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Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
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Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz
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Boy Scouts in the Coal Caverns

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Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: Archibald Lee Fletcher
Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)
ISBN: 978-3-8491-9657-8

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CHAPTER I

CAMPING IN THE BREAKER

"And so I says to myself, says I, give me a good husky band of Boy Scouts! They'll do the job if it can be done!"

Case Canfield, caretaker, sat back in a patched chair in the dusky, unoccupied office of the Labyrinth mine and addressed himself to four lads of seventeen who were clad in the khaki uniform of the Boy Scouts of America.

Those of our readers who have read the previous books of this series will have good cause to remember George Benton, Charley ("Sandy") Green, Tommy Gregory and Will Smith. The adventures of these lads among the Pictured Rocks of Old Superior, among the wreckers and reptiles of the Florida Everglades, in the caverns of the Great Continental Divide, and among the snows of the Hudson Bay wilderness have been recorded under appropriate titles in previous works.

The four boys were members of the Beaver Patrol, Chicago. Will Smith was Scoutmaster, while George Benton was Patrol Leader. They wore upon the sleeves of their coats medals showing that they had passed the examination as Ambulance Aids, Stalkers, Pioneers and Seamen.

Instructed by Mr. Horton, a well-known criminal lawyer of Chicago, the boys had reached the almost deserted mine at dusk of a November day. There they had found Canfield, the caretaker, waiting for them in a dimly-lighted office. The mine had not been operated for a number of months, not because the veins had given out, but because of some misunderstanding between the owners of mines in that section.

The large, bare room in which the caretaker and the Boy Scouts met was in the breaker. There was no fire in the great heater, and the tables and chairs were black with dust. A single electric light shone down from the ceiling, creating long, ghost-like shadows as it swayed about in a gentle wind blowing through a broken window.

"Well," Tommy Gregory said, as the caretaker paused, "you've got the Boy Scouts, and it remains for you to set us to work."

"And a sturdy looking lot, too!" grinned the caretaker.

"Oh, Mr. Horton wouldn't be apt to send a lot of cripples!" laughed Sandy Green. "He's next to his job, that man is!"

"I presume he told you all about the case?" suggested Canfield.

"Indeed he did not," replied Will Smith.

"Not a thing about it?" asked the caretaker.

"He only said that you would give us full instructions."

"That's strange!" Canfield observed thoughtfully.

"Perhaps he thought we wouldn't want to undertake the job if we knew exactly what it was!" suggested Sandy.

"It is a queer kind of a job," Canfield admitted, "but I don't think you boys would be apt to back out because of a little danger."

"I wanted to back out several times," laughed Tommy, "but, somehow, these others boys wouldn't permit me to."

"Go on and tell us about it," urged Sandy. "Tell us just what you want us to do, and then we'll tell you whether we think we can do it or not."

"You've got to find two boys!" replied Canfield.

"Mother of Moses!" exclaimed Tommy. "I hope we haven't got to go and dig up blond-haired little Algernon, or discover pretty little Clarence, and turn a bunch of money over to him!"

"I think these two boys may have money coming to them," the caretaker replied. "There must be money back of it or the friends of the lads wouldn't be giving me cash to spent in their interest."

"Where are these boys?" asked Will.

"I've heard the opinion expressed that the boys are somewhere in the mine!" answered Canfield. "I can hardly believe that they are, but it has been suggested that we may as well begin the search under ground."

"Where do these boys belong?" asked George.

"Anywhere and everywhere," was the reply. "Jimmie Maynard and Dick Thompson came here as breaker boys six months ago. They were ragged and dirty, and appeared to be as tough as two young bears. They worked steadily until the day before the mine closed down and then they disappeared."

"That's easy," declared Tommy. "They got tired of work!"

"That may be," answered the caretaker, "but they certainly didn't get tired of drawing their pay. They went away leaving about eight dollars the two of them in the care of the company."

"Then something must have happened to them!" Will suggested.

"Who's looking for these boys?" asked George.

