

Allen Quincy

**The Outdoor Chums in the  
Big Woods: or, Rival Hunters  
of Lumber Run**



Quincy Allen

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# **The Outdoor Chums in the Big Woods; Or, Rival Hunters of Lumber Run**

## **CHAPTER I – THE SNOWBALL BATTLE**

“That looks like a challenge, Frank.”

“It was well fired, at any rate, Bluff!”

“I should say yes, because it knocked my hat clear off my head. Do we stand for that sort of thing, or shall we accept the dare?”

“There are half a dozen and more of the enemy against four Outdoor Chums, but what of that? This is the first snow of the fall, with a real tang in the air. Say yes, Frank, and let’s get busy!”

“Here are Bluff and Jerry ready to eat up that crowd in a snowball fight. What do you say, Will?”

“Oh, count me in, because I can see they’re just spoiling for it!” exclaimed the fourth boy in the party, who did not look quite so hardy as his comrades, although no weakling.

“Well, I should think it’d be a shame to miss it, when the snow is just soft enough to handle easily,” and Jerry Wellington held up a big round ball he had quickly manipulated in his practiced hands.

“That settles it. Everybody get busy making a supply of ammunition. Then we’ll charge their line, and give them as good as they send!”

The last speaker was Frank Langdon. His three comrades had always been proud to look up to Frank as their leader. They had been through a great many lively adventures together, and up to the present no one had ever found cause to regret the fact that when it came to deciding on their plans Frank’s word carried the greatest weight.

While they are feverishly stocking up with a supply of such ammunition as is required to win snowball battles, it might be well for the new reader to learn a few important facts concerning Frank and his chums, as narrated in previous volumes of this series.

They lived in the thriving town of Centerville, which was situated in one of the Middle States. Coming together in order to encourage the spirit of outdoor life, to their mutual profit, the four lively lads had called their little association the Rod, Gun, and Camera Club. In the initial story, under the name of “The Outdoor Chums; or, The First Tour of the Rod, Gun, and Camera Club,” were given numerous strange happenings that befell them on the occasion of their first camping trip together.

Later on they ran upon a mystery connected with an island that had a bad name in the neighborhood, and of course could not rest satisfied until they solved this puzzle to their satisfaction. In order to understand just what they did you must read the second volume, issued under the title of “The Outdoor Chums on the Lake; or, Lively Adventures on Wildcat Island.”

With the coming of Easter, and another chance to get abroad, the boys formed a plan to visit a section of country some miles from the home town. Here they found an opportunity to clear up a ghost scare that had been giving the country people of the neighborhood the time of their lives. It is all told in the pages of “The Outdoor Chums in the Forest; or, Laying the Ghost of Oak Ridge.”

Fortune was certainly kind to Frank and his chums. At Christmas time they were given a chance to pay a visit to the Sunny South, and had some wonderful adventures on a Florida river that ran to the Gulf. Aboard a motorboat that belonged to a cousin of Frank’s, and which was fully stocked with supplies, with the owner ordered to Europe for his health, they had the time of their lives, as told of in “The Outdoor Chums on the Gulf; or, Rescuing the Lost Balloonists.”

After this came another opportunity for a trip, this time to the Far West, where among the mountains and valleys of that wonderful country they found occasion to call themselves the luckiest of boys. Every one of them had a share in the exciting adventures that came their way, and it would be hard to tell which deserved the greatest credit for true manliness. You will be better able to decide that point for yourself after you have read “The Outdoor Chums after Big Game; or, Perilous Adventures in the Wilderness.”

Again it was summer, and the boys home from college planned a voyage down the great Mississippi on a houseboat belonging to Will’s Uncle Felix, at the time in New Orleans. There was something very queer about the conditions under which he proposed that they make this trip at his expense. The boys could not understand it at all when they started out, though anxious to accept the offer. Of course, during the progress of their cruise, the mystery began to clear up. That Frank and his friends carried their plans through to a climax can be proved by reading the sixth volume, just preceding this, called “The Outdoor Chums on a Houseboat; or, The Rivals of the Mississippi.”

And now we can return once more to the present conditions surrounding Frank and his three chums, Will Milton, Jerry Wallingford and Bluff Masters.

