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**The Cave in the Mountain A  
Sequel to In the Pecos Country /  
by Lieut. R. H. Jayne**

Edward Sylvester Ellis

# Imprint

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## The Cave in the Mountain.

### Chapter I.

#### A Strange Guide.

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“Well, if he doesn’t beat any one I ever heard of!”

Mickey O’Rooney and Fred Munson were stretched on the Apache blanket, carefully watching the eyes of the wild beast whenever they showed themselves, and had been talking in guarded tones. The Irishman had been silent for several minutes, when the lad asked him a question and received no answer. When the thing was repeated several times, he crawled over to his friend, and, as he expected, found him sound asleep.

This was not entirely involuntary upon the part of Mickey. He had shown himself, on more than one occasion, to be a faithful sentinel, when serious danger threatened; but he believed that there was nothing to be feared on the present occasion, and, as he was sorely in need of sleep, he concluded to indulge while the opportunity was given him.

“Sleep away, old fellow,” said Fred. “You seem to want it so bad that I won’t wake you up again.”

The boy’s curiosity having been thoroughly aroused, all tendency to slumber upon his part had departed, and he determined that if there was any way by which he could profit any by that wolf, he would do it.

“He may hang around here for a day or two,” he mused, as he heard the faint tappings upon the sand, “thinking all the time that he’ll get a chance to make a meal off of us. So he will, if we don’t keep a bright look-out. It seems to me that he might be driven out.”

The more he reflected upon this suggestion of his own, the more reasonable did it become. His plan was to drive out the wolf, to compel him to show up, as a card player might say. Considering the

dread which all wild animals have of fire, the plan was simple, and would have occurred to anyone.

"The camp-fire seems to be all out, but there must be some embers under the ashes. Mickey threw down his torch somewhere near here."

Carefully raking off the ashes with a stick, he found plenty of coals beneath. These were brought together, and some of the twigs laid over, the heat causing them at once to burst into a crackling flame. This speedily radiated enough light for his purpose, which was simply to find one of those "fat" pieces of pine, which make the best kind of torches. A few minutes search brought forth the one he needed, and then, shoving his revolver down in his belt, he was ready.

The light revealed the large beautiful Apache blanket, stretched out upon the ground, while the Irishman lay half upon it and half upon the earth, sleeping as soundly as if in his bed at home. Beyond him and in every direction was the blackness of night. But, looking to his right, he discovered the two eyes staring at him and glowing like balls of fire.

The animal was evidently puzzled at the sight before him. Fred dreaded a shot from the Indians above, and, as soon as he had his torch ready and had taken all his bearings, he drew the ashes over the spluttering flame. Save for the torch, all was again wrapped in impenetrable gloom.

The glowing orbs were still discernible, and, holding the smoking torch above his head, Fred began moving slowly toward them. The animal did not stir until the lad was within twenty feet, when the latter concluded that it would be a good thing for him, also, to take a rest.

"Wonder if he's been trained not to be afraid of torches," mused the little fellow. "I hope he hasn't, and I hope too there won't be any trouble in scaring him."

The lad dreaded another possibility,—that his torch might be suddenly extinguished. If that should go out, leaving them in utter darkness, the wolf would immediately rise to a superior plane, and speedily demonstrate who was master of the situation.

Fred swung the torch several times around his head, until it was fanned into a bright flame, after which he resumed his advance upon his foe. At the very first step the beast vanished. He had wheeled about and made off in a twinkling.

The lad pressed onward at the same deliberate gait, watching carefully for the reappearance of the guiding orbs. It was not long before they were observed a dozen yards or so further on. The wolf was manifestly retreating. He had no fancy for that terrible torch bearing down on him, and he was falling back by forced marches. This being precisely what Fred desired, he was greatly encouraged.

“He is making his way out, and after awhile he will reach the place, and away he’ll go. If he’s a wolf or fox, the hole may be so small that Mickey can’t squeeze through, but I think I can follow one of the animals anywhere.”

After going some distance further, Fred noticed that the animal was not proceeding in a straight line. He would appear on his right, where he would stare at the advancing torch until it was quite close, when he would scamper off to the left, and go through the same performance.

“He knows the route better than I do, so I won’t try to disturb him,” reflected the boy as he followed up his advantage, with high hopes of discovering the secret which was so important to himself and friend. “I won’t crowd him too hard, either, for I may scare him off the track and fail.”

The wolf was evidently a prey to curiosity – the same propensity which has caused the death of many bipeds and quadrupeds. The action of the torch puzzled him, no doubt. He had seen fire before, and probably had been burnt – so he knew enough to give it a wide berth; but it is doubtful whether he ever saw a flaring torch held over the head of a boy and solemnly bearing down upon him.

