



BOY SCOUTS' OF THE AIR ON THE GREAT LAKES



Boy Scouts of the Air Books



The Boy Scouts of the Air
on the Great Lakes



Dave looked around at a yell and saw the half-frozen fisherman being dragged over the side.

The Boy Scouts of the Air
on the Great Lakes

BY GORDON STUART

Illustrated by Norman P Hall
The Reilly & Britton Co. Chicago

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THE BOY SCOUTS OF THE AIR ON THE GREAT
LAKES

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Dave looked around at a yell and saw the half-frozen
fisherman
being dragged over the side.

Frontispiece

The four boys paused in admiring silence. Before them
lay the *Sea Wolf*.

Chapter III

“I saw it!” exclaimed Dave abruptly. “A star — a new
star! Bet a dollar it's him!”

Chapter VII

While he was digging away earnestly, those above-
ground suddenly saw him drop his shovel. “Look at
this!” he cried hoarsely.

Chapter XVI

The Boy Scouts of the Air on the Great Lakes

CHAPTER I

ORDERS!

“It's no use, fellows,” said Gerald Rankin, otherwise known as “Spike,” and he rumped up his black hair in a discouraged manner. “This Wolf Patrol is just about disbanded, I guess.”

“You're off your base!” flared out his brother Rufus, for Rufe immediately took sides against his brother on any sort of statement. “We're not disbanded by a long shot, Spike! Just because the high school burned down isn't any sign —”

“Aw, go to it, you two bruisers, and get it out of your systems!” snapped out a little red-headed chap, dancing around belligerently. “Don't talk all the time. Do something! You're dead right, Spike. With no more'n four of us showin' up, I guess we'd better quit till fall.”

“Well, I'm mighty sorry, fellows,” said the fourth member of the Wolf Patrol, Dave Hartley.

He was a tall, serious-eyed young fellow, not so good

looking as Spike Rankin, but more masterful for all his cheap clothes. "If we aren't goin' to have no — to have any meetin', I'll hike home, I guess. I got to put in a few licks on night school work, anyhow."

"Don't be in a hurry," commanded Spike, the patrol leader. "Say, fellows! Dad came home from Washington today, on a quick trip. When he heard about the school goin' up in smoke, and us goin' every which way and gettin' all balled up, he said he'd address the meetin' to-night. So lay low a while. He'll be up pretty soon."

The four were all that remained of the Wolf Patrol of South Chicago. Two weeks previously there had been a fire in the high school, which necessitated its closing, and the pupils were scattered among other high schools near at hand. This naturally confused everything; the Wolf Patrol split up and separated, and as it was only a month before the end of the school year, Spike and his assistant, little red-headed Jim Baxter, had assembled the remnants of the patrol at the Rankin home in order to disband for the summer.

The two Rankin brothers were sons of Senator Rankin, who was now home from Washington on a short visit. Both were first-class Scouts, and while Spike had a badge for aviation, among others, Rufe had been

unable to get one — chiefly because he refused to give up the necessary time to making a model. Rufe, who was quick tempered but meant well, invariably opposed his brother on every subject brought up a but the discussions, while often waxing warm, never got any further, to the intense disgust of Jim Baxter.

Jim was always urging the two brothers to fight it out, and never seemed to realize that down beneath everything Spike and Rufe had a deep affection for each other. Jim's father was a lawyer, and the red-headed chap, who was full of fiery enthusiasm, had badges for everything, from aviation to botany.

The last of the four, Dave Hartley, was one for whom the entire patrol — or what was left of it — had a very warm affection. Dave was an orphan, a young chap from the country who was fighting his way along in the city to an education; working during the day, attending night school in the evenings, saving every cent and investing in books, he had a great determination behind him a great force of character. The others had been quick to recognize this, and when by chance he entered the patrol, Spike and he had become fast chums. In some ways he was ignorant, for he had battled his way all his life; but in other directions he knew a good deal more than all the others put together — and he was destined to put his knowledge to good uses before long.

“What's your dad got on his brain-pan?” queried Jim Baxter, who had no respect for the dignity of a senator. “Does he know this patrol has gone up the flume, evaporated, busted flat?”

“Sure,” grinned Spike cheerfully. “I know what's up, but I've promised to keep quiet. It's a great little scheme, fellows —”

“Get out!” broke in Rufe instantly. “Dad's got a fine idea, but it's not going to work worth a cent. There — I hear him coming upstairs now.”

The others straightened up expectantly, for they were gathered in Spike's room, and all could now hear the heavy tread of their distinguished visitor. Then the door swung open, and in strode the gray-haired, erect, soldierly figure that they all knew so well.

“Good evening, Scouts !” he cried briskly, shaking hands all around in his best senatorial manner. “Well, this looks quite a bit different from the last meeting of the Wolf Patrol that I was privileged to attend!”

“We're the last o' the faithful, for a fact,” grimaced Spike whimsically.

“How's everything, Dave?” asked the senator cordially. “Last time I saw you, it was just when you were starting night school. How's the work?”

“Pretty good, thanks,” answered Hartley, flushing a little. “I'm thinkin' o' quittin' the night school, Senator. I want to take up a correspondence course in electrical engineering, when I can. Things aren't goin' so well at the shop as they might be, 'cause the foreman don't especially like me; but all things considered, I'm able to hold up my end o' things just now, thanks.”

“Hm!” The senator frowned thoughtfully. “Electrical engineering, eh? Do you know anything about engines in general?”

“*Does* he!” cried Rufe before Dave could answer. “Why, dad, he's a walking dictionary on gas engines! He'd be the very chap to —”

Rufe stopped suddenly, as he received a warning kick from his brother. Dave was puzzled, but Jim Baxter perceived instantly that there was something in the air, and raised his voice suddenly, striking a threatening attitude.

“What ho, Senator! Unless you instantly unbosom your mind to us, there'll be a senatorial investigation of

the reasons for this calling together of the Wolf Patrol
—”

“What's that?” laughed the senator. “How *do* you unbosom your mind, Jim?”

“You go ahead and do it,” persisted Jim, unmindful of the laughter. “There's something up, and we're getting curious. Dave and I want to be in on what's doing.”

“All right,” returned Senator Rankin, settling down in his chair comfortably. “If you can keep quiet for a little, Jim, we'll try to elucidate. Now, I suppose both you chaps know that I've got a summer place up north, at Washington Island?”

He paused questioningly. Jim and Dave both nodded.

“Yes,” said Dave in his usual serious manner.

“Spike was tellin' me about it. But where is that Washington Island Senator? Up in Wisconsin somewhere, isn't it?”

“It is, Dave. It's a good-sized island between Green Bay and Lake Michigan, and it's the greatest place you ever heard of. It was settled by Icelanders, and —”

“Icelanders?” broke in Jim Baxter quickly. “Are they the real thing, Senator?”

“Of course ! Some of them don't even speak English, Jim. They've got the queerest place up there you ever saw, and they're the finest people you'll find anywhere. Most of them are fishermen, but they've got some farms grubbed out, and there aren't enough summer resorters there to spoil them. You'll like it fine.”

Senator Rankin paused, a twinkle in his eye. For a moment the sense of his final words did not penetrate the minds of Dave and Jim, until the former looked up, frowning.

“*We*'ll like it fine? How's that, Senator? Far's I'm concerned, there won't be no — won't be any chance for liking it. This boy don't do any summer resortin,' not much! Not but that I'd like to see the place, though.”

Jim, who caught a grin on Rufe's face, began to squirm excitedly, but the senator waved him into peace.

“Keep still, Jim! After I get through, you can ask all the questions you like, but I have a story of my own to tell first. Now, as I say, I've got a pretty good cottage up there. It's right on the water, it's large, and we

usually go up in the middle of June for the rest of the summer.”

“Last year our launch was badly smashed up, and as Gerald and Rufus both were crazy to have a larger sailboat than the small one they'd been using, I placed an order with a Sheboygan firm for a large thirty-footer, built to sail, but with an auxiliary engine in case of need. I got a letter from them to-day, saying that the boat was completed. and asking whether I had made any arrangements for its delivery. Sheboygan, you know, is in Wisconsin, about halfway up — ”

“Hold on!” cried Jim Baxter. Cheboygan is in Michigan, Senator, 'cause I — ”

“No, this is spelled with an S,” laughed the senator. “You get a map and see. It's on the lake, about halfway between Chicago and Washington Island. But as I was going to say, I'd have to pay men to sail the boat up to the Island, because there's no railroad, naturally, and the only way to deliver her there is to go up in her. Unfortunately, her price did not include delivery which makes it awkward.”

“Well, I mentioned it to the boys, and we decided that we'd have to get a crew and send her up. A large boathouse is being built for her now — perhaps it is

finished by this time — but I can't tell when I'll be able to get up. There'll probably be an extra session of Congress this summer, and while Mrs. Rankin will no doubt go up at the usual time, with a guest or two, I'll not be able to look after affairs myself, as usual.”

“Our cottage up there is a large one, the grounds are good-sized, and then there's this proposition of the new boat and boathouse. Of course, I could write up there and get the place opened up, but it pays to do these things yourself. The cottage will have to be unboarded and aired, cleaned out thoroughly, the garden must be fixed up more or less, the dock will have to be partly rebuilt, for the ice always crushes it in winter, and the new boat must be attended to pretty carefully. So you see, there is a lot to be attended to. What's more, time is getting short. This is the beginning of May, and we ought to get men at work by the middle of the month, because it'll take quite a bit of work to get all things in shape there.”

“Said anything to mother yet?” asked Spike, while the others stared.

“No. I haven't had much time to think about it myself, yet,” laughed the senator. “I thought that I'd better put it up to you fellows first of all, and see what you thought about it.”

“Huh?” Jim Baxter looked from one to the other, puzzled “What've we got to do with it?”

“Several things, Jim. You see, I thought that what was left of the Wolf Patrol might come in handy. Why couldn't you four boys take care of that boat, and — ”

“Nothing doin' Senator!” shot out Jim, excitement blazing into his face and then fading away into dejection. “Say, you don't know what kind o' people I've got to deal with at home, I guess! Why, my dad's got a notion that I oughtn't to go out alone on the street, and mother is dead sure that I haven't got enough brains to take care of myself!”

As the laughter died away, Dave Hartley responded to the senator's inquiring look with a slow shake of the head.

“Much obliged, Senator, but I guess you'll have to count me out too. I've got to work for a living. Of course I'm not saying that I wouldn't like to go, but life isn't a soft snap for me, not at all. I've got to work.”

And the growing exultation of the Wolf Patrol was suddenly turned to dismay.

CHAPTER II

SETTLED.

“Now, just keep cooled down, you fellows,” commanded Senator Rankin calmly. “Dave, let's take up your case first. You're working in a machine shop, I believe. What wages do you get?”

“Why,” returned Hartley, a slight flush of color in his cheeks, “it's piecework, Senator. I usually average somewheres around eight dollars.”

“What — a day?”

“Whittaker, no!” At Dave's startled look the others shouted with laughter. “A *week*, Senator. O'course, I can run over that sometimes but mostly it holds to about the same level.”

“And out of that,” went on the senator judiciously, “you have to pay for your board and lodging and other expenses?”

“Yes, Sir. It'd be easy enough to run along on that, only clothes certainly do take a heap o' money.”

Dave cast a half-shamed look down at his undeniably shabby garments, while the others remained silent. Senator Rankin regarded him critically, tugging at his stubby gray mustache.

“But you've an ambition to take a correspondence course, haven't you? Where will you get the time and money for that?”

“I don't know,” answered Dave stoutly, “but I'll get her some way, Senator. A fellow can usually get what he goes after, if he goes hard enough.”

“Exactly. Now, supposing you four boys went to Sheboygan, took my boat, sailed her up along the coast to Washington Island, and put my place in shape for me. I'll need a man or two to take care of things this summer, especially as Mrs. Rankin may have guests and I won't be able to get north. Gerald and Rufus won't be able to do it all, and I don't ask them to; they work hard enough in school, and in vacation I want them to play.”

“I'm putting this to you frankly, Dave. You can't afford to go as a vacation; but I don't ask you to. You're a mechanic, and can look after the engine in the boat and the pumping station at the cottage, among other things. If you want to go, from now till the first of September,

let us say, I'll make you a proposition.”

“Go?” Dave sat up straight, staring at the senator, his gray eyes shining with eagerness. “Why, if you really mean it — you're mighty right I'll go!”

“Good. Then I'll offer you all your expenses, five dollars a week, and the best correspondence course money can buy, in any subject you name. How about it?”

Dave seemed to catch his breath suddenly, the others watching him in fascination. For a moment he looked as though he could not believe what he heard, and the flush in his cheeks deepened. Then he leaped to his feet swiftly, his hand outstretched to that of the senator.

“Good ! I'll do it, Senator — I'll do it! Whittaker — but it don't seem as if it could be true, though!”

“Of course it's true,” laughed Senator Rankin heartily. “And I'm going to make a pretty good investment on you, too, Dave!”

“Fine work!” shouted Spike, pounding his chum on the back. “Hurray! We'll sure have a great time, fellows!”

“Well, I *should* say!” added Rufe, agreeing for once

with his brother. Before he could say more, however, Jim Baxter spoke up in lugubrious accents.

“Fine! Elegant! Perfectly scrumptious!” he exclaimed sarcastically. “But where does red-headed Jimmy come in? I haven't noticed anyone offerin' me a salary to take a vacation. And if anyone did, would I be allowed by my fond parents to accept it? Nix! Not by a jugfull? I see where little Jimmy spends the summer in Chicago. It's a great little health resort, is Chi !”

“Also, mother's not been consulted yet,” suggested Spike, whereupon he was sent to bring Mrs. Rankin into the consultation. By the time she arrived, Jim Baxter had begun to see the possibility of his taking the trip, though he refused to admit that it could be brought about.

Mrs. Rankin, who was very quiet and level-headed regarding the doings of her two sons, heard the proposition that her husband had made all four boys, and nodded.

“I think it's a very sensible plan,” she exclaimed, to the intense relief of Spike and Rufe who had dreaded lest she spoil everything at the last moment. “Both you boys can take care of yourselves on the water and know how to handle a boat. You're a pretty cool-headed boy

too, Dave, but I'm not so sure about Jim. As far as taking the trip north is concerned, I would say that it's a fine scheme; but won't it interfere with your schoolwork?"

"Well, poor Jimmy's getting it all around!" interposed the red-headed one, dolefully. When the laughter died out, Spike made answer.

"School doesn't matter, mother. Everyone's going to the other schools, the classes are overcrowded, and the whole thing's a joke. They'll have to give us our credits, anyway, and we can put off the final exams until the fall. It's knocked all our graduation class plans galley-west so I can't see that a month is going to make any 'difference."

The senator approved this reasoning at once — and although Rufe opened his mouth in his usual opposition, he received a kick from Jim Baxter that made him keep silence and grin ruefully.

So far, everything looked promising, and Dave Hartley especially was in a wild flame of eagerness, though he kept himself under control, as always. He was not given to any display of emotion, but his one fervent handgrip had expressed more gratitude than could many words.

Spike and Rufe, who had been made aware of the plan that day, were also thrilled with excitement. Spike had been rather bitter of late toward the majority of his patrol, because they had taken for granted that the scout work was over with the dispersal of the school, and now a sudden idea came to him.

“Say, fellows,” he leaned forward earnestly, “we’re all that’s left of the Wolf Patrol, eh?, The other fellows have gone into other patrols, or they’ve drifted away, and they think that the old Wolves are dead. Well, let’s wake ‘em up! I guess dad has enough influence with the papers to get a little item put in, about the Wolf Patrol of Boy Scouts going on an all-summer’s camp and lake cruise. The other boys will see it, and you’ll hear em come around asking to go along — ”

“But they won’t go!” cried Dave. “Not much! That’s a good idea — ”

“Well, I’m not gettin’ anywhere yet,” mourned Jim Baxter. “Where do I belong, anyhow? Do I resort in Chicago or Washington Island?”

This brought up the question of persuading Jim’s parents to allow him to go on the trip. Jim himself was perfectly certain that they would never hear of it, and

when the senator said that he would interview Jim's father, a general smile passed around.

“That'll queer it for sure,” said Rufe. “Mr. Baxter doesn't sit on the same side of the fence that you do, dad — in politics, I mean,”

“He's stubborn as all get-out, too,” added Jim.

“See here, you people,” smiled Mrs. Rankin, “I'll go over and see *Mrs.* Baxter. You just leave it to me, and we'll see what a woman can do!”

Jim brightened up at once, and upon receiving instructions to say nothing whatever of their plans, he promised faithfully to obey. It was finally agreed that Mrs. Rankin should take charge of the whole affair, and she on her part had no doubt whatever that the outcome would be favorable.

“You'll see,” she smiled as she rose to leave. “I'll see your mother to-morrow, Jim, and you can depend on it that things will be all right.”

With her departure, Senator Rankin suggested that they get down to hard-pan and settle the whole matter then and there, as he would have to leave in another day for the Capitol, and would have little time to spare.

“We've got to settle several things,” he said.

“Whoever's in charge of the trip will have to have money, and — ”

“That's easy,” said Dave. “We're going as the Wolf Patrol, aren't we? Then we'll stick just as we are with Spike as leader.”

“And Jim as assistant,” added Rufe.

“Well, you boys suit yourselves as to that,” said the senator. “Whoever is in control will of course be responsible for the boat, after she's delivered to you at Sheboygan.”

“What's her name, Senator?” asked Jim.

“That's undecided. We'll let you chaps name her, if you succeed in getting her safe to the Island. Next thing is, what equipment will you need?”

“We'll sleep on board the boat,” spoke up Gerald. “She's planned to accommodate three, but I guess we can crowd in. We won't need anything but our regular scout blankets. As far as that goes, I s'pose our regular scout equipment will do us right along.”

“Not much,” dissented the senator vigorously. “You won't do any camping except on the trip up; you'd better tie up every night and make camp on shore. When you come to any town, tie up at a wharf, and one of you stay aboard to guard the boat from thieves, and the other three go to a hotel — ”

“Us? Shucks!” cried Rufe. “No hotel for, ours, dad! We'll tie up at night, though, No use chasing around in the dark.”

The matter of outfit was not so serious as it first appeared, however. Getting a map of the region, and outlining their course, Spike pointed out the fact that after leaving the railroad at Sheboygan and taking to the boat, they would be able to put in at some town or city nearly every night, at least until after leaving Sturgeon Bay.

Then Dave Hartley put in with the remark that the middle of May would be fine for spring storms, and this brought about a further discussion as to the course to be taken by the young navigators. It was finally decided that for the sake of safety they had best cut in past Sturgeon Bay to Green Bay, and so proceed in comparative shelter to Washington Island.

“Slickers and blankets, sweaters and leggings,” volunteered Jim Baxter in his capacity of assistant leader. “That’s all, except grub, I guess. Looks as if our regular scout equipment would hold us clear to the north pole, Senator, eh?”

“Well, you boys seem to be right, after all,” assented Senator Rankin. “Of course, you can settle for yourselves whether you want to camp out or put up at hotels in comfort. As regards the rest of you, I’ll make you all the same terms I made Dave — five a week and all found — until the family gets up. Then Dave can settle down to his engineering course, or whatever course he wants and you, Jim, can stay on as a guest if you’d rather. You don’t have to work for a living, and Dave does, so there’s no use mincing matters.”

“Not a bit,” agreed Dave heartily. “I’m not ashamed of it, Senator, and I don’t believe I could loaf around anyhow, without working. I guess the right thing, fellows, would be to give three cheers for Senator Rankin — but seeing as Mrs. Rankin is around the house, I move we postpone ‘em, till we get outside.”

Which was promptly agreed to, and the senator smiled at his wife as they sat before the fire and listened to the three rousing cheers that ascended from the Wolf Patrol.

CHAPTER III

OFF !

“You, Rufe, go help that old veteran with his bags and get him over into the depot. He looks as if he was scared stiff. Hey, there! Where you goin', Jim ?”

As Rufe departed, Jim Baxter waved his hand at a pair of young ladies not far distant. The four Scouts, equipment on their backs, had just left a car opposite the Northwestern Station.

“I'm goin' to help those poor girls with their heavy grips,” returned Jim with an injured air. Spike Rankin grinned, as Dave emitted a chortle.

“Well, you're not,” determined the patrol leader with decision. “They're in about as much need of help as I am. You chase along and lend Rufe a hand — he's having trouble with that old man. Dave, you and I are wanted up the line, I guess.”

The red-headed lad departed to help Rufe, with a last glance at the smiling girls, while Spike and Dave went to the rescue of two old ladies who were in evident fear of crossing the street, Ten minutes later, with their

charges taken care of and deposited in safety, the four Scouts reassembled at the head of the stairway in the great depot.

It was the morning of May 15th, and the Wolf Patrol was at last on its way to Sheboygan. As Mrs. Rankin had predicted, Mr. Baxter's consent had been obtained to the departure of Jim, though not until after a good deal of persuasion. Through the agency of Mrs. Baxter, however, he had been forced to give way at last more especially as Jim, with his usual furious energy, had flung himself too hard into school work and would be tremendously benefited by a summer in the north woods.

So now, in marching order and under full discipline, the three Scouts saluted their patrol leader at the head of the stairway and awaited further orders. Spike drew an envelope from his pocket and glanced at the big clock.

“Reservations on the nine o'clock train,” he said briefly. “Ten minutes before the gates are open. We might as well wait right here, fellows.”

“What time do we get to Sheboygan?” queried Rufe as he set down his load and looked about.

“About four this afternoon, We'll have to put up at a hotel overnight, and if we move lively this afternoon we can start early in the morning on the cruise.”

“Say, we certainly made the weak sisters in the Wolf Patrol sit up!” chuckled Dave, as he returned with interest the stares of those standing around. He did not like to be stared at, and the spectacle of the four khaki clad, knapsacked boys drew attention. “I guess the old Wolf Patrol isn't dead yet, eh? Didn't Rocky Carlan and the rest fall over themselves tryin' to rejoin, though!”

The others grinned happily. As they had planned, the papers had published a short account of their proposed trip, and this had speedily wakened the scattered members of the patrol to the fact that they were to miss a fine time in the country. With true journalistic instinct, Spike had followed this up with the story of how the nearly defunct patrol was being kept alive by its four members, and in consequence there had been a flood of applications to join, and the old members had eagerly applied for places on the trip.

“Serves 'em right,” grunted Spike, watching the gate to the train, “Didn't they let out a howl, huh? Golly, I never enjoyed anything so much in all my life as just tellin' them, to run along about their business!”

“Yes, you told 'em,” retorted Rufe. “If I'd been one o' them, I'd have landed you one on the jaw, too. Why couldn't you do it decent, instead o' playin' the high an' mighty over 'em?”

“I noticed you did some talkin' yourself,” retorted Spike sweetly, “when the Roberts kid come along and applied to go. Why — ”

“Well, well,” chimed in Jim Baxter, “get to it, you fighters! Poke him one in the ribs, Rufe!”

“Silence in the ranks!” Spike whirled on him with assumed severity. “Jim Baxter, what do you mean by reporting with muddy shoes? You're detailed to visit the washroom and get a shine — and be back here in five minutes or I'll send Dave to arrest you. *Jump*, you ! Move lively, now!”

Not quite sure whether or not Spike was in earnest, Jim took no chances, but departed hurriedly, amid the grins of Rufe and Dave. He had barely returned, with brightly shining shoes when the gates clanged open and the four Scouts took their way to the waiting train in the great shed.

They had a section to themselves, and as they had no

luggage except their blanket rolls and knapsacks, there was plenty of room for all four.

“Now,” said Spike, who liked to get future plans off his mind, “we may as well get our military dispositions settled for good. As soon as we hit Sheboygan, Jim, you and Rufe light out and buy some grub. Get tinned stuff, mostly, and you don't need to get so very much either, because we'll have plenty of chances on the trip up.”

“There's the fishing tackle, Spike,” put in Rufe. “Hadn't we better get that, too?”

“No more'n a couple of stout trolling lines — we got plenty of stuff up at the cottage, Rufe. Get them, and then you two hit for the Marine Boat Works — oh, yes, have the grub sent down there by to-night sure. You can meet us there. Dave and I'll take care of gasoline or whatever we need, and we'll look over the boat.”