As they had been graduated a year and more previous to this time from private school, and had had one season at college, their presence at home with the advent of early winter needs explanation.

A fire had occurred, and part of the college buildings were in ruins. As the dormitory in which the four chums lodged had been burned to the ground, they lost a good part of their clothing, besides other things. Fortunately no lives were sacrificed in the blaze.

There being no suitable place at hand where their studies could be carried on until such time as hasty repairs were made, a portion of the pupils had to be sent to their homes for a month or two. It was arranged that they keep in touch with their studies and later on extra speed might push them up to their proper standing.

So it came about that they were home and wondering what they should do to pass away the weeks that must elapse before the summons back might be expected. Various projects had been suggested, although they only arrived in Centerville on the previous night; but up to the present nothing had been decided definitely.

There was an old trapper they knew, and with whom they had spent some happy days and nights on a previous occasion, and Frank was favoring a return visit. At any rate, they could settle this later on.

“All ready?” demanded Frank, when he had all the hard snowballs he could conveniently carry. The jeering cries of the six or seven boys anticipating the attack grew more and more strenuous.

“Wait till I make two more, and I’m with you!” begged Bluff, who had even filled his pockets with the hardest balls he could squeeze in his powerful hands.

“There’s our old enemy, Andy Lasher, in that bunch over yonder,” announced Jerry, who from previous fights with the one-time town bully had occasion to know the contour of Andy’s knuckles, since they had been printed on his face more than a few times.

“I wonder when he came back to town?” ventured Frank. “The last we heard of him he had to skip out because of some trouble he got into about taking things that didn’t belong to him.”

“Well, we’ve still an old score to settle with him,” observed Bluff, “so every chance you get, give him your hardest ball. Ready now, Frank!”

Frank led his forces to the attack.

“Hold your fire till we get close up!” he advised.

The consequence of this plan was that while they were greeted with a shower of missiles, some of which hit the mark, when the time came to commence a fusillade on their own account they had a full supply of ammunition, while the other side had more than half exhausted their stock.

It looked lively enough just then, with almost a dozen lads hurling the snowballs with might and main. All sorts of shouts accompanied the encounter, for of course they were pretty well aroused by the excitement of the battle.

The big fellow whom Jerry had called Andy Lasher seemed to be the real leader of the opposing band. Perhaps he had even organized the ambushade so as to get even with Frank and his chums, because there was a long-standing account between them.

At any rate, it kept him busy dodging the cleverly aimed missiles that flew from the hands of Bluff and Jerry. They had singled him out for their especial attention, and at close quarters their aim was so good that pretty soon Andy failed to move fast enough, so that he found himself struck in the cheek, and as he started to dodge it was only to get another whack fairly in the eye.

Some people who had been passing stopped to watch the fight. Men remembered that they had once been boys themselves, and no doubt their blood tingled with rekindled memories of days long since gone, as they saw the hostile forces fiercely contending on the town street.

For a short time the entrenched battalion held its own, though Frank knew from the way some of Andy's followers began to look over their shoulders that they were getting ready to retreat.

"Keep it going, boys!" he shouted to his three chums, as he scooped up more of the soft snow and started making fresh balls; "hit hard all along the line! We've got 'em wavering! Another rush, and the game is ours! Send in your best licks, and make every shot count!"

All of them were attacking Andy now. They realized that if he could be put to flight there must follow a complete collapse of his line; because these fellows were only held there by the fact that they feared Andy's anger if they deserted him.

Andy had managed to make one last hard ball. He had even in desperation, as was afterward proven, snatched up a stone and hid it in the middle of the snowball he pressed between his half-frozen hands. This is reckoned a mean trick among most boys and frowned upon as much as hitting below the belt would be in a prize fight.

Frank saw that he had been selected as the victim of the bully. He managed to dodge in the nick of time, and the weighted missile, sailing across the street, smashed through the window of a house.

With the jingling of broken glass Andy Lasher gave a shout, and then with jeers of derision he and his followers vanished from sight, leaving the four outdoor chums to bear the brunt of the householder's anger.

## CHAPTER II – A BROKEN WINDOW, AND GLORIOUS NEWS

“Gee whiz! Look who’s coming out of the house on the rampage, will you!” cried Bluff Masters, as the front door was flung open and an excited man hurried down the steps toward the spot where the four chums stood breathing hard after their recent exertions.

