still more withered, Tommy Cody drew near, hesitating, shambling, as though his pipe-stem legs failed under a heavy burden of doubt and care.

"Look, boys," he hailed, with a false note of cheeriness. "Le's us hev some talk. Us fellers don't pick no quar'ls. Sure not. Us fellers don't want to fly at one t'other's thro'ts, as the old sayin' is. Look a-here."

Giving Lola a wide berth, he passed to the other side of Mark, and laid his arm affectionately over the boy's shoulder. It was a feeble arm and a quaking.

"Now, son," he began, in a low, hurried voice. "Now, son. You hark. I ain't a-goin' to tell no lies. We did see your father. You know me, Mark. Everybody does. Your father and me's old friends. He's always good to me. Had I but fol-



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lered your father's advice, boy, I wouldn't be now. . . ."

He broke off, with a choking sound. Mark suddenly glanced up at him. The queer little starveling face was all drawn painfully askew; and the lips trembled, the foolish blue eyes blinked with a real emotion.

"Bible truth, Mark," whispered Cody. "I'm a-scairt. That Chubbuck, he's a danger's man. I reely am a-scairt of him. I'd ask ye both to stay supper with us, but —but—" He paused, then weakly concluded; "but I can't. You best clear out, and that's a fact. I'm dretful sorry; but if you boys was to stay here, we'd all be fightin' again like tom-cats."

He removed his quaking arm from the boy's shoulder, and with pitiful anxiety stood watching the effect of his words.

"Last time I was to town," he continued, pleading earnestly, "Didn' I leave your father's message for ye? Didn' I? And wasn't you sick abed? Says I, the Judge



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he told me to tell you he tolt me, he was goin' furder in, deeper, to fish. Well! Didn' I?" Tommy was now blubbering outright. "You know me, son. The Judge he knows me. Nobody says the's any harm in Tommy Cody, do they? No. Never was inside a jail or a lock-up house in my life, 'cept maybe two-three times, Fourth o' July, Queen's Birthday, likes o' that. Was I? No. Well, there now!"

Somewhat bewildered by this fervent plea, Mark made no answer. It was Cody who continued their discourse, bending down as though to whisper in Mark's ear.

"Now, listen," said he, and glanced timidly back toward the camp-fire. "You go take the Judge his hat. She's his; you was right; and we give her up to ye free and fair. He left us that hat by accident, kind of. He'll be wantin' her, too. And you tell the Judge I never picked no fight. Tell him us fellers ain't doin' aught but . . . Tell him the fishin' ain't no good here; better stay where he is. Like a good



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boy, now, you go carry your father's hat to him."

Mark laughed.

"Where is he, then? We'll go fast enough. I don't want anything better."

Tommy drew a long breath, in relief. All the wrinkles in his little face turned suddenly from care-worn crowsfeet to the strangest net-work of smiles. He seized Mark by the arm.

"Come down here," he cried, briskly. " 'Tain't fur. Come on down, Lola. I kin show ye. 'Tain't no distance."

It was comical to see how openly the poor, frail simpleton rejoiced at getting rid of his visitors, as he hurried them down the bank to their canoe.

"Spang over there," said he, pointing across the lake, which was now a bottomless gulf of amber light. "Round the fust point, then open up Loon Cove, so, and there's the mouth o' the brook, where your father went." Tommy poured out a stream of tedious instruction. "Can't miss the



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brook; plumb afore your nose; if she was a bear, she'd bite ye. Good-bye, boys. Glad to seen ye. So long. Good luck to ye both."

Lola, by a motion of his hand, sent Mark aboard the Sea Rider. With a gloomy, suspicious air, he followed, and shoved out the canoe through a rattle of parting reeds.

"Goo' bye," he grunted; and under his breath, as he began to paddle,—"Humph! Foolish. Yea-ah."

The shore quickly receded. Tommy's grin and fatuous waving hand were blurred by the green lines of the reeds. Mark had one backward glimpse of the pine grove, the cabin, locked inhospitably, and the morose trio staring from that sylvan fireplace, where a faint bluish twist of smoke mounted among glowing red-barked pillars. Then, like a dream, all the evergreen hill floated away into distance. Lola and he faced a world of primrose-yellow flame, high in air, deep in water, both elements forming one limitless glory,



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save where the western woods divided them by a bar black as midnight,—a double fringe of dark spruce pinnacles, half upright, half inverted.

"What can those men be doing?" said Mark. "That's a queer camp."

Cool shadows surrounded them. The canoe slid under the edge of evening, close to land, round the point, and into a cove of dark-green water. A mink, taken unaware on the shore, dove silently under Mark's paddle-blade like a brownish streak, no sooner guessed at than gone.

"Dunno," answered Lola, at last. "They didn' mean us fer to know. It hain't fish they's after. No-sir."

A moment later he ceased paddling.

"Turn roun'," said he.

Mark did so. The birch drifted on through dark-green twilight.

"See," muttered the Indian, fumbling in his pocket, "what I founded."

And he drew out that white object, like



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a small flat stone, which Mark had seen him pick up at the camp.

"Ketch." He tossed it carefully. "What's you call that? It hain't fish-bait. It hain't man-vittles."

Mark sat staring at the unexpected thing he had caught in his hand.



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# CHAPTER VI



"WHAT you call it?" asked Lola.

At first Mark would have thought it a curious bit of limestone. Then, turning it over in his palm, he saw that the thing was not of nature's handiwork, but of man's. Irregular in shape, a rough disc broken across the middle, it bore a deep impression, as though stamped by one half of a circular seal. Mark scratched with his thumbnail the broken edge, which came away frittering in white powder.

"Plaster of Paris," he concluded.

Lola grunted wisely.

"Oh, yea-ah. Plaster. Fer the rheumtiz," he replied. "I heerd of it onct. Mustid plaster. Some folks 'lows it to be good."

"No," said Mark. "Not that kind."



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He scrutinized the clean round rim of the impression. It was milled. Within its half circle appeared a fragmentary device, —the profile of a woman's head.

"Why!" he exclaimed. "Why, Lola! It's a cast!" Staring through twilight, he wondered why the Indian did not share the thrill of his discovery. "A cast, I tell you, or a mould! For making money. They're coining half-dollars in that camp over there. And Chubbuck passed them on the Widow Johnquest, when he was drunk, in her shop. You wait till Sheriff Hardy catches him!"

Lola began paddling, like a man who had other interests.

"Tha's so?" he inquired, vaguely. "Makin' money, hey? I heerd tell o' that, too; never seen it done afore." He steered the canoe toward a gray granite beach. "Time we was buildin' a hovel and gittin' our supper to eat."

Mark sat astonished at the sight of such barbarous indifference.



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"But Lola," he cried, "that's what they're doing, those fellows! That's why they drive away visitors, and no wonder. Don't you understand? They're coiners—counterfeiters. They're making money."

The Indian merely hooked his paddle between two rocks, and brought his craft ashore.

"Good fer them," he murmured. "Good fer them. Some folks kin. Wisht I could. Now you climb out, an' we'll cook the supper."

He would listen to no further explanation. As they worked side by side in the dusk, cut poplar saplings and laid boughs to build a leafy shelter, Mark went on talking indeed, but found his words entirely wasted. Lola was hungry, and said so. Nor would he speak further on any subject, until their house for the night stood ready under the stars, and a fire was leaping before it, and supper smoked in a dish on the ground. They sat down side by side, facing the fire, beyond which the bottom



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of the canoe, up-turned, glistened wet like crystal in a patch of grass. All the cove lay still and lost in darkness. The topmost leaves of the living poplars pattered with a sound as of tiny raindrops.

Lola ate heartily in silence; then stared, musing, at the fire; then spoke in a mournful vein.