Their journey was an uneventful one, in the light of after events, except for one incident. This was when Dave and Rufe, who had brought an armful of magazines, chanced on an article describing a stone found in Upper Michigan, which purported to have been left there by a party of Viking wanderers in the fourteenth century. It bore an inscription, said the

article, and its authenticity had been fully established by scientists; there seemed to be little doubt that somewhere around the year 1300 the Norsemen or Icelanders had penetrated Michigan and Wisconsin from Hudson Bay.

“What's the inscription?” asked Spike, becoming interested. “Does it say?”

“You read it if you want to,” returned Dave, handing him the magazine. “It doesn't say much, just gives a brief mention. This here Christopher Columbus theory seems to've been exploded long ago.”

“Looks like the real thing, this does,” asserted Spike.

“Rats !” cried Rufe promptly. “All that stuff's a fake, anyhow. It's made up by a bunch o' wise guys to get their names in the papers. There wasn't anyone over here before Columbus. Not much !”

“Sure there was,” struck in Jim. “The Vikings were over here and had colonies.” This started an argument which lasted until all four boys grew tired of the subject, and the remainder of the trip to Sheboygan passed with out further incident. Shortly after noon it became evident that rain was impending as they drew farther to the north, this changed to a black sky and a

slowly growing storm, which had become a stiff gale by three o'clock. When at length they reached Sheboygan, it was in the midst of a wild sweep of wind, rain and lightning that caused more than one dubious glance at the sky as they donned their slickers, waiting for the train to pull in.

“Looks kind o' bad for to-morrow, eh?” remarked Spike.

“It'll clear up,” returned Rufe cheerfully. “What do we care, anyhow? We'll run along the shore in the boat — say, fellows, what'll we call her? We could get her name painted on before morning?”

“Call her the *Wolf*,” suggested Jim. “Goes with the patrol — ”

“The *Sea Wolf* !” cried Dave. “Give it the water flavor.”

“*Sea Wolf* sounds good to me,” agreed Rufe easily.

“Here too,” nodded Spike. “How about it Jim? Unanimous !”

“Far's I'm concerned,” grinned the red-headed chap. “You'll think she's a sea *serpent* if we get out in that

storm to-morrow — say, I never thought about being seasick? Let's wait a day.”

“Not much,” laughed Dave. “Well, you fellows get off after the groceries, and Spike and I'll see you later. Marine Boat Works, remember. Got any money, Rufe?”

Rufe waved a hand as he jumped to the platform with Jim close behind him, and Spike and Dave followed them out of the station. Dave and the assistant leader were surprised to find Sheboygan a place of no little size and importance, but as Spike and his brother had been there before and knew their way around more or less, there was no delay. Indeed, it soon became evident that the provisions must have been ordered in some haste, for barely had Dave and Spike reached the long white boat-works buildings when they saw the other two hustling along behind, and paused to wait.

“Say, this is some blow!” exclaimed Dave a low voice. “Think we'd better try it in the morning, Spike? Whittaker! Listen to her howl !”

Gerald glanced anxiously at the sky. The storm was a bad one, from the north; in fact the gale had risen almost to a hurricane, and from where they stood they could hear the whistle of the wind among the scattered

trees and could see how, even in the sheltered haven before them, the boats tossed madly at their moorings.

“I don't know,” returned the patrol leader. “Of course, we can't go if it's anything like this, Dave. Mebbe she'll let up by morning, though.”

Reunited now, the four entered the boat-works hastily, for by this time it was nearly five o'clock. Inquiring for the manager, to whom Senator Rankin had already written advising him of their coming, they found him at work with some of his men on the skeleton of a launch. He knocked off at once to shake hands with them, in cordial interest over their trip, their uniforms and everything else. In fact, he seemed to forget all about their business until Spike recalled his mind to their boat.

“Oh, sho' !” he cried hastily. I got your dad's letter, Mr. Rankin, an' ye'll find her a pretty nice little boat. All ready — come along. We put her in the water yestiddy, an' she rides fine. Her engine goes slick as grease, too.”

“Sails aboard and bent ?” inquired Rufe.

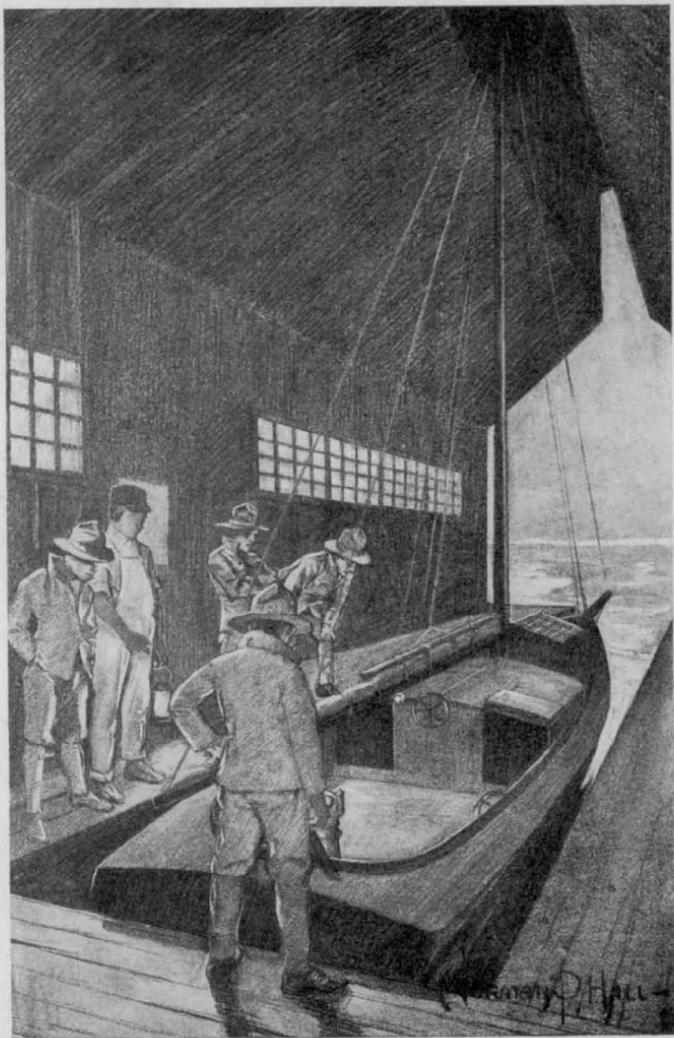
“All ready to start now, ef ye want to,” chuckled the manager, leading the way to a covered slip and

switching on an electric light, which glowed dimly under the high roof.

The four boys paused in admiring silence. Before them lay a thirty-foot craft, beautifully lined, but broad enough in the beam to be handled with perfect safety. Her mast was stepped, and her big mainsail was neatly clewed up, as was her jib. Forward of the mast was a small cabin, large enough to hold two persons with comfort, and abaft the mast was her engine. This was covered by decking, but was reached from the cockpit, which arrangement precluded any danger of spray or water flooding the engine. The manager displayed the boat with no little pride in her building.

“Four cylinder, them engines,” he remarked, bending over and throwing in the clutch, then pulling up the flywheel by the crank. There was an abrupt explosion, which rose into a smooth whir as the spark caught. “Don't she work good? Give you fellers about eighteen mile an hour, in smooth water. Gas tank for'ard o' the cabin. Now take a squint at them lockers.”

Around the sides of the boat were lockers — wide seats which ran back to the stern. They held tools, various supplies and repair parts for the engine, and a spare outfit of sails ready for bending. Spike decided promptly that they might as well leave their blankets



The four boys paused in admiring silence. Before them lay the *Sea Wolf*.

and other baggage there, and when all was put aboard they found that there was still room and to spare.

Then the manager pointed out a step for a small pole, which would hold a tarpaulin to be stretched over the cockpit when desired, so that this could either be used as a sleeping place or as a refuge in bad weather, The cushions were inflated, serving as life preservers in case of necessity.

“Think it'll be too rough to start in the morning?” asked Jim anxiously.

“No,” returned the manager. “The' ain't much sea along here, from the north. Anyhow, she's plenty broad — couldn't tip her over in a hurricane. You fellers could take her from here to Duluth ef ye wanted to, in the worst kind o' weather ! Now look at her centerboard — work it from the cockpit, see? 'Stead o' havin' to haul it up by hand, ye just use this here turn-wheel saves a heap o' labor. She don't draw more'n two feet, without the centerboard down, I don't reckon the wind'll let up much before mornin', but that won't bother ye none. By noon it'll switch around to the west'ard, mebbe, an' ye can scud right up the coast under sail.”

Dave, who promptly detailed himself as engineer,

examined the engine with unbounded delight, declared that it was perfectly familiar to him, and he gratified the boat-builder no little by his display of knowledge and appreciation. The others were no less delighted by the craft, and Spike arranged to have their provisions stowed aboard as soon as they arrived.

Then came the question of the boat's name, and the manager at once sent for a man and instructed him to paint it on without delay, The paint would be partially dried by the morning, and no great harm would be done it by water. Spike, who had a check already made out by his father, paid it over for the boat and the Wolf Patrol went out in search of supper and lodging for the night.

“Golly !” breathed Jim, as they emerged into the darkened street, “ain't she a beaut, though ! We're goin' to have one peach of a time, fellows!”

“You bet,” assented Spike vigorously.

CHAPTER IV

THE STRANGE BIRD

“Where'll we get to by to-night, Spike?”

“Kewaunee, I guess. How's Jim making it?”

“He's worse off than Dave,” chuckled Rufe, glancing forward. “She's not so bad, though.”

“I should say not! We'll not try any sailing until to-morrow, Rufe. A night on shore, or tied up at Kewaunee, will fix both of 'em, and we'll need them to handle the ropes. How 'bout grub?”

“Cold beans, crackers — ”

“We want something hot, Rufe. S'pose you get that alcohol lamp out o' the kit and warm up a can o' soup. Jim won't want to eat, I guess, but Dave's not so bad off.”

Rufe chuckled and clawed his way forward, while Spike settled down at the helm again. They had left Sheboygan that morning, and it was now nearly noon. The day was cloudy and gray and the seas were

running fairly high, but the worst of the storm had passed with the night, and by sunset Spike predicted fair weather again.

To the minds of the Rankin boys, the *Sea Wolf* was doing splendidly; though the high seas tossed her not a little, she was far from taking in any water and the engine drove her onward at a good clip. But to Dave and Jim it was different. The assistant leader was forward in the cabin, in acute misery, for he had never been on the water before and seasickness had gripped him hard and fast.

Dave managed to display more of his fighting qualities. He was seated in the floor of the cockpit, forward where he could watch over the engine and although his face was pale and tight-lipped, he was far from giving up altogether.

With every passing hour, Spike was more delighted with the *Sea Wolf*. She was running along smoothly about a mile from shore, riding the waves lightly as a duck. Spike was seated at the wheel. At the feet of the helmsman and built into the deck with a sliding lid, was a large mariners compass which could be covered up with its lid when not in use, and Spike had no trouble in steering by a chart which he had obtained the evening before. The compass was even fitted with a

tiny electric binnacle-light which could be pulled up with a hood for night steering when desired.

Rufe appeared before long with tin cups full steaming soup, and as the day was by no means warm, even Dave forced himself to partake. This was followed by cold baked beans with crackers, and the Wolf Patrol considered that it had dined sumptuously, with the exception of its assistant leader, who groaned unheeded in the cabin.

At one o'clock Rufe relieved Spike at the helm, and the trim little boat plunged onward through the afternoon. From Sheboygan to Kewaunee was fifty miles in a straight line, but as they followed the coast, the route was made considerably longer. They passed the smoke of Manitowoc before noon, and after sweeping out around the long Two Rivers promontory, turned north-by-half-east for Kewaunee.

It was five o'clock when they chugged up to a long vacant wharf and tied up overnight. Dave had recovered from his illness, but Jim had not, so Rufe was detailed to take the assistant leader to a hotel for the night, the three boys deciding to go uptown for supper and return to sleep on board.

When Spike and Dave had made all fast, they visited a

store at the end of the wharf and procured a fresh supply of gasoline, several loafers gathering around to watch proceedings. During the filling-up, one of these, an uncouth-looking individual, accosted them bluntly.

“Say, you fellers, did you see anythin' of a big bird out yander as you come in?”

“No,” answered Dave. “What kind of a big bird? Eagle?”

“I don't know just what kind, but me an' another feller seed a great big kind o' bird come up from Green Bay way an' scoot across the inlet, 'bout two hour ago. It was high up an' the clouds was thick, but it must have gone right over you fellers as you come in by the channel.”

“There're lots o' big birds,” returned Spike. “Anyhow, we didn't see it.”

“Wa'll this wa'n't no ordinary bird. 'Twas 'most fifty feet across, I reckon, and it sure went like lightnin'!”

The boys dismissed the matter without thought as they started uptown to meet Rufe and get supper. They got a fairly good meal at the hotel, where Jim was left for the night, but as they left the dining room and stopped

in the lobby to pay for their meal, they heard a knot of men gathered about the stove, who were also discussing the strange bird.

“I seed it myself,” said one earnestly. “It come up right over there where the ol' wreck lies, then it made a kind o' half turn 'way up in the air, and scooted off east. It was gettin' too dark to tell what color it was or anythin' more.”

“Bill, you been drinkin' again,” laughed one of the other men.

“Drinkin' nothin' !” came the vigorous retort. “You fellers are foolish.? It wa'n't no bird, though. It was some kind o' machine like we been readin' 'bout, that flies.”

“I seed it myself up over Menominee,” struck in another. “Yesterday durin' the big storm it come right out o' the lake an' went east, Washington Island way. They're all talkin' about it over there.”

“It ain't no flyin' machine,” chimed in Bill. “Them things can't go in storms, accordin' to the papers. Ef there's any wind at all they can't fly. It wa'n't a bird, but it wa'n't no flyin' machine neither.”

The boys listened to the discussion with no little amusement, Dave being the only one who considered it at all seriously, and the three of them chuckled over the mystified natives as they returned to their boat.

“All right,” contended Dave, “but folks up this way don't go crazy over nothing. I'll bet there was some kind o' *bird* or aeroplane.”

“Nonsense!” laughed Spike. “They got fooled by a thundercloud.”

“Not much,” flashed out Rufe. “Dave's right, mebbe.”

The argument lasted until they got asleep, rolled up in their blankets. With the first streak of dawn Spike was up and after a quick plunge they started for Jim and breakfast. On the way they stopped at a drug store whose proprietor was up and building a fire, as Rufe wanted some quinine to stave off a threatened cold.

The proprietor, who took great interest in them, was eager to talk. He volunteered his name as Doc Stiles, and finally popped out a question about the queer bird.

“My wife saw it swoop around over Green Bay yesterday,” he declared. “I tell you, it's one of those monsters from away up north, got down here by

accident ! Fellows from Fish Creek say they saw it during the big storm last week, and it went right into the middle of a thunder cloud. Lightning came out of the cloud, and off went the monster to the north, and since then nobody's seen hide nor hair of it, till yesterday.”

“What do you mean by a monster ?” queried Spike, interested in the queer druggist. Doc Stiles shook his whiskers vaguely.

“I know! I used to live in Illinois and I studied about 'em in medical college,” he made answer. “I tell you, boys, when we get into the polar regions and the middle o' Asia and Africa we'll find dinosaurs and mastodons and things like that yet. You mark my words! This here was a gigantic prehistoric animal that's been lying dormant all these years, and has come to life now. Frogs do it, and the wheat they dig out along with Egyptian mummies. If frogs can do it, why can't dinosaurs, eh? I know what I'm talkin' about !”

The boys had a good laugh over Doc Stiles while they ate breakfast and related the story to a fairly recovered Jim Baxter. The assistant leader began to take some interest in life, and by the time they untied the *Sea Wolf* and set off, was quite himself. The day turned out fine, and Spike anticipated a short run to Sturgeon Bay,

which they could easily make under sail.

None the less, the subject of the strange bird was not forgotten. After they had shut off the motor and got the sails up, a hot argument ensued. Rufe and Jim contended that the natives might have seen an aeroplane, but they could not answer Dave's objection that no aeroplane could last in such a storm. Then Spike put forward the serious contention that the theory of Doc Stiles might have some truth in it, upon which all factions combined to down him. The matter was forgotten in a burst of laughter as Jim came near to going overboard when Spike shifted the helm suddenly.

Spike wasted a good share of the morning in tacking about, making Dave and Jim familiar with the ropes and the management of the helm, and acquainting himself with the sailing qualities of the *Sea Wolf*. When Rufe took the helm, he insisted on bearing up for Sturgeon Bay, and under a stiff westerly breeze that made the boat lie over well, they sped along at a good pace. However, it was after sunset when they made the lighthouse on the point leading in to Sturgeon Bay, and getting in the sails they switched on the lights and went ahead more rapidly under motor power, tying up at the Sturgeon Bay wharf shortly after eight.

They did not go uptown until the morning, for breakfast, and left the wharf without incident. After some discussion it was determined to make Washington Island under power; by pushing the engine they could get there that evening easily, and they would have all the rest of the summer in which to sail.

“What are all those boats on the right?” cried Jim, as they got comfortably under way. “They look like a lot of bones of dead animals !”

“Bones of dead boats,” replied Rufe. “This is where all the wrecks and busted ships are taken to be repaired or else to rot into nothing. It's the Boneyard of the Lakes, all right.”

“Whittaker !” exclaimed Dave, staring at the eighteen or twenty hulks and rotted ship-skeletons. “It sure looks gruesome, doesn't it? They must have been good boats once.”

“Bet your boots,” chimed in Spike. “They've all had a hist'ry in their day. Say, Dave, we didn't get any gas; have we got enough left?”

“Sure,” nodded the engineer confidently, “We filled up at Kewaunee and didn't use hardly any yesterday.”

Spike laid a straight course on the chart for Washington Island, at the point where Green Bay merged into Lake Michigan, and the *Sea Wolf* sped on famously at top speed, flinging wings of water on either bow. More than once they passed fishing boats — cumbrous launches with wide, stub-nosed build, and the boys were overjoyed at the way their craft darted past. She was a fast boat, indeed, and it was still early afternoon when they passed Ephraim and headed for the Lake Michigan channel.

The Rankin boys, who were delighted at being in well-known waters again, told of the queer name given this channel — Death's Door. Spike told the legend of how a great war-party of Indians, paddling across to Plum Island, had been wrecked in a storm here, and of how Pere Marquette had lost several canoes here also, he had barely finished the story when the engines gave an exhausted “chug-chug” and stopped dead.

Amid blank consternation Dave made an examination and could find nothing wrong. Then he examined his oil-cups, tinkered for twenty minutes, and finally plumbed the gasoline tank forward, to find that every particle of gasoline had been used up.

“Must have a leak somewheres,” he announced, and

Spike nodded, gazing around.

“All right, fellows,” said the leader. “Get up the sails, and we’ll hit for the life-saving station on Plum Island. We can get gas there.”

With a light breeze behind them, they were soon under way again, and bore up for the little islet, only three miles away, which lay so directly in the center of the channel that it had been named “Plumb Island,” to be later shortened to “Plum Island.” On their left lay Washington Island, and they might easily have finished their run under sail, except for the very light breeze to avoid danger of getting in after dark, they ran in to the life-saving station, the Rankin boys shook hands with their old friends the life-savers and after twenty minutes they chugged away to the north and their home port.

It was just four o’clock when the *Sea Wolf* danced into Detroit Harbor, on the south end of Washington Island. Senator Rankin’s cottage lay to the right, near the summer homes of a few other Chicagoans, and Dave and Jim examined the white building among the pines with great interest. Opposite were thick woods; and directly ahead of them was the long dock, the store and hotel and other buildings, with numerous boats on

the shore or at their moorings.

“We'd better head direct for Anderson's, Rufe,” ordered Spike, watching the shore through his glasses. “Our dock may not be ready, and we'll put up at the hotel for to-night anyhow. Prob'ly the life-savers phoned over that we were coming.”

“What's that?” exclaimed Dave quickly. “You mean telegraphed, don't you?”

“No,” chuckled Rufe. “There's a telephone cable from here to Plum Island and on down to Sturgeon Bay, Dave. Lots o' things here you don't read about, eh? But you just wait ! There's Bo Anderson coming down the dock now.”

“Half-speed, Dave,” commanded Spike, and the engine slowed down. “Jim, get up on the bow with that boat hook and fend us off the dock when we get in. I'll tend to the lines myself.”

Five minutes later they floated gently up to the dock to greet the genial Bo Anderson, proprietor of the hotel, while others of the Icelanders crowded down to meet the voyagers. The *Sea Wolf* was tarpaulined and tied up, Dave and Jim were introduced and the four Scouts wearily found their shore legs again as they stumbled

up the dock to the waiting rocking chairs and Mrs. Anderson's bountiful meal. Spike arranged for sending a message home announcing their safe arrival. The journey was over and their summer's work had just begun.

CHAPTER V

GETTING DOWN TO WORK

Shortly after six the next morning, a shrill whistle screamed outside the window of the boys' room, and an instant later all four stood shivering at the window.

“Bet it's a fire !” said Jim excitedly.

“N-no, it's a f-factory,” shivered Dave. Then Spike and Rufe burst into a yell of laughter, pointing to the dock.

“It's the *Sailor Boy*,” gasped Rufe at length, as Spike slammed Dave in the back with a pillow. “It's Cap Hart's boat. She ties up here every night an' runs over to Menominee every morning. That whistle wakes up the Islanders so's they can get aboard her in time.”

At that instant Dave, who had hurled a retaliating pillow, went staggering back under a second shock, caromed into Rufe, and Jim seized the opportunity to empty a pitcher of icy water over the two as they went to the floor.

“Wow!” yelled Rufe, and a startled shriek broke from

Dave. Jim made a dash for the door.

“Run for it!” shouted Spike, hurling another pillow at the two and then doubling up with laughter. “Run for it, Jim!”

Jim, by this time frightened at the muffled threats of vengeance, wasted no time but caught up his clothes in one hand and put out the door, slamming it after him. With a yell of fury Dave and Rufe were after him there came a sharp click, and they vainly shook at the door.

“So long!” chirruped the voice of Jim Baxter. “I’ll see you — my stars! There’s Mrs. Anderson!”

Those inside the room heard a sound of bare feet pattering down the corridor, and then silence. Recalling Jim’s scanty garments, the three Scouts laughed until they were out of breath, then made a hasty toilet and were dressed by the time Jim came back to the door. Dave and Rufe promised to forego vengeance and he unlocked it, and so sheepish was his countenance that another spasm of laughter seized the rest that lasted until long after they were at the breakfast table. Then, breakfast finished, there was a rush for outdoors.

The morning was perfect, and the delighted boys were

overjoyed at the scene before them. Just at the foot of the lawn stretching down from the hotel was an old boat lying on her side, with two or three dismantled fishing schooners; beyond was the long dock, with the *Sailor Boy* at the end, beside their own tethered boat. At this moment Bo Anderson joined them, and Spike turned to him eagerly, asking about their boathouse.

“Yes,” replied the hotel-keeper, who also acted as caretaker of the cottages during the winter, “yes, she's built, but she's over among the trees and you can't see her from here. Got her painted last week, all ready to move in.”

Deciding to take the boat over at once and get the cottage opened up that day, Spike ordered his command to the wharf. While on their way down they passed a pile of cases, standing as they had been unloaded from the *Sailor Boy* the night before, evidently. Dave stopped with an exclamation.

“That's funny! he pointed to the top box, which was covered with labels. “Hey, Rufe — You've studied French; don't that say 'The Astra Co., Paris, France'?”

Rufe strode over and after a glance, nodded.

“That's correct, Dave. What about it?”

“Why, that’s the big French aeroplane company! I’ll bet a dollar some one’s got an aeroplane up here!”

“Oh, you’re crazy!” scoffed Spike, who was busy with the lines of the *Sea Wolf*. “Here, get that tarpaulin off, Dave, and start up your engine. Go help him, Jim. You take off that stern line, Rufe. Never mind about the boxes. It’s somebody from, Chicago sendin’ up summer supplies in second-hand packing-cases.”

And as this seemed the logical explanation, no more was said about the matter.