Fred’s absorbing interest in the whole affair made him wholly unmindful of the distance he was traveling. He had already advanced several hundred yards, and had no idea that he was so far away from his slumbering friend. The fact was that the singular cave was only one among a thousand similar ones found among the

wilds of the West and Southwest. Its breadth was not great, but the distance which it ran back into the mountains was amazing.

The wolf was leading the lad a long distance from the camp, and, what was more important (and which fact, unfortunately, Fred had failed to notice), the route was anything but a direct one. It could not have been more sinuous or winding. The course of the cavern, in reality, was as winding as that of the ravine in which he had effected his escape from the Apaches, and from which it seemed he had irrevocably strayed. Had he attempted to make his return, he would have found it impossible to rejoin Mickey O'Rooney, unless the two should call and signal to each other.

However, the attention of the lad was taken up so entirely with the task he had laid hold of, and which seemed in such a fair way of accomplishment, that he took no note of his danger. The wolf was leading him forward as the *ignis fatuus* lures the wearied traveler through swamps and thickets to renewed disappointment.

"He has some way of reaching the outer world which the Indians haven't been able to find. Of course not; for, if they knew, they would have been in here long ago. They wouldn't stay fooling around that opening, where they're likely to get a shot from Mickey when they ain't expecting it. Now, if the wolf will only behave himself, all will come out all right."

Fearful of being caught with an extinguished torch, the lad kept up the practice of swinging it rapidly round his head every few minutes. When he ceased each performance, the flame was so bright that he was able to penetrate the darkness much further upon every hand.

On one or two of these occasions he caught a glimpse of the creature as it bounded away into the darkness. In shape and action it was so much like the mountain wolves which had besieged him some nights before that all doubts were removed. He knew it was one of those terrible animals beyond question.

"Wonder how it is he's alone? It wasn't long after I saw that old fellow the other night, when there was about fifty of them under the tree. One of them is enough for me, if he doesn't give us the slip.

Maybe he has come in to find out how the land lies, and is going back to report to the rest."

Fred could not help reflecting every few minutes on the terrible situation in which he would be should his torch fail, and the other bring a pack of ravenous creatures about him. They would make exceedingly short work of a dozen like him.

"It seems good for hours yet," he said as he held it before him, and examined it for the twentieth time.

The stick was a piece of a limb about as thick as his arm, and fully a yard in length. It felt as heavy as *lignum vitae*, and, by looking at the end held in his hand and that which was burning, it could be seen that it was literally surcharged with resin—so much so that, after being cut, it had overflowed, and was sticky on the outside. No doubt this, with others, had been gathered for that express purpose, and there was no reason to doubt its capacity.

As Fred advanced he caught occasional glimpses of the jagged overhanging rocks, which in some places were wet, the water dripping down upon him as he passed. The fact, too, that more than once both sides of the cave were visible at the same time, told him that the dimensions of their prison were altogether different from what he had supposed.

"There must be an end of this somewhere," he muttered, beginning to suspect that he had gone quite a distance, "and I'm getting tired of this tramping. I hope the wolf hasn't gone beyond the door he came in by, and I hope he has nearly reached it, for it will take me some time before I can find my way back to Mick."



## Chapter II.

### Alone in the Gloom.

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Before Fred could complete the sentence his foot struck an obstruction and he was precipitated headlong over and down a chasm which had escaped his notice. He fell with such violence that he was knocked senseless.

When he recovered he was in darkness, his torch having been extinguished. The smell of the burning resin recalled him to himself, and it required but a moment for him to remember the accident which had befallen him. For a time he scarcely dared to stir, fearing that he might pitch headlong over some precipice. He felt of his face and hands, but could detect nothing like blood. The boy had received quite a number of severe bruises, however, and when he ventured to stir there were sharp, stinging pains in his shoulders, neck and legs.

"Thank God I am alive!" was his fervent ejaculation, after he had taken his inventory. "But I don't know where I am or how I can get back again. I wonder what has become of the torch."

He could find nothing of his flambeau, although he was confident that it was near at hand. Fred believed that he had fallen about twenty feet, striking upon his chest and shoulders. At this juncture, he thought of the wolf which had drawn him into the mishap, and he turned his head so suddenly to look for him that the sharp pain in his neck caused him to cry out. But nothing of the beast was to be seen.

"Maybe he went over here ahead of me, and got killed," he thought; "but I don't think that can be, for a wolf is a good deal spryer than a boy can be, and he wouldn't have tumbled down as I did."

Fred recollected that he had several matches about him, and he carefully struck one upon the rock beside him. The tiny flame showed that he had stumbled into a rocky pit. It was a dozen feet in length, some three or four in width, and, when he stood erect, his

head was level with the surface of the ground above. In consequence, it would be a very easy matter for him to climb out whenever he chose to do so; but above all things he was desirous of regaining his torch. Just as the match between his fingers burned out, he caught sight of it, lying a short distance away.