"How's folks make money, Mark? I heerd white men talk, many's time, say—'So-'n-so, he's a-makin' money.' 'That store, she's a-makin' money han' over fist.'—How's they do it?" He sighed.

"Machin'ry, mebbe. I seen sardines a-makin' onct int' the fact'ry. Um. Yea-ah. They doos the money sort o' same way, spose. Like how the saw-mill make aidgin's?"

"Something like," replied Mark. "The Government makes it in a kind of factory. But these men over here—"

"Ho, no!" interrupted Lola, shaking his head. "Gov'ment don' *make* money, Mark. You don'no. Gov'ment *gits* money. Gov'-



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ment take it away f'm other fellers. Yea-ah. Gov'ment he take it, take the land away, too; gives you a paper, mebbe, tha's all. Man, name o' George Washton, he was Gov'ment, he taken all this land away on my father gran'father, promise to pay him a slat o' money, hund'ed year ago. Can't never do it. Too poor. Gov'ment hain't got none, Mark. You's wrong."

Mark, knitting his brows, tried to meet this argument.

"Money," he began, "is made in a Mint."

He had read about mints, but never seen one; and while he expounded as best he might, Lola laughed him to scorn.

"A mink?" said the Indian. "'Twas a mink doved under us w'en we was a-turnin' int' this bay. You's tired. You's talkin' foolish. They's a little money ketchin' 'em. And minks kin swim. But they hain't much else to minks."

Mark tried again, and did somewhat better. He talked earnestly, holding the



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broken plaster cast so that both of them could study it in the red firelight. Lola scratched his ears, and thought, and nodded once or twice.

"Now don't you see?" Mark urged. "What these fellows make is *bad* money!"

Lola's face became a brown puzzle.

"Tha's so. Um. Likely," he grumbled. "Guess 'twould be kind o' bad. Tommy Cody, he couldn' shave a hoop-pole ner fit an axe-handle. An' the Cock-eye, there, he'd never make nothin' straight. Yea-ah. Guess tha's true. Guess *their* money would be two botches an' a bungle."

Somehow, Mark felt, the right and wrong of this affair were being overlooked.

"Why, Lola," he cried, "it's worse! It's meaner. It's low down. This red-head man we fought, this Cock-eye, what do you suppose?—he took things out of Mrs. Johnquest, the widow, her store! Things to eat and wear. And the money he paid, wouldn't buy that poor old woman so much



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as a last year's potato peeling. It's no good!"

The Indian's broad face gradually woke, brightened, and grew hot with anger.

"Huh? Hey?" He jumped on foot, and paced a few rapid turns before the fire. "The Widder? *I* knows *her*. They cheats the Widder, hey?" He burst forth suddenly with a great oath, and Mark loved him for it. "W'y, boy! W'y, boy! They cheats her?" He stopped, and glared at Mark over the fire. "They stealded f'm old Mis' Johnques'? What kind o' way's that to do? By gorry, I gits mad!"

He shook his fist, very slowly, in a measured fashion which gave weight, dignity, and power to his wrath. He paused. And Mark, remembering how this man had not once lost his temper even during the fight, saw now, with a touch of dread, that Lola's face had altered. Between firelight and obscurity, it was an older and a harder face, glowering with fixed eyes, the lips drawn back.



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"In the ole days, when we gits mad—" He broke off, and pointed at the fire below him. Voice, look, and gesture, made him seem for the moment an apparition who had stepped from the darkness, not of the night behind him, but of an ancient and revengeful past. "W'en we, our people, gits mad at that kind o' man, we digs a pit-hole in the groun'; an' we fills the pit-hole full o' hemlock bark; an' then we takes him, an' burns him up in a hot fire, quick. Yea-ah! Tha's what we do, acause they desarves it!"

He moved away, muttering. Mark saw his dim shape pass back and forth in the gloom by the water's edge. When he returned, he came shuffling along, the same dull, patient, downcast Lola of every day.

"We'll ketch up evens with 'em," he declared, quietly, and flung wood on the fire, so that a great explosion of sparks burst upward. "Um. Yea-ah. Now le's us go to bed, Mark. Don't cost ye nothin' to



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board at Popple House. Tha's so. Hain't it?"

As they lay down beneath a roof of poplar leaves already wilting in the warm firelight, Lola unbuckled his belt, to put away the captured pistol and the sheath-knife.

"It only shows ye, Mark,"—Yawning, he moralized the day's event—"shows jes' what I tolt ye. They couldn' git the upper hands of us. Al'ays take yer knife-blade to kill a wossip."

So saying, he twisted himself into his blanket, rolled over, shifted his feet a few times, and began to snore. Mark lay listening, with a complacent idea that he, at his age, could stay awake longer than this weathered old campaigner of the woods.

"I must think what we ought to do," he told himself. "Lola is not very strong at thinking."

In this agreeable conceit, he watched the firelight flicker across their ceiling—



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golden mist and tiny black-tongued shadows that played among the withering poplar leaves.

He fancied he was thinking all the while. His eyes, he knew, had never closed for a moment. But of a sudden the fire was out, the poplar house dark as desolation, and a glimmer of gray light hanging aloft strangely over the tree-tops. A crow somewhere cawed raucously at long intervals, as though but half awake. The repeated note was that of morning.

"Morning, no mistake," thought Mark.

A low white bank of fog lay smothering the cove.

"I've been sound asleep all night!" Mark chuckled at his own chagrin, and turned for another nap. In doing so, he discovered that he lay alone under the shelter, beside an empty blanket. Lola was gone.

The discovery fetched Mark upright. What could have happened here, between dark and daybreak, sleep and waking? He



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sat and gave ear to the morning stillness. The crow uttered one last drowsy caw.

"Lola?" called Mark, on the chance that his companion might be close at hand.

Nobody answered. The boy rose and went outside. Their fire was long dead—gray ashes, encircled by a border of half-burnt sticks. Overhead, to the right, a few pale western stars were fading above the ragged band of vapor and black spruce points; to the left, the sky showed overcast with a sour dawn, dead-colored like the ashes and the water-mist.

"Lola!" he cried.

At the sound of his hail, a tree-top rustled near by, and off went flying the crow whose voice had waked him. High over the mist-bank flapped this uncouth black bird, to alight swaying and balancing frowsily on the tip of a tall fir. Woods and water rang with derisive cawing.

The cove seemed utterly forlorn, even at that moment; and at the next, Mark learned it was no mere seeming, for as he



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peered along the misty confines of the shore, he found with a bodily shock of surprise that he stood there, in truth and indeed, alone.

The birch canoe was gone.

At first he remained gaping, doubtful of his own eyes. It was incredible that his friend Lola should have deserted him, like a thief in the night. But it was true. The wet grass by the shore sparkled silvery, except where footprints darkened it in a line of drenching, trodden sprays, and where the canoe had left a dry pattern of her body shaped like a giant willow leaf. Lola had picked up the Sea Rider and vanished with her into the smoky dawn.

"What struck the man?" thought Mark. "Why should he sneak away like this?"

Following a first impulse, the boy set forth to patrol the shore; but he soon came to a halt, for everywhere the cold, wet solitude wrapped him round, the same brown edge of water simmered and steamed under low-hanging fog.



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"Oh, well," said he, for encouragement, "that Injun will come back. He *can't* propose to leave me for good."

Returning to the camp, he suddenly bethought him, and did what he should have done at the outset.

"Let's see if he took anything."

Surely the Indian had not touched their supplies. It was a hateful suspicion, and Mark blamed himself for it heartily. When he had stooped under the roof of poplar leaves, he rejoiced to find their bags and bundles lying safe in the corner.

"It's all right," thought Mark, ashamed but relieved. "He's too good a chap. . . ."