After they had puffed across the harbor to the Rankin cottage, the boathouse disclosed itself. It was placed down among the trees, as Bo Anderson had said, and was a good-sized building. The dock at one side of it was sadly in need of repair, though piles and planks lay near at hand; Anderson had explained the night before that the work had been delayed until the boys arrived, and Spike decided that they would finish it up themselves, as it was not a hard job.

“We won’t put the *Sea Wolf* in the boathouse,” he remarked as they slowed up, “but we’ll keep her at moorings a little way out from shore. We’d never be able to unship her mast every night to get her in.”

They eased in to the dock, and in five minutes the *Sea Wolf* was again made fast, while the four Scouts started to the boathouse. Rufe had obtained the key from Anderson, as the structure had been built in place of a smaller boathouse used in previous years, and they entered from the land door. Then, the other doors opening beside the dock were flung wide, the sunlight streamed in, and explorations began.

Before them, in her shallow basin, lay a smaller launch, the *Edith*. This was the personal property of Edith Rankin, and not to be touched by the boys; but on one side was a light dory, and overhead on the rafters reposed a lake-cruising canoe. This the boys at once proceeded to get into the water, to use in going about the harbor. She was Morris-built, with false keel, and was provided with sail and paddles.

“Well, I guess we're all right here,” declared Spike, when they had taken her out beside their large craft. The others were eager to go for a paddle, but he sternly forbade it at present. “We've got plenty of work ahead, fellows. Rufe, I'll detail you and Jim to fix up the buoy for the *Sea Wolf* right now. Put it about twenty feet out, in the deep water, and use this old cork-raft we had last year. Dave and I'll open up the house.

So, leaving his brother and Jim, Spike led Dave up the path to the white cottage that was set back from the shore a hundred feet. The place was beautiful in its spring freshness, but Dave concluded that when they had finished with the flower beds, got the trees trimmed, the dock repaired, and the large two-storied cottage itself in shape, they would have done a good amount of work. In which he was quite right.

There were only three downstairs rooms in the cottage — an immense living room, with a ten foot fireplace, an equally large dining room, and kitchen while all around ran a wide veranda. The windows were boarded up, but Spike unlocked the door and routed out some tools. By the time Rufe and Jim had placed the anchor and buoy, the lower windows were unboarded and the house was airing.

Upstairs there were eight bedrooms, with a large bathroom. Set behind the boathouse was the powerhouse, which pumped water to the cottage, and this would have to be put in working order at once. By the time the house was entirely open, however, it was noon, and all four piled into the canoe and paddled back to the hotel for lunch.

Before returning, they bought an outfit of provisions at

the store and now Dave made inquiries about the boxes which had perplexed him that morning. Bo Anderson grinned and jerked thumb at the island behind.

“Some city feller has rented the old Olafsen farm up at the north end,” he said. “He gets them boxes all the time, and I send 'em up by wagon. Lives all alone.”

“City fellow?” repeated Spike in surprise. “He's not a resorter?”

“No — he's been there since the ice went out. Guess he's kind o' silly in the head, though he's a good-lookin' young chap at that. He won't never talk, an' hardly ever comes down to the village.”

This being all Bo Anderson could tell, the four departed for home and soon forgot the strange resorter in their work. Dave pitched into the powerhouse but did not get the pumps to working until nearly dark. Meanwhile, Rufe set to work getting the bedding out in the air, while Spike and Jim cleaned out the lower rooms thoroughly and got some wood chopped for the fireplace. This latter was an easy matter, since the virgin forest ran down to the back of the house, the cottages being strung along the shore.

That evening they started in their housekeeping, Jim and Rufe taking turns as cook, for both were proficient in the art. After dinner they settled down before a log fire in the big living room, and voted unanimously that they were going to enjoy themselves immensely.

An immense amount of work can be accomplished in a surprisingly short time by four eager boys, and with the next morning Spike determined to throw all hands to work on the dock. Then, by having everyone turning in to help on the grounds under Rufe's direction, that would next be cleared up by common consent Jim was placed in command of the housekeeping arrangements and Dave was put in charge of all machine and boat work. With this planned out, all four got into bathing suits and went to work. The dock was built on small piles, hand-driven. Most of these were intact, but a few had to be reset in place and driven down level with the rest. Then there was new planking to be nailed down, where the ice had torn away that of last year, and rotten boards, replaced.

It was a stiff job, but under Spike's practical direction the entire work was finished by the late afternoon. Weary, blistered, sunburned, but thoroughly happy, the four Scouts resumed their uniforms and lay around the fire that evening, for the nights were still bitterly cold.

“It isn't going to be so much work after all,” observed Rufe with a chuckle. “I guess dad hadn't much notion of how much ground we could cover once we got started! Say, Spike, shall we lay off to-morrow and go fishin'?”

“No,” decided the leader. “You've got a badge for botany, so you'll take charge o' fixing up the grounds to-morrow. O' course, if you and Jim want to get up early and go out in the canoe,” he added with a grin, “I'm not objecting. Dave and I are going to be up at four and take the dory outside the island ourselves for some *big* fish.”

This precipitated a rush on the fishing tackle, with which the cottage was well furnished, and an early getting to bed. Before daylight Dave and Spike were off in the dory, going outside the semicircular island which enclosed the harbor, and the other two were not far behind.

The split in the forces was occasioned by the divided opinions of the Rankin boys. Rufe was addicted to still-fishing and line-trolling for bass, while Spike would consider nothing but trolling for larger bass or pickerel. When they returned at seven, Dave and Spike had pulled in a nine pound pickerel and two

large bass, while the others came back from the east channel with a dozen perch. With such results for two hours' fishing, Jim and Dave admitted that the wildest tales of their respective chums had some basis in fact.

The entire day was spent in going over the grounds, as Spike was anxious to get the heaviest part of the work cleared off before they began to play. The beeches near the house were trimmed, the flower beds dug up and planted, and the summerhouse set among the thick trees was cleaned out thoroughly. By evening all four were too tired even to take another fishing trip, and they turned in at an early hour.

Nor was there any fishing the next morning, for another spring storm had swept down from the west. This was Jim's day, however, and the cottage was given a good scrubbing, the summer "trimmings" were broken out and installed on the veranda and about the house, and the bedrooms were put ready for occupancy.

The storm kept up that night and the next day, but when the others rose for breakfast, they found that Spike had been out alone in the canoe and had returned with two bass. He refused to allow the others to venture forth, however, and as he was in full command, and was virtually responsible for their

actions, they had to agree.

“Tell you what we will do, though,” he said when they were going over the pumping engines and boathouse, under Dave's direction, that afternoon. “If it turns out decent to-night we'll get Old Midge, Bo Anderson's horse, and tote the canoe up to Black Lake. How's that, Rufe? We'll get some great old fishing, eh?”

“You bet!” conceded Rufe, and proceeded to explain for the benefit of the rest. “Black Lake's a deep little pond at the other end o' the island, fellows. There's only one or two played-out farms around there, and mebbe we'll see old Gissliver Gisslafsson, 'cause his farm is — ”

“Huh ?” broke in Jim. “Say that again will you? Giss who ?”

“Gissliver Gisslafsson,” repeated Spike with a grin. “That's an oldtime Iceland name, ain't it? He's got a place up there, where he keeps sheep for his mother.”

“Look here,” exclaimed Dave disgustedly, “what you kids handing us? This talk about a horse goin' fishin', and keepin' sheep for mothers — ”

“It's a fact, Dave,” laughed Rufe. “We'll need a horse and wagon to haul the canoe to the lake. Gisslafsson's mother is an old Iceland woman, who doesn't speak English, and she wasn't happy without her spinning wheel. So Gissliver got some sheep, and he keeps 'em up there on pasture, just to supply her with wool for her spinning. Some sight, believe me! She's a fine old lady, though. Wait till you see her!”

“Ain't there any boats on that lake?” asked Jim.

“No,” grinned Spike, “But there's fish for further orders. We got to go up through the woods, and it's some haul — 'bout four miles. Want to come over an' see Bo to-night, Dave? That old horse of his is the limit, but she's the best one on the island. You can't go near her without gettin' bit, so you fellows watch out.”

“Sure, I'll paddle over,” agreed Dave, with a doubtful glance at the tossing waters.

He was as good as his word, however, and under Spike's guidance they reached the hotel and made all arrangements, as Andersen declared that it would be clear weather in the morning, or by noon at latest. Upon returning, they decided to make a trip of it and stay overnight at the lake, in order to bring back a big catch of fish to the hotel; so, having made up their kits

in readiness, they got to bed early, as they would have to be up before the day.

CHAPTER VI

GISSLIVER GISSLAFSSON.

There are four harbors on Washington Island — Detroit, at the south, Jackson, to the east, Washington, on the north, and West Harbor. All these are indentations in the island itself, Detroit Harbor being the largest and best, and it was to the northwest corner, between West and Washington Harbors, that the boys were bound.

Jim was perched precariously on the canoe, which stretched over the end of the wagon for a good six feet, only the weight of the assistant leader holding it down. The others tramped along beside the equipage, and as they had left Anderson's well before sunrise, they figured on reaching Black Lake in time for some good early fishing. Spike and Rufe acted as guides until the dawn broke, when they turned aside from the main road to the trail that led through the woods to the lake itself.

“I thought you said this horse was a bad actor?”
 exclaimed Dave, trudging up beside the horse, Midge, and giving her a brisk slap on the neck.

The next instant Midge's head swung around, two rows of bared yellow teeth flashed in the dawning, and Dave emitted one startled yell that woke the echoes as the teeth clamped shut on his shoulder.

Jim jerked up on the lines vainly, and the two Rankin boys looked back with a shout of laughter. Before they could come to Dave's assistance, however, the latter landed his fist on the nose of Midge, and tore himself free.

“Whittaker!” he said ruefully, feeling his shoulder and twisting his neck to gaze down at the ripped khaki. “The blamed old brute!”

After that Dave marched behind the wagon, but it was long before he was to hear the last of that incident.

Before the sun had cleared the hills, they debouched on the lake itself, all but hidden in the thick timber. The paddles for the canoe had been brought, together with a large section of canvas to serve as a tent that night; and after their dunnage was unloaded they tied Midge with a picket-rope and ran the canoe down to the water's edge. The smallness of the lake was a disappointment to Dave and Jim, but the latter had hardly put out his light trolling line when he gave a grunt of amazement and began to haul.

“Swis-s-sh!”

Up from the water leaped a fish. To the excited senses of the Scouts he seemed fully six feet long — though Spike afterward declared that he was more like four — and he curved up glittering in the sunshine, then was gone like a streak, and Jim hauled in his empty line.

“Whittaker!” gasped Dave. “What a whale! Was he a 'lunge, Spike?”

“No,” put in Rufe, as his brother nodded excitedly. “There ain't any muskies around here, Spike! He was prob'ly a big pike — ”

“Look out!” yelled Jim. “I got another!”

So he had, though it was by no means a whale, and Rufe got a strike at the same instant. Within an hour they had pulled in several fine bass, two pickerel, and half a dozen large perch, while the Rankin boys declared stoutly that there were also trout in the lake.

Nothing was seen of trout, however, and after exploring every weed-bed and paddling over every likely-looking spot, the four turned back to make camp, about ten o'clock. Save for a few which they

killed on the spot for immediate consumption, their fish were kept alive, as they had promised Bo Anderson a good mess on their return.

“We'd better make a first-class scout camp,” volunteered Rufe as they swept slowly back toward their halting place. Firewood's an easy matter around here — hello! Why, where's Midge? I'll bet a dollar she's wandered back home!”

“She's lookin' for Dave,” chuckled Jim. “Likes the taste of him — quit, you big rube!”

For Dave had deftly tripped his paddle through the water and sent a wet spray over the redheaded lad. Spike, however, voiced his anxiety from the stern as he searched, the shore ahead.

“Rufe's right for once, fellows. Blamed if I can see hide or hair of old Midge! Like's not she's busted her rope and gone off on the home trail.”

“That means more trampin', then,” said Jim disgustedly. “She's prob'ly got back to Detroit Harbor by this time.”

“Unless she's struck another trail,” added Spike. “There are all kinds o' trails in these woods — leadin'

out to the farms around. Well, pile out, everybody.”

The four leaped out on shore, to find that Midge had indeed vanished, and that her picket-rope had evidently slipped off through careless tying. As Rufe and Jim were not anxious for a tramp, Spike left them to clean fish and make camp, while he took Dave in pursuit of the horse.

Both boys had badges earned for knowledge of woodcraft, and in the sandy soil the tracks of Midge were not hard to follow. These did not go on the back trail, however, but struck into a smaller trail that branched out.

“Bet she's goin' to Gissliver's,” speculated Gerald Rankin. “He's got that cleared patch we saw down beside the lake, only his house is over toward the bluff. If it wasn't for trees, we could see the big lake from 'most anywhere along here.”

Indeed, the trail ended suddenly in a cleared pasture stretching over a hill. Half a dozen sheep were grazing near by, and in front of them was a small farmhouse. A man with grizzled beard and wide shoulders was examining Midge, who was contentedly nibbling at the new short grass.

“Hello, Mr. Gisslafsson!” cried Spike cheerily as they advanced. “How's everything this year? Shake hands with my friend Dave Hartley. We came after Midge — down at the lake.”

The islander crushed Dave's hand in a big grip, smiled, and spoke heavily.

“So! I am glad to see you again. Yes, all is well, but you will get drowned very soon in your camp. A storm comes, my mother says.”

“Storm?” Dave glanced at the clear sky, incredulous. “Don't look like it!”

“My mother knows,” said the big man, shaking his head. “Storm to-day.”

“Then we'd better get back,” and Spike took Midge's picket-rope. “How about a mess o' fish, Mr. Gisslafsson? We'd be glad to bring one up, later on.”

“My mother would like it, thanks,” nodded the big man, and saw them off with a splendid smile and a hearty wave of the hand.

“Where's his mother?” asked Dave, looking back at the scene curiously. “Is she a weather prophet?”

“Sure,” grinned Spike. “She has a little house all her own, just over the hill. She doesn't speak English; but if she says storm, it'll storm. You wait and see!”

They reached the camp again to find that Rufe and Jim had made good use of their time. A few fish were cleaned, the fire was blazing, cooking, utensils were laid out, and a space was cleared beneath a big beech for their sleeping-place. Spike nodded, hitching Midge.

“Good work, fellows. S'pose we have a swim, eat, then fix up camp and take a mess o' fish up to Gissliver?” and he related their conversation with the islander.

His plans were agreeable to all, though their swim was brief, owing to the ice-cold water of the little lake. Jim and Dave scoffed at any thought of storm, but Rufe unexpectedly backed up his brother.

“If she says storm, it'll storm. I tell you, Spike! Let's haul up the canoe in reg'lar storm-fashion, then go over with the fish. To-night, storm or not, we can cast from the banks and pull in some bass.”

Spike nodded. After their meal, the canoe was hauled

up and turned on her side, facing the lake. The canvas was stretched from the beech to the canoe, in order to run off rain overhead, was staked down securely, and their dunnage was disposed inside the canoe. Then, with half a dozen perch, they started back through the woods on their visit.

On the way, while they talked about these Iceland people who had settled on this island in the lake, Dave's thoughts reverted to the magazine article they had read on the train coming up to Sheboygan. It did not seem at all unlikely, he argued, that a party of Vikings had come down through Hudson Bay, indeed, the record that had been found had been accepted by scientists.

“Let's ask the old lady about it,” suggested Jim, though Rufe scoffed openly. Before they could say more, they had arrived, and Gissliver Gisslafsson shook hands all around. He set out at once with them, and over the brow of the hill they found another little farmhouse. Out in front was seated an old, wrinkled, white-haired woman at her spinning wheel, who rose to meet them with a few words to her son in a strange tongue. After the introductions to Jim and Dave, the islander picked up the spinning wheel and carried it inside, and the old woman motioned the boys to enter, which they did.

The interior of her house was plainly furnished, but comfortable. When their fish had been stowed away in some dim recess, Spike caught a look from Dave, and asked the islander if he had ever heard of any Vikings coming down to Wisconsin. To their great surprise, he nodded seriously.

“My mother says so. I will ask her.” He turned, and spoke at length in the odd language that seemed much like English, yet was so different. The old woman brightened up, and with smile at the boys she broke into a flood of speech. When she had finished, her son translated heavily and slowly.

“My mother says that it is so. There was in Iceland an old story handed down which says that long ago thirty of our people, with four Frieslanders, visited this country and made a great trip in small boats, with their trading-goods. Finally they had a battle with the savages, many were killed, and they had to leave their goods and fly.”

“Why, that's exactly the story on the stone!” cried Jim, and they told the islander about the magazine article. He, nodding gravely, repeated it to his mother, who spoke fast and furiously in reply. By this time the boys were in great excitement.

“She knows all about it,” came the slow translation. “The story was handed down. One of my own ancestors was on the expedition.”

Suddenly the old dame bent down and began drawing something in the sanded floor of the room, After a moment Gissliver explained the drawing, while the boys crowded around.

“See, here was their camp — on the shore of a little lake between two hills. It is said in the tale that this place was two days' journey from the big water. I think it was somewhere in Michigan, or Wisconsin, maybe. My mother says that twelve of the men were killed in the fighting, and were buried here, on this island.”

Dave, looking down over Jim's shoulder, suddenly gave a start of surprise. Then he seemed to take no more interest in the affair, but settled back into a chair near the fireplace, and commenced scribbling something on a piece of paper, with a stub of pencil. Finally the old lady finished her rude map, and her son went on.

“My mother says that the story says that the camp was made here, on the shore. Close beside the camp were

two very high black stones, higher than three men's height. That night the traders buried all their trading-goods between those two stones, then fled from the place hastily. Only ten of them got back to the Viking ship and reached Iceland again. One of the ten was an ancestor of my mother's, and he told his son, thinking that some day men would go back to get the trading goods.

“And did they?” asked Spike eagerly.

“No,” Gissliver shook his head. “At least, no one ever heard of it being done. You see, when the men who had been there died their sons and grandsons would not know how to find the exact place. It was never done. There are many places with black rocks.”

“And when did all this take place?” spoke up Rufe. “How long ago, I mean?”

The burly islander turned to his mother, and for a little they talked together in the odd language. Finally Gissliver turned about again frowning in a perplexed manner.

“It is hard to say — my mother counts back so many grandfathers, not so many years. But I have figured it

out, and I think that it must have happened six hundred years ago — somewhere about the year 1300.”

The boys stared in amazement.

“And that legend has been handed down all this time just like that?” said Jim in an awed tone. “It don’t seem possible!”

“Yes,” nodded the islander. “It is handed down from father to son, many times, exactly the same each time.”

“That’s queer, too,” remarked Spike thoughtfully. “You know, there was a magazine article — ”

He stopped abruptly as Dave stretched out a foot and administered a hard kick.

“Ouch!” he whirled angrily. “What’s the matter with you?”

“Sorry, old man,” cried Dave, who had gained his feet hurriedly. I was stiff with sitting down, and stumbled — mebbe,” he added below his breath. “I tell you what, Mr. Siss — Gissliver — Mr. Gisslafsson, I mean,” he stammered; “could we ask your mother to

spin for us, or would she mind? I'd like to see her do it mighty well.”

The islander smiled and turned, but at his question the old woman gave a quick look around and shook her head.

“My mother says it is too dark now,” he said.

“Dark!” cried Spike. “Why, so it is! Say, there's a storm comin', do you fellows know it? We'd better hustle!”

Rufe sprang to the door, and flung it open, to start back in dismay, Instead of a bright sunny afternoon outside, they were greeted by a chill blast of air and a gust of fine rain that had just begun to sweep down.

“My mother said it would storm,” chuckled the burly islander. “It is storming.”

CHAPTER VII

THE MYSTERIOUS HANGAR

Old Mrs. Gisslafsson had been right. Seemingly out of a clear sky had burst a black thundercloud, with a terrible gust of rain and wind that swooped down on the island and hid all things.

The big islander soon had a fire blazing in the stone fireplace, and the little house leaped into cheerfulness with his prediction that the storm would be nearly over in an hour. Dave had remained sitting over that drawing on the sanded floor, seemingly lost in thought the other three drew up around the fire, talking and chatting, and finally Spike was astonished to find that the afternoon was well on the wane.

“Storm's about over,” he exclaimed, gazing out of the little window at one side. “I guess we'd better be piling along, fellows.”

“Are you all alone up at this end of the island?” asked Jim. The big man nodded with a smile as he knocked out his pipe.

“Yes, now. The Olafsen farm over toward the bluff,

has been deserted for two years. There is a queer man there now, who sleeps all day and works by night.”

The boys exchanged glances quickly, and Dave looked up, remembering what Bo Anderson had said about this “city feller” who had rented the Olafsen farm, and the boxes he received.

“What does he work at?” queried Rufe. Gissliver shook his head solemnly.

“I do not know. It is none of my business. He pays his money and is good-looking. We leave him alone and he leaves us alone. That is all.”

“Yep, that's all,” exclaimed Dave, his eyes shining queerly, as he leaped up. “Let's be on the move, Spike!”

So the boys bade Gissliver and his mother farewell, and left the place. The storm was practically over, the rain had ceased, and they hurried along in some doubt as to how Midge and the camp had survived. Suddenly Dave voiced his thoughts.

“Say, Spike, where's that Olafsen place? Let's go and take a look at it.”

“Huh?” The patrol leader stopped. “What's the matter with you, Dave? You look as if you'd landed on a real idea! Look at the eyes of him, fellows!”

Dave halted, grinning a little.

“I have! But you wait — I'm not going to spring it on you yet awhile. I've got more ideas than you think, at that. Let's go an' see that chap on the Olafsen place. If he ain't an aviator, I'll eat my hat !”

“Aviator!” scoffed Rufe. “Aviators don't fly by night!”

“Well, you heard what those men all said comin' up here?” returned Dave stoutly. “About the big bird? That druggist — Doc Stiles — ”

“Wow!” shouted Jim. “Prehistoric grandmothers! You're crazy, Dave.”

“All right,” retorted Dave, squaring his shoulders. “You take us there, Spike.”

Spike took off his hat and rumped up his black hair, hesitating.

“Well,” he assented at last, it's no more'n a half mile

from here, so I'm willing. One of us ought to get back to camp and build a fire, though. We'll get wet as sin going through the woods."

"I'll dig for camp," volunteered Jim hastily. "Walking ain't in my line."

"All right — come along," ordered Spike, leading the way.

They followed the back trail for a little distance, until they came to a side road cutting up through the woods. Here Jim went on to camp alone, while the other two followed Spike into a maze of trees, by the overgrown and disused side road. After ten minutes of rapid walking they saw the trees thin out ahead, then a splendid scene opened upon them.

They stood at the brow of a hill, the trees ending abruptly fifty feet farther on in a grass sprouting pasture, well cleared of stumps. At one side, sheltered by the trees from the heavy west and north winds, stood three buildings: a house, a rickety barn, and a newer structure that was larger than both put together.

Directly ahead stretched the cleared strip of ground, on for perhaps five acres, like-a path lined out between the trees by some giant; and at the end came a strip of

rocky ground, then the blue waters of the lake. At that instant the sun emerged again, low in the west, and Spike pointed to the lake.

“There's Michigan, fellows, and there's a big bluff there. Can't see it from here.”

“Ain't this a dandy place to run out an aeroplane?” asked Dave excitedly and pointing to the largest and newest of the three buildings. “There's your hangar, too !”

The others did not reply, but Spike led the way forward toward the house. It appeared deserted, the barn was falling to pieces, but the hangar — if it was a hangar — was a solid building of new boards, without a window but with two immense doors that were closed and padlocked.

“Well, let's see who's here, anyhow,” and with that Rufe walked up the steps of the rudely constructed house and hammered at the door. The blows resounded with a dull hollowness that spoke of desertion within; no answer came, and after other knockings and a good five minutes of waiting, all three were forced to the conclusion that the mysterious occupant was away. Dave wandered off to the large building, and his sudden shout called the rest.

“Hey! Come over here!”

He was standing in front of the big door, bending over. Spike joined him, with his brother, and Dave pointed to the ground. By this time the sun was sinking fast and twilight was close upon the woods.