"It's queer what became of that wolf," he said to himself, as he recovered the precious fagot and painfully climbed up out of the pit. "Maybe he thought I was killed, and went off to tell the rest of his friends, so that they can all have a feast over me. I must fire up the torch as soon as I can, for I'm likely to need it."

This did not prove a very difficult matter, on account of the fatness of the torch, which ignited readily, and quickly spread into the same thick, smoking flame as before. But Fred noted that it was about half burned up, and he could not expect it to hold out many hours longer, as it had already done good service.

"I wish I could see the wolf again," he said to himself, looking longingly around in the darkness, "for I believe he entered the cave somewhere near here, and it was a great pity that I had the accident just at the moment I was about to learn all about it."

He moved carefully about the cave, and soon found that he had reached the furthest limit. Less than twenty feet away it terminated, the jagged walls shutting down, and offering an impassable barrier to any further progress in that direction.

All that he could do, after completing his search, was to turn back in quest of his friend Mickey. The belief that he was in the immediate neighborhood of the outlet delayed the lad's return until he could assure himself that it was impossible to find that for which he was hunting, and which had been the means of his wandering so far away from camp.

Fred occupied fully an hour in the search. Here and there he observed scratches upon the surface of the rocks in some places. He was confident that they had been made by the feet of the wolves; but in spite of these encouraging signs, he was baffled in his main purpose, and how the visitor made his way in and out of the cave remained an impenetrable mystery.

"Too bad, too bad!" he muttered, with a great sigh. "I shall have to give it up, after all. I only wish Mickey was here to help me. I will call to him, so that he will be sure to hear."

As has been intimated in another place, the two friends had a code of signals understood by both. When they were separated by quite a distance, and one wished to draw the other to him, he had a way of placing two of his fingers against his tongue, and emitting a shrill screech which might well be taken for the scream of a locomotive whistle, so loud and piercing was its character.

When the lad uttered his signal, he was startled by the result. A hundred echoes were awakened within the cavern, and the uproar fairly deafened him. It seemed to him that ten thousand little imps were perched all around the cavern, with their fingers thrust in their mouths, waiting for him to start the tumult, when they joined in, with an effect that was overwhelming and overpowering.

"Good gracious!" he gasped, "I never heard anything like that. I thought all the rocks were going to tumble down upon my head, and I believe some must have been loosened."

He looked apprehensively at the dark, jagged points overhead. But they were as grim and motionless as they had been during the many long years that had rolled over them.

"Mickey must have heard that, if he is anywhere within twenty miles," he concluded.

But, if such was the case, he sent back no answering signal, as was his invariable custom, when that of his friend reached him. Fred listened long and attentively, but caught no reply.

"I guess I'll have to try it again," he added, with a mingled laugh and shudder. "I think these walls can stand a little more such serenading."

He threw his whole soul in the effort, and the screeching whistle that he sent out was frightful, followed, as it was, by the innumerable echoes. It seemed as if the walls took up the wave of sound as if it were a foot-ball and hurled it back and forth, from side to side, and up and down, in furious sport. The dread of losing his torch alone prevented the lad from throwing it down and clapping his

hands to his ears, to shut out the horrid din. Some of the distant echoes, coming in after the others were exhausted, gave an odd, dropping character to the volleys of sound.

Had the expected reply of Mickey been the same as the call to him, the lad would have been deceived thereby, for the echoes, as will be understood, were precisely the same as answering whistles, uttered in the same manner. But Fred understood that, if the Irishman heard him, he would reply with a series of short signals, such as are heard on some railroads when danger is detected. But none such came, and he knew, therefore, that the ears which he intended to reach were not reached at all.

"I don't understand that," he mused, perplexedly, "unless he's asleep yet. When I left him, it didn't seem as though he'd wake up in a week. Perhaps he can hear me better if I shout."

A similar racket was produced when the boy strained his lungs, but his straining ear could detect no other result. It never once occurred to Fred that he and his friend were separated by such a distance that they could not communicate by sound or signal. And yet such was the case, he having traveled much further than he suspected.

Having been forced to the disheartening conclusion that it was impossible to find the outlet by which the wolf had escaped, Fred had but one course left. That was, to find his way back to the campfire in the shortest time and by the best means at his command. If the mountain would not go to Mohammed, then Mohammed would have to go to the mountain.

The lad began to feel that a great deal of responsibility was on his shoulders. The remembrance of Mickey O'Rooney going to sleep was alarming to him. He looked upon him as one regards a sentinel who sinks into slumber when upon duty. Knowing the cunning of the redskins, Fred feared that they would discover the fact, and descend into the cave in such numbers that escape would be out of the question.