A second later, in alarm, he was down on his knees rummaging through Lola's grimy blanket. He lifted it, glanced underneath, shook out the wrinkled folds, then tossed it away and burrowed in the dry leaves and bedding. When he stood up again, his face was grave and troubled.

The Indian had taken something, after



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all. His belt and sheath-knife were missing, and so was Chubbuck's old revolver.

Mark sat down on his blanket and stared into the melancholy dawn. Drenched to the bone from wading through grass and bushes, he had begun to shiver; but he hardly noticed that, his mind being elsewhere. A picture of Lola's face appeared to swim before him,—not in its kindly, stupid aspect, but transfigured as he had seen it last night, when Lola spoke of burning people quick.

Was this the man who had stolen away, armed?

It was a bad thought to sit alone with; and Mark, leaning forward, chin in hand, fell prey to intolerable doubt. Instead of finding his father, he had lost his guide. This lake of mist and of sombre tree-tops encompassed him like a curtain—a curtain drawn before a very hopeless world. No good of any sort would come from Lola's errand.



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# CHAPTER VII



No good of any sort could come. Mark pulled his blanket round his legs, and waited, shivering. Wet and cold, alone in a shadowy wilderness at that doleful morning hour when courage runs low, he found cause to remember that he had left home half-sick, anxious, and weaker than he was willing to confess. The lake mist mournfully shut him in with his forebodings. Even the crow had gone from the fir-tops yonder. Lola's desertion wore a sinister look.

"Suppose he fights those people at camp?" thought the boy. "Indians like to get even, they say. Somebody may be hurt —or killed. It may be happening now."

Whatever happened, he could only sit there under his blanket and shiver, and be



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of no help or use in the world. These woods were filled with darkness and trouble. He had tried to remain hopeful, to picture himself and Lola as travelling always through sunshine, and at last, in some brightest part of all the woods, triumphantly reaching his father. Everything was to have come right. But now—suppose that everything went wrong?

He roused, and shook off these doubts.

"You fool," said he, "at least you can build a fire."

They had piled a stack of dry wood behind the hovel, under the long overhanging poplar boughs. He brought an armful, and set to work reviving their camp-fire. The red blaze of kindlings made at once a cheerful, homelike color amid the gray fog. Mark squatted over it, nursing the flame.

There was no sound; nothing told him to raise his head; but he glanced from the fire just in time to see a white thing stealing toward him through the vapor. Like a wraith turning solid and real, the birch



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canoe slid into the margin of brown water, and the blurred figure of a man, lifting a glossy paddle, stepped out on the granite rocks. It was Lola.

"Hallo!" cried Mark.

The Indian climbed up toward the fire. He came bare-handed and without a weapon. His broad face was calm, his old brown shirt covered with pearly seeds of moisture.

"Mornin'," he replied. "Woken too soon, did ye? Start'n' the fire. Tha's good."

He stooped under the hovel, and dragged out one of the food-bags.

"What happened?" said Mark.

"Nothin'," Lola grumbled. "Where's tea-kittle?"

Not before they were eating breakfast did he offer to speak again.

"Rain. I kin smell them pon'lilies way here, clean f'm other end the lake. Um. Yea-ah. We're a-goin' to git rain."

Mark then grew conscious of what he



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had been too fretful and busy to enjoy,—a cool fragrance of water-lilies. Now that Lola mentioned it, all the woods and waters breathed forth a faint, incomparable sweetness.

"Rain's a-comin'," Lola nodded. "We better put on more boughses, make the roof tight."

The mist had melted, so that the cove lay clear and dark, a pool of mirrored evergreen. When the two camp-mates had chopped and laid on their house a double thatching of poplar branches and fir, the coming shower already marred that mirror with delicate rings, widening slowly. Lola brought ashore his canoe, from which, before placing her upside down, he took out his knife-belt and the nickle-plated pistol.

"What did you do—with those?" Mark ventured. "What happened?"

"Nothin'," repeated his friend.

They took refuge under the hovel, as the first great drops fell hissing into their



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camp-fire. The perfume of far-off water-lilies faded and was gone. Then suddenly, with a plashing outburst, the rain drove aslant the cove and transformed all to leaping quicksilver.

"No," murmured Lola. He sat watching the many-shafted downpour and the bright drops dancing upward. "Nothin' happened. I jes' went a-huntin'—a-huntin' fer a thing."

"Did you find it?" asked Mark.

"Yea-ah, I guesso." Lola's eyes puckered thoughtfully. "Guess I did. Mebbe. W'en the rain hol's up, I'll go show ye. Then you kin see."

This proposal was by no means welcome.

"We ought not to waste time," Mark objected. "I want to go straight up the brook."

"Wha' for?" growled Lola in displeasure. "Wha' d'ye wan' to do that for?"

"Because my father's up there, of



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course," replied the boy. "Tommy Cody told us—"

"Huh!" The Indian cut him short. "Tom Cody, Tom Fool. Your father, he ain't up no brook."

Mark looked at his friend, who sat humped in a posture of meditation.

"Where is he, then?"

"Dunno," said Lola, with a tranquility that was maddening. "Can't say fer sartain. Hain't up no brook."

Mark barely restrained his anger. He was now thoroughly tired of this prolonged mystification. It cost him a sharp struggle to forbear, to hold his tongue and wait. At last, all in Lola's good time, he was rewarded.

"I can't say, Mark," continued Lola, "acause I was promise not to. The Juds, your father, he tolt me shut up, not say nothin'. I'll keeps ma promise, me. Tha's kind of man I am. Can't *tell* nothin'. But I'm a-goin' *take* ye where he is. Um. Yea-ah. First, show ye what I founded,



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on the way; then take ye where yer father was. I guesso."

Mark unrolled his blanket and stood up.

"Let's go now," he proposed with alacrity.

The Indian shook his head.

"Not ontell this rain hol's up," he answered. "The Juds, he won' run away, sech weather. Nobody won' stir out, but angly-worm and mud-turtle, w'ile she rain this hard. Se' down. Rain, she won' quit fer you fussin'. Se' down an' wait."

All day they sat and waited, while the rain fell steadily, veiling the cove and opposite woods with a silvery mesh, now light and transparent, now coarse and blinding. The rain filled all the air with noise—a swish and spatter that never ceased, and a multitudinous drumming on the canoe-bottom, where it hopped like shining bullets. Not a dry sound was left in the world; and the only smells were of wet earth and of acrid charcoal from the dripping ruins of the fire.



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Lola squatted patiently, dozing at times, or murmuring some drowsy tale, some interminable history of his own days in the forest, or his father's, or his grandfather's. Slow or fast, a day or a generation, the passage of time affected him not at all; but Mark wished the morning away, and found the afternoon no better. The gloomy semblance of daylight failed, at last, into an evening darkness.

"I think she quit now," said Lola, suddenly. "She quit rainin'. Yea-ah. Pooty soon."

If any change were coming in the weather, Mark could not recognize it. Yet the Indian was right; for not long afterward the silver curtain of rain dissolved, the evergreen shore reappeared as a dark wall of bristling points, a few last drizzling lines vanished from the air, and Loon Cove lay before them clear and lonely under a threatening twilight.

"Now we're a-goin'," Lola mumbled. "Git the paddles."



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They were not to go far, it seemed, for he left their bundles in the shelter, and made no longer preparation than to buckle on his "wossip" knife and stick the captured pistol into his shirt bosom.

"Don' talk. Don' make no noise," he cautioned Mark. "Got to creepse roun' on'em, we have. Come on. Don' scrope yer paddle again' the side o' the canoe, neither."