“Look there! If those ain't aeroplane skid tracks I'm a Chinaman!”

Spike emitted a low whistle. There, indeed, were marks that ran out and merged with the grass; also there were footprints which had not been washed out by the rain, as the tramped down space around the building was protected from the wind by the forest beyond.

“There's oil, too,” and Rufe pointed excitedly to the inclined boarding leading from the ground to the floor of the building. The dark stains were unmistakable, and when Dave got down and smelled them, he rose excitedly.

“Oil — and gas somewhere around! Whittaker! We've struck it boys!”

“I b'lieve we have,” said Spike slowly, looking

around. “And I bet a dollar the aviator's gone — he must've got hit by that squall, out over the lake!”

All three, looked at one another with swift dismay; then Rufe laughed out.

“Rats! What about that prehistoric bird, eh? This guy's used to storms. I'll bet he's either an inventor, or else he's practicing up on storm weather. How's that for a guess?”

“Pretty good,” assented Dave after a moment.

“Whittaker! Let's wait here and nab him when he comes back!”

The result of this audacious suggestion was blank amazement on the part of the Rankin boys. They stared at Dave, hardly believing that he was in earnest, yet of that his manner left no doubt whatever.

“By golly!” breathed the startled Rufe. “I don't — know — ”

“Bully idea!” cried Spike, recovering his breath. “There weren't any keep off signs that I could see.”

“And it's too dark to look for 'em now,” chuckled Dave, for it was indeed growing dark fast. “I can't see any reason why we haven't the right to wait for him!”

“He's liable to be a crazy inventor,” objected Rufe seriously. “Unless we keep hid, he might go after us with a gun — ”

“Oh, nonsense!” scoffed Dave. “There ain't any warning-signs up, are there? Of course, he hasn't been bothered, just like old Giss-what's-his-name said; but all the same, I'll bet he's a good scout. It won't hurt Jim to wait in camp by himself.”

“Well, we'll not hide,” asserted Spike, who had by this time made up his mind to follow Dave's suggestion. “We'll sit down on his front porch and see what we can see. We won't wait very long, though; I'm getting cold.”

Rufe's objections being downed, the three moved back to the ramshackle house and camped on the excuse for a porch. It was undeniably cold with the sunset, and the darkness made it colder. Dave suggested that they enter the house and light it up, upon which proposal Spike set a firm negative.

“Nothin' doing in that line. I'll give this guy half an

hour, then we'll go home and come over to call tomorrow. You keep your shirt on, Dave.”

“I'd like to have my blanket over it,” chuckled the other. “Say, I got somethin' else up my sleeve, fellows. You know that map the old lady drew? I got that down by heart. Also I took notes of what she said about the Viking camp.”

“Huh?” grunted Rufe, “What for?”

“Oh, just f'r instance. I've got a hunch, that's all.”

“Well, there's nothin' to it,” said Spike decisively. “It's just a tradition, and that's all. You can't trust those things.”

“Well, I noticed it chimed pretty well with that magazine article,” flashed up Rufe, in quick opposition. “Those old Icelanders thought too blamed much of a cargo of trading-goods to take any chances on forgetting where they was stored away, believe me! You can bet they figured on going back there sometime.”

“Why didn't they put it on the stone, then?” asked Spike. “That magazine article about the stone said nothin' about any cargo bein' hid away.”

“Naturally not,” put in Dave. “The Vikings wasn't spreadin' the news that way! No; they buried their men, hid the stuff, put up a grave-stone an' dug for home, what was left of 'em. Well, we can talk that over later — mebbe. Did you keep that magazine?”

“Sure — it's up at the cottage, on the lib'ry table,” returned Rufe, and for the present the subject was closed. Dave's thoughts were busy, however, as he sat with the cold creeping into his bones. The wrinkled, white-haired old Iceland woman had impressed him strongly; he had felt at once that she was repeating no wild tale, but one that had been handed down from generation to generation, intact. Then, the fact that it corresponded so exactly with the magazine article had caused him to take quick action, and his night schooling had given him enough shorthand to jot down the important facts as Gissliver had translated them.

It looked to him as though there might be something in it. He knew, however, that if he put it up to the other three he would be laughed down immediately. Rufe had sided in with him just now only from his natural opposition to Spike.

So Dave sat and looked out into the darkness, while

down from the stars crept cold that chilled all three to the marrow. Suddenly, even while he shivered, Dave began to smile to himself; his smile widened to a grin, and he finally chuckled.

“What's the m-m-matter!” chattered Spike.

“Oh, I was thinkin' about Jim,” returned Dave, grinning again. He had been thinking about Jim indeed, but also about something else.

“I wish I was where Jim is,” grunted Rufe disgustedly. “I'm going to walk around a bit. Come along — get limbered up!”

As this was sensible, the others followed him. Spike looked at his watch and groaned, for they still had ten minutes of the allotted half hour to wait.

“Hungry!” he declared. “Golly, but I'm hungry! We missed the fishing, we're cold clear through, and there's nothing doing in the aviation line.”

“You wait,” retorted Dave. “This Hartley boy ain't starting what he can't finish, believe me! Anyhow, we can catch more fish to-morrow morning than we can tote home.”

This argument being true and unanswerable, Spike said no more. Five cold and dreary minutes passed, and the disgusted Rufe was urging an immediate start for home; it was after seven, there was supper to be made ready and the camp to prepare, and Jim was waiting for them.

“Come on, Dave,” said Spike. “We'll make a trot home an' get warmed up — ”

“Whittaker!” exclaimed Dave abruptly, staring at the sky. “I saw it!”

“What?” cried the other two together, forgetting their cold.

“A star — a new star! Bet a dollar it's him — wait a minute — there it is again! See there — it's moving!”

And following his pointing finger, the others gave a cry of surprise. Sure enough, there was a moving light among the stars, out over the lake.

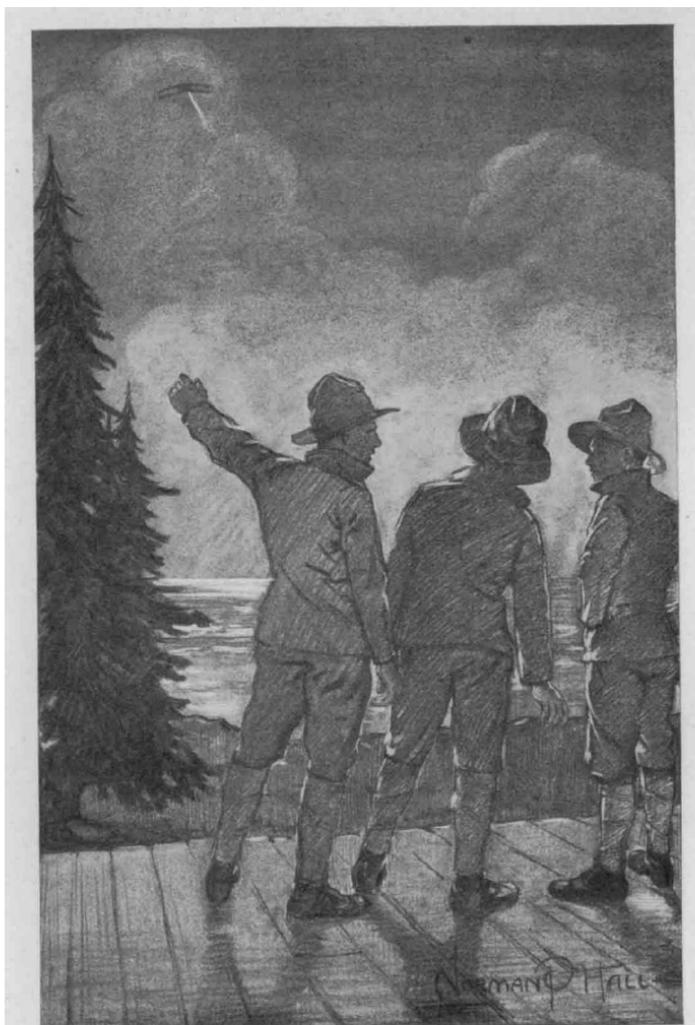
“Don't stand out here,” ordered Spike swiftly. “Get back to the porch.”

The others obeyed, still watching the sky. The light

grew larger, then seemed to hang motionless. Suddenly it fell in a swoop, and almost before they realized it, there came to them the humming of a motor, and they could see a black speck around the light.

“She's coming down!” breathed Rufe.

And down she came — with a fierce, quick swoop that landed her neatly on the ground before the house, her light flinging down a circle of radiance that was cut off at once as she landed. Dave had been right — there was an aeroplane on Washington Island, and the Wolf Patrol was about to capture it.



"I saw it!" exclaimed Dave abruptly. "A star—a new star! Bet a dollar it's him!"

CHAPTER VIII

CAPTURING MUGGER

“Get back to the porch,” whispered Spike authoritatively.

They obeyed. Out in the cleared space before them, a black mass was visible in the starlight; then a light appeared — an electric torch that moved here and there in flashes. It seemed to Dave that the aeroplane's lights were directed downward, to admit of her making a safe landing in the darkness, for as the black mass slowly swung around there was no light except the electric torch.

Slowly the black mass bore around toward the hangar. Then the electric torch moved forward, as its bearer went ahead and opened the doors of the hangar. For a moment the boys saw the big doors swing back, then all was lost in obscurity as the corner of the house shut out the aeroplane and it vanished within the hangar.

Dave, whose excitement had banished his shivers, dug Spike in the ribs, and received a warning kick in return, delivered with much vim.

“Lay low,” said the leader below his breath. “When he comes we’ll just salute him and see what he says.”

The electric torch reappeared, then snapped off. A moment later the three could make out a dark shape advancing toward them, and Rufe caught his breath sharply. At the sound, slight as it was, the figure stopped, then came forward again. As the moment approached, Dave regretted vividly that they had ever come near the place.

Then he saw Spike rise erect, and the figure of a man was close upon them. As the aviator put his foot on the first step, Spike came out of the shadowed doorway, saluting.

“The Wolf Patrol of Boy Scouts reports a capture!” he exclaimed sternly, but his voice quivered involuntarily. And well it might.

Almost with his first words the man leaped back, then the starlight glinted on something in his hand — and as he realized what it was, Dave let out an angry yell.

“Hey, there! Put that gun away!

“Step out here,” said a hard, tense, but strangely likable voice. “Get out here in the light and do it

quick, unless you want to stop a bullet!”

The three boys wasted no more words, but stepped out, and as they did so the electric torch snapped out in a flood of light that blinded them. Then it vanished, and the aviator gave a long whistle.

“Whew! Boy Scouts, by hemlock! Oh, what a joke on Joe Mugger! Wow!”

And to the intense surprise of each boy, the aviator went off into a roar of laughter, which ended as abruptly as it began, when Spike spoke out again.

“Yes, sir! We didn't mean to intrude, but we stayed around to see you — ”

“Oh, I understand, son!” came the chuckling answer, and Dave drew a long breath of relief. He knew at once that the aviator was not going to prove troublesome.

“Here, you boys — wait here a minute till I get a lamp going.”

With a quick leap the man was up the steps fumbling at the door. Again the electric torch flashed out, then

the door was opened and the tiny flare of a match became visible within.

“Come along, you Wolf Patrol!” sounded the cheery invitation.

It needed no repetition. Conscious now that they had not come out so badly after all, though he had been no little startled by the sight of that revolver, Spike led the way inside, where a lamp was now burning. By its light they saw for the first time what the mysterious aviator looked like.

He had pushed back his close-fitting hood, and his face was revealed as rather young, clean-cut and determined. His black eyes snapped merrily as the boys entered, and as he pushed back his curly dark hair with one hand, he waved the other toward the fireplace on one side.

“If you fellows are Boy Scouts, get busy and build a fire,” he ordered briefly. “I’ve got to get out o’ these duds and get some grub. Wade in, now — wood’s outside. I’ll be back in a jiffy for introductions.”

And with that he strode from the room, leaving three mightily surprised boys staring at each other.

“Whittaker!” grinned Dave. “Let's get a move on!”

Spike nodded and dashed outside, after the wood which they had seen piled beside the house. Dave, looking around, saw that the room was furnished only with a couple of old bookcases, well filled with books, and a table and chairs. Before Spike returned with an armful of wood, Dave and Rufe had ready in the fireplace some slivers of kindling whittled from pieces of pine that had stood in the chimney corner.

The, wood, protected from the rain by its position, blazed up almost at once, and when a quick step sounded in the hall the fire was well under way. Spike uttered a brief hope that Jim would wait patiently in camp, but there was no use borrowing trouble over the absent member.

“Hello!” came the cheery voice, and they looked up to see the aviator standing in the door-way, wrapped in a big red bathrobe. He was carrying a Thermos bottle and other things, and set them down on the table with a subdued crash. Instinctively each one of the three liked him at once, so winning and frank was his smile.

“I always leave a lunch — got some hot coffee all ready in the bottle,” he remarked as he deposited his burden. Then he stepped forward and faced them.

“My name's Joe Mugger, friends. Welcome to my humble residence!”

“Mine's Gerald Rankin,” returned Spike, grasping the, proffered hand. “I'm the patrol leader. This is my brother Rufe, and this Dave Hartley, Mr. Mugger. Glad to meet you.”

“We thought you would be sore over our waiting for you,” volunteered Dave, but Joe Mugger only laughed and swept them with his keen, searching black eyes.

“Got to make the best of it,” he said somewhat ruefully. “Sore? I'm not sure — though I'm not glad, exactly. But wait till I get some hot coffee — I'm about frozen.”

Turning to the table, he unscrewed the cap of the bottle and raised it to his lips without ceremony. When he had emptied it, he motioned toward the chairs standing about the room, drew one up to the table, and began making a light meal, talking between bites.

“Where, you fellows come from?”

Spike related how they had come to the island at this early date, and also told the strange stories they had

gathered while on the way up, about mysterious birds and prehistoric creatures. This caused Mugger to go off into a gale of laughter, in which the boys joined through the sheer contagion of his hearty manner.

“Well, you've got a good one on me,” he confessed finally. “You see, boys, I picked this place out purposely because it would be without tourists and absolutely out of the world for another month or so yet. I'll tell you quite frankly what you know already — that I'm an aviator.”

“That's easy to guess,” grinned Spike. “What stuck us, though, was your flyin' around in a storm. What you got — an invention!”

“No,” and suddenly it seemed that Mugger's face looked older, graver than before. “This machine of mine is different — it's a Dunne aeroplane, which is an automatic-stability machine invented by a Britisher named Dunne. It was one of the first put out, and the English government promptly scrapped it after unconvincing trials. Dunne sold French rights to the Astra Company, and our own government recently bought two of the machines from them. I've got one of 'em here, learning it and experimenting with it in connection with some of our own patents by the summer it'll go down to Fort Meyer, and we'll try it

out there when I've got all the parts perfected.”

The three boys listened to this amazing speech in open-mouthed astonishment, but there was no doubting the earnestness of the aviator. Now they saw that he was not nearly so young as he had seemed at first glance, and there were strong lines about his mouth that had — suddenly leaped into prominence.

“Then you mean that it's a sort of combination machine?” asked Rufe.

“That's it,” nodded Mugger, finishing off a hastily constructed cheese sandwich. “It can't be blown over by the strongest wind, and anyone who has sense enough to drive a motor car can handle it. Instead of dropping like an ordinary machine, it simply rolls in the air like a boat on the waves. I'll show it to you some time — there's nothing secret about it, except my present experiments, and I guess you Boy Scouts will keep your mouths shut, eh?”

“You bet,” said Spike instantly. “Were you up all afternoon?”

“I went up at the first sign of a blow, as I've been doing every day lately. It was pretty cold, though. I got over Menominee, and thought I'd freeze.”

“Menominee!” cried Dave. “Say, you must have gone some!”

The aviator smiled, and lugged his chair over nearer the fire. “Well, I’ve got a bit of speed,” he assented with twinkling eyes. “The trouble with Dunne’s machine was that it was slow, at first. But we’ve improved matters a good deal, or rather, I have. That’s what I’m paid for — to try her out, take all the risks myself, then turn her over to the government. If it goes through, I get an appointment as government aviator, which will be a big thing for me.”

“I should say so!” exclaimed Spike, regarding Mugger with rather awed respect. “And she’s a success, eh?”

“Fine, fine! All but the lights — that’s what I’ll have to solve now, how to fix the lights so a landing will be safe for anyone, in the darkness. I can do it, but I’m an old hand at the game; if this machine goes through, we’ll have an aeroplane that we can put any army officer into and let him fly safely, with an hour’s practice.”

With this, Mugger abruptly declared that he wanted to talk no more “shop”, and changed to the subject of the

patrol's present status and plans. He listened with keen interest to a more detailed account of their trip up from Sheboygan, and laughed heartily when they related what Bo Anderson had said of him.

“So they think that I'm crazy, because I do most of my flying at night, eh? I usually build a big fire out there at the edge of the bluff, to guide myself back by, and I I'm working on a small searchlight that I'll throw light down below me. Well, these people around here are mighty fine folks hard-working, big-boned Vikings, every one of 'em. And they're good people to know!”

“You bet they are,” assented Dave quickly. “They're honest, and that kind o' folks ain't easy to find in a bunch. And they're Vikings, all right! Old Gissy's mother was tellin' us to-day — ”

“Eh? Whose mother?”

“Gissliver Gisslafsson's grinned Rufe. “Dave can't get that name straight.”

“I don't blame him,” chuckled the aviator. “I couldn't myself for quite a while, and I've been here for two months, ever since the ice was out of the bay.”

“Well,” resumed Dave, “I was saying that she was

telling us to-day about a trip that some of her folks made, hundreds of years ago. They handed down the yarn back in Iceland, and handed it down complete, too; she's got it all at the tip of her tongue, and believes it."

"Why, sure!" Mugger nodded, gazing into the fire. "That's common, in Iceland. There are people there whose families settled the island a thousand years back, and these descendants of theirs still hold the same ground the settlers held."

Dave stole a glance around, but he saw that neither Spike nor Rufe had given any great attention to his words, and said no more. He was quite content to go slow and not to rush matters; his plan had leaped full-fledged into his brain that afternoon, and he was too wise to spoil it by any undue haste.

None the less, as he settled back, his eyes widened slowly. The others talked on, but Dave stared down at the fire, and what he saw there caused a quick flush to leap into his face. His eyes danced excitedly, his fingers clenched; was it possible that it could be done? Why, the whole thing fitted in perfectly — as if it had been laid ready to his hand! It could not have been better if he had mapped it all out himself from the start! But — was it possible?

“Well, we got to be going,” declared Spike suddenly. “I forgot all about Jim. We’ll have to be up early, too. It’s awful good of you, Mr. Mugger, to treat us so white, and you know that we didn’t have any intention of — ”

“Oh, nonsense!” exclaimed Mugger, shaking hands all over again with them. “I know that perfectly well, boys! Now, if you chaps would like to see an exhibition flight, come over some time next week — say Wednesday. I guess I can put you up here overnight.”

“We’d be mighty glad,” said Rufe quickly. “And since your machine is so safe — ”

“ — why couldn’t you take a passenger?” finished Dave eagerly. Mugger laughed, watching them.

“Well, that can come later,” he returned. “It’s a pretty serious matter, you see, and there’s lots to be considered. You show up Wednesday, along about noon, and we’ll have some fun. And now, so long, fellows! Hope you get lots of fish in the morning!”

“Good luck to you,” chorused the three, and they tramped away into the wet woods, with a last good-night yell at the black figure in the doorway behind

them.

“Whittaker!” breathed Dave. “That turned out pretty well, huh?”

And the decision was unanimous.

CHAPTER IX

WORK AND TALK

“Say, Jim, leggo that clutch and let her drift a minute. I’ll fend off the tow — I want to ask you about something.”

Dave and Jim were out in the *Sea Wolf*, coasting along outside the harbor and picking up stumps that had washed ashore with driftwood. As part of the patrol’s work lay in providing enough firewood to keep the big living-room fireplace going for the remainder of the summer, this had been brought down to a systematic basis. Driftwood stumps making the finest blaze and lasting the longest, the four boys took turn about in going out with the launch, while the other two would cut shorter and smaller wood for kindling in the forest.

Behind the launch were fastened three “whoppers” — great black stumps, half burned from some forest fire, which they had located up the shore and were towing in. The *Sea Wolf* lay out beyond the southwest point of the island, and in among the trees they could see the half-ruined “Folly” — an immense log house, which had been built by the original settlers. The idea had been that all the settlers would live together, and when

this proved impracticable, the big log house had fallen to ruins.

As Jim obediently threw off the clutch, Dave fended off the following tow of stumps with the boathook, and when all were finally drifting safely, he turned back to the red-headed lad. Jim had already been told about their visit to the hangar, and was looking forward with keen anticipation to the following Wednesday.

“I wanted to ask you something,” began Dave seriously, stretching out to the roll of the slow breakers and watching his puzzled friend. “Now, you remember that yarn the old lady told — the one about the Vikings and that cache of stuff?”

“Sure,” nodded Jim quickly. “Biggest yarn I ever heard!”

Nothing taken aback by this, Dave only rubbed his nose.

“Sure it is,” he agreed promptly, then fished under the thwart and pulled out a magazine, turning over the pages until he came to a map. “But take a squint at this. This is the map of the place where they found the stone, see? Well, here's your two hills, one on each

side, as the old lady said. You know, the Vikings buried their dead men out on that island; that's where the stone was found, though most of the island has washed away by now, and the lake is mighty shallow. Is that right?"

"Looks good so far," and Jim began to take some interest. Dave grinned covertly.

"Well, look a-here. Gissy's mother said they went back to where their camp was, on the shore beside two big black rocks higher'n the rest, remember? Then they buried their stuff in between the rocks — got that? All right. Now, don't it look to you as if that place could be found mighty easy? We — "

"Say, what you drivin' at?" demanded Jim quickly. "You don't believe — "

"Sure!" and Dave stared him in the face earnestly. "Here's the place — " and with that he produced a pocket map of Michigan. "Here's the river, Cedar River, where the stone was found; the old lady said they went up two days' journey from the big water, remember? Here's the lake — right where they found the stone. B'lieve me, Jim, if those scientific sharps that got the stone knew what *we* know, there'd be an expedition on the job next week!"

With this triumphant conclusion Dave saw at once that the red-headed lad had capitulated, for Jim was staring wide-eyed at the maps. He pursued his advantage at once.

“Now, here's the point, Jim. If anything's said about us goin' over there in the *Sea Wolf*, you kind o' back it up, see?”

“Golly! It'd sure be a great old trip!” breathed Jim excitedly, and Dave went to the stern with his boathook.

“Start her up — slow! Come on, we got to got back. Mebbe it's all a fake anyhow, only I had a suspicion that Spike would propose the trip, see? Full speed — we got 'em!”

And after that Dave was careful not to broach the subject again, at least for the present, to the assistant patrol leader.

The next morning, as Spike took the canoe to visit Anderson's for some provisions and the mail, Dave suggested to Rufe that they go outside the harbor after some big perch, which the islanders reported to be biting well along the shore. Rufe assented gladly, and

after they had pulled in four two-pounders, Dave forgot to throw in his line again, but lazily pitched it into the bow and leaned back comfortably.

“Too bad Spike don't take any stock in that Viking yarn,” he observed, looking up at the sky.

“Huh?” grunted Rufe sharply, with a quick look. Dave, however, stared innocently at the clouds. “You still got that thing on your brain?”

“Who — me?” Dave glanced at him, blankly surprised. “I was talkin' about Spike. I only said, it's too bad he doesn't take any stock in it. Mebbe it ain't true anyhow.”

Rafe paused to haul in a small perch, and rebaited.

“Well” he returned slowly, “I don't know, Dave.”

Encouraged by this, the wily Dave pursued his way cautiously.

“Of course,” he said judiciously, “it ain't true. It couldn't be.”

“Huh? Why not?”

“ 'Cause it's too blamed probable!” shot out Dave craftily. “You know, the old lady spoke about the two big hills, and the lake, and the island. Wait a minute — I b'lieve that old magazine's around here, somewheres.”

He explored the stern of the dory, and finally drew out the magazine in question. Rufe tied his line around the thwart and came aft to look.