“It’s old Isaac Chase, the meanest man in Centerville!” exclaimed Jerry, in dismay.

“But we didn’t break his old window, you know,” expostulated Will Milton. “Here are lots of witnesses to prove it came from the other side.”

“Little he’ll care about that,” Bluff told him. “He must have seen us in the fight, and that settles it. Frank, you talk with him. I’d be apt to get sassy if he scolded too hard.”

So it usually came about. Upon Frank’s shoulders was laid the burden of extricating them from numerous mishaps. But Frank rather liked being made the scapegoat; he certainly faced the angry old miser of Centerville without showing a sign of alarm.

“Now you’ve gone and done it, you young rascallions!” cried Isaac Chase, so excited that he could hardly control his trembling voice. “I don’t know what this town is coming to, when a pack of boys are allowed to fight battles right on the public streets, and with stones in their snowballs at that!”

He held up something he had in his hand, so that every one could see. It was a stone, there could be no doubt about that, with some of the snow still adhering to its sides.

Bluff rubbed the side of his head at seeing this, as though wondering whether the missile that had struck him there had also been loaded in that way.

“We’re sorry, Mr. Chase, that your window was broken,” said Frank steadily; “it was an accident, I give you my word about that. I happened to dodge a ball fired from the other side, and it went through the glass.”

“What! You here in this rowdy business, Frank Langdon!” exclaimed the other, as though more than surprised. “I shall have to see your father and make complaint, if the Chief of Police declines to back me up and arrest a few of you.”

“As to that, Mr. Chase, I will tell my father all about it as soon as he comes home from the bank. I know what he will say, though, and it doesn’t frighten me one bit. My father was a boy himself once, not like some people who forget that they once used to play themselves.”

“Don’t be impudent to me, boy!” snapped the old miser angrily.

“I don’t mean to be so, Mr. Chase,” Frank continued; “and as for your window, we will send a glazier around right away to put in a fresh pane, and pay for it, too. I’m sure that is all you could expect from us.”

“That’s a measly shame, Frank!” objected Bluff impetuously.

“When it was Andy Lasher who broke the window,” added Jerry, filled with righteous indignation. “You only ducked, Frank, when you saw it headed your way. Perhaps Mr. Chase thinks you should have stood up and got that snowball with the stone in its heart smashed in your eye. It isn’t fair for you to pay the bill. Let him go after Andy.”

“No, I prefer settling the account myself, and not having any trouble about it,” Frank told his objecting chums. “Besides, we’ve had enough fun out of the business to stand a little expense like that. The innocent often have to suffer for the guilty.”

Some of the bystanders at this point tried to convince Mr. Chase that Frank was entirely innocent of the whole transaction; but the miser, acting on the principle that “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,” declined to let the generous offer Frank had made slip from his grasp.

“Someone’s got to pay for my broken window,” he insisted stubbornly, “and these boys admit they were connected with the rowdy crew that made themselves a disgrace to the town in front of my

door. I shall expect him to fulfill his offer, which you heard him make, Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Mole. The sooner that window pane is replaced the better I shall be pleased. That's enough."

With that he turned his back upon the group and hurried to reenter his house, as though fearful lest some of the spectators might endeavor to shame him out of accepting pay from an innocent party.

Frank and his three comrades stood talking with some of those who had gathered when the crash of broken glass, followed by angry words in the high-pitched voice of the miser, drew attention to the scene of action.

"Come, let's be moving along, fellows," Bluff finally remarked. It galled him to think they had been made the scapegoats by Andy Lasher and his set, though he knew only too well that once Frank's mind was made up to pay for the broken window nothing could change him.

True to his promise, Frank first of all visited the hardware store, and engaged the owner to send a man around at once to the home of the miser, so as to replace a twelve-by-twenty pane of glass.

"I expect to have a good many orders like that, Frank, before the day is over," remarked the dealer, laughingly. "They always come with the first snow, for you boys must have your fling. A ball went wide of the mark, did it, and picked out the window of Miser Chase's house to smash?"