Silent as a floating leaf, the long birch went out from shore. Lola steered straight across for the opposite woods, then, when almost aground, with a quick turn headed her outward, close along the dark-stained granite border. By this manoeuvre, as Mark afterward saw, they crossed the cove secretly, and secretly put forth from its mouth; for the little promontory of the poplar house barred all view toward the east. No money-maker could spy them as they slid along shore. This end of the pond lay hidden from the campers—a lonely sheet of dull-brown water, so quiet that the



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surrounding trees dripped audibly, in a wide-spread, sodden whisper. This dripping solitude, under the low, cloudy twilight, was very cheerless.

They had stolen round the southern curve of Hardhack Pond, and approached within a half-mile of the hostile camp, when Lola suddenly ran the canoe ashore between two fallen pine logs and a wild-pear bush toppling down the bank.

"Shind out," he ordered, standing erect in a cavern of leaves. "As nigh as we dast paddle. We're a-got to hoof it."

Leaving the Sea Rider well hidden, they pulled themselves up through the wild-pear boughs, and set off, the Indian leading, into a grove of yellow birches. Lola swung along, ungainly as a bear, but with a bear's deceptive speed, so that Mark, to keep at his heels, broke into a struggling trot through the wet fern and blueberry tangle.

"Where are we going, Lola?" he panted.

His companion did not reply. Glimpses of dark water, now and then, among the



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stout golden birch-trunks on the left, told him that their course followed the outline of the pond.

"What are we. . . ."

Lola flashed one menacing look over his shoulder.

"Hesh up," he whispered, without pausing. "We hain't a toad's hop away f'm them fellers."

Down through the last of the grove they hurried, into a soggy lane choked by alders —the ruin of some ancient corduroy road, now ribbed with green moss and shining puddles of rainwater. Walking softly as on velvet, they traversed the lane, and at the other end were about to climb a mound of granite, when Lola stopped short, reached one hand backward, caught Mark's arm, and pinned him fast.

They both stood rigid. People were talking, close at hand, and coming nearer.

"No, Mr. Chubbuck, I think you're wrong," said the whining voice of Tommy Cody. "You're mistaken, you're mis-



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taken. Tell? The boy don't know nothing *to* tell on us. Him and that Injun has gone up the brook, as I was sayin'—"

"You!" sneered another voice. "You always are a-sayin'! But what you say wouldn't butter no parsnips.—The whol' thing's goin' wrong. We can't afford to take resks."

And while he spoke, out from withered sumac bushes that crowned the granite knoll, above, stalked the tall red-haired man, with Tommy Cody shambling after. They came from the woods on the right, and now halted, barely ten feet away, in full view against the darkening sky. Mark would have dodged among the alders; but at his first movement, Lola's grip tightened and held him powerless. Lola stood like a piece of the rock.

"Well, well, mebbe. I don't set up to be no great," argued the scarecrow Tommy. "You know best, dessay. All is, Judge Boswell he don't see nothing wrong. The Judge and me is old friends. Guess the



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Judge knows a thing or two! And he says. . . ."

The tall ruffian made a gesture of impatience.

"Aw, you and your Judge!" he cried. "You and him better close your fly-traps, the both o' ye!"

So saying, he slouched angrily forward, and with Tommy babbling beside him, crossed the little granite eminence and disappeared among the lakeward trees. Thanks to his blind left side, and to Tommy's love of chatter, there had been no discovery.

Till the sound of voices and footsteps died away, Lola remained a listening statute. Then he released Mark's arm, and turning, frowned.

"W'en you hain't time to hide," he whispered, "al'ays stand right still."

With this rebuke, he began climbing the granite, a gray ledge striped with red iron rust from sled-runners of last winter. Mark, as he followed, became conscious of



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a new discomfort; not that he was tired, hot, excited, and wet from head to foot; but that he had overheard something which left him strangely ill at ease.

"The way they were speaking of father," he thought; "I don't like it. They spoke . . . almost . . . as if my father was here —was one of them!"

A foolish thought; he brushed it aside. But somehow it returned to pester him, as he hurried after his guide among the blighted sumacs. Swerving to the right, whence their enemies had come, Lola went silently along the "backbone" of the ledge, until it curved abruptly downward, to overhang a small, gloomy ravine. Here all was tumbled confusion,—immense gray boulders piled on end, and wretched gray saplings that tried to live, twisted from under the rocks and straining leanly toward the sky. Lola slipped down among them like a cat. Heavily and cautiously, Mark clambered from boulder to boulder.

"Now. I show ye. Um." The Indian



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permitted himself to grin, briefly, but with satisfaction. "Yeah-ah. This where they keeps they money! Come quiet."

At the bottom of this hollow, where they stood together, a gurgling, runnelly sound passed underfoot without ceasing. Deep down, beneath the huge piled fragments of granite, passed a brook. Unseen, buried forever, it made as pleasant variable music as if it were shining in the sun. With a voice no louder than the Indian's, it caused in that rocky waste a little rejoicing.

They listened for other sounds. None came. Surely they stood alone with the brook.

"Come stiddy." Lola beckoned, then started on, through a gap or natural gateway between high boulders. "You'll see um. Right there."

He pointed into a sort of devil's kitchen, or giant cellar pit among the rocks. But even as he pointed, his arm dropped, and he shrank back under the shadow of the gateway. Mark stared past him.



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If this were the hiding-hole for base coin, they had surprised one of the coiners. Kneeling among ferns, across the enclosure, a bareheaded man in drab moleskin busily worked at something. Mark saw only the man's back, at first; but now and again that busy head turned for a quick, suspicious glance from side to side. Half-buried in dead, wet bracken, before his knees, a pot or bucket lay open. From this he took some white object—a cloth bag, which he hastily untied. Fumbling in it, he rose; and the watchers saw his hand draw forth, full of silver money. There was a familiar cock of the head as he stood, for a moment, considering or counting.

And then the scene went giddy before Mark's eyes. His heart was like a wild creature kicking in a basket. He did not mean to groan aloud.

The man wheeled, facing them, startled and guilty.

"Oh," cried Mark, and wrung his hands. "Father!"



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# CHAPTER VIII

## INJUN MEDICINE

IT was too bad to be true. The menacing twilight, the bare granite boulders, the uncanny gray saplings, combined to give this place and this encounter a strange, dark, colorless unreality; but after the first shock of disbelief, Mark knew he stood there confronting a fact, a hopeless fact filled with terror. Here, then, was the end of their search. This man, surprised, guilty, caught with the vile cheat in his very hand, was father.

"Oh," said Mark, "I never thought you would!"

He broke off, trembling so that he was forced to lean against one of the gateway rocks.

"Why!" exclaimed his father, in a queer voice, between anger and alarm. "Why!"



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He slipped the tell-tale coins into his pocket, and advanced. "What does this mean?"

Richard Boswell was a very young man for a judge; too young, some persons said, too easy-going, boyish, and ready to laugh. But now, as he came near, there was little sign of ease or laughter. His quick blue eyes had no merriment in them; his face, sunburnt and rough with a blond stubble of woodman's beard, was now exceedingly grave. Lithe and springy, a rather dashing figure in his old moleskin kit, he seemed like a ready man turning at bay, greatly upset, but rousing from a secret and dangerous deed to face unwelcome discovery.

Unwelcome: that, to Mark, was the hardest thought. His father stood there alive and well—and was not glad to see him.

"Why, Mark! What's all this?" he demanded, sternly. "What on earth brought you here?"

The invisible brook continued its trund-



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ling music underneath the boulders. Mark found it a hateful sound to hear, as it went on and on, tinkling high, gurgling low, a mockery in this gray hollow of defeat.

"Evenin', Juds," mumbled Lola, with unshaken composure. "I brung 'im, tha's all. Never tolt 'im a word. No. Jes' brung 'im. Howdy do, Juds."

The Indian remained the only calm one of the three. Mark had never before seen his father so agitated, so alert, and dubious, and painfully on guard.