“Yes,” went on Dave, “you see, this article says that the lake is between two — why, here's a map of it all! There's the hills, and the island. Of course, it ain't prob'ble that the two big black stones would be there where she said the Vikings buried their stuff — ”

“By thunder, I don't see why not!” burst out Rufe excitedly. “The men that found that stone and explored around there wouldn't know about this yarn, would they?”

“Not likely,” assented Dave, mentally hugging himself.

“Well, they wouldn't be lookin' for any buried stuff, then, nor black stones either! Say — I'll bet a dollar'nd a half that the stuff's there right now, Dave!”

“Oh, you're crazy!” scoffed Dave. “Look out — you got a fish!”

“Blame the fish!” Shouted Rufe. “Think of what we could find over there — and the fun!”

“Well, let's get back home,” returned Dave, throwing down the magazine. “Of course, accordin' to that map we could get up the river easy in the *Sea Wolf*, but — oh, there's no use goin' over all that, Rafe. I tell you what. You lay low, an' mebbe I can put a bug in Spike's ear. Then, if he suggests the trip, you back it up, see?”

“Sure! Oh, glory, yes!” panted Rufe excitedly, and Dave grinned at the sky. Things were going far better than he had dared dream could be the case. In his own mind there was no doubt whatever that the goods deposited there in the year 1312 by the Vikings were still to be found — unless they had rotted away. This, too, was not very probable, because the Icelanders would cache their goods carefully.

According to the magazine article, the stone had been found on a small island in a shallow widening of Cedar River, between two hills, some fifteen miles from Lake Michigan. The hills were prominent, being the only ones close by. The stone had borne an

inscription stating that a party of Icelanders had visited the place during the year in question, and had buried their twelve dead comrades there. After no little discussion both in this country and in Europe, the stone had been accepted as genuine proof of a visit of Icelanders to this country in pre-Columbian times.

The startling coincidence between this story and that of old Mrs. Gisslafsson had struck Dave at once. She too had spoken of a lake between two hills, and an island on which the dead men were buried. Now, for the first time, a sudden and very disturbing thought seized Dave, and he voiced it as they were pulling up to the cottage dock.

“One more thing, Rufe,” he said, looking back over his shoulder as he paused at his oars. “Mebbe some o’ these people have been over there and got the stuff!”

“Huh?” Rufe was taken aback for a moment. Then he rallied quickly. “No, sir! It ain’t likely, in the first place, ‘cause they don’t get any magazines an’ wouldn’t know about that stone bein’ found. Second, they wouldn’t know where the exact place was unless they *did* hear ‘bout the stone, see? Third, they’re too busy scrapin’ up a fair living to bother ‘bout those things. No, sir, it’s there waitin’ for us!”

And Dave was convinced beyond any further doubt.

Now, however, came the hardest part of his work — getting Spike around to the point. The real burden of the whole expedition lay on Spike's shoulders, and Spike was fully aware of that fact. He was responsible for the conduct of the patrol, for the safe-keeping of the cottage and boats, and for the *Sea Wolf*; and a trip over to the mainland would cause him to weigh things seriously.

However, Dave did not hesitate long. On Tuesday, while they were planning to visit Muggler the next day, he and Spike were weeding out a flower bed. Suddenly Dave looked across at his grimy patrol leader, with a wide grin.

“Whittaker! Don't you wish we could do something up here, Spike — something real big, that'd get into into papers back home and show 'em the old Wolf Patrol wasn't dead? Wouldn't it boost the patrol up a heap when we got back, eh?”

“You bet,” assented Spike emphatically. “But chances like that don't come often.”

“No, that's right,” nodded Dave dreamily. “If we'd only found that Viking stone, now, or something like

that, eh?"

"Sure. But we aren't scientists. I wish we *could* wake things up, though!"

Dave went on working for five minutes in silence. Then he looked up again.

"Do you know, Spike, it struck me kind of funny, for a fact?"

"Huh? What did?"

"Why, I was reading that magazine article about that Viking stone — wait a minute, I saw it lyin' around." And rising, Dave went to the porch and by some strange good luck found the magazine ready to his hand. He came back, shuffling over the pages.

"You remember what Gissy's mother said about those folks having a fight when they was camped on a lake between two hills? An' about buryin' their dead on an island?"

"Well, what about it?" demanded, Spike challengingly.

"Oh, nothin' much, only this article — here's the map — it says that the Viking stone was left on an island.

Here's two hills, too. Funny coincidence, ain't it?"

Spike wiped his hands on his overalls and inspected the magazine map, frowning.

"That does look queer!" he remarked at length. "I don't s'pose it's the same, though. Let's see — didn't this stone have a date on it?"

"Mebbe — the translation's there," returned Dave carelessly. "You know, Gissy figured out that it'd been somewheres around 1300."

Spike turned over the pages swiftly, and found what he was looking for. Then he looked up with a quick start.

"Say, Dave! That stone was dated 1312, d'you know it?"

"It was, eh?" Dave resumed his weeding. "Well, that stuff wouldn't be there now, anyway; the tradin'-goods she talked about, I mean."

"Quit work, there — we've done enough for this morning," commanded Spike, rising. Dave grinned. "Dave, what did she say about two black stones?"

"Why, let's see!" Dave was immersed in heavy

thought. “Seems to me she said their camp was by two big black stones that stood up higher'n the rest. Was that it?”

“You're right — I remember now!” Spike began to breathe hard, staring at Dave, his black eyes shining. “Why couldn't we go over there, find those black rocks, dig for the stuff — ”

“Oh, shucks!” responded Dave. “Of course, it'd make all kinds of a sensation back home, if we found it, an' the old Wolf Patrol'd get all kinds of advertising, but prob'ly the stuff's rotted away by now. I'd like to try it, sure; but we couldn't do it.”

“Why not?” demanded Spike instantly. “We've got some sense, haven't we?”

“I guess so. But we'd never get Jim an' Rufe to look at it that way, Spike. I don't know's it could be done, myself!”

Spike stared down at the ground for a moment, then looked up suddenly.

“See here, Dave! You know that if I propose it, Rufe'll kick on general principles — he's all right down at bottom, o' course. I don't know 'bout Jim, but he'll

stick by Rufe, usually. Anyhow, if I put it up to 'em at a camp fire to-night, you back it up, will you?"

Dave assented, hiding his exultation, and Spike continued thoughtfully.

"It looks good to me, Dave! Besides, it'd make a fine little trip for us, and we'd have heaps of fun. Let's see — could we get up to that place between the hills in the *Sea Wolf*? If we could, it's a go!"

Dave, who had no doubt whatever that Spike would answer his own question by an examination of the maps and the charts aboard the *Sea Wolf*, strolled off into the house to clean up. After five minutes he glanced out a window to see Spike vigorously paddling out to where the big craft was moored, and turned away chuckling.

"Whittaker!" he murmured. "If there was a merit badge for bein' a tactician, or whatever you call it, I guess I'd get one on the strength of this business!"

CHAPTER X

DAVE GRINS

“I've got a proposal to make, fellows.”

The Wolf Patrol was grouped before the big fireplace in the living room, where a driftwood stump was roaring merrily. As Spike, looking rather doubtful, made this statement, Dave continued to gaze steadily into the fire; Jim glanced quickly at him, but got no response, and Rufe looked at this brother queerly.

“Another fishing trip, Spike?”

“No, not exactly,” returned the patrol leader slowly. “You see, I've got an idea that if we could put through some real first-class stunt, the news would get around down home and next fall the old Wolf Patrol would be on its legs again. Rufe and I'll be out of high school then, and I'd like to leave the patrol booming.”

“Uh-huh,” assented Rufe soberly. “We'd ought to do that, anyhow, Spike.”

Seeming somewhat astonished by this unlooked for acquiescence, Spike hesitated.

“Well, I been going over the evidence — about this Viking business, I mean. Mebbe you fellows haven't thought of it, but old Mrs. Gisslafsson told a pretty straight yarn the other day. The queer part of it is that her story, handed down by tradition, backs up the scientific stuff that was found on that Viking stone.”

“Yes,” assented Jim, his flaming head looking fire-red in the warm glow. “I thought about that too, Spike. Only, the scientists didn't light on anything about the trading-goods being there.”

Dave grinned, but went on watching the fire. Things were coming fine!

“Well, here's the idea,” broke out Spike. “The old lady told about those trading goods. She said they were buried between two big black rocks, which were about as high as three men — say eighteen feet, eh? It's a cinch that stuff was never found.”

“Huh?” Rufe looked up quickly, not being able to repress his natural instinct entirely. “That don't stand to reason, Spike. Indians might have dug 'em up, for one thing, For another, they might have rotted away — whatever they was. Then again, the two stones might be gone, by now. You can't tell what might have

happened — ”

“And again, they might not,” interposed Dave quickly, with a warning glance at Rufe. The latter grunted, but subsided.

“Well, o' course you can't expect to look for buried treasure an' turn it up first flop,” answered Spike soberly. “But we know where the place is. All we've got to hunt for is those two big stones, and dig between 'em. There must've been a good lot o' stuff to make it worth while handing down the story, an' I don't b'lieve the Indians got to 'em. We'd take chances on their rotting away. I can't see why we couldn't take a trip over there in the *Sea Wolf* an' prospect around. It wouldn't hurt anything.”

“No-o,” added Dave slowly, “it wouldn't hurt anythin' I guess.”

A little silence fell on the room, broken only by the crackling of the blaze. Dave, without looking up, was aware that Jim was watching him half suspiciously, but he carefully kept all exultation from his face, and finally the suspicions of the red-headed lad were quieted.

“What d'you think about it, Rufe?” Jim asked cautiously. To Dave it was apparent that each of the three was feeling out the others; each one was anxious to go, but thought that the other two would be overwhelmed by the seeming absurdity of such a trip. And who is not afraid of being laughed at?

“Why, it looks good to me,” returned Rufe, to Spike's utter astonishment. “Of course, I don't say the story isn't fishy, but I don't say it don't look as if there might be something in it, too. We'd sure have a bully time on the trip.”

“You bet,” said Jim. “Wouldn't take so long, either. The mouth o' Cedar River is only about twenty miles from here, or maybe more.”

“So you've been looking it up yourself, eh?” Spike shot him a quick glance. “No, it's not very far. We could sail over there in a morning easy, camp out for a day or two, after we got up the river — that'd be the hard part, though. If you fellows look at a chart, you'll see that Cedar River is the crookedest thing ever. There's no lake showing on the maps either, but it's on that map in the magazine article.”

“It ain't a reg'lar lake anyhow” struck in Dave, feeling that the critical moment had arrived. “It's just a

widening of the river like, across a shallow bottom. According to the chart, it's twenty-two miles, about, to the river mouth from here. Then we've got to figure that the Vikings went up to where that stone was found — fifteen miles along a shallow, twisty stream. Mebbe the *Sea Wolf* can get up, and mebbe she can't, but it's up to us to see. We can start along some morning, sail over to the river, then do some fishing and tie up overnight at the town o' Cedar River. It's a lumber town, prob'ly, and we can start upstream next morning. If it's a lumbering country the logs will all be floated down by this time o' year and the river won't be so shallow after all.”

The other three favored him with curious glances, and it was Spike who finally broke silence, voicing the thought that had been in the minds of all.

“Dave seems to take it for granted that we're going. Are we?”

“I'm willing!” grunted Rufe, and the, red-headed boy nodded after him.

“Sure, I guess there's no doubt about Dave, is there?”

At this Dave looked around, with a slow grin breaking over his stolid face, and as he read a new suspicion in

Spike's features, he hastened to send it flying with a quick change of thought.

“No, I'm willing. 'Specially because there ought to be trout up that Cedar River, and Spike's some keen on trout-fishing, I guess.”

“You bet!” and the patrol leader beamed.

“When'll we go? To-morrow?”

“Well, that stuff's been there for six hundred years,” said Dave dryly. “I reckon it'll wait a couple more days. I want to go over and watch Mugger fly to-morrow, myself. I've got a hunch that he might take us for a trip in the machine.”

“Yes,” added Spike quickly, “and I want to see that machine, too!”

With that the talk promptly switched to the subject of aeroplanes and aviation, in which both Spike and Jim held merit badges. Dave held electricity and automobiling badges, while Jim ran to carpentry, photography. and printing. Both Rankin brothers held seamanship badges, Rufe held a life scout badge besides, and Spike was going after his star the following autumn.

After locating several books on aviation, which the senator had been using during the previous summer, the boys managed to find a short description of the Dunne aeroplane. It was practically the same as Mugger had described it, except that a sketch in the book gave an idea of its aspect, which was that of an inverted “V” flying in the air.

Spike was no little disappointed to find that it was a biplane, for he had had great expectations of going up in a monoplane, or “dragonfly.” When the article went on to state that the machine was very heavy and very slow in the air, not even the fact that Mugger had been experimenting along newer lines, with added improvements, could restrain the general disappointment.

“Oh, shucks!” exclaimed Spike disgustedly. “I was looking for one o’ those fine dragonflies — ”

“Yes,” grunted Rufe, “the kind that kills more airmen than all the rest put together! Not much. I like to see ’em, but if I’m going to fly I’ll stick to something a heap safer’n a monoplane, for a while yet!”

This turned the tide again, and the argument ended in the decision that while Mugger’s machine might be

slower, it was infinitely safer and was more apt to inspire confidence in an amateur.

Now came the question of when they should take the trip over to the mainland. Here, however, Dave interposed and suggested that they leave the matter open for another day or two, until they saw what turned up.

“I got another idea workin' in my head,” he admitted at length. “No, never mind what it is — we'll see later. Let's talk over the matter with Mugger. He's got a level head, and he's a good scout too.”

“Sure — mebbe he'd go along,” added Spike. Dave stole a quick glance, but the patrol-leader had spoken carelessly, and no one paid any great heed to his words. Dave drew a breath of relief.

Before they went to bed they decided to tramp up to the aviator's — in the morning, stop for lunch along the way, and arrive there shortly after noon, Jim wanted to go around the island in the *Sea Wolf* and land at the northern harbor, but the others were too glad to be able to get out in the woods to listen to him.

With the morning they were up early, for a general furbishing up of equipment. Spike produced a new

khaki coat, with its gay stripes one of red and two of white, as he had served for five years — and they removed the wolf-flag of the patrol from its place aboard the *Sea Wolf* to its rightful staff, for this was to be a visit in style.

Before they got started in the canoe for Anderson's, Jim relieved the monotony of the day by taking a header off the dock in full outfit — blankets and all, due to his incautiously trying to step through instead of over a rope. When he had been picked out there was nothing for it but to go ahead, substituting dry blankets from the house for his roll, and odd garments furnished by the other patrol members for his uniform. Consequently, the assistant leader was in a very irritable frame of mind for most of the day.

They had brought in some perch that morning, which they took along to cook for lunch on the way, and halted about eleven o'clock, still a mile from Mugger's place. Over the cooking, Jim got into an argument with Spike, Rufe chipped in and made it three-sided, and so avidly did the red-headed lad fan the flames that Dave became alarmed lest real strife should arise. Therefore, taking their bag of flour, he caught Jim around the neck with one hand and gently rubbed the flour into the flaming red hair with the other, while Jim went into a wild rage that was all unavailing.

When the last of the flour was gone, the grinning Dave released Jim and took to his heels. As he had anticipated, the assistant leader was after him instantly, while the other two stayed behind to recover from their laughter and get the camp in shape. Dave kept up his flight for a quarter-mile, then halted and let Jim come up. The latter had run out most of his ill humor, and Dave silenced the rest at once.

“You got to cut this business out, Jim,” he said soberly. “You blamed near got Spike an' Rufe real sore back there — that's why I chipped in. Now chop it out; we can't have any scraps on, or ill-feeling. It isn't right.”

Jim stared at him for a minute, panting, but realized fully the force of Dave's argument. At last he nodded.

“You're a slick proposition, Dave!” he returned, with a grimace. “I'll be careful after this, sure. But you're a slick one all right. I'd give a good deal to know how you worked that Viking trip business! Oh, I can smell a rat, believe me!”

“Well, ain't you glad we're going to look up that Viking stuff?” demanded Dave.

“Of course I'm glad! Only — ”

“Well, you ain't got any kick coming then, have you?”

Dave grinned, all his good-humored, strong face breaking out slowly into mirth. Jim stared at him, then his own quick smile flashed out, and he stuck forth a hand.

“Shake, old man! I'll not let a word out o' me — shake!”

And with that they went back to restore harmony, which was easily accomplished by this time.

With lunch out of the way, they took up the trail through the heavy woods once more and without further incident arrived at the old Olafsen farm. This was different-looking now to the three who had seen it before, and entirely new to Jim; for out in front of the hangar was standing the aeroplane itself.

And it was undoubtedly a queer-looking affair — a biplane shaped something like a V, with the aviator's seat at the apex. However, the boys wasted no time looking at it, but hastened on to the house. As they tramped up the steps, the door opened and Joe Mugger appeared, wearing old khaki clothes.

“Wolf Patrol reports arrival, sir!” and Spike saluted with his patrol flag. To his surprise the aviator returned the salute, then pointed to his left sleeve.

“Got a little surprise for you here,” he laughed, his eyes dancing over their astonished faces. “How does that look to you?”

Dave craned forward to see a scout's badge of green on the aviator's sleeve just below the shoulder. Without a word all four boys saluted again.

“Well, come in!” At the cordial invitation, they stepped in and disposed themselves around the front room, still too surprised to say anything beyond introducing Jim. “You didn't expect to find any scout masters running around loose up here, eh?”

“I guess not!” returned Spike. “Where's your troop?”

“Haven't any now. Up until last winter I was scout master of the Fourth Detroit Troop, then I went into this aviation affair with the government and left Detroit for good. So, as I had this old uniform along, I thought I'd wear it for your benefit to-day!”

Suddenly Dave leaned forward eagerly.

“Are you open to engagement, Mr. Mugger?” he asked. “I mean — do you want a job as scout master with the Wolf Patrol? I guess we'd be a heap tickled to have you!”

The aviator hesitated a moment, smiling, and glanced around.

“Why, sure!” he returned. “But — we'll see if it's a unanimous request, first!”

The yell that went up left no doubt of that. And as the others crowded around the new scout master in a burst of enthusiasm, Dave looked out of the window at the aeroplane, and grinned again. He felt “mighty good,” as he phrased it to himself !

CHAPTER XI

IN THE AIR

“Have you chaps had lunch yet?”

“Sure — we stopped on the way,” returned Spike.
“How's the aeroplane to-day?”

“Working fine,” was the hearty response.

“Let's look her over.”

Joseph E. Mugger — shortly to be titled Lieutenant J. E. Mugger, if all went well — was the full appellation of the aviator. He urged the boys to “make it Joe,” but although they felt perfectly at home with him, this they could not do very well, more especially as he was now officially scout master of the patrol.

All five left the house and approached the aeroplane. The aviator had already ascertained that the scouts knew quite a little about the machine, in a general way, and he gave a gratified nod when they told about finding an account of it in a book.

“Yes, but that described the original Dunne machine.

I've changed this one quite a bit, as you'll see. For example, this is a specially constructed Gnome engine and propeller, of one hundred and twenty horsepower, and the framework and braces were turned out for me by the Curtiss people. However, here's the original idea.”

Instead of being before the aviator, the propeller and engine were behind him; but as Muggler went over the machine in detail, it lost its queerness to the eyes of the four boys.

Owing both to the V-shape of the aeroplane and to the arrangement of the controlling flaps at the rear of the wings, the Dunne machine had an almost perfect automatic stability, since no gust of wind could overturn it. The pilot had only to direct it, and was not bothered with balancing.

The machine was a large one, measuring forty-eight feet across and having seats for two passengers behind the pilot. There were landing wheels under the pilot only, each wing having spring skids, and the seats were aluminum-enclosed. As the machine stood on the ground, its nose pointed up at a sharp angle, and the pilot's seat was a good eight feet from the ground.

“That's one difficulty — climbing up,” laughed

Mugger, pointing at the high body towering above them. “However, that's a minor matter.”

“How 'bout gas?” asked Spike, peering about with a critical eye. “That's a mighty small tank you got behind the seats, there!”

“That's the oil tank,” explained the aviator. “Here's a flat tank for gasoline underneath the body — and when you get up into the car you'll see that the seats and flooring are cushioned. Those are specially made cushions, each filled with gasoline and so arranged that by turning a cock the flow is on. They're only for emergency, however; that tank underneath is a good deal larger than it looks.”

For half an hour the four boys were all over the machine, until at length the pilot sent them to the wings and got the aeroplane twisted around, facing the level strip of cleared ground that ran straight onward to the lake.

“I've got that small searchlight fixed up with dry batteries,” and he pointed to the contrivance which they had already inspected, beneath the apex of the car. “We'll try that out to-night, but I want to make a trial run now — out and back, that's all.”

“All right,” announced Dave, who had settled himself in one of the passengers' seats. “Come on up — we'd better be going!”

“Huh?” Mugger looked up blankly. “Get down out of there, Dave!”

“Why, aren't you going to take me up?” inquired Dave, poking his head over the side with a surprised air. “What'd you promise when we were over the other night?”

“I didn't make any promise, you rascal,” laughed Mugger.

“Well, ain't it safe?”

“Of course, but — ”

“Then climb up here and don't waste time talking,” said Dave, and settled back comfortably. “I'm the one that's running risks — not you!”

The others had listened to this colloquy in amazed silence, and now awaited the outcome.

Mugger, realizing that Dave was in earnest, or seemed to be, stared up at him for a brief moment, his good-

humored face looking set and hard. Spike confessed afterward that he expected Dave to “come out o' there a-kiting,” but suddenly the sternness on the young aviator's face changed, and he, shot a wink at Rufe.

“All right, then,” he cried gayly, and began to climb up from the rear of the car. “I was a little doubtful, because the engine isn't working very well and a couple of those braces were damaged yesterday. But I'm willing if you are.”

“Hey? What's that?” Dave's head appeared suddenly, and his face wore a startled look. “You say the engine ain't working?”

“Oh, it's apt to stop now and then,” cried the aviator, who was climbing into the car over Dave's shoulder. “Here, fasten down that strap — ”

“I guess I won't go up to-day, after all,” returned Dave. From below, the others could see the aviator force him back into his seat.

“Look out there! Fasten that strap! No time now to back out!”

The engine was fitted with a self-starter. The three Scouts on the ground, who had cleared away from in

front of the machine, saw Dave, white-faced and desperate, try to get up, then his voice drifted down as the first explosions of the motor tore out and drowned everything.

“Good-bye, fellows! Get out the *Sea Wolf* if we don't come back — ”

The other three, who had caught the joke, gave a wild yell as the explosions droned into a steady hum. Slowly the aeroplane began to move, then swept out across the pasture toward the rim of rocks.

For an instant the laughter of the three behind died away, as it seemed that the machine would not rise. Then, as though demonstrating her pilot's perfect control, she lifted lightly and rose on a steady line of ascent, while the three behind sent up yell after yell.

Dave, however, was having the most wonderful moment of his life. As the pilot had started the machine, he had caught a quick grin, and he knew instantly that Mugger had been having a little quiet fun. Then all things had merged into a wild thrill of exultation as the machine swept forward, bounced, and finally surged quietly into the air and seemed to hang motionless in space.

“Look over — you're all right!”

Dave forced a grin as the aviator turned encouragingly.

“I'll pay you out for that some time,” he threatened.
“You wait!”

A flashing smile answered him, as he craned his neck to see. Below was the lake itself — far ahead the dim blue line of the mainland — behind a great mass of trees that he knew for Washington Island. The glory of the thing thrilled him anew — he was actually flying!”

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, he found that the machine was sweeping around. To talk was out of the question, for after that first exchange of shouts Mugger was too busy to heed him. Now the island swept into view ahead, and looking far down Dave could see the dots that represented his fellow Scouts, the house and hangar. Again they swept out over the lake, and then back, this time at a lower angle. Almost before he realized it, the ground was shooting up to meet them, the bluffs were dead ahead, and he felt his heart leap. Then Mugger twitched his levers, the aeroplane lifted gently, the brow of the cliffs passed under them, and a second later they were bouncing

along the ground with the engine shut off.