"A New York lawyer," was the reply. "I know nothing whatever about the man. In fact, I don't know why he wants to find out where the boys are. He sends me money and tells me to continue my quest until the boys are found, and then to send them to New York."

"So you have entire charge of the search," said Sandy, tentatively.

"Yes," was the reply, "except for Joe Ventner. He's a detective sent on from New York by this Burlingame person, the lawyer to whom I referred a short time ago."

"What part of the world is he searching?" asked Will.

"He seems to think that the boys ran away because of some childish prank put on by them the night before. They broke some windows in a couple of shanties down by the tracks, or, at least, the other boys say they did, and Joe thinks they ran away because of

that. He accounts in that way for them not calling after their pay envelopes."

"So he thinks they've gone out of the country, does he."

"Yes," was the reply. "He comes back here every few days to ask if I have heard anything regarding the youngsters, and then goes away again. If you leave it to me, I don't think the fellow is working very hard in the case. There's a half a dozen saloons in a little dump of a place about ten miles away, and my idea is that he puts in a good deal of his time there."

"You don't seem to take to this detective?" asked George.

"Oh, I don't know, as he's so much worse than the average private detective," replied the caretaker. "He's out for his day's wages, and the easier he can get them, the better it suits him."

"So you don't know who wants these boys, or what they're wanted for?" asked Will. "Lawyer Burlingame never took you into his confidence so far as to post you on the details of the case?"

"He never did!" answered the caretaker.

"Is he liberal with his money?" asked George.

"He pays all the bills I send in," was the answer. "And seems to keep this bum detective pretty well supplied with ten dollar bills."

"We may have to investigate this investigator!" laughed Sandy.

"Did Mr. Horton say anything to you about your lodgings while here?" asked the caretaker. "It's getting too cold here for me, and we may as well be shifting to warmer quarters."

"You said a short time ago," Will began, "that you rather thought we ought to begin this search in the mine itself."

"That's my idea!" answered the caretaker.

"Do you think the boys are hiding in the mine?"

"Well, there are some things connected with the case which point in that direction," replied Canfield. "For instance, there's a lot of queer things going on underground."

"Ghosts?" demanded Tommy.

"You're not steering us up against a haunted mine, are you?" asked George with a wink at his chum. "That would be too good to be true!"

"I haven't said anything about ghosts or haunted mines," chuckled the caretaker. "I'm only saying that there are queer things taking place in the mine. Now there's Tunnel Six," he went on, "I have seen lights there with my own eyes, when I know there wasn't a person within two miles of the spot except myself. And I've heard noises, too! These unaccountable noises which make a man think of graveyards and ghosts."

"But why should two healthy, active boys want to seek such a hiding place?" asked Will. "It certainly can't be very pleasant in the dark and damp tunnels! Besides, where would they get their provisions?"

"I'm not arguing the case, lads," the caretaker replied, "I'm placing the case in your hands without instructions. I only suggest that you look in the mine first, but you don't have to do that unless you want to!"

"I don't see how we can find fault with that arrangement!" laughed Will. "And now," he went on, "let's arrange about our lodgings. In the first place, who knows that we are here on this job?"

"Not a soul, unless some one saw you coming into the breaker!"

"That's just as it should be," Will went on. "Now I propose that we camp out in the breaker. There must be a cozy corner somewhere, under the chutes, or in back of a staircase, or away up under the roof, where we can camp out while we are going through the mine."

"You won't find the old breaker a very comfortable place to live in," suggested Canfield.

"Well, we can line the walls of some little cubbyhole with canvas if necessary, and you can string a wire in so as to give us electricity for heating and lighting, and we can live as comfortable as four bugs in a rug. If we keep out of sight during the day time, no one will ever suspect that we are here."

"Have it your own way!" replied Canfield. "I'll see that you get plenty to eat and plenty of bed clothing."

"That'll help some!" laughed Tommy. "During the night we can travel through the mine with our lights, and during the daytime we can crawl into our little beds and sleep our heads off!"