And then again, suppose that their enemies did not disturb them, what was to be their fate? The venison in the possession of the Irishman could not last a great deal longer, and, when that was

gone, no means of obtaining food would be left. What were the two prisoners then to do?

Mickey had hinted to Fred what his intention was, but the lad felt very little faith in its success. It appeared like throwing life away to make such a foolhardy attempt to reach the outside as diving into a stream of water from which there was no withdrawal, and the length of whose flow beneath the rock could only be conjectured, with all the chances against success. But Fred recalled in what a marked manner Providence had favored him in the past, and he could but feel a strong faith that He would still hold him in his remembrance. "I wouldn't have believed I could go through all that I have had in the last few days; and yet God remembered me, and I am sure He will not forget me so long as I try to do His will."

On the eve of starting he fancied he heard a slight rustling on his right, and he paused, hoping that the wolf would show himself again; but he could not discern anything, and concluded that it was the dropping of a stone or fragment of earth. The lad was further pleased to find, upon examination, that the revolver in his possession was uninjured by his fall. In short, the only one that had received any injuries was himself, and his were not of a serious character, being simply bruises, the effects of which would wear off in a short time.

"I hate to leave here without seeing that wolf," he said, as he stood hesitating, with his torch in hand. "He may be sneaking somewhere among these rocks, popping in and out whenever he has a chance; and if I could only get another sight of him, I would stick to him till he told me his secret."

He awaited awhile longer, but the hope was an illusive one, and he finally started on his return to camp.



## Chapter III.

### Strange Experiences.

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Young Munson was destined to learn ultimately that he had undertaken an impossible task. The hunter, in the flush and excitement attending the pursuit of game, can form no correct idea of the distance passed, and so he, in attempting to run the shadowy wolf to earth, had traveled twice as far as he supposed. The case is altogether different when the hunter starts to return. It is then that the furlongs become miles, and the wearied pursuer feels disgusted with the enthusiasm which led him so far away from headquarters.

When the lad was certain that he had labored far enough on the back track to take him fully to the camp-fire, he really had not gone more than one-half the distance. Worse than this, he saw, from the nature of the ground, that he was "off soundings." Several times he was forced to leap over openings, or rents, similar to that into which he had stumbled, and the broadening out of the cave made it out of his power to confine his path to anything like reasonable limits. The appearance of unexpected obstructions directly in his way compelled numerous detours, with the inevitable result of disarranging the line he intended to pursue, and causing his course to be a zigzag one of the most marked character.

There were no landmarks to afford him the least guidance. In short, he was like the ill-fated steamer caught on a dangerous coast by an impenetrable fog, where no observations can be made, and the captain is compelled to "go it blind." He was forcibly reminded of this difficulty by unexpectedly finding himself face to face with the side of the cavern. When he thought that he was pursuing the right direction, here was evidence that he was at least going at right angles, and, to all intents and purposes, he might as well have been going in exactly the opposite course.

"Well, things are getting mixed," he exclaimed, more amused than frightened at this discovery. "I never tramped over such a place before, and if I ever get out of this, I'll never try it again."

But there was little cause for mirth, and when he had struggled an hour longer, something like despair began to creep into his heart. Worse than all, he became aware that his torch was nearly exhausted, and, under the most favorable circumstances, could not last more than an hour longer.

While toiling in this manner, he had continued to signal to Mickey in his usual manner, but with no other result than that of awakening the same deafening din of echoes. By this time he was utterly worn out. He had been traveling for hours, or, rather, working, for nearly every step was absolute labor, so precipitous was the ground and so frequent were his detours. He had accomplished nothing. When he expected to find himself in the immediate vicinity of the campfire, there were no signs of it, and the loudest shout he could make to his friend brought no reply.

This fact filled the mind of Fred with a hundred misgivings. He had given up the belief that it was possible for Mickey to remain asleep all this time. He was sure the night had passed, and, great as was the capacity of the Irishman in the way of slumber, he could not remain unconscious all the time. And then nothing seemed more probable than that he was placed for ever beyond the power of response. If a dozen Indians quietly let themselves down through the opening during the darkness of the night, they could easily discover the sleeping figure, and dispatch him before he could make any kind of resistance.

It was this fear of the Indians being in the cave that made the lad apprehensive every time he gave utterance to his signals. He believed they were as likely to reach the ears of the Apaches as those of Mickey, and his faith of the extraordinary shrewdness of those people was such that he did not doubt but that, by some means or other, they would learn the true signal with which to reply. As yet, however, no such attempt had been made, so far as his ears informed him, but his misgivings were none the less on that account. What was the use of their taking the trouble to answer when he was walking directly into their hands? There was a cowering, shrinking sensation from his own noise, caused by the expectation that a half-dozen crouching figures would leap up and swoop down upon him.