Since he had taken Dave up, the aviator found that he would have to have to give the others a ride also. As Jim and Rufe were lightweights, he crowded all three into the car, in order, as he said, "to have the agony over with on one trip," and ascended quickly. When he returned, however, he refused to take any more trips until that night, for it seemed that one of his cylinders was really out of commission and he wanted to fix it at once.

The boys were wild with delight over the machine and over the fact that they had actually been flying. It was hard to realize, and not until Mugger had got his engine into perfect condition again, toward sunset, and they had entered the house to get supper ready, did the four calm down to any degree of sanity.

Jim went to work with a will over the wood-stove, and it seemed that Mugger had visited Black Lake that dawn on his own account, for he had three fine black bass. These, with ham and fresh eggs, and a couple of pies the boys had brought from Anderson's, made a bountiful repast for all.

Dave, however, had by no means forgotten his great idea. When all had finished washing up the dishes, he

suggested that they let the aviator in on their plans for recovering the cache left by the Viking party.

“Since he's our scout master now,” he added slyly, with a wink at Mugger, “he might want to go along. In fact, there's no reason why we couldn't go in the *Sea Wolf* and he could go in the aeroplane!”

So Dave burst the bomb, and a look of awed admiration from Jim told him that at least one of his comrades had pierced to the heart of his craft.

Not so the others, however. Spike drew a quick breath, and Rufe stared from Dave to the aviator. Mugger leaned back easily in his chair, appearing to consider the boys before him with a kindly whimsical manner.

“Well, let's hear about it, fellows! What's this Viking proposition you've got on your minds? Just remember that this machine of mine is government property, however.”

This statement took Dave aback, but next moment the others plunged into the story in detail. “Government property, eh?” Dave stared into the fire, for in those words he saw danger of all his great idea going to

wreck.

Mugger volunteered no comment upon their story, but as each boy carried it forward in turn, merely nodded at each point made. Finally they came to the end, and he turned to Dave with a smile.

“So that's why you hit me to be your scout, master, eh?”

“Huh?” Dave stared, perplexed. “Why me?”

Mugger laughed, as Jim tittered to himself,

“You're a wise chap, Dave Hartley, I'll bet you worked this whole proposition up yourself. Come now — didn't, you?”

“Me?” Dave looked astonished, and wriggled in his chair. “Why, I didn't propose the trip — Spike did!”

“Oh, I know!” Mugger's keen eyes disquieted Dave again. “But I notice that it's the same old story from everybody — 'Dave says this,' or 'Dave's got a hunch!' How about it Rufe?”

“Why, I don't know!” Rufe looked at the reddening Dave and grinned. “I guess he worked us, come to

think of it!”

Dave saw the end approaching, and met it bravely.

“Sure I did!” he cried, leaping to his feet. “I worked it, and I did it fine — but the stuff’s there, ain’t it? All I did was to make you fellows see it the way I saw it. Nothing wrong in that, was there?”

“Not a bit!” Mugger held up a restraining hand and the others quieted down. “I think you have brains, Dave, — but don’t try to work me, see? Now, where did you reckon that I’d come in on this business?”

“Well,” Dave faced them sturdily, confident in his convictions, “it looked like this to me. Here we were with the *Sea Wolf*, able to get over to the mainland and scoot up the river to that place. But s’pose the river was too shallow for the boat to get up. S’pose we ran out of gas or something — where’d we be?”

“But if you were there we could all make a camp, and use the aeroplane to scout around in after the two big black stones. Judging from the maps, that valley or lake is a couple miles across. It’d be a powerful big job to hunt two big stones all around there, wouldn’t it? But if we had the aeroplane, it’d be a cinch. Now, here’s Mr. Mugger, our scout master, I say, put him in

charge o' the trip. Let him be the boss, and we'll be under his orders. Ain't that fair?"

Somewhat startled and a good deal amazed by the astonishing revelation of Dave's powers as a general, the others stared dumbly. Even Jim had had no idea of the extent of the plan. Mugger began to smile, and then a roar of laughter broke from them all with one accord, even Dave grinning sheepishly.

"Oh, it's rich!" gasped the aviator, "Dave, you're a genius!"

"Well," and Dave stubbornly forced himself to be heard over the uproar, "that's not answering my question. Will you do it or not?"

Mugger wiped his eyes and straightened up in his chair.

"Do it?" he exclaimed. "Why, you chaps have struck the biggest thing I ever got a chance at! Of course I'll do it and we'll start day after to-morrow!"

And it was Dave's turn to grin again.

CHAPTER XII

OFF ON THE TRAIL

“Where's that canned tongue?”

“In the port locker, Spike. All the grub's together there. The blankets and camping stuff is over in the starboard lockers.”

“Well, I guess we're ready, then. You and Jim tend to the jib halliards. Dave, give us those peak halliards — this wind'll take us out a-flying.”

It was the second morning after their visit to Joe Mugger, and in the intervening time many things had happened. Somewhat to their astonishment, the boys had found that Mugger not only thought they had found a big thing in this secret of the Viking cache, but he had become wildly enthusiastic about it.

He had argued that while of course they might not be able to locate any of the six-hundred-year-old trading goods, they had nevertheless established the connection between an old Icelandic legend and a scientific discovery. This in itself, when sent to the Chicago papers, should serve to give the Wolf Patrol

some much-needed publicity.

If they did chance to discover the cache by some, wild stroke of fortune, they would find themselves famous. Mugger was well educated, had done some newspaper work in his time, and had promised to write up the matter for them. Indeed, should they succeed in their quest, he anticipated that the cache would prove highly valuable from a historic and archaeologic standpoint alone. This belief, naturally, had served to work Dave and the rest into a still more feverish eagerness to be up and doing.

According to their charts, the mouth of Cedar River lay twenty-two miles to the northeast. They had planned to leave Washington Island in the morning and take their time sailing over to the mainland. As the short trip would not take the *Sea Wolf* above three hours, with a brisk wind, they could pass the town of the same name at the mouth of Cedar River shortly after noon and camp a few miles farther on up the stream.

As Mugger thought it best that he should not do much flying around in clear daylight, he had agreed that if they would pick out a good spot for him to land with his machine, he would leave the island about dark and be over to join them inside of an hour. Much,

however, would depend on the character of the ground up the river.

This made signals necessary, as he would join them during the nighttime. If they found the country swampy, thickly overgrown, and without a fit landing place for the aeroplane, they were to build a single large fire. Seeing this, he would know that he was practically out of it, and could return home at once.

If, however, they struck upon a good strip of open country — either on a farm or some other clear patch of ground — they were to build four large fires at its four corners. These fires would indicate to him exactly where he could land safely, and his small searchlight would do the rest. As there was no danger that anyone else in that thinly settled strip of coast would have four such fires burning, this signal was agreed upon without much discussion.

“Wind's pretty good, eh?” queried Jim delightedly, as the snowy canvas bellied out and the *Sea Wolf* ran quickly toward the west channel, Spike at the rear helm.

“Fine,” returned Rufe easily. “She's not so strong in here, but wait till we get outside! Then you'll see us walking along in great style!”

Here Spike struck in with word that since the wind was from the west by a half south, they might be able to head directly for their goal. Rufe objected at once, on the question of speed.

“We might, but we won't make time that way, Spike. We'd better pay off a point to the north, then tack back and head up for the river.”

“Well, what's the difference?” argued Spike. “If we set her on one tack we'll lose no more time than we will monkeying around!”

Dave kept remarkably silent. Since his great exploit of twisting the other three as he desired had been exposed so painfully by the keen insight of Joe Mugger, he had been in some doubt as to just what he could and could not do. While no one said anything about how he had worked them, that very fact made him feel uneasy.

To him, it seemed that without intending to do so, he had put his foot in it. Spike, he thought, was inclined to resent his generalship; Rufe was biding his time to hit back, and Jim alone seemed to take the expose in a jovial and jesting manner. Consequently, Dave had taken counsel with Jim, and that worthy had cannily

advised him to “lay low and shut up” for a time. Everything now depended on the success of the expedition.

If Dave should prove right, all would be well forever after. But if the thing fizzled out it would be a disaster for Dave. Whatever plan he proposed would be scanned from every angle, and if he ventured to express any opinion upon a subject it would immediately fall under suspicion. Indeed, for a few hours the warm friendship between Spike and Dave was threatened, but by now everything had blown over and the sky was bright.

None the less, Dave gazed somewhat anxiously into the west. If he made a success of the trip it would be a rousing one, and his talent for intrigue would be remembered with warm gratitude and adulation forever by the Wolf Patrol. But if he failed, he faced a future that was not exactly pleasant to his extremely frank and honest spirit.

However, he shook off the doubts that oppressed him as the *Sea Wolf* danced out beyond the island and was hauled around into the northeast. The day was a perfect one, and they all looked forward to a short run across the lake to the mainland. Barely had they made the western end of the island when Jim let out a yell

and pointed to starboard. There, just clearing the high bluffs to the north, was a V-shaped object whose bright apex glittered in the sunlight, and they recognized the aeroplane. Mugger had run out to bid them farewell.

“Dip our patrol ensign there, Rufe!” called Spike, and Rufe ran to the lines hastily. Out swept the aeroplane, holding a few hundred feet high, and as it came closer Rufe dipped the ensign three times. Looking up, they could all see the aviator wave a hand at them, and their hearty cheer rolled up to him. Then he headed around again and darted back to the island, vanishing over the crest of the bluffs.

“That's mighty friendly,” observed Dave cheerfully.

“You bet,” assented Spike. “Kind of starts us off right, eh? Say, don't she sail fine, you folks?”

To this there was unanimous assent. Indeed, the boat did sail like a witch, and Spike was delighted. It was no trick for him to make Cedar River, as he had only to head for a point south of its position and then coast up to the river itself.

The enthusiastic Jim got out a deep-sea, trolling line with a heavy sinker, but obtained no results, as might

have been expected. However, the time passed quickly enough for all on board. Neither Dave nor Jim had any recurrence of the sea-sickness they had experienced on the voyage up, and as the Rankin boys had already instructed them in the mysteries of steering, they were able to take keen delight in every moment of the time. Dave, who was planning to add a merit badge for seamanship to his trophies, took lessons in the six different kinds of knots required, and filled his mind so full of the points of the compass that he forgot all his troubles utterly.

Gradually the thin blue line on the horizon, which was little more than a mirage, deepened out and became more definite, as Spike was holding to his original intention of steering a straight course, whether Rufe liked it or not. By noon, however, the land was no more than a mile off, and when they had finished their lunch and had straightened up the decks, they sighted an out-bound fishing boat, toward which they ran.

Dave hailed her, and found that Cedar River was only three miles to the north of them, and with no little exultation over having held to so straight a course, Spike let out the mainsail and they ran off at a good deal faster gait.

Suddenly Rufe sighted the river ahead, on the port

bow, and they held on their course until opposite the river mouth. Then Spike ordered everything hauled close up and they headed directly for the river, barely a point off the wind. So well did the clean-lined little craft behave that even on this tack they darted in rapidly, and when they were well in the river channel, with the timbered swamps and “slashings” on either side, Spike ordered the sails down, he himself joining in the work.

Then, leaving the other three to clew up and make fast, Dave took the helm, cranked up the engine, and they chugged up the river at a great rate, water-wings rising on either hand. The river seemed wide and fairly deep, for they met many craft of various sizes, and soon came to the town of Cedar River itself. The deep-water voyage had ended, and most successfully. The town was a small one, being far from any railroad, and no sooner did the boys get tied up at the dock than a small crowd of curious Indians and backwoodsmen gathered to observe proceedings. Before leaving the boat the four Scouts held a consultation.

“We'd better get some more grub,” stated Spike decisively. “We've got enough here to hold us for a couple of days, but we aimed to load up here, so we'd better get enough for a week and count the scout master in too.”

“No telling how long we'll be on this trip,” said Jim exuberantly. “We ought to get some fish, though, going up the river. A week looks good to me.”

“Tell you what we'd better do,” put in Dave, as a sudden thought struck him. “If Mr. Mugger gets over here, and anythin' happens, he might need gas. We'd better get a couple o' cans, anyhow. There's enough for ourselves in the tank, but it won't do any harm to have an extra supply.”

This suggestion was met with suspicious silence, until Rufe spoke up with a laugh that relieved his words of any unpleasant meaning.

“Anything behind that remark, Dave? You can't blame us for being suspicious of your suggestions.”

“No,” and Dave colored. “You boys got me marked up wrong, but it don't matter. I'll win out when we hit that cache! No, if there ain't any sense in what I said, then don't do it.”

“Sure there's sense in it,” grinned Spike. “The trouble is, there's too much sense to what you say! Anyhow, we'll do it. It's a blamed good idea, seems to me.”

With the situation considerably relieved by this show of frankness, Rufe was sent uptown while the other three stretched out on the dock and exchanged comments with the natives. Attracted by the scout uniforms, the strange flag, and the boat itself, there was soon a goodly crowd gathered around, but the boys were careful to say nothing of their object in going up the river. They found that there was plenty of depth to carry them up for fifteen or twenty miles, with the centerboard up, but their questions aroused no little curiosity, and finally one old fisherman, sucking his pipe, wagged his head sagely and voiced the suspicions of the others.

“You fellers better watch out. I was over to Gourley last week an seen a couple o' depitties there.”

“Huh?” Spike frowned. “Deputy what? Sheriffs?”

Everyone laughed, and the old fisherman spat contemptuously.

“Naw — wardens. You fellers needn't try to look like fools, not much! I bet you got a couple o' shotguns an' rifles hid away on that boat, eh?”

The three boys stared open-mouthed for a second, then Dave gave a whoop of laughter as he dug Spike in the

ribs.

“They think we're doin' illegal hunting — after deer or something! Say, this is rich, Spike!”

Somewhat mystified by the laughter of the three boys, the natives looked on in solemn wonder, until the old fisherman spoke out again.

“Well, what you fellers after, then? The ain't nothin' else but swamp an' rock up that way.”

“We're after birds' eggs,” asserted Jim solemnly. “We're goin' to fish for 'em up the river with a silver spoon.”

At this the old fisherman arose with a disgusted grunt and stalked off amid the laughter of the crowd. One of the other men, however, leaned over and spoke seriously.

“He's right, jest the same, boys. O' course, I ain't askin' no questions, but ef ye *are* up here after a bit o' fun, why, it ain't healthy right now. There's wardens over to Gourley lookin' for hunters right now, so keep your eye skinned.”

As this warning was evidently well-meant, Spike

thanked the man, but assured him that they were not after game and had no guns aboard the boat. These statements met with evident disbelief and a muttered opinion that “them kids are right smart.” Then the crowd opened to admit Rufe, carrying his bundles, and another native who bore a ten gallon can of gasoline.

With the can deposited on the after deck and the bundles stowed away with the rest of their outfit, the boys cast off their lines, chugged out into the stream, and departed from civilization. Rufe was told of the comments of the crowd, and grinned.

“They're all illegal hunters up here,” he asserted carelessly. “We'll have no trouble, anyhow. I bet a fellow could go up the river with this boat, load up with two or three deer out o' season, and slip out again without ever seeing a sign of any game wardens!”

“Sure,” said Dave confidently. “They were just tryin' to throw a scare into us, that's all. I don't spose there's a game warden this side o' Manistee!”

And Dave did not see a quick glance that passed between Rufe and Jim, though he did hear the red-headed lad snicker as if some joke had just occurred to him.

CHAPTER XIII

IN CAMP

“Fifteen miles up this river ain't fifteen miles in a straight line, by any means,” observed Dave after the town had vanished behind them and the desolation had settled down all around.

“Isn't she some twister, though!” assented Spike, gazing around.

Indeed, the river was no straighter than the famous Meander of olden times, and if set in comparison might have proved a good deal more of a wanderer. They were forced to go ahead at half speed, for although the channel was fairly well marked out, there were snags and logs galore, and they could run no risk of being damaged.

“S'pose we can reach the place by to-night, Spike?” asked Rufe doubtfully. “If we can, will Mr. Mugger be able to get to us?”

“Not if this kind of country keeps up,” put in Jim, waving a hand at the low swampy land all around.

“Well, all we have to do is to build good-sized signals,” returned Spike philosophically. He'll see 'em all right. From that magazine article and from what the old fisherman down there on the dock said, there's nothin' up this way but swamp and rock. Just at present we're in the swamp. If we reach the rock before night we're liable to find a place where the aeroplane can land.”

“No danger of missing the lake, is there?” queried Rufe. Dave grunted.

“You'll see! There's two hills, remember — the lake sets right between 'em.”

This argument served to set all doubts at rest. As this low speed of seven miles an hour was none too fast to troll for a “musky,” Jim got out his line again and let it out. Up in the bow crouched Dave and Rufe, watching the channel narrowly, while Spike steered.

Suddenly there came a jerk that drew a wild yell from Jim and made the others fear they had struck a snag. Spike's hand flew down to the engine, shutting it off at the same instant Jim let out another yell, and the three up forward saw him hanging on desperately to his line, which had been turned about a cleat.

“Got something!” he shouted frantically. “Get back here, you chumps! Hurry!”

“Rats! You got caught on a log!” retorted Spike disgustedly.

For an answer Jim only yelled again, and this time even Spike echoed the cry. Out of the water, more than a hundred feet behind the boat, had leaped a long, glittering body that sent a thrill through each of the four, and brought them all tumbling back into the stern to assist Jim.

Now, however, the red-headed chap was over his first startled alarm, and that sight of the muskellunge he had hooked had filled him with a wild exultation. As Spike reached for the line Jim shoved him back hastily.

“Get out that gaff hook,” he shouted excitedly. “I’ll get him!”

But during the next ten minutes Jim’s “getting him” looked extremely unlikely. The great fish, the gamest of all northern fishes, was hooked fast; but with everyone yelling wildly, shouting advice and encouragement, Jim could hardly realize his own actions. However, he reduced the problem to its

simplest form by hauling in on the line whenever the fish gave, and by hanging on desperately with his feet braced whenever the strain came hardest. The wonder was that the fish did not pull loose, as he would have done had he been less securely hooked; but finally Jim had brought him up alongside, after several wild rushes out of the water, and with no little difficulty managed to gaff him, and with Dave's help hauled him into the boat. Rufe promptly knocked him on the head, and they gathered around in silent admiration. Although they had brought no scales along, it was not hard to guess that the "musky" was little short of fifteen pounds — truly a regal catch; and when at length Dave cranked up the engine and they resumed their way, Jim Baxter was undoubtedly the proudest boy who had ever sailed the waters of Cedar River.

Onward they twisted their devious way, now passing through sections of dank flooded swamp-lands and now winding between snatches of swift stream and forested banks. By three o'clock they figured that they had come ten miles or more upstream, and still had seen no signs of any lake. Neither had they caught any more fish, though the trolling was faithfully kept out.

"Whittaker!" thought Dave in no little dismay. "If this thing doesn't pan out I see where I catch it! But it's

got to pan out, that's all!"

Half an hour later, however, the swamp country had disappeared, to his intense delight. Ahead of them and all around stretched low hills. The river itself had become shallower, and the swamps had been replaced by rocky banks and stretches of pine and cedar and sand.

"Old glacial country," announced Rufe decisively. As no one knew enough to dispute his authority, the statement passed unchallenged, though Dave kept out a sharp watch for any signs of a lake.

"If we don't hit the place before five o'clock," announced Spike, "we'll hunt around for a likely spot where the aeroplane could land. Prob'ly we'd hit it better a little back from the river where there aren't so many trees. However, we've got an hour to go yet."

The *Sea Wolf* chugged onward, until they rounded a bend to see a stretch of clear, straight river ahead of them. On either hand lay a boulder-strewn stretch of land, studded with small patches of pine — and suddenly Dave gave a wild yell that made everyone jump in swift alarm. "We've got it!" he cried, dancing on the fore deck, one hand around the mast. "We've hit her! Shut her off, shut her off!"

Then, for the first time, the realization grew upon them all that Dave was right — they had come upon the lake! Only, instead of being a lake, the river ahead had widened into broad, shallow pools on either hand where once had been a lake.

Now, there stretched a rocky boulder-strewn pasture on both sides of the wide shallows, with no trees for some distance around. On the left was a hill, a good two miles away, and closer on their right was another. Directly ahead of them, among the shallows but out of the riverbed proper, was a small island. Dave pointed at this.

“There's our island! There's the two hills — ”

“Well, where's the lake?” broke in Jim scornfully. Dave was staggered, but stuck to his guns manfully, waving a hand around.

“There ain't any now, but there's where it used to be — all around here. This is what's left of it.”

“Well, where're the two black stones?” demanded Spike, gazing around at the expanse of country rather blankly.

“What d 'you expect?” grunted Dave. “Want to find a buried treasure out in the open so's you can load it in the boat an' hike? We got to find a place where the machine can land, first.”

“Where we can land, you mean,” supplemented Rufe, and pointed to the left bank ahead, just before the river broadened out. “That looks good, Spike.”

It was a low shelf of rock, with a few stunted cedars sprouting on the top, barely two feet above the water. By approaching cautiously they found the *Sea Wolf* could reach the bank without scraping, and five minutes later they stepped ashore stiffly. It was just half past four.

“Now, there's no time to waste.” directed Spike briefly. “First thing we want to do is to hunt a good place for the aeroplane to land. Jim, you and Rufe go out to the left and circle around; Dave and I'll go to the right, and we'll meet and see what has turned up. Then there's wood to gather, and the bonfire to set and camp to make.”

Making fast the boat to the small cedars, they set off at once, advancing across the ancient lake bottom toward the hill beyond. Dave and Spike soon lost sight of the other pair, but after circling around for a quarter of an

hour they struck on nothing in the least suitable for an aeroplane landing. Finally they gave up in despair and started back to meet the other pair, when Spike caught sight of his brother standing on a pinnacle of rock and waving with his handkerchief.

“He's wigwagging,” announced Dave promptly.
“Wait a minute.”

After some scrambling Dave mounted a boulder and got clear sight of Rufe. After a moment he gave the “all right” signal and tumbled down to rejoin Spike.

“He's got a place,” was his brief report. “Come on.”

All about them were great boulders, and when Dave reflected that they had to find two big black rocks, his heart sank. However, they met the other two and were led to a patch of level ground almost unbroken by boulders, where only a few trees shot up.

“It might be better,” acknowledged Jim, “but if we get those trees cut away close down she won't be so bad. It's a couple hundred yards across and plenty big enough to hold a dozen machines.”

As there was nothing better in evidence, Dave went back for the big axe and the others set to work with

their hand axes at the trees and brush. Before the sun touched the hills in the west they had cleared out the few trees in the center of the open space and were busy gathering brush and wood for the four corner fires.

With this, Spike despatched Rufe and Jim to make camp and cook part of the muskellunge for supper, while he and Dave finished gathering wood. At length, weary and spent, the two boys gazed on their work and decided that the piles were large enough to serve their purpose.

“We'll wait till about eight o'clock,” said Spike as they returned to the boat. “We'll have to keep watch for his light, but if he doesn't show up by eight we'll start our fires.”

It was a half mile to the river, but upon arrival they found that the *Sea Wolf* had her tarpaulin up and was in shape for the night. On the bank a fire was blazing cheerily, supper preparations were well under way, and before darkness fell the four Scouts were dining sumptuously and voting that their expedition had been a great success.

With the dishes washed up, they made their way back by starlight to the landing-place, and settled down by a

small fire to keep watch on the eastern sky. By seven thirty no sign of a moving light had been seen, and considering it possible that Mugger would show no light, the boys began to grow anxious. At seven fifty Spike could wait no longer, but gave the word, to start the fires. It was well that he did so, for the blaze, at each corner of the cleared space had hardly been going ten minutes when Jim gave a shout, and after a moment the others detected what seemed to be a moving star low in the east. It swung along rapidly, and then rose, until it was above them. Passing on, it circled around, dropped, and with the small searchlight flitting across the ground below, the aeroplane came down in a gentle curve squarely in the center of the four fires.

“Hello, everybody!” came the cheerful voice of Mugger as the boys rushed in on him and he stepped to the ground. “Pretty good landing, eh?”

They surrounded him amid wild congratulations, realizing the danger he had run now that it was all over.

“And have we hit the right place?” he asked.

“You bet!” cried Dave happily, all his forebodings fled. “And to-morrow we'll get busy on those two big

black stones. Whittaker! I hope we find 'em!"