"When do you want your first load of provisions?" asked Canfield.

"Right now, tonight!" replied Sandy.

"Well, come along then," Canfield said, rising from his chair, "and I'll let you pick out a spot for your camp, as you call it."

After quite an extended search through the breaker the boys selected a small room on the ground floor, from which one window looked out on the half deserted yard where the weigh-house stood. The room was perhaps twenty feet in size each way, and the walls were of heavy planking. The whole apartment was sadly in need of it scrubbing, but the lads concluded to postpone that until some future date.

"I can bring in cot beds and bedding," the caretaker announced, "and string the electric wire for heating, lighting, and cooking before I go to bed. That will leave you all shipshape in the morning, and you can then begin your cleaning up as soon as you please."

The caretaker was as good as his word, and before ten o'clock the cots and bedding were in place, also an electric heater and an electric plate for cooking had been moved into the apartment.

Not considering it advisable to go out for supper, Canfield had also brought in provisions in the shape of bacon, potatoes, eggs, bread, butter, coffee, and various grades of canned goods, so the boys had made a hearty meal and had plenty left for breakfast. While cooking they had covered the one window with a heavy piece of canvas.

"Now you're all, tight and snug for the night," the caretaker smiled, as he turned back from the door and glanced over the rather cozy-looking room. "If I'm about here during the night, I'll look in upon you again."

Canfield stepped out and closed the door behind him. Then he came back and looked in again with a big smile on his face.

"Do you boys know anything about mines?" he asked.

"Not, a thing!" replied Tommy.

"Then don't you go climbing down the ladders and wandering around in the gangways tonight," the caretaker warned.

"Say, there's an idea!" Tommy said to Sandy, with a wink, as Canfield went out. "How do you think one of these mammoth coal mines looks, any way?"

"Cut that out, boys!" exclaimed Will. "If I catch one of you attempting the ladders tonight, I'll tie you up!"

"Who said anything about going down the ladders tonight?" demanded Tommy.

CHAPTER II

THE CALL OF THE PACK

It was somewhere near midnight when the boys sought their beds. Will and George were soon asleep, but Tommy and Sandy had no notion of passing their first night in the mine in slumber. Ten minutes after the regular breathing of the two sleepers became audible, Tommy sat up in his bed and deftly threw a pillow so as to strike Sandy in the face.

"Cut it out!" whispered Sandy. "You don't have to do anything to wake me up! I've been wondering for a long time whether you hadn't gone to sleep! You looked sleepy when the light went out."

"Never was so wide awake in my life!" declared Tommy.

"Well, get up and dress," advised Sandy. "If we get into the mine tonight, we'll have to hurry!"

"Have you figured out how we're going to get into the mine?" asked Tommy. "It will be the ladders for us, I guess."

"Of course, it'll be the ladders!" replied Sandy.

"Do you suppose Canfield is coming here in the middle of the night to turn on the power?"

"I wonder how deep the shaft is?" asked Tommy. "I guess this one must be about five hundred feet."

"Is that a guess, or a piece of positive information?"

"It's a guess," laughed Sandy, drawing on his shoes and walking softly across the bare floor in the direction of the shaft.

The boys passed out of the sleeping chamber into a passage which led directly to the shaft of the mine. This shaft was perhaps

twenty feet in width. It included the air shaft, the division where the pumps were operated, and two divisions for the cages which lifted the coal from the bottom of the mine. The pumps were not working, of course, and no air was being forced down.

One of the cages lay at the top so the other must have been at the bottom of the shaft. As the boys looked down into the shaft, Tommy seized his chum by the arm and whispered:

"Did you see that light down there?"

"Light nothing!" declared Sandy.

"But I did see a light!" insisted the other.

"Perhaps you did," replied Sandy, "but if there's any light there it's merely a reflection from our electrics. There may be a metallic surface down there which throws back the light rays."

"Have it your own way!" grunted Tommy. "You know yourself that the caretaker said there were lights in the mine which no one could account for and he especially mentioned the light in Tunnel Six.