"How are you, Lola?" He answered mechanically. Not once did his blue eyes leave their study of Mark's face. Frowning warily, they seemed to wonder how much, or how little, the boy had happened to see. "I wish," he said, regretfully, "I wish you could have chosen almost any other time. What's wrong at home?"

"Nothing," replied Mark, miserably. It was not at home that the wrong lay.

"Then what made you come out here?"

"I thought you were lost."



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His father's face lighted and softened, but only for an instant. The wary frown returned.

"You didn't receive my message? I sent you word I was fishing."

Mark could not bear to meet those eyes, so well-known but sadly altered. He hung his head, and with the toe of his moccasin dug at a vein of green moss in the granite.

"Yes, I know." He gulped, and swallowed as it were a great longing to shed tears. "I know you did. I—I supposed you *were* fishing."

And with that unlucky speech he fell silent. When he glanced up, he saw a smile play round his father's rough-bearded lips.

"How did you know I am not?" came the retort. "There are many kinds of fish to catch, my boy, besides trout, bass, and pickerel. Queer fish, too. Eh, Lola?"

"Um. Yea-ah," replied the Indian, leaning against the other rock, with his face upturned and puckered, watching the sky. "Tha's so."



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Mark said nothing. To hear this horror treated lamely as a joke, was more than he could bear; so that when for a moment his father's hand lay, in the old kindly fashion, on his shoulder, he could not help wincing and turning away.

"You don't look well, Mark," said the old kindly voice. "What's the matter?"

"I'm all right," replied Mark, shortly. The vein of green moss in the granite required much attention. He kicked at it stubbornly, as if to bury the lie he was telling. "I'm all right."

The brook flouted them with its hidden merriment.

"This is no safe place for us," declared Judge Boswell, suddenly. "Go up on the ledge there, will you, and wait a moment?"

Mark obeyed wearily, dragging himself away from that dismal hollow in the rocks.

"If anyone should come," his father added, "look sharp, and hide."

"Yea-ah," said Lola. "Can't ketch us."

On the ledge, among leafless, contorted



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sumacs, the two friends stood waiting. Mark pulled a few red seeds from a sumac ear, and mechanically put them in his mouth. They tasted sour, like lemon or sorrel, just as always. He wondered, stupidly, how a mere weed could remain the same, when all else had gone, and the bottom had dropped out of his world. He knew exactly what his father was doing, down there behind them. He saw, with a curious inward clearness, how his father would stoop among those ferns, tie up the bag of coins, replace it, and cover all with dead leaves and rubbish, as before.

"Rubbish to rubbish," he thought. "Nothing matters now."

And then a wild rebellion rose within him.

"It can't be true!" he told himself. But it was; he had seen it. What good came of rebelling? He threw down the sumac seeds, and crushed them under his moccasin. "Anyhow," he concluded, grimly, "I'll stand by my father. Right or wrong."



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His father came hurrying up the ledge.

"Look here, Marco Polo." The familiar nickname was like a sting. "I *am* glad to see you, though you may not believe me." He paused; then, as Mark stood dogged and silent, he continued: "It was the wrong time, that's all; the wrong time for you to come here. I'm not free. Something—something worries me. I must see it through." His blue eyes were anxious and evasive. "But I don't like the way you look, my boy. Have you been ill?"

Mark told the same dull falsehood.

"I'm all right."

Judge Boswell shook his head.

"Lola," he said, and took Lola by the arm. "Where are you camping?"

" 'Cross Hardhack Pon'," replied the Indian. "Loon Cove. We builted a popple house, fust p'int."

"Good. That's within reach." The Judge nodded. "Now, Lola; you take charge of this chap, will you, until I come for him? As if he were your own boy?"



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Lola thoughtfully scratched his cheek.

"Um. Yea-ah. Don' let him git sick. Mebbe."

The Judge put both hands on Mark's shoulders.

"My dear old Sober-sides," he continued quietly. "Do keep yourself well. Mind what Lola tells you." His bearded and sunburnt face, even in that clouded gloom, shone warm and loving. "I'll come get you inside the next twenty-four hours." He dropped his arms, and stood back. "Remember, don't tell anybody where you saw me." He seemed to wait for a reply. "What?" said he. "You won't shake hands with your own dad?"

Mark reached forth and grasped his father's hand.

"Don't you fret about me!" he cried with burning loyalty. "I'll never tell a soul!"

"Of course you won't!" His father patted him soundly on the back. "Now, clear out! We mustn't be caught together. And take good care of yourself! I'll come



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across the pond as soon as these—as quick as ever this thing is finished—and we'll go home together. Good-bye, for the present. Mind you watch him, Lola!"

With a parting nod and smile, the Judge swung off along the granite mound, his footsteps quick and springy and silent, like the gait of a hunter who has no time to lose. Once he looked back, still smiling, and waved his hand. Then the black pines swallowed up his lithe, drab figure and bare yellow head. He was gone—toward the money-makers' camp.

"I tol' ye," murmured Lola. "The Juds, he's lookin' hearty. Hain't failed non', has he? Um. No. Didn't 'spect to found him here. Thought he'd be odder place. All same. We saved a journdey, ketchin' him half-way. Yea-ah."

Mark paid no heed to what the Indian was saying. As he crumbled to pieces another red cockade from the sumacs, so all his power of thought crumbled into pain and weariness.



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"Well." At last he stared about him in the darkening woods,—a dreadful labyrinth where even the points of the compass had lost their meaning. "Well, let's go home."

He started forward blindly.

"Here," called his companion, in surprise. "That hain't the way. You's got turned roun', you. Come o' me. Foller clos'."

He tried to do so and, staggering downhill, made heavily after the shadow which was Lola. Night overtook them in the corduroy lane. He labored on, splashing through water, tumbling over hummocks of moss, rising and going forward, with that obstinate, smothered perseverance which one exerts in a dream. Lola went too fast, much too fast. Lola flitted from sight, somewhere ahead, and left him alone. Mark neither called out, nor thought of caring. He found nothing in his heart, nothing in all the black wilderness, but a kind of aching indifference. Walking, face



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foremost, into a tree-trunk, he fell as if clubbed, sat up with blood streaming from his nose, and then, crawling to his feet again, marched on without a word. How long the march was, or how far astray, he never learned; but when after more downfalls he tripped on a rotten log, Mark lay still in a litter of wet touchwood and fragrant box-berry leaves.

The rest of that night passed in a daze, half sleep, half consciousness. He remembered weeping, though not for himself. He remembered shivering, not with cold but with fiery pains. Once in the darkness a tiny wild beast came snuffling the ground, until with a great sneeze of fright it bounded backward and galloped off among the leaves.

And then later, still in darkness, a man was bending over him.

"Pooty way to do!" grumbled the man. "Go lose the Juds' boy fer him. Pooty way to do!"

It was Lola. He seemed to scold himself



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continually, first in English, then in some unknown tongue.

Mark felt a pair of arms about him, tried feebly to resist, then groaned and lay still. He knew nothing more, except that the arms were carrying him, that wet leaves brushed his cheek, and that water was lapping close to his ear, through the bōttom of a canoe. Afterward, long afterward, he lay swaddled by a huge fire, blinking at the withered leaves of the Popple House.

"I-gorry, boy," said Lola's voice, "I-gorry, didn' guess you was be so sick. No. You wait. I'll fixed the med-cine for ye."

The voice was little and remote; so were his own hands, little, light, far away; and he himself, this fellow whose life somebody had dreamed of, long ago, now shrank to an atom in the darkness, only to grow and swell, dizzily revolving till its motion filled all space and strained against an outermost boundary.

"I'll die if that grows any bigger," he whispered. And then once more his being



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shrank and receded to a whirling pin-point. "There!" he moaned. "It goes out. He's dying."