And they set out for camp, chattering all at, once of
"muskies" and adventures to come.

CHAPTER XIV

DISAPPOINTMENT

With the morning, the camp of the Wolf Patrol leaped into activity. Spike, Dave and the scout master had slept aboard the *Sea Wolf*, while the other two boys had camped ashore, having a preference for the warmth of a fire.

Jim and Dave fished for an hour that morning, casting and still fishing, without a bite to reward them. At length they gave up in disgust, returned to camp in time for breakfast, and plunged into the discussion that was raging as to the day's work.

As the aeroplane's engines had been tarpaulined the night before, she could be left where she was for as long as was necessary. Her pilot had heard the account of their trip without comment, and agreed that they must have struck the right spot at length. The situation of the valley agreed entirely with the magazine article map, as they found upon taking a run up the river in the launch after breakfast.

There was the island, almost on a direct line between the two hills, and upon landing there they could see

plain signs of the camping party which had found the stone. It seemed that the island had been dug over for the remains of the buried Vikings, but without success, and the explanation of this came later. There was the same level ground stretching away toward the farther hill, and after no little thought and discussion Mugger solved the difficulty.

“Last spring,” he declared, motioning toward the broad shallows and pools on their left, “— didn't you say that stone was found in the early spring, Spike? Well, there'd naturally be high water then — last year was a mighty wet year — and those shallow spots would have spread out considerably. That would make the lake the article spoke of.

“Several hundred years ago, I s'pose, this whole basin was a lake. Then either the land rose slightly or else the river cut deeper in its channel and drained off most of the water. As it did so, it would naturally cut away the banks of the island, and no doubt that washed away all trace of the Viking burial except for that stone. The question is, where would be the most likely place for those Vikings to camp, coming up river?”

“Right where we did,” volunteered Rufe. Dave objected.

“No, that's not the place for a crowd to camp with Injuns waiting all around! Those Vikings weren't a bunch of fools, b'lieve me! They'd naturally hit out for some spot in the open where they could get a clear view, with big rocks around to fight from. I'll bet that's where the two big black rocks come in.”

“That sounds good,” declared Spike thoughtfully. “Those rocks, said the old lady, were right on the shore, Mr. Mugger. All we've got to do is to find the old shore-line, then keep a-going till we hit the black rocks.”

“That's simple,” laughed the scout master, and pointed to the country around. “If we were trained geologists it might be as easy as it sounds, Spike. But we're not. You fellows take another look and see if you can hit the old shore-line or the black rocks either!”

He was answered by a discouraged silence, as the boys looked about them and saw the truth of his words. Rocks there were in plenty — great glacier-scarred boulders of every shape and form as far as the eye could see but where any ancient shore-line had been was impossible to say. Patches of small trees, stretches of grass and sedge and bushes, appeared on every hand, interspersed amid the twisted boulders,

but nowhere could the boys detect any signs of eighteen foot black rocks.

They put back to camp, discussing the situation. Plainly, they need not trouble to search on the right-hand bank of the river, for here the hillside was close, and no camp would have been made amid that whirl of rock and boulder, with never a tree or bush for fires. In any case, they could make out nothing with their single pair of field glasses that had any relation to the two black rocks.

“There's only one thing to do,” stated the scout master as they landed. “I'm firmly convinced that we've hit the right spot, fellows, and that we'll win out yet. But our only clue appears to be those two tall black rocks, and we'll have to cover the ground all along the basin and over to that hill on the left.”

It was no small proposition, as they could see now. There was a mile and a half of ground between the river-shallows and the hill, while the basin itself was something like three miles long. As Jim pointed out, the Viking party might have come up river and camped anywhere in the stretch up to the far end where the river narrowed once more. However, there was still hope that a closer inspection might show some indications of the ancient shore-line.

With this hope in mind, they laid plans for the search, their scout master's cheery manner and energetic confidence filling them all with optimism and enthusiasm for the quest.

It was arranged that Mugger, Jim and Rufe should go inland to the hill, starting here at the foot of the valley, and should circle around the outer edges up to the head. Spike and Dave would cover the ground between them and the lake, and the two parties would meet at the head of the valley. In case anything definite was located, they would communicate by smoke-signals, and Spike carried the field glasses in order to better make out the possible signals of the farther party.

Their forethought in bringing the extra ten gallon can of gasoline was warmly commended by the scout master, to Dave's great gratification. When the latter suggested that they might save a lot of work by using the aeroplane in the search, as he had intended from the first, Mugger only laughed.

“Getting lazy, Dave? Well, it's a good idea — I grant you that. But we don't know how long we'll be here, and you'll need more gas for your launch, getting out to the lake again, so we'd do better to economize for

the present.”

This settled the matter, and the two parties separated, after making up a lunch to take with them, for they figured that they would not meet at the head of the valley until the afternoon was well gone.

The three who set off inland were soon lost to sight, and Spike and Dave began their careful covering of the ground, making slow but steady progress. They agreed that their best plan was to strike back from the water a quarter mile, then separate, Dave going farther inland and both working up toward the valley head. The others were to pursue the same course farther back toward the hill, and this would insure them against overlooking the two tall black stones.

In ten minutes Dave had lost sight of his chum and was working along amid a mass of huge boulders and scattered clumps of bush and trees. Whenever he got a chance he climbed one of the boulders for a look around, and found his task of examination no light one. Yet, the farther he went, the more certain he became that success would crown their efforts, for the majority of the boulders were of granite, and any large black ones would be sure to stand out distinctly — as no doubt they had in the minds of the members of the Viking party.

“Whittaker!” he thought, pausing an hour later to wipe the perspiration from his streaming face. “That’s a pretty good idea, all right! If there’d been many black rocks around here, the Vikings would have picked out something else for a landmark. I guess we’ll get a chance to use that pick yet!”

For they had brought along a pick and shovel from the cottage. However, by noon he had come upon nothing, so he climbed a high boulder and waited until he got sight of Spike atop of another, three hundred yards away. As they had all cut staffs the night before, the two held up their staffs straight over their heads, indicating nothing in sight, then Dave pulled out his handkerchief and shook it. This was the Indian blanket-sign for desiring a talk, and Spike held his hand up level for a moment, then left his boulder.

They met midway and partook of their cold lunch, after reporting nothing found. Then gaining a boulder again, they searched with the glasses for the other party, but were unable to get any sign whatever. They had covered only a third of the distance up the basin, so after a drink from the river they started out again as before.

Spike had agreed that Dave’s idea about the black

rocks was a good one, as none had been met with save a few small ones, which were palpably not the ones in question. The ground was rough, and as Dave struggled on through the afternoon he realized more and more that a thorough search was next to impossible. Those two black rocks might have been overgrown by trees or thrown down by the weather, while even if they remained standing they might easily be overlooked by any one of the boys, so rough was the nature of the place, so rugged in some parts and so overgrown by brush or trees in others. Back at Washington Island the thing had looked very simple and easy, but here on the spot Dave acknowledged to himself that it was a very different matter.

The hours dragged slowly, and as there was no wind to speak of in the basin among the rocks, Dave found the heat and exertion trying in the extreme. Still he could find no large black rocks, and though he searched the hill side of the basin he could see nothing of Mugger's party, and no smoke-signals went up to announce discovery. Hoping against hope, Dave struggled along, every black boulder he saw sending a thrill through him that changed quickly to disappointment.

At four thirty he had reached the head of the valley where the woods began again, met Spike, reported nothing, and the two set up a smudge and flung

themselves down to rest. Both agreed that they had covered their ground thoroughly, but that it would take half a dozen patrols of Boy Scouts to make a minute search of the whole basin.

Half an hour later the scout master, Jim and Rufe straggled in, footsore, weary and discouraged — all save the aviator, who still preserved his cheerfulness. As they had to reach camp before dark, they set out at once, talking on the way. Nothing had been found, it appeared, and so great had been their difficulties that both Jim and Rufe were confident that they would find nothing whatever.

“Not so bad as all that yet,” laughed the scout master, slapping Jim on the back in his hearty way. “This is only the first day's work, remember. Any traces of old shore-line, Spike?”

“We didn't look for shore-line,” responded the patrol leader. “We were after black rocks and nothing else.”

“Same here, I guess,” chuckled Jim. “We found one peach of a black fellow, but he was standing all alone on a little hill, so he wasn't worth while diggin' around.”

“Sure Gissliver's mother didn't say one rock?” asked the aviator.

“No,” Dave shook his head wearily. “She said two, and the stuff was buried in between 'em. Both were big fellows, too.”

“So was this one,” returned Jim. “Just about the right height, too. However, there wasn't another one anywheres around.”

That settled it, and as they were all too tired and hungry to discuss the matter any further, they made haste to reach camp and have a swim before night. Muggger declared that he was with them to stay as long as they would stay, and when Spike sneaked away down-stream and returned with a mess of bass and one small pickerel, the spirit of the camp began to pick up perceptibly.

“We'll keep at it,” declared the scout master that night as they sat around their fire before turning in, “We'll fish to-morrow morning and work in the afternoon, and after we knock around this basin a little we'll strike those black rocks.”

“Whittaker!” breathed Dave softly. “I sure hope we will!”

CHAPTER XV

UNDER ARREST

It turned out that Rufe had met a game warden, while the party of three had been spread out searching, and though Mugger had not seen him, Rufe's description of the man sent them all into a peal of laughter. He had stopped Rufe, it appeared, and had listened to an account of the party's doings, accepting the explanation fully.

“Of course,” added Rufe slowly, you can't never tell about these backwoodsmen. He might be hanging around now, waiting to get evidence — ”

“Oh, nonsense!” laughed the scout master. “The only evidence they can accept is freshly killed game. And I guess I'm the only one here with as much as a pistol!”

This being perfectly true, the others promptly forgot the matter, and Dave did not heed the grin that passed from Rufe to Jim. While they were down the river fishing at sunrise, Jim approached Dave and brought up the subject of the lone black rock they had found the day before.

“You don't s'pose that could be the place, do you?” he asked.

“Sure not,” said Dave, watching a bobbing at his line. “There were two of 'em. Did you look around there for more?”

“Well, I guess we covered the ground pretty well,” returned Jim doubtfully. “Of course it was overgrown pretty thick right there, and the rock stood at the top of a little precipice, 'bout a dozen feet up.”

Dave considered in silence for a space, while he landed a wandering bass.

“I think mebber I'll have a look at that place,” he said after a little.

“We ought to be able to locate the rock from here, with the glasses,” returned Jim, and no more was said on the subject until all were at breakfast.

Then it was that Dave proposed to the scout master that they go and inspect the lone rock, and search for others in the vicinity. At this Rufe exclaimed quickly.

“Hold on there! We want Mr. Mugger to come with us this morning on a fishing trip.”

“Thanks,” smiled the scout master, “but I’m not very keen on fishing. I believe I’d sooner go back there with Dave — or I tell you! You chaps go fishing, and I’ll take Dave up in the machine. We’ll make a short flight over the ground we covered yesterday, and it may be that we’ll see more from above than we did while we were wandering around.

To Dave’s surprise, both Jim and Rufe broke into a storm of protestations, until even Spike eyed them suspiciously.

“Here,” said the patrol leader finally, “what have you boys on your minds, anyhow? You seem terribly anxious —”

“Nothing,” answered Jim quickly. “Only we figured on a fishing trip.”

“Well, no one’s stopping you,” retorted Spike. “Quit your howling!”

Dave’s suspicions were dimly aroused, but they vanished before the prospect of a flight. It seemed to him that Rufe particularly was dismayed over the plans, but he was to learn the reason for this before very long.

In company with the aviator and the gasoline can, Dave was soon on his way to the “aviation field,” where they found the machine as they had left her. They were in no hurry, and seeing that Dave knew a good deal about aeroplanes in general, the scout-master-pilot offered to give him some lessons in managing this particular 'plane, at which offer Dave jumped eagerly.

“It's as simple as falling off a log,” declared Mugger confidently, explaining the construction of the steering flaps and the levers. “Now climb in and we'll be on our way. I'll let you take a whack at steering after a bit — we won't go high, though.”

The motor surged up into a droning hum, and they left the ground almost at once, as Mugger would take no chances on the roughly strewn boulders. Again Dave experienced that wild thrill of exultation as the ground dropped away from him, and with a perfect confidence in the aviator he gave no thought to fear.

Mugger turned, and while they drifted out toward the farther hill, the river behind them he proceeded to give Dave directions about steering, until the Scout was confident that he understood the thing thoroughly. Then they gave their attention to relocating the black

rock below.

This was a matter of some little difficulty at first, but after quartering the basin and hillside once or twice, Mugger pointed ahead, and Dave made out their objective. The aeroplane was barely two hundred feet up, and he could distinctly make out the topography of the ground below them.

At the lip of what seemed to be a curving bank, there was standing a huge black boulder. It was narrow, like a shaft, and Dave estimated that it was some twenty feet in height. There was a patch of stunted cedar just behind, and in front of it, where the curving shelf of ground fell away, was a mass of brush and smaller rocks.

“Got it?” exclaimed Mugger. “Then reach over here and steer straight back. We'll come over on foot after I make the landing.”

Thrilling with excitement, Dave crowded next to the pilot and handled the levers. Slowly he turned the machine, and the black eyes of the aviator danced as he saw the excitement in the boy's face. Indeed, Dave found the matter simple; the machine answered to his touch as readily as the *Sea Wolf* answered to her helm, and seemed a good deal more stable. Never once had

she lurched or had the engine missed fire, and when finally they approached the “aviation ground,” Dave resigned the levers with a sigh of perfect bliss.

“Landing is a pretty delicate matter,” explained Mugger quietly as they swept down, “Especially here, on this rough ground. You've got to aim for your place when it's quite a way ahead, then gradually come down to it — and shut off the engine.”

He suited his action to the words, and with only a slight bounce they ran over the ground, slowed down, and came to a dead stop. Mugger laughed and pointed to a small compass set in the aluminum rail.

“Forgot to take your bearings, eh? Well, we hit back due west from here.”

Dave had been too excited over steering to think about bearings, and when they had climbed out he could hardly realize that the trip had not taken more than fifteen minutes in all.

The black rock proved to be a good mile from their present position. In fact, Dave began to fear that they would not find it again, when Mugger came to a place that he recognized as having passed the day before, and after that it was clear sailing. Finally they sighted

the black boulder ahead, and after a last painful climb stood on the shelving bank that fell away to the brush and rocks below.

Directly before them stood the boulder, and without delay they began their examination. To Dave's keen disappointment, however, there seemed to be no others in the vicinity. The lone boulder stood pointing to the sky, a dozen feet from the edge of the grass-grown bank, and not far away was a jagged hole where the rains had evidently washed out a deep gully, that ran down to the brush and boulders a dozen feet below them.

Dave was scanning the hillsides for signs of other black rocks, when he caught a sudden cry from his companion. Whirling around, he saw that the aviator, on the brink of the declivity, had incautiously approached too near the gully. Even as Dave turned, Muggler went over the edge with a rush of dirt and small stones. To his dismay, Dave saw the airman pitch out head first, unable to save himself, and go rattling down with outflung arms, straight into a pile of boulders.

Dave was down after him instantly, but as he helped Muggler up, the scout master groaned, and Dave saw that his face was drawn and contracted with pain. A

swift dread shot into his heart as he asked what the matter was.

“Arm broken,” groaned Mugger. “I heard it snap. Got your first-aid packet?”

Fortunately, Dave had it. Mugger laid bare his right arm and disclosed the fracture, just above the wrist. Then ensued a terrible moment, as the airman commanded him to pull the arm into place. The slightest touch was agony, but Dave obeyed. He saw Mugger's face go ghastly white, heard the man's teeth grind together, but no sound broke from him; then the forearm was in place, and Mugger toppled backward with a groan against a mass of rock and bushes, and lay unconscious.

Dave, himself white-faced, fortunately knew what to do. Whipping out his knife, he quickly cut some rude splints, put them in place, and bound up the broken arm firmly. Still the other showed no signs of life, and Dave determined swiftly to send up a smoke-signal that would bring the rest of the patrol to his aid.

With this object in mind, he left the green bushes and turned to the gully, which at its head was choked with leaves and dead wood. He had almost reached this, when he heard a crackle of brush and a rough voice

spoke out behind him.

“Hands up there — you're under arrest!”

Turning, Dave found himself looking into the business end of a shotgun, held by a rough, bearded man clad in lumberman's costume of short trousers, flannel shirt and heavy boots.

“Hurry up with them hands,” came the rough voice again. “I been lookin' fer you.”

Dave obeyed the command, in desperate fear.

CHAPTER XVI
THE VIKING CACHE

“Now,” commanded the other, advancing a step, “I’m the depitty game warden o’ this — ”

“Drop that gun, you!”

The cold, deadly voice that came from behind him caused the deputy to look over his shoulder swiftly. Dave, to his astonishment and relief, saw Mugger raised on his right elbow, his bandaged forearm showing white against the ground, while his left hand held a revolver that covered the warden. Also, his black eyes were blazing with anger.

“What do you mean, pulling a shotgun on that boy? Drop it, you skunk, and do it quick!”

There was unmistakable purpose in Mugger's eyes, and without protest the burly deputy dropped his shotgun.

“Pick it up Dave,” commanded the airman. “So you're a game warden, are you? How does that give

you any license to go around holding up innocent parties?"

The deputy shook a huge fist, his face convulsed with anger.

"Innocent parties, hey? This here looks like it! I heard about you fellers — " "That so?" interrupted Mugger. "Where'd you hear, and what was it?"

"Ef ye want to know, I was tipped off by a feller yesterday that there was a young-lookin' guy up here after deer. He said the feller had a couple in his camp, over by the river. This here's the guy, from the description." And he jerked a thumb at Dave.

Dave stared at the man, utterly amazed, as did Mugger. Suddenly Dave recollected Jim's chuckles. Hadn't Rufe met a deputy warden over here the day before? And both Rufe and Jim had tried to get him over to the black rock alone —

"Say!" he broke out eagerly. "Did the fellow that tipped you off wear a khaki uniform like mine? And was he tall and slim, with dark eyes?"

"That's him!" nodded the angry warden, and before he could say more Dave went off in a yell of laughter.

“It's Rufe! Whittaker — he was trying to pay me back for putting this trip over on the bunch, Mr. Mugger. It's all right — here's your gun, Mr. Warden.”

The explanation that ensued brought no little relief to all three. The deputy, once he understood the matter fully, shook hands and helped Mugger get up the bank, for the airman was weak with the nervous shock and with pain. Dave went ahead with his work of building a smudge, for it had occurred to him to get the other three over here, keep out of sight, and have the deputy arrest them all in revenge. That would certainly be turning the tables.

This idea was abruptly forgotten, however. Going back down the ravine to where Mugger had fallen, after some green bushes for his smudge, he plucked a few and threw them on the blazing pile — then stopped suddenly. As he pushed his way into the mass of bushes, he suddenly saw that in the midst of them, half-buried in the earth, lay a huge black boulder of immense length!

Dave stared at it a moment, but there was no mistake. Then he stared up at the other one against which Mugger was propped, and slowly realization dawned upon him. A look at the gully, directly behind the

fallen boulder, and he flung another armful of branches on the fire and slowly climbed up to the bank, where the warden was talking with the airman.

“Well,” said Dave calmly, “I’ve found it.”

“Eh?” Mugger glanced at him, puzzled. “Found what?”

“The Viking cache.”

“You — what!” Rank incredulity sat in Mugger's eyes. “Where?”

“Just about under you, I guess,” grinned Dave. Then, unable to contain himself any longer, he told about the fallen boulder, the warden staring in dumb amazement.

“Why, it's a cinch! Look at this curving bank that runs along here — it ain't nothing but the bank of the old lake? That other boulder stood over here where the gully is, and after the lake had dried away, the rain washed out under it and toppled her over. The other one stood right here to fool us. Whittaker — it's as plain as a Pikestaff!”

“By thunder, I believe you're right!” Mugger

scrambled up, faint and giddy, but afire with eagerness. As he looked down and saw the boulder amid the bushes, and reviewed the aspect of the place, he gave an unqualified assent that Dave had struck it. Then, while Dave waited for an answer to his smoke, they told the deputy of their quest.

When they had finished, he gave a single disgusted grunt, and stated that he guessed a crazy wave had struck the whole county.

“I been waitin' around here all night, on the stren'th o' what that pardner o' yourn told me,” he growled finally. “Now, ef there's anythin' I can do for you, sir,” turning to Mugger, “I'll be glad to do it. You're a good-lookin' guy ef ye are crazy, an' I won't refuse t' help a wounded man.”

“No, we'll be all right, thanks,” smiled Mugger, and extended a five-dollar bill, which completely mollified the other.

“Then I'll git along to Gourley afore night. I reckon we'll blow up a storm. So long, gents!”

They shook hands again, and at that instant Dave caught a smoke from the river direction, and hastened to his own fire. By putting sticks through his coat-

sleeves he managed to blanket his smudge enough to send up the usual signal for help, and after it, ordered in the Morse code that they bring the pick and spade. He had to repeat this message before getting an “O. K.” but finally stamped out his fire and returned to wait.

He found Mugger considering his case in no little dismay. From the sky, it looked as though the deputy had been right, and a storm was coming up; the aviator had a broken arm and his nervous system was wrenched to pieces from the shock, while his aeroplane was out here, miles away from shelter or attention.

“Well” said Dave cheerfully, “if you can make the landing on the island, I'll fly you back!”

Mugger laughed and said he'd consider it. The most important thing was that he get medical attention, which at Cedar River would be out of the question. Dave urged that his plan included that; they could fly to the island in well under an hour and catch the evening boat for Sturgeon Bay.

Between this prospect and the finding of the two black rocks, Dave was so excited that when the other three boys came up he dismissed the matter of the deputy

warden in a few exultant words that made Rufe redden deeply, while even the shameless Jim sobered down for the moment. Then, urging that they waste no time, Mugger put them to work.

Measuring halfway between the gully and the standing rock, Spike went to work with the pick, under a tense strain of excitement that made him fling himself into the task furiously. The rest were no less overpowered with excited eagerness, however, and when Spike flagged, his place was at once taken by Rufe, and the pick broke up the dirt until Dave was able to step in with his shovel and clear it out over the bank.

Down they went — two feet — three feet, and although they came upon nothing, their eagerness only increased. They were certain that sooner or later they would come upon the cache and nothing could now shake their confidence, while Dave was the hero of the hour.

“No,” he modestly disclaimed while resting, with a grin at Jim, “it was Rufe did it. He sent me over here — some joke on Rufe, eh?”

A burst of laughter answered him, and he enjoyed his triumph to the full. As the boys dug, Mugger joined in the enthusiasm, bitterly regretting that he could not

take part in the work himself, but lending them advice and encouragement.

“You'll probably find,” he exclaimed, “that the earth's packed down solid with the stuff, whatever it is. Even in the Indian mounds, where they protected their dead by building log chambers, the earth crushed down the logs.”

“Wonder what we'll find?” speculated Jim, panting from his labors, as Spike relieved him at the pick. “What'd they use for trading-goods, anyhow?”

“Nothin' very valuable in itself, you can be sure o' that,” grunted Dave.

“Whatever it was,” put in the airman, “it'll be valuable now, from a historical viewpoint. Go to it, fellows! You're five feet down now!”