"But the trouble is, none of us threw it!" burst out Jerry, determined that the true facts should be known at any rate, even if they did have to foot the bill. "Andy Lasher hid a stone in his last ball, and expected to do Frank damage, for he shied it straight at his head; but Frank dodged, and bang went the glass!"

"Andy and his cowardly bunch pulled out like fun," Bluff hastened to add; "and so we had to stand for it. But then Frank says we were in the crowd that was fighting, and it wasn't fair that Mr. Chase, who was an innocent party, should suffer from our fun. So I reckon we'll have to put our hands in our pockets and pay your bill, Mr. Benchley."

The hardware man nodded his head. There was a twinkle in his eye as he observed Frank Langdon. He knew the sort of reputation Frank had in Centerville, although the latter had not been a resident there much more than three years, having come from away off in Maine at the time his father took the local bank over.

"Believe me, I'll let you boys off as lightly as I can, and not lose by it," was what he told them. "I like the manly way you stand up and take hard knocks. If I had a boy, I'd want him to be just your style, Frank."

As the four chums went away, Jerry chuckled.

"That was as neat a compliment as you ever had paid you, Frank, do you know it?" he asked the other.

Frank smiled, but he did not look displeased.

"I'm glad Mr. Benchley has such a good opinion of the outdoor chums," he remarked, "for he meant every one of you, as well as me, when he said that. We try to do the right thing most times; and yet there never were four boys more fond of having a jolly time than this bunch."

"That's so," Bluff declared sturdily, "and we've had lots of dandy vacations in the past, too. What's bothering me is where we ought to go to spend this unexpected time that's been given to us through the fire at the college."

"We'll figure all that out in a day or so, never fear," Will observed.

"Yes," added Jerry, "leave it to Frank, and he'll arrange the details. Chances are we'll be dropping in to see how old Jesse Wilcox is getting on with his muskrat trapping. I think I'd enjoy another turn up there in the woods."

"One thing sure," said Frank, "we must arrange to go away *somewhere*, and do a little hunting again. Just the thought of it gives me a warm feeling around my heart."

"Same here," Bluff told him cheerfully; "I never feel happier than when I smell the woods and get on the trail of game. That glorious spell we had out on Mr. Mabie's ranch among the Rockies has haunted me ever since."

They talked it over as they sauntered in the direction of their homes. It happened that Will Milton's house was the first they came to.

"I saw the postman come out of our gate," Will commented. "I wonder if he brought Uncle Felix the letter he's been expecting for some days. You see, he's got a bad attack of rheumatism; yet he says he must try to get away Down East on some very important business. Between you and me, he never will be able to do it for days or weeks, he's that doubled up."

"Run in, if you feel like it, Will," Frank told him. "We'll wait out here for you."

"Yes," added Jerry, as if it might be an afterthought, "and while you're about it, Will, just mention to Uncle Felix that there are four husky boys around, with considerable time to burn just now, and if he wants anybody to take that trip for him we might be coaxed into doing it, if he'd stand for expenses."

At that all of them laughed, as though they considered it a joke. Will left them shying a few snowballs at a tin can Bluff had set on a fence-post.

"If we're going to get in many affairs like the one we just had with Andy Lasher and his crowd," the latter remarked, "it stands to reason we want to tune up some in our heaving. My baseball arm is out of practice, and I'm ashamed to say that three out of four balls I fired missed their mark."

"Oh, well, I noticed a lot of dodging being done," commented Frank; "and only for that all of us might have made more bull's-eyes."

"Chances are that Andy will have a circle around *his* left eye after that smash he got," observed Jerry. "A hard snowball can sting like fun when it catches you there."

"Yes, look at my right cheek, if you want to prove that," Bluff advised them. "I got caught there, and it keeps on burning like a hot iron. I wouldn't be surprised if there was a piece of coal or a stone in that ball. They must have fixed up a lot of ammunition that way before they tackled us."

"Seems to me Will's a long time coming out again," complained Jerry. "He's always so much taken up with that photography of his that any old time he's liable to remember something and go to work at it, forgetting all about his chums, who may be kicking their heels in the back yard waiting for him."

"Oh, I don't think he's quite that forgetful!" laughed Frank. "You know he said Uncle Felix, who loaned us his houseboat to make that trip down the Mississippi to New Orleans, was expecting some important mail to-day. Perhaps he's held Will up to tell him about something. You know Uncle Felix thinks heaps of our chum; yes, and of all the rest of us in the bargain."