"No, you hain't," came Lola's steady answer. "Drink. Med'cine."

The drink, scalding hot and thick as gravy, tasted like all the herbs of the forest —a bitter-sweet, nauseous mess. He swallowed it only because he could not fight the giver. Presently he found himself awake, staring at the fire. Lola seemed very busy there. Like some broad-faced brown demon, the Indian toiled with a long forked pole, shoving aside the logs, even while they blazed. Mark closed his eyes; when he next opened them, the fire burned at the waters' edge, removed there bodily, and Lola was brushing away the last coals from its former bed. Another doze followed. Another dreaming glimpse revealed a little cone of a hut standing where the fire had stood. Hemlock bark, evergreen boughs, and strips of white birch, formed its patch-work walls.



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"Come, git in." Lola was carrying him toward the hut. "Crawl int' your sweat-house. I'll cure ye."

A helpless bundle of blankets, Mark felt himself lowered and thrust through a sort of dog-hole. Insufferable heat surrounded him at once. He tossed upon a fir bed, under which the ground lay scorching.

"Let me out!" he stammered. "Let me out! I can't breathe!"

"Hesh up. I'll cure ye," Lola chuckled. "Cure ye like a smok'd eel!"

Three times, desperately, Mark struggled to creep forth from that oven. Three times Lola shoved him backward, and clapped over the entrance hole a slab of hemlock bark.

"Let me out!" wailed the captive. "Please! Let me die in the open air."

"Lay still," growled his jailer. "Pooty soon, med'cine she'll work. Needn' be scairt o' dyin'."

Mark fought once more a losing fight for one outdoor breath.



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"I don't care," he moaned. "You might as well let me go.—Wish I'd been dead before we found father."

Lola, squatting in firelight by the hole, gave an indignant snort.

"Pooty way to talk!" he replied, sternly. "After all your father done fer you!"

"Oh, it's no use," panted Mark. "You don't know right from wrong. You don't know what my father *was*. . . ."

The words trailed off in a feverish whimper. Lola suddenly poked his head into the darkness.

"No, mebbe," he said, scandalized and vehement, "I dunno much, me. But I kin tell a good man f'm a bum. Yes-sir. Go to sleep. Go to devil. Shut up. Foolish. Hain't nothin' wrong with *your* father!

Mark surrendered. The stifling heat, the exertion, and the first queer drowsy workings of that bitter draught, now slowly overcame him. He lay quiet and limp. All at once the sweat ran down his forehead like rain; and next moment,



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drenched from top to toe under his blanket, he lost every desire to move or speak. The steam of the resinous fir-boughs made his head swim.

Perhaps Lola did know. Perhaps; probably; certainly; why, of course Lola would know. Lola could find lost idiots in the dark. Lola could make medicine. Of course he knew. . . .

"Hain't nothin' wrong with *your* father," thought Mark. He made it into a little, light-headed, quavering ditty. "Hain't nothing wrong with *my* father. Hain't nothing wrong, hain't nothing wrong. . . ."

He fell asleep at some point in this comforting ballad.



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# CHAPTER IX

## MARK'S AWAKENING

In the long sleep which followed, Mark had only two dreams, and those obscure and doubtful. One contained voices talking somewhere, in a region beyond his world of suffocating darkness. "No danger," came the words: " 'twill soon be over. But when you see my signal, come at once. A white flag up among the pines . . ." "Yea-ah," another voice replied, "see it f'm this p'int . . . a white flag . . . come quick. Sure." For a moment, Mark might almost have known the speakers; but even while he heard them, this first dream departed. The second, an apparition that never spoke, was like his father's countenance. It hovered close at hand, in a luminous mist; its eyes were his father's eyes, deeply shining with compassion and



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comfort; but before he could welcome it with speech or look, it dissolved into the night again.

When he awoke, noonday blazed above the tree-tops. He was lying in ripe yellow grass near the water's edge. Peace enfolded him, not drowsily, but with a keen renewal of all his faculties. The sunlight, tempered by cool air, seemed lazily to penetrate body and spirit. In all the conscious world there was not an ache or a twinge. The sky glowed marvelously clear; and as he sat up, rejoicing, the pond sparkled everywhere among its calm, eternally contented woods. Behind him, a locust sang in the poplars. Before him, cardinal flowers, leaning from the rocks, painted the brown shore-water with streaks of brilliant reflection.

"Aah!" he yawned, stretched like a rousing dog, and stared about.

The place, a sheltered grass-patch, forming one edge of Popple House point, looked across Hardhack toward the campers'



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grove. Among silvery pine stumps, near by, what he had taken to be a sprawling root suddenly moved, and became legs. Lola hoisted himself from the grass, and stood up.

"How ye feelin'?"

Lola grinned; and his grin seemed a welcome back to life.

"Feeling?" cried Mark. "I could eat a bale of oakum!"

"Guesso," replied Lola. His face shone polished in the sun, like a comic mask of worn bronze. "I got ye somep'n better."

He slouched away toward the Popple House, whence he returned carrying a deep tin dish.

"Eat 'em." He placed it on the grass. "meat and good herbses. Yea-ah. Good herbses. Never you min' what meat 'tis. I ketched it fer ye. You hain't the game-wadron. No-sir. I don' go gab myself int' no trouble, me."

Mark cleaned the dish. The name of that glorious meat he never learned.



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Lying down again, basking away the afternoon, he felt the slow, full tide of strength steal tranquilly through his limbs. At first, he had no desire to talk, but after keeping silent an hour or more, he rolled over, and saw through the yellow spears of grass that Lola sat as formerly, his back against one of the silver-gray stumps.

"What are you doing, Lola?"

"Watchin'," replied the maker of medicine.

"Watching what?"

"Them pines," droned Lola, "acrost the pon'. Fer to see what some feller hang up 'mongst 'em. A w'ite flag, mebbe."

"What for?" inquired Mark, without greatly caring to know.

"Cause if he doos," came the pensive answer, "I mus' paddle acrost to 'im like all git out."

A white flag: the convalescent wondered at this mild vagary: a white flag among the pines. Then, of a sudden, his dream returned.



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"Who'd hang it there?"

"The Juds, o' course," said Lola, gruffly. "Who s'pose? Your father."

Mark sat up, and with new interest looked toward the far shore and its dark-green hill.

"Was my father here—talking? Last night?"

The Indian snorted, as though put out of patience.

"Good gorry!" he cried. "*Course* he was! An' lit a match, an' peekened at ye!"

Mark sat thinking. It was no dream, then: his father had come in the night, looked down at him with pity and tenderness, and then gone away. A feeling of estrangement, of lonely separation from all familiar things, came sweeping over him.

"Lola," he began, "I wish. . . ." He boggled at the words, and ceased; yet it seemed easy to confide in this man, who sat with his back turned, motionless, like part of the gray pine stump. "Lola, you saved



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my life last night. I almost—I wish you hadn't, if my father's going—if my father isn't what I always believed he was."

Lola, without moving, spoke out angrily.

"Good gorry!" he repeated; and then, with quiet but tremendous conviction—"Your father, he's all right!"

"If he's making bad money?" returned Mark, sorrowfully.

Lola detached himself from the stump, rose, and stood glaring at this outrageous affront.

"Your father wouldn' make it bad," he shouted. "Your father, he's got more sense'n you. Your father, he'd make good money!"

With a woeful smile, Mark dismissed the matter and lay down. The incorrigible pagan, muttering rebukes, went back to his watching. No signal appeared, however, on the far shore. The afternoon dragged by without incident or change, except when the sun left their clearing. Then Mark



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found himself caught up in Lola's arms, to be carried home to camp like a sick child.