So they were, and the deeper they got the harder grew the labor, since the confined space made it difficult to swing the pick. They remedied this by enlarging, the hole, and although it was past noon by this time, all five of them had forgotten lunch in the fever of their quest. A little deeper, and they had to give up the pick entirely in favor of the shovel. Many were the speculations as to which one of them would be lucky

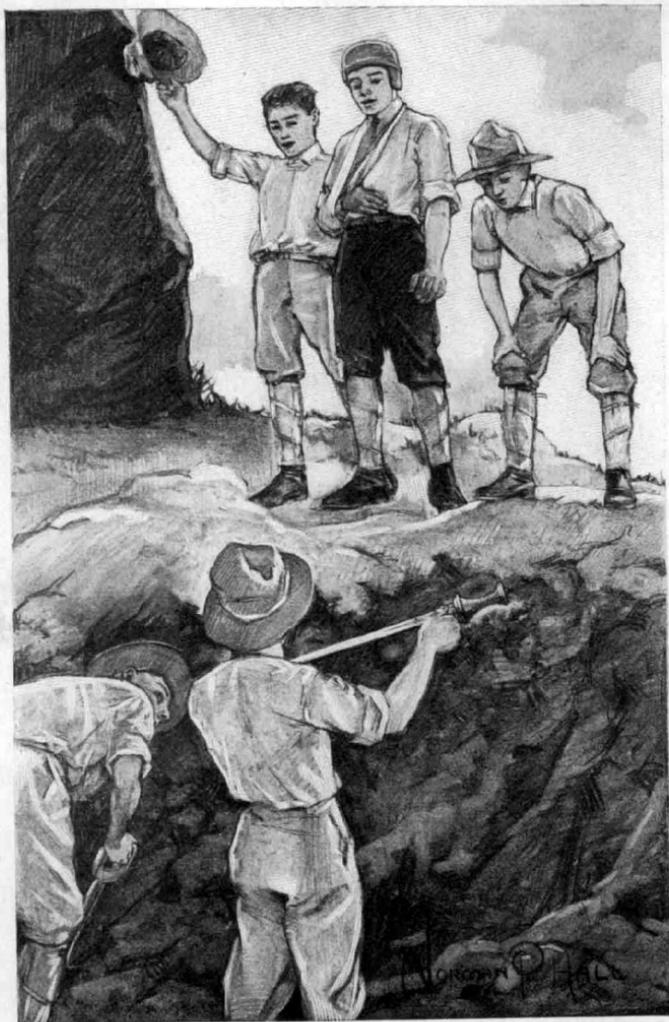
enough to strike pay dirt first, but again fortune favored Dave. In fact, as Rufe afterward expressed it, the whole credit of the affair seemed to go to Dave from start to finish.

While he was digging away earnestly, those above-ground suddenly saw him drop his shovel and go to his knees with a muffled yell. Crowding over the edge, they saw him come up, pawing a handful of dirt as he emerged, and holding up something to them.

“Look at this!” he cried hoarsely.

Spike seized on the object and held it up. One wild yell broke from them all as they saw that the thing Dave had found was no other than a heavy sword hilt of bronze — encrusted deeply with dirt and corrosion, but still recognizable. Then Dave gave another yell and began to toss other objects over the edge, and with that pandemonium broke loose amid the Wolf Patrol.

Two hours later a tired, dirty, but thoroughly excited group stood about the black rock. Before them on the ground lay a heap of objects — for the cache of the Icelanders had been uncovered to the last bit, and it was plain that the Vikings had abandoned everything which might impede them in their flight from the



While he was digging away earnestly, those above-ground suddenly saw him drop his shovel. "Look at this!" he cried hoarsely.

place.

There were loose fragments of bronze of every description, from which the other metals and wood had rusted or rotted off, and which would have to be identified by experts. Besides these, there were such things as sword hilts and shield bosses which the boys could recognize at once. Then there was a large chest of bronze and wood, holding over a score of swords in very fair condition; this chest, like the other objects, had apparently been wrapped in cloth and hides, which accounted for its preservation.

But this was not all, though the chest of swords was the prize of the collection. There were a number of objects of horn or bone, half a dozen Indian stone hammers, and the remains of several heavy crosses of bronze. All in all, the collection was a large one, and although the boys were disappointed in not finding any coins, the aviator went into ecstasies over two bronze-mounted drinking-horns, which he declared were alone worth all their labor.

“You've got a big thing here, boys!” he exclaimed, drawing in his breath. “Now, the next job is to get it all aboard the *Sea Wolf* and stowed away safely. This old stuff will be pretty delicate now that it's exposed to the air.”

With that, the boys promptly removed their coats and managed to get everything tied up securely, though the result was a heavy load all around. With the lifting of the tension, they now became aware of a fierce hunger, and resolved to start out for camp at once. Mugger, however stopped them.

“Jim, you've got your camera in the boat, haven't you?”

“No — got her in my hip pocket,” return'd Jim.
“Why?”

“Good!” cried the airman, “Spend every film you have in snapshots of this hole, the black stone here, and the other one down in the bushes. Get busy, now! Those pictures will make a valuable record when this thing gets into scientific hands, and the more proof we have the better.”

While Jim took his pictures, Dave noticed that the west was hazing over, and a stiff breeze seemed to be coming down on them already. This brought up the question of whether or not he should take Mugger across to the island in the aeroplane, and he was no little downcast when the aviator promptly negated the proposition.

“No, I can't have that, Dave. Sorry, but it looks to me as if a humdinger of a storm is coming, and I wouldn't dare risk anything happening to us while my right arm is crippled.”

“But you've got to have attention,” expostulated Spike. “Besides, there's the aeroplane lying out there in the field!”

“She'll take no harm,” came the confident answer, “You tie her up in the tarp pretty well, anchor her securely, and nothing will hurt her. As for my arm, that'll have to wait. I'll get back with you fellows in the boat — if we can get out of this river by to-night, we ought to make Detroit Harbor easy enough. Of course, if the blow comes on we'll have to tie up down at Cedar River and wait.”

So to this program the boys perforce resigned themselves. None the less, Dave was keenly anxious about the airman's hurt, and on their tramp back to the boat he more than once caught a spasm of pain flitting across the determined features. However, the ground was rough and jars were unavoidable, so he trusted that things would turn out all right later on, when Mugger had a chance to rest.

And it was with a great joy that Dave Hartley returned to camp, the heavy chest of swords carried on his back. For he had won out — and great things lay ahead of the Wolf Patrol! But not even Dave saw just how great these were to be, for their trip was not ended.

CHAPTER XVII

ON THE ROCKS

“Hey, Spike! You and Jim turn out here.”

The words were drowned in a jagged crash of thunder and a wild swoop of rain, and the shivering, oilskinned figure of Dave crawled from beneath the tarpaulin that was lashed down over the cockpit, and gained the streaming wharf. In the cockpit rose the voices of Spike and Jim, and the sounds of hurried dressing, for his summons had been peremptory and there was fear in his voice.

The *Sea Wolf* lay lined to the wharf at Cedar River, and it was barely four in the morning — an hour before sunrise. But there would be no sun visible that morning. The storm had broken in the middle of the afternoon, and by the time the boys reached the town they had decided to lie up there overnight at least, for the gale was a furious one.

Even the placid waters of the river were lashed into foam, though the rain kept down the waves. But the rain was lessening now, and the wind was rising steadily, it seemed. Out on the lake the storm must be

terrific, and Mugger had not allowed them to risk trying the passage to the island.

The Viking cache had been safely stowed away in the lockers, with due regard to the trim of the boat, and Dave had retired in the cabin with Mugger, the other three taking the cockpit to themselves. They had not been uncomfortable despite the storm, for the tarpaulin had been designed to keep the boat dry at just such times, and it succeeded admirably.

Spike grumbled drowsily as he dressed, Rufe wakened and demanded to know the cause of the confusion, and when the patrol leader and his assistant had emerged, Rufe was dressing hurriedly. From forward came the droning sound of a voice, rising and falling steadily, but Dave sat on the edge of the wharf and waited silently.

“I like your nerve!” growled Spike, getting the force of the rain and wind.

“Shut up,” commanded Dave abruptly. “Say, fellows, this is awful! Mugger's out of his head, raving away down there, and we'll have to do something and do it pretty all-fired quick!”

The others caught the sound of the droning voice from

the cabin, and Spike looked up at his chum, white-faced and startled.

“What can we do, Dave? There's only one doctor in town here, and he's 'way up at a lumber camp, they said — won't be back for a couple days.

Dave nodded, for they had vainly tried to get hold of a doctor upon arriving. Just then Rufe emerged and was told the bad news. The shock of it staggered them all, and after listening a moment to Mugger's ravings, Dave replied.

“There's only one thing we *can* do, Spike. We've *got* to do it! That's to get him to a doctor. There's nobody at this place, and we've got to move lively.”

“Well, how?” exclaimed Rufe, now thoroughly frightened. “There's no railroad, an' we can't put out into the lake — why, even those fish-boats were afraid to go out!”

“That's just what we got to do, though,” returned Dave determinedly “There's no use trying to hit for Menominee or Manistee. What we've got to do is to put for home. Once we make the island, the life-saving men will know what to do, and if not, then the

Sailor Boy will be startin' for Sturgeon Bay. It's four now, and she leaves at six-thirty. That gives us time to get across easy."

The four stared at each other, then Spike went to the cabin and listened. There was no doubt of it; the scout master had been sent into a fever of delirium by his broken arm, and they all realized that Dave had advised well.

But the thought of venturing out into that gale was a hard one to face. After a moment, however, Spike faced it with his quiet determination.

"Dave's right, fellows. We must do it!" And he held up his hand in the scout sign. The others nodded without a word, and Spike turned.

"Dave, you look after the engine and I'll stick out here by the forward helm. Good thing we filled our gas tank last night — we'll need it all now, I guess. Jim, you and Rufe throw off the lines, and be ready to jump for the sails if the engine goes dead."

"She isn't going dead," responded Dave, as he crawled under the tarpaulin. A moment later he had an electric flash lamp at work, cranked up the engine, and they sped out from the wharf on their errand of mercy.

While they were in the river mouth it was not so bad, but when they struck the open lake the fury of the storm swirled down on them out of the darkness like a wild thing.

Their electric searchlight guided them out safely, then Spike ordered it doused and steered by the binnacle in the stern deck, where Rufe sat and directed things from underneath the tarpaulin. The *Sea Wolf* was pitched about like a cork; hardest of all was the strain on Rufe and Dave, beneath the tarpaulin, for if she went under they would be caught; but the cover was necessary to keep water from the engine. The plight of Jim and Spike was little better, however. The waves broke over the little craft for her entire length, until she would shudder after each blow; at times she would bury her nose deep in the seas, lifting her propeller out of the water and letting it race until Dave feared the shaft would snap. And over all was the terrible darkness to increase their fears a hundredfold.

It was a tremendous storm, that was evident, and the only thing in their favor was that it was from the west and drove them before it. After half an hour, indeed, Spike abandoned the helm to Jim and managed to break out the foresail, which was instantly blown from the ropes with a report like a gun. Another effort with

the spare sail succeeded much better, however, and under this she wallowed along better, as it lifted her nose and helped her speed a good deal.

Spike was forced to run for the north end of the island, directly before the wind, in order to take no chances on being blown ashore. This, therefore, necessitated his going away around the island, but after reaching the other side they would be sheltered by its lee and could make good time.

After an hour had passed, all four began to see that they were coming through in fine shape but the storm was also increasing. As the dawn broke, cold and desolate, they made out the island some three miles to the southeast, and just as Jim discerned it amid the flying scud, Spike gave a cry and pointed to a flying streamer of green against the dawn.

“Rocket!” he yelled. “Tumble up, all hands!”

There was no need to use compass and binnacle now, and as the engine was going smoothly Dave followed Rufe on deck forward. How Mugger was they had no means of knowing; they dared not open the cabin door lest the seas flood them.

Another rocket spurted up ahead of them, and in ten

minutes they discovered that a ship or boat must be on the rocks beyond the bluffs, out under the aviator's "jumping off place," as Jim termed it.

When it grew light enough to use the glasses, they were barely two miles from the northwest corner of the island, and could clearly make out a black spot fixed among the breakers, though no more rockets ascended.

"Prob'ly a fish-launch!" yelled Rufe above the howling of the gale. "She'll be gone before the life-savers can get up from Plum Island!"

"Get that tarpaulin lashed down around the engine so's to clear the cockpit!" shouted Spike, never taking his eyes from the angry waters ahead. The other three who were clumped together, shivered as a sea swept across and drenched them. Then they sprang to obey the order, and as Dave met Jim's eyes he read there the same wild surmise that has sprung up within his own heart.

With no little difficulty they got the tarpaulin down and lashed around the opening on the engines, which left the cockpit bare. Then Dave ordered Rufe to the stern helm, as the patrol leader had not been relieved since they started, Spike made no objection, but crept

back in the stern beside his brother, seized the glasses and directed affairs.

Spike asked for no discussion, and none was needed, for the others knew his object as soon as he had ordered that tarpaulin down. There were men on that boat stuck there on the rocks, and he intended to get them off if possible — that was all.

They all knew that bit of coast — jagged and rocky under the high bluffs, with a narrow channel cutting through to Washington Harbor. The fish-launch, for such it was, had evidently tried to get through the channel and had gone on the rocks. If they were to rescue her, Spike would have to try the channel also. As they were a bare mile away now, and going down on the rocks fast, Spike turned and began shouting his orders.

“Dave, cut that canvas away — it'll take close steering. Jim, fetch me that coil of rope out of the forward locker.”

Dave managed to obey, at the cost of several duckings from the sweeping seas, and he returned to find Spike fastening a heavy plummet of lead to the end of the rope.

“They're on the rocks at the far side o' the channel,” explained Spike, getting down inside the cockpit to make himself heard. “When I yell, Dave, slow her down to half speed. Rufe, when we hit the channel you head as if we were going right over to the rocks on the left, see? The current's to the right — that's what caught her. When they get the line it'll make us sweep round on the rocks unless we head straight across the channel. Then we'll hold just about in the same place.”

All comprehended the plan, but it was dangerous in the extreme, for if the pull of the rope behind, added to the current, proved too strong for the engine, they would be swept on the rocks as the fish-launch had been. She was in plain sight now, with the spray beating far over her, and they could make out the figures of two men clinging helplessly to her rail. She was hard and fast on the rocks, and seemed to be breaking up under the smashing breakers.

It was just five thirty. Even at that moment Dave could not forget the errand on which they were bound. They had an hour to get around the island in, providing they escaped the rocks, and should be able to catch the *Sailor Boy* easily. But so tremendous had the gale become that Dave strongly doubted whether the boat would leave for Sturgeon Bay at all that

morning.

Ten minutes later they entered the channel, and at Spike's yell Dave slowed down the engines. All about them was spray and scud. The water boiled and swirled in whirlpools, and the great billows thundered on the rocks. Time and again Dave gave himself up for lost, but the steady hand of Rufe pulled them through. Then, so suddenly that he hardly realized it, they were bearing down past the wreck.

She lay fifty feet away from the channel, driven up among the rocks. Spike had his rope ready, the distance with his eye, and just measuring before they reached her he whirled up the lead plummet, stepped to the lockers, and after two short whirls sent the rope out toward the wreck.

His judgment was true. The wind caught the flying rope and held, and a moment later one of the men aboard the wreck had made the rope fast. Then, throwing his end of the line about a cleat, Spike yelled to Dave for full speed, and the struggle was on.

For long moments the four boys held their breath, doubting whether the *Sea Wolf* would make it. As she swung about and got the driving seas on her quarter, each one burst over her in a blinding, stinging wave of

cold spray; Dave found the little cockpit ankle-deep in water, and his heart sank as he felt the current drag at the boat.

But the two fishermen had wasted no time. Hardly was the line made fast when one of them swung himself out and started for the *Sea Wolf*, hand over hand. The stout little launch quivered and throbbed as her propeller raced, but gradually she made her way and even forced herself back against sea, wind and current; then Dave looked around at a yell and saw the half-frozen fisherman being dragged over the side.

The second man was already on the way, the seas buffeting him and trying to tear him from his precarious hold. The first man had fallen unconscious as he came aboard, and could give them no help, but the boys were confident of victory now.

As the second fisherman had left his wrecked boat, they saw him dashed among the jagged rocks, but he held to the rope valiantly. Later they discovered that his leg had been broken in that moment. Little by little he came forward, gasping, choking, but with his hands ever reaching out anew, and finally Spike caught him, Jim lent a hand, and he was dragged aboard.

“Let her go!”

The rope was thrown off. Like a top the *Sea Wolf* whirled to her helm. One crashing sea sent her staggering and half-swamped her, then she was scudding away down the channel to safety. On the bluffs Dave made out a few helpless people watching — doubtless Gisli Gisslafsson and one or two others. Then they were past and sweeping on across the mouth of Washington Harbor in a wild race for the lee side of the island and comparative shelter.

The two rescued fishermen both lay unconscious in the swishing water, and with sudden fear that this would get to the engines, Spike set all hands to work baling. Sea after sea swept them on, rising high behind them, threatening to engulf them, then lifting them high in a swaying, swaggering motion, only to sink them down into the depths again. The baling helped out the automatic pumps, and at length the *Sea Wolf*, laden with the treasure of the Vikings, the prey plucked from the jaws of the storm, the four weary boys and a raving, delirious man, swept around into the lee of the headlands and swung to her course for the south on the last lap of her terrible race against death.

CHAPTER XVIII

AND LAST

“Well, you chaps can brace up. He's not in any great danger now, but a few hours longer and he'd have faced amputation, if not worse.”

The four boys sitting around the fireplace in the Rankin living room, jumped to their feet with a subdued shout of joy. In the doorway stood the uniformed surgeon, smiling.

“Less noise, please!” he continued, raising a hand. “My assistant will stay with him until the morning, when we sail. Then I'll turn him over to you for nursing, and he'll need nothing more than good care for a couple of weeks.”

“A couple o' weeks!” repeated Spike in dismay. “Why, his aeroplane's over on the mainland — ”

“I know,” broke in the surgeon. “He told me about it before he went off to sleep. We'll steam over that way and send in a party of men to stand guard over it until the government sends up a man from Chicago, It'll be only a few days. Now I'd like to shake hands with you

boys, then I'll let you go off to sleep. My assistant will wake you before he goes.”

It was the evening of the most eventful day the boys had ever known. When they arrived in Detroit Harbor that morning they had found that the storm was one of the worst experienced on the lake for years; in the harbor was the revenue cutter *Mackinac*, which had put in during the night for shelter, and the exhausted boys had hailed her in passing and asked for a surgeon. Then they had gone on to their own dock, and the launch from the cutter had arrived in time to help bear the three unconscious men to the cottage — for by this time Mugger had sunk into coma.

No sleep had the boys gained that day, for the islanders had poured in upon them, and the aviator's condition had proved serious indeed. There had been visitors from the cutter, from the life-saving station, and from the whole island, as the story of what had taken place went abroad. The two rescued men had been removed from the cottage to the hotel, being both islanders and relatives of Bo Anderson, and there had been no little anxiety among the four boys as to the condition of their scout master, who was still delirious.

Not a word had they breathed about the Viking cache, though they had unloaded the *Sea Wolf* and brought

their plunder up to the cottage. Now, however, assured that all was well with Joe Mugger, they turned in and slept until the surgeon's assistant roused them and departed for his ship, at sunrise.

The aviator was still sleeping, and after a hasty breakfast the boys gathered in the living room at the request of Spike, who had been silent and thoughtful ever since their arrival. They had barely assembled when, to their surprise, there was a knock on the door and Gissliver Gisslafsson entered.

“Sit down,” invited Spike, and the wondering islander obeyed, staring. “I asked Mr. Gisslafsson over yesterday, fellows. You know, his mother told us about that cache, and one of her ancestors was in on the deal in the first place. It looked only square to me that we should divvy up all around on the stuff.”

The others nodded, though this was the first they had heard of Spike's intention. However, the justice of it was evident to them, and there was no dissenting voice as their leader told of their trip and then showed the “trading-goods” recovered from the cache, which were disposed about the room.

“But,” said the burly islander, when he had examined it all in puzzled amazement, “this is not mine. You

have found it.”

“Yes, but you've got as much moral right as we have to it,” and Dave explained their position clearly. Finally the islander shook his head decidedly.

“No. I do not understand. If my ancestor lost it, it was his fault. You have found it, and you are brave boys. You keep it. I must go home and see that my mother is all right.”

And with this simple and blunt speech he shook hands and departed, leaving the boys in mingled delight and chagrin. But as Rufe said, the stuff was nothing to him, and his ancestor was even less. So there the matter ended.

When Mugger awoke, weak but on the road to recovery, the boys crowded around his bed and related in detail the story of their voyage home. He had heard nothing of it from the surgeon, and now his amazement was great, and mingled with a keen pride in *his* patrol, as he termed it. Then there was an exhibition of the “treasure” and before he dropped off to sleep again he ordered the boys to make photographs of the whole thing that day, and to find out if any word of their adventures had gone out from Plum Island.

Jim, being the official photographer, at once took pictures of the various spoils, after they had been arranged on the wide veranda. Dave telephoned over to the island and found out that the enthusiastic life-savers were already preparing a story to send out, which he managed to hold up for the present.

At noon the scout master woke up again, and heard their reports with huge delight. This was increased when Jim developed his films and found that he had an excellent set of photographs.

“Then there's no time to lose,” declared Muger. “Any of you chaps know shorthand?”

Dave did, as also Rufe, and the scout master ordered them into service at once.

“Nonsense!” he replied laughingly to Spike's protests, “I'm able to talk if not to write, and this story must go out to-night. Jim, make wet prints of those pictures before sunset sure.”

Jim departed hurriedly, and the other three settled down to work, Dave and Rufe taking dictation while Spike wrote out an account of the rescue of the two fishermen. When it was finished, Muger ordered

them to transcribe their notes and telegraph the whole to the City Press Association at Chicago, in his name, and to send the photographs off by the evening boat without fail. After this, he turned over and fell asleep.

It was done as he had ordered, and during the next day the boys were busy putting the *Sea Wolf* in shape after her battering. Along in the afternoon the telephone in the cottage began to ring, and the amazed and delighted boys began to receive message after message from Chicago. The whole account had appeared in the papers, telegrams were pouring in at Sturgeon Bay, and everyone, from Senator Rankin to the newspaper editors, was to congratulate the boys and Mugger and the *Sea Wolf* in a grand jumble.

“Whittaker!” breathed Dave, after Jim had relieved him at the telephone and started in transcribing a new set of messages. “What's going to happen to us, anyhow?”

The aviator, who had dressed and had joined them downstairs that afternoon, grinned as Jim handed him a message.

“What'll we do with all this Viking stuff?” asked Spike. “I haven't heard anybody say it was any good yet — everyone seems to think more o' taking the

fishermen off!”

“That so?” laughed the scout master. “Listen to this — a wire from Chicago University, offering one thousand dollars for the stuff if it turns out as stated — ”

“Wait!” shrieked Jim, scribbling away. “Here's one from the Smithsonian at Washington. They're sendin' a man and offer us two thousand — ”

He broke off short, catching up the receiver again. The others watched him, fascinated, for his face suddenly was a marvel to behold — as Dave said later, it was as if lightning had struck him.

“Somebody come here — quick!” he gasped out, and Spike relieved him. For a moment he scribbled off the message he had been receiving, then held it up.

“Listen here — it's from the Scout Local Council of Chicago, and congratulates us on being the finest examples of true Scouts Chicago ever had — and it says our names are going in to the National Council for gold medals of honor — Oh, glory be, glory be!” And Jim seized Rufe and began to dance around the room in an ecstasy of delight.

A wild yell shrilled up from the others, and small wonder, for this was the greatest honor in the gift of the Boy Scout organization. With that the messages had ceased, and Spike looked up suddenly from some of those he was reading over.

“Say, fellows,” he exclaimed abruptly, “what'll we do with the coin we get for this Viking stuff? Do we split it or what?”

Rufe answered quickly, quieting the others.

“Split? I should say not! I'll leave it to the Scout master if we'd ought to split it!”

“Why, what do you mean?” asked the aviator, in surprise, while the rest stared.

“I mean,” said Rufe earnestly, his cheeks flushed, “that we've all got a heap out of this we didn't expect. Spike and Jim and I don't need money — we've got what we wanted when this thing builds up the old patrol. But there's Dave Hartley — it hadn't been for him we wouldn't have gone after the stuff, and wouldn't have found it when we got there — ”

“Oh, shut up!” shouted the embarrassed Dave hotly.

“I ain't going to — ”

“Didn't you say something about wanting an education?” smiled up Mugger. Who's scout master of this patrol — you or I?”

“You are, sir,” answered Dave meekly.

“Then here's the wherewithal!” and Mugger held out his left hand. “Congratulations, Dave!”

the end of
“The Boy Scouts of the Air on the Great Lakes”

scanned & proofed 99 years after publication by:

Chuck Olson
Jackson Harbor Press
<http://wb9kzy.com>