"There he comes!" exclaimed Bluff.

"And, say, he seems to be in a terrible hurry," added Jerry, beginning to show a touch of excitement himself. "Look at him waving his hat over his head? And do you see how he's grinning from ear to ear? Now what d'ye reckon can have happened?"

"Oh, Uncle Felix, don't I love you!" muttered Bluff, as if a sudden brilliant idea had come into his mind.

"What's Uncle Felix got to do with it?" demanded Jerry.

"Hold your horses a minute, and listen to what Will's going to give us," was all the other would say; for, to tell the truth, he himself had not been able to more than dimly suspect what was coming.

Will came hurrying up, and when he spoke his words gave them a thrill.

"What d'ye think, fellows," he exclaimed joyously; "we're on the highroad to another glorious trip like some of the ones we've enjoyed in the past!"

"Is it Uncle Felix?" gasped Jerry.

"Yes," came the quick response; "he wants all four of us to go up to a logging camp in Maine and do that important business for him!"

## CHAPTER III – GETTING READY

“Somebody hold me up!” exclaimed Bluff Masters, weakly. “I’m afraid I’m going to faint!”

“Wait till you hear the particulars before you drop off,” Will advised him.

“Then for goodness’ sake hurry up and get started,” said Jerry. “Look at Frank’s face, would you? Just remember that Maine’s his native State, and you can understand what good news you’ve brought him, Will. Start in now, and explain.”

“Oh, there isn’t so very much to tell,” the other began. “Uncle has had his letter, and it necessitates his getting a paper signed by a certain well-to-do lumberman up in the heart of the loneliest region in Maine. Unless this is done inside of two weeks Uncle Felix says he stands to lose a big sum of money. And there he is, laid up with the rheumatism so he can’t straighten up, much less take such a long journey.”

“So he wants the outdoor chums to go in his stead; is that it, Will?” cried Jerry, as well as he was able; for Bluff had thrown his arms around his neck and was hugging him as savagely as any black bear could.

“That’s all arranged,” Will announced proudly. “Kept me longer than I meant to stay; but then I thought you’d like to have things settled.”

“And how about the expense?” asked Bluff cautiously.

“Uncle stands every cent of it!” came the reply.

“Three cheers for Uncle Felix!” exclaimed Frank; and they were given with a vim that must have quite tickled the old traveler inside the Milton house, who could not fail to hear the chorus and must know what it signified.

“When do we start?” demanded Jerry.

“How long would it take us to get ready?” asked Will.

“Let’s see, it’s just ten-forty-nine now by the town clock,” Jerry hastily observed; “I reckon eleven o’clock would fill the bill with me. Eleven long minutes, and you can do lots in that time, when you hustle.”

Frank laughed.

“Well, you do like to rush things, Jerry,” he remarked. “We couldn’t go off like that on such a long journey. There are heaps and heaps of things to be looked after; clothes to be gathered and examined, for it’ll be pretty cold up there at this time of year; shells to be loaded, other stuff to be bought, and packed, and all that sort of thing. To-morrow we’ll make a start, and it’ll keep us all on the jump even at that to get properly stocked.”

Jerry looked disgusted, and muttered to himself; but his later judgment was likely to be to the effect that Frank knew best.

“Uncle wants you to come in and have a talk with him, first of all,” Will went on. “He’ll give Frank the paper that has to be signed in the presence of three witnesses – ourselves, if there are no others handy. Then he means to put the thing in our hands to do as we please. He was a little anxious about our having to get the consent of our parents; but I told him that if my mother was willing I should go, the rest of you would have no trouble at all.”

“I should say not!” declared Bluff.

“Oh, it’s hard to believe such a chance has come to us just when we have all this time hanging heavy on our hands!” Jerry cried.

Their interview with Will’s bachelor uncle turned out very satisfactorily. Uncle Felix was only too willing to leave everything in the way of details in charge of Frank, whom he knew to be the leader of the chums.