"All right!" Sandy grinned. "We'll sneak down so quietly that any person who happens to be at the bottom of the shaft with the light will never suspect that we are within a hundred miles of the place. We may be able to geeze the fellow that's making the ghost walk around here nights."

The boys took to the ladders and moved down as silently as possible. Now and then a rung creaked softly under their feet, but they got to the bottom without any special mishap.

Tommy drew a long breath when at last they landed at the bottom of the shaft. He threw his light upward, then, and declared that in his opinion they were at least ten thousand feet nearer the center of the earth than they were when they started down.

"I remember now," Sandy said with a grin, "that the Labyrinth mine is only about five hundred feet deep. If I remember correctly, there are three levels; one at three hundred feet; one at four, and one at five."

"And which level is this?" asked Tommy. "Why, we're on the bottom, ain't we?"

"Of course," laughed Tommy. "I ought to have known that!"

"Well come along if you want to see the mine!" urged Sandy. "All we have to do is to push our searchlights ahead and walk down the gangway. We'll come to something worth seeing after a while."

As the boys advanced they found the gangway considerably cluttered with "gob," or refuse, and the air was none of the best.

"I wish we could set the air shaft working," suggested Sandy.

"Well, we can't!" Tommy answered with a scornful shrug of his shoulders. "We can't set the whole works going in order to give us a midnight view of the Labyrinth mine. What gets me is how are we going to find our way back? There seem to be a good many passages here."

"I've got that fixed all right!" Sandy exclaimed.

As the lad spoke he took a ball of strong string from his pocket and tied one end to the cage which lay at the bottom of the shaft.

"Now we can go anywhere we please," he chuckled, "and when we want to return, all we've got to do is to follow the string."

"Quite an idea!" laughed Tommy.

The boys proceeded along the gangway, walking between the rails of the tramway by means of which the coal was delivered at the bottom of the shaft. The experience was a novel one to them. The dark walls of the passage, the echoes which came from the counter gangways, the monotonous dripping of water, as it seeped through seams and crevices in the rock, all gave a weird and uncanny expression to the place.

After walking for some distance the boys came to a level which showed several inches of water.

"We can't wade through that!" Tommy declared.

"Well," Sandy suggested, "if we go back a little ways, we can follow a cross heading and get into the mine by another way."

The boys followed this plan, and, after winding about several half-loaded cars which had been left on the tramway, found themselves in a large chamber from which numerous benches were cut.

"Where does all this gas come from?" asked Tommy stopping short and putting a hand to his nose.

"There must be a blower somewhere," Sandy explained.

"What's a blower?" demanded Tommy. "What does it look like, and does it always smell like this?"

"It doesn't look like anything!" replied Sandy. "It's composed of natural gas, and they call it a blower because it blows up out of crevices in the coal and in the rocks."

"If I should light a match, would it set it on, fire?" asked Tommy.

"I wouldn't like to have you try it!"

The boys continued on their way for some moments, and then Tommy stopped and extinguished his light, whispering to Sandy to do the same.

"What's that for?" demanded the latter.

"Didn't you hear that noise behind the cribbing?" asked Tommy.

"Rats, probably!"

"Rats nothing!" replied Tommy. "Rats don't make sounds like people whispering, do they? Keep still a minute, and we'll find out what it is!"

"You'll be, seeing a light next!" Sandy suggested.

"I see it now!" answered Tommy.

Sandy saw it, too, in a moment. It seemed at first to be floating in the air at the very top of the gangway. It moved from side to side, and finally dropped down nearer to the floor. There seemed to be no one near it or under it. Its small circle of illumination showed only the empty air.

"What do you make of it?" asked Tommy.

"Is this Tunnel Six?" asked his chum.

"I don't know! If it is, we've seen the light the caretaker referred to. We'll have a great story to tell in the morning!"

The boys stood in the darkness of the gangway watching the light for what seemed to them to be a long time. Now the light advanced toward them, now it receded. Now it lifted to the roof of the gangway, now it dropped almost to the floor.