Nobody came that night, or the next day. Lola's vigil among the stumps went unrewarded. But on the third day, after breakfast, as Mark was pacing by the fire, testing his legs, he heard a sudden thud of footsteps, and saw Lola come running up the cove.

"Flag's out!" he panted. "I mus' go!"

Mark reached the canoe first, and climbed into it.

"Can't leave me behind!" said he.

The Indian stared at him dubiously, then seized a paddle.

"May need ye," was his only comment. "Se' down."

Mark had seen many a canoe race, many a famous paddler; but not once, before or afterward, did he know a canoe to fly as now the Sea Rider flew across that morning water toward the sunrise. Lola swung to.his work like a machine. In long rising leaps they clove the fathomless mirror of



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the sky, gaining on the dark pine barrier and two white specks that glimmered there, one aloft, one reflected below the shore. Soon they over-ran the latter, and recognized the former as a bath-towel hung on bristling pine-tufts.

Here the shore was deserted. Jutting boughs hid the camp. Lola swerved to the right, and sent the birch into a long narrow creek which ran winding in behind the evergreen hill. Mark learned what he had not known,—that this hill, bearing the coiners' grove, formed almost an island; for when they landed, it was on a narrow strip of grass and pebbles, between the creek and a wide stretch of cat-tail swamp. The back of the hill rose gently, a sloping evergreen wood carpeted with brown needles.

"Here," grunted Lola, when he had bestowed the canoe among tall grasses. "You hide behin' that chok'cherry." He nodded at a great bush loaded with garnet-colored clusters. "You stay there. Don'



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let that red-head feller git pas' you fer to run."

Mark felt gloriously excited.

"How'll I stop him?"

For answer, Lola reached into his shirt-bosom and produced the old nickle-plated pistol, which he held out.

"Can't git pas' ont' the mainland no other ways but here," he explained. "Spose you see him a-comin', you onhitch—let her flicker twicet, in the air. I'll come."

Mark received the weapon gingerly.

"But," he asked, "where are you going?"

Lola shook an impressive forefinger.

"Don' you leave this neck o' land," he replied. "Me, I got to ketch that red-head feller."

He spoke with no more concern than if he were going to catch a colt in a pasture. Unhurried, he went ambling silently into the pines and up the slope. The earliest sunlight followed his vanishing figure under the branches.

Mark took cover at once behind his ap-



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pointed bush, and waited, sitting comfortably on a flat rock, the pistol alongside. The sun reached him after a time, warming his back, and sparkling red on the wet chokecherries. Not a sound came, either from the pines ahead, or from the low-lying heath and glossy young birches of the mainland. The sun climbed higher. Ferns, on the tiny isthmus, began to droop and lose their glittering coat of dew.

Then footsteps came down hill from the campers' grove.

Mark sat ready, watching through his bush.

It was not the red-haired Chubbuck who came, but two men side by side. They began talking as they stepped out from the woods.

"I'll swear it for ye!" piped an eager voice. "I'll lay my oaf onto a stack o' Bibles high as Tower Hill! Never once I dream what this Chubbuck and the rest was makin'. There!"

The speaker was Tommy Cody. He



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came protesting, with feeble, downcast mein and aimless gestures. Beside him walked Mark's father. They halted in full sunlight on the grassy foot-way.

"Swear not at all," said the Judge, in the light yet serious manner which Mark knew so well. His blue eyes twinkled. "You may remember, I once heard you swear in court." Then with a change and deepening of the voice, he added: "Tom, by golly, I've known you ever since you read Beadle and Cap Collier behind your geography in school. You always were a sly old sleuth. Don't play it on a friend like me."

The poor spindling Cody glanced roundabout, searching the creek on one hand, the cat-tail swamp on the other, as though seeking a place to plunge into and escape.

"I didn't know!" he whined. "I didn't know. Dick, git me out o' this. I only cooked for the camp. Thought they was castin' bullets or somethin'. I never knowed 'twas money."

Judge Boswell reached into his moleskin



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jacket, and pulled out a handful of bright coins.

"It's not," he said. "They wouldn't fool a child. Horridly done; dago work; and as usual, finished with quicksilver. Look at 'em. You wouldn't take one yourself for pay, Tommy."

The thin man refused to look. Tears hung on his wrinkled yellow cheeks.

"Never clapped eyes on 'em afore, Dick. Give ye my word."

Mark saw his father slip one hand under Cody's elbow.

"Tom, I've watched your camp the past week,—and slept in devilish uncomfortable places. You're not really worth so much trouble, are you? But you've got a wife—she went to school in our day—and ten or fourteen children. So I'll take your word." The Judge looked thoughtfully toward the young mainland birches. "Luck's an odd thing. Here I'm left a widower, and you. . . ." He released the frail arm. "Tombo, God knows, you don't want jail



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for life. You'd better go cook on a vessel, say, for a year or two; and send your money home. I'll take your word."

Cody stood blubbering. Mark, from the chokecherry ambush, saw his father smiling. It was not altogether a happy smile.

"Come," said his father, pushing the thin man forward. "I'll take your word, and believe it—until you're five miles away."

The two passed within hand's reach of Mark, gained the heath, and presently were hidden by the little glossy trees.

Mark sat on his rock, overwhelmed with pride and shame; pride in his father, shame for himself and all his vile imaginings. This was the man whom he had doubted,—this friend of the humble, true to the old homely ties, loyal even to the village fool!

"What a beast I am!" he thought.

But chiefly he wanted to shout for joy. A burden of despair had rolled off his back. This world of woods and ruddy morning



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sunlight was transfigured. He had found his father.

While he exulted, a movement in the grove caught his eye. Down through the mottled pine-shadows came a long, blue-clad figure, slinking from trunk to trunk like a wolf. It made straight for the isthmus. Through a patch of sunshine bobbed a fiery head. It was Chubbuck.

"Stop where you are!" shouted Mark, jumping out from behind the chokecherries. In his present mood of jubilation, he could halt a hundred such men. "Stop!"

And raising the pistol, he obeyed Lola's word, "onhitched," and fired twice into the air. Long woodland echoes went ripping up the hill. A flock of black-birds, terrified, rose from the cat-tails with a whirr. At the edge of the clearing the red-haired fugitive quailed, as though struck.

"Ho! You there, are ye?"

Glancing backward, doubling his fists, Chubbuck gathered his courage and dashed forth into the open.



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"You can't pass!" cried Mark.

With his one malignant eye, the rascal squinted first at the creek, then at the swaying cat-tails.

"Git out o' my ro'd!" he snarled.

"No passing." Mark stood firm, with weapon pointed at the ground.

The man showed his long yellow teeth.

"You can't stop me," he stated, cynically. "A thing your size? Why, you 'ain't got the innards to fire at a man barehanded—in cold blood. I know you 'ain't. What's more, *you* know you ain't."

He came deliberately forward. Mark felt his body grow taut. He was ready.

"Look out," he said hoarsely.

Not more than a yard of grass lay between them. He could see the red empty socket straining as if to stare him down, like the fellow's eye.

"Come! Git! You can't."

Mark shivered. His joints went loose again. This man spoke the hateful truth.

"Gimme that!"