“Never mind the expense, lads,” he told them; “only get that signature for me, and I’ll not count the cost. Besides, you can hardly know the pleasure it gives me to offer you such a fine trip into the

Big Woods of Maine. You'll find them well worth going all that distance to see. It will be a great deal finer than if you were simply heading up into the pine woods of Michigan."

"That's what Frank's been telling us, sir," declared Jerry. "Perhaps you don't know Frank's home used to be in Maine; and that's where he learned most of what he knows about the big outdoors. He's often said he only wished we might have a chance to run up there and visit some of the old stamping grounds with him."

"Well, that's better than I thought," Uncle Felix told them; "and when you come back I hope you'll have some great stories to tell of your adventures in the woods. I only regret that I can't be one of the party, because all my life I've been an advocate of outdoor life."

"I expect to take a good stock of films along," Will said, "and that new-fangled flashlight apparatus, too, so I can try to get pictures of game taken at night time by themselves. That's a stunt I've been reading up lately, and I'm as anxious as can be to see what I can do."

"Well, if we want to get off by morning," Frank warned them, "we ought to be at work. Let's sit down for a few minutes and figure out just what we want to take along."

"How about the grub?" asked Bluff; for it would be strange indeed for him not to consider that important subject the first thing.

"We'll make sure to get some things here, because we know what the quality is," Frank commented, "such as tea and coffee and a few others; but the heavier stuff we ought to pick up after we get to the jumping-off place. That'll save us lots of carrying, you see."

"Why, yes," Jerry agreed, "we wouldn't want to have our trunk so heavy it couldn't be lifted without a derrick. That was the trouble with the first boat old Robinson Crusoe built, remember? I've heard of other cases just as bad. A fellow was telling me about a time he went off on a trip with another chap and they kept adding this and adding that to the things that they thought they must have on their outing, till at last they had to take two tents along and hire a team to draw the stuff up and back."

With that Jerry ran off, and both Frank and Bluff were not long in following his example. Each of them had made out a long list of things he must personally attend to in the time that remained before night.

Frank's positive declaration that everything necessary must be completed before they went to bed had been accepted by his chums without a single murmur.

"Don't try to load any shells until the last thing," Frank had told them all. "If there's no time for that, we can buy what we want. As a rule, though, all of us much prefer to get our own powder and shot, for then we know what's coming; and sometimes we've been fooled when we used machine-made shells."

Frank was a little anxious until he had received calls over the telephone from both Bluff and Jerry. After they assured him that full permission had been given by their parents, so that the last possible doubt was removed, Frank's spirits grew lighter.

Nothing remained to be done but get in readiness, and on the coming morning start upon the long railroad trip to Maine.

When supper-time came four tired boys sat down to what they expected would be their last meal with the home folks for some time. Of course nothing was talked of around those family tables but the possibilities that awaited them in that wonderland of game and summer tourists.

If the anxious eyes of mothers occasionally filled with unbidden tears because of the separation to come, they bravely kept from displaying their emotions before the others, not wishing that any regrets should interfere with the happiness of those who were bound on such an enjoyable journey.

Of course every boy solemnly assured his mother that he meant to be very careful every minute of the time, knowing she would be worried; but that there was not the slightest danger of any harm befalling them.

Frank went the rounds, looking over the accumulation of traps, and lightening the collections in many ways.

“Just remember,” he told them when they murmured against his decree, “we have to tote every pound of this, and a heap of grub besides, over each foot of the way, up and down hill, and over snow fields besides. So leave it to me.”

In the end he had reduced every pack to its proper proportions; and finally returned home with the understanding that they would all meet on the station platform for the eastbound train.

Little sleep visited four pairs of eager eyes that last night under the home roofs in the little town of Centerville.

## CHAPTER IV – HEADED FOR THE BIG WOODS

On the second day after leaving home, the four chums found themselves upon what Bluff called the “last leg” of their railroad trip.

They were already in the State of Maine and heading north, bound for the station where they expected to get off, and somehow find their way to the place where Mr. Samuel Darrel, the well-known lumberman, was to be found, according to his letter to Uncle Felix.

This was a logging camp known as Lumber Run. It lay in the depths of the Big Woods, and was surrounded by a virgin growth of fine timber that would consume some years in the cutting.