At intervals, the noises behind the cribbing to which Tommy had referred were repeated, and the boys at last moved over so as to stand with their ears almost against the wooden walls.

"There is some one behind the cribbing, all right!" Tommy declared. "I hear some one breathing."

"Aw, keep still!" whispered Sandy. "If there is anyone there, you'll frighten them away! I though I heard some one myself!"

"I'll tell you what I think," Tommy suggested in a moment, "and that is that either Will and George, or both of them, beat us to this gangway. They are hiding behind there on purpose to give us a scare."

"That's a dream!" replied Sandy. "We left them both asleep."

"Dream, is it?" repeated Tommy scornfully. "You just listen to the sound that comes from behind this cribbing, and tell me what you make of it!"

Both boys listened intently for a moment, and then Sandy switched on his light and moved swiftly along the cribbing as if in search of an opening. Tommy gazed at him in astonishment.

"You've gone and done it now!" he said.

"There's some one in here all right!" Sandy explained. "Did you hear the call of the pack a minute ago? There are Boy Scouts in there, and what we hear are the signals of the Wolf Patrol."

"That's right!" cried Tommy excitedly. "That's right!"

CHAPTER III

WHO CUT THE STRING

"Do you suppose he would understand the call of the Beaver Patrol?" asked Sandy. "I'm going to try him, anyway!"

The boy brought his hands together in imitation of the slap of a beaver's tail on the water, and listened for some reply.

"He'll understand that if he's up on Boy Scout literature," suggested Sandy. "He ought to be wise to the signs of the different patrols if he's a good Boy Scout."

There was a short silence, broken only by the constant drip of the water in an adjoining chamber and then the call of the pack came again, clearly, sharply and apparently only a short distance away.

"What did Mr. Canfield call those two boys we are looking after?" asked Sandy, after waiting a short time for the repetition of the sound.

"Jimmie Maynard and Dick Thompson," replied Tommy.

Sandy threw out his chest and cried out at the top of his lungs.

"Hello, Jimmie! Hello, Dick!"

The lad's voice echoed dismally throughout the labyrinth of passages, but there was no other reply. Tommy and Sandy gave the call of the Beaver Patrol repeatedly, but the call of the Wolf pack was heard no more.

"I'll bet it's some trick!" exclaimed Sandy after waiting in the chamber for a long time in the hope of hearing another call from the boys who were hidden somewhere behind the cribbing.

"What do you mean by trick?" demanded Tommy.

"Why, I mean that some of the breaker boys, out of work because of the stoppage of operations, may have sneaked into the mine on purpose to produce the impression that there are ghosts here."

"But ghosts wouldn't be giving signals of the Wolf Patrol, would they?" asked Tommy.

"Not unless they were Scouts," replied the other.

"Oh, well, of course the kids would want to test us, wouldn't they, seeing that we were only boys?"

"Well, we've discovered one thing by coming down here," said Tommy, "and that is that there really are people in the mine who have no business here."

"Then we may as well go back to bed," advised Sandy.

"Do you know how many corners we've turned since we came in here?" asked Tommy.

"About a thousand, I guess," replied Sandy.

"Yes, and we'd have a fine old time getting out if you hadn't brought that ball of twine!"

"Tell you what we'll do," Sandy said, as the boys turned their faces down the gangway, "we'll pass around the next shoulder of rock and then shut off our lights. Perhaps, the kids who gave the cry of the pack in there will then show their light again."

"That's a good idea, too!"

The boys came at length to a brattice, which is a screen, of either wood or heavy cloth, set up in a passage to divert the current of air to a bench where workmen are engaged, and dodged down behind it, after turning off their lights, of course,

"Now, come on with your old light," whispered Tommy.

As if in answer to the boy's challenge, the light showed again, apparently but a few yards way from their hiding place.

A moment later the call of pack sounding louder than before, rang through the passage. The boys sprang to their feet and switched on their lights.