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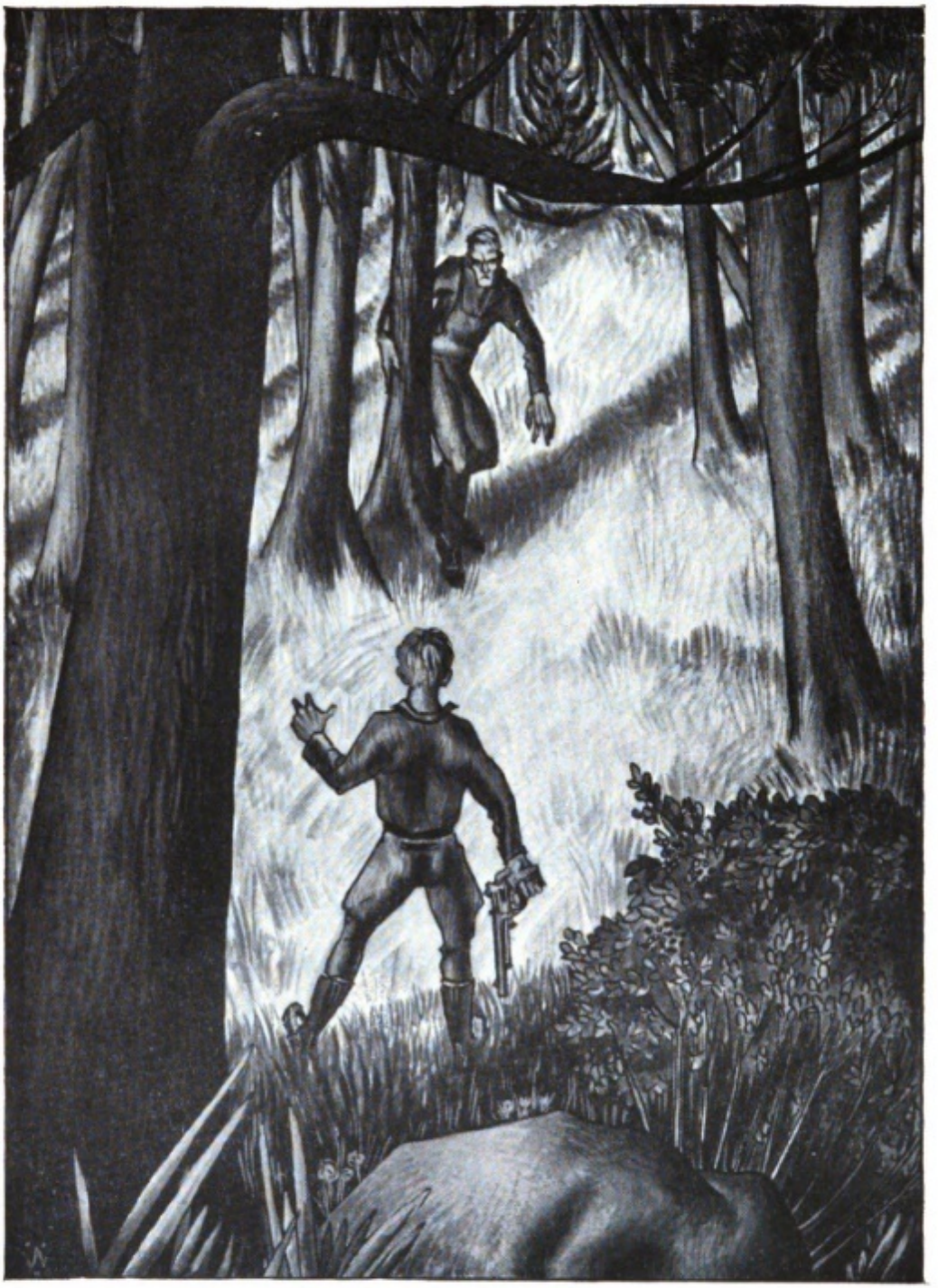

*"Stop where you are!" shouted Mark.*

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With a leap, Chubbuck had him by both wrists. There followed a moment of blind, puny, losing conflict, until, shaken like a rat, Mark fell backward on the grass with a bony knee in his chest, and two enormous freckled fists wrenching his right arm round. It would break. He cried out in agony.

There came an answering roar. Something crashed and swept over them as if a tree had fallen. Mark saw the vacant sky above him. He sat up, coughing.

"Skunk! I don't want nothin' better than to kill ye!"

Like a shaggy brown bull, Josephus Hardy, the Sheriff, straddled over the whole breadth of the grass.

"Stand up!" he bellowed.

Before him, glaring with a bitter, lonely eye, sprawled Chubbuck, overthrown.

"Up!" roared the Sheriff. A hot light of battle covered his big, honest, untidy face. "Ye widder-cheat! Ye small-boy fighter! Up, and try on a man for onct!"



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Chubbuck, seeming all freckles and pallor, slowly rose. Doubtful whether to fight or run, he opened and closed his hairy paws, then bent his head and rushed, letting drive an awkward, muscle-bound right arm. At the same instant with this feint, cleverly enough, he shot out a long leg in a kick, low, vicious, and foul.

"Ho, ho!" cried Josephus Hardy. "Ye would?"

The Sheriff's arms made a dodging motion, a two-handed grapple which caught his foe under crotch and arm-pit. Chubbuck flew aloft, poised horizontal in air above Hardy's head, and was flung like a cord-wood stick splashing into the heart of the cat-tails.

"Did he hurt ye, Mark?" The Sheriff's anger turned to a funny solicitude. "Did he break any bon's?"

But Mark stood holding his ribs with laughter.

"Look!" he crowed. "Oh, look!"

A dismal water-god, oozing chocolate



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mud, wigged and bearded to his waist with green scum, waded painfully toward shore. In this guise the unhappy Chubbuck sat down and collapsed.

"If I thought you was worth skinnin'," quoth the Sheriff, not quite sure, "by jibjers, I *would* kill ye!"

"Oh, by no means," advised a friendly voice. "The pelt's too dirty."

Judge Boswell had returned from the mainland. He reached one hand toward Mark, who sprang and took it.

"Why!" said the Judge. "I think we have them already. Here are the rest."

Down the pine hill, from the money-makers' camp, Lola came bringing two swarthy, discouraged foreigners. One, whom he led by the ear, seemed to have been rolled among thorns; the other followed tamely, nursing a cheek that bled; and both were limping.

"Here they be," Lola reported, calm as a cattle-drover. "Wouldn' hev treated 'em so rough, 'cept they tried to git the upper



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hands o' me. I never drawed knife ner showed it, Juds. You tol' me not to. Got good brains fer remember, me.—But I lost that red-head feller."

Sheriff Hardy laughed.

"Here's your beauty." He pointed down at his captive Chubbuck, a weedy fresh-water Triton lying under strings of mourn-ful slime. "Though someways his hair don't show jest the right color."

"Not quite," agreed the Judge. "You've been making the red one green, as Macbeth used to say, Joe."

The Sheriff seemed rather at a loss; but he groped in his pocket and fetched out a ball of strong cord-line.

"Dessay," he replied courteously. "Any-how, I perpose to add this sculpin to my string." He stooped, and began binding his cord round Chubbuck's ankles. "Don't ye kick. Your arms is free. You're a-goin' to paddle me all the ways down to Mis' Johnquest, her store, and kneel to her on your knees, damn ye, and beg a widder's



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pardon, and pay her one dollar. You'll paddle good and hard, too. Set up, I won't lam ye. Never hit a man yet on the ro'd to jail.

"Let me tell ye, Judge," he added, over his shoulder, "That ain't a bad son of yourn. Stood right up barrin' the path, like an old he-pa'tridge."

Mark felt the grasp of his father's hand, and looked up at him. They both smiled. Each had many things to tell the other.

"You and I," said the Judge, "must take more time to grow acquainted. Eh, Marco?"

Blackbirds came fluttering to perch once more among the brown torches of the marsh.

Lola, stolid and wise, moved in between father and son.

"Mark hain't got no sense," he mur-mured. "Not yit. Um. Yea-ah. But Juds, mebbe, I tell ye, some day he's a man's boy."

THE END

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# Lola the Bear OF CALIFORNIA

*A Tale for Men and Boys*

*By*

HENRY MILNER RIDEOUT

*Illustrations by*

LYND KENDALL WARD

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