No doubt the crews were already starting in to work, and the boys anticipated considerable enjoyment in seeing how the loggers dropped their trees. Of course, the most picturesque part of the business came in the spring when, after the customary freshets, the logs were rafted down the rivers to the accompaniment of thrilling exploits by the lumber jacks.

The train was filled with people, every seat having been taken in the day coaches at the time the four boys got aboard. As a consequence, although they did not much fancy it, they were compelled to sit in the smoking car. At times they opened the windows a bit, so as to get some fresh air.

Of course there was a motley assortment of rough-looking men aboard. Some of them may have been honest tillers of the soil returning home after a visit down in Boston or Portland. Others were undoubtedly lumbermen, heading for regions farther north, where they anticipated doing a season’s chopping, for as a rule they carried their axes with them.

There were sportsmen on the train, too, and naturally these claimed more than a share of attention from Frank and the other boys. Anything that had to do with hunting interested them. They listened whenever they heard some of these men discussing the chances for making a record bag that season.

“Sounds from the way they talk,” remarked Bluff at one time, “as though there never was so much game in the woods as this year.”

“I only hope it turns out that way,” Jerry went on, “because we’d be nearly tickled to death if we bagged a big moose, after all our past hunts. That’s one thing I’ve dreamed of doing many a time.”

“As for me,” ventured Will, with a long sigh, “I’d rather be able to get a picture of the moose than plant a bullet back of his shoulder. I think I’ll let the rest of you supply the game for the pot, while I spend all my time trying for something that will give us pleasure later on, whenever we look at it.”

“Every one to his taste,” said Bluff. “I admit that I wouldn’t give a snap of my finger for crawling around in the night, trying to take pictures of silly little ’coons and foxes that have been baited to come up and pull a string. When I hunt, I want to see something worth while drop.”

“Like that grizzly bear we ran across when we were out West?” suggested Jerry, his eyes kindling with vivid recollections.

“I was thinking,” remarked Frank, “how some of these city sportsmen aboard here, togged out in the latest clothes, and seeming as though they’d stepped out of bandboxes, keep looking over at us every once in a while, just as if they wondered how a pack of boys had been able to break away from the apron strings of their mothers.”

“If we up and told ’em one-half of what we’ve been through,” suggested Bluff, “I reckon they’d either think us descended from old Baron Munchausen, who could tell the biggest whoppers ever heard; or else they’d believe we’d broken loose from some lunatic asylum.”

“Watch that hard-looking fellow the other two call Bill Nackerson,” remarked Will, in a low tone. “He’s forever taking a nip out of a flask he carries, and then offering it to each one of the bunch. Both his mates accept, but that big boy I’ve seen shake his head. He doesn’t seem to like the stuff.”

“Well,” Frank observed, “can you blame him, when he sees such a horrible example in his uncle, for that seems to be the relation he bears to the big hunter. There, look the other way, he’s

scowling at us as if he might have guessed we were talking about him. Pretend we're admiring the scenery in this patch of woods where the snow hangs on the pines and hemlocks and firs. It's pretty enough to admire, you'll all admit."

"Think of the nerve of that Nackerson, fetching his old partridge dog in here, when all the other dogs are chained in the baggage car," observed Jerry.

"Well, the brakeman wanted to throw the dog out, but when he saw that would be sure to start a row, he gave it up, and went off growling," said Will.

"Yes, but I saw one of the other hunters slip something into his hand that looked like a bank-bill," Frank told them. "They've all got plenty of money, that's sure; and such men always believe they can buy whatever they want. He's still looking over this way from time to time."

"I hope he doesn't take a notion to make trouble for us," mentioned Will, who was the most peace-loving of the chums. "He's been taking more than he ought to, and is hardly responsible for his actions. I'd hate to get into a quarrel with such a fellow."

"All the same," muttered Bluff, "a dozen like him couldn't make me knuckle down, if I knew I was in the right."

"Sh! not another word; he's coming over here!" hissed Frank.

All of them felt their hearts beating faster than usual, as the big sportsman advanced along the aisle, his eyes fastened on them.

"Does that heavy bag that fell on my dog belong to any one of you kids?" he asked thickly, in a threatening tone.

Some time before a little accident had happened. The dog, in prowling around as far as his tether would admit, had managed to knock over a pack, and that it caused him a certain amount of pain his yelps had testified. At the time the owner had been in another car, but, seeing the dog licking his hurts, he must have forced one of his companions to tell him what had happened.

Frank hastened to explain, not in an apologetic way, but simply telling the facts, that it was really the animal's fault he had upset the pack on himself.

"It was the only place the thing could be set, and the brakeman himself put it there," he declared. "The dog was nosing around, and got his rope caught in the bag, so that he pulled it over on his back. I've fixed it so the accident can't possibly happen again, sir."

The man was in a very ugly mood. He looked Frank over with a dangerous scowl, but so far as could be seen the boy did not quail.

Then Nackerson began to berate them for having such an unwieldy pack, and leaving it at an end of the car he wanted for the use of his prize dog.

"What d'ye mean, setting a trap like that?" he demanded. "I believe you did it just to see how you could catch my dog. That sort of thing belongs in the baggage car – and it's time you took it there, d'ye hear me?"

"I hear you all right, sir," replied Frank, pale, perhaps, and yet meeting the ugly look of the other steadily. "But you must understand that we have a perfect right to carry any hand-baggage in the car with us. If your dog had been where he belonged, in that same baggage car, possibly he wouldn't have been hurt. And it doesn't amount to much, I figure, sir."

His bold words infuriated the hunter. But for his two friends, who seized hold of his arms, he might have attacked Frank, and then, as Bluff said afterward, "there *would* have been the dickens to pay."

The other hunters must have realized that their companion was in the wrong. They saw that others in the car would have jumped to the assistance of the boys had a struggle been precipitated. Accordingly, they soothed him as best they could, and in one way or another managed to coax the big brute back to his seat.

There he sat, every once in a while twisting his head around to scowl toward Frank and his chums, while muttering dire threats under his breath.

Twice he even started to get to his feet, whereupon Bluff Masters doubled up his fists aggressively, and clenched his teeth hard, as though ready for the battle that seemed imminent. On both occasions, however, the other men succeeded in pulling Nackerson back into his seat before he could break loose. So all the rest of the journey was pursued with what might be called an “armed truce” prevailing.

“I’m feeling sorry for that big boy they call Teddy,” remarked Frank later on, when they had reason to believe that another half hour would take them to the station where they expected to get out.

“Me, too,” added Bluff. “He seems made of different stuff from his ugly relative.”

“He certainly looks disgusted with the way his uncle acts,” Will declared. “How do you suppose he came to be with them up here, Frank?”

“Oh, I suppose they asked him to come along, and help out with the cooking,” replied the other, “and he caught at the chance to get an outing without any expense. Some men come up here just to drink and lie around camp. They are ashamed to carry on that way at home, and too lazy to even bother cooking, so they either have guides to do all the work, or else fetch some half-grown boy along. I’m sorry for Teddy, because I imagine he’s in for a bad time all around, and with mighty little pleasure.”

“Already the boy is more than half afraid of his uncle,” Will gave as his opinion. “Like as not he never dreamed he would turn out to be such a brute, once he got started for the woods.”

“I hope they keep the man quiet until we can leave the train,” said Frank. “It would be unpleasant to have a row to begin with.”

“Didn’t you say ours was the next one to this stop?” asked Bluff eagerly, as he pressed his nose against the glass and looked out, when the train came to a stop at a small country station.

“Yes, it’s the next,” Frank observed, “though if we chose we could go on to Clayton, and even then be about as close to Lumber Run. I was told we might find the trail a little better from Burnt Pine, and that’s why I picked it out.”

“Looks pretty lonely, doesn’t it?” asked Will.

“Just what I expected to find,” Frank replied. “I’ve always known that in all Maine this section had gone free the longest from the operation of the loggers. That’s why it’s called the Big Woods. For many years it’s been a favorite place for guides to bring parties of sportsmen, because they were pretty sure to find deer, moose, perhaps a bear, and always an abundance of partridge.”

“But,” remarked Bluff, “now that Samuel Darrel and his company, in which Uncle Felix has a big interest, have bought up all this section, with the idea of getting out the timber, it’ll only be a few years before the game is thinned out. Logging always hurts hunting.”

## CHAPTER V – AMONG THE LUMBERJACKS

“How’s your back, Bluff?” asked Jerry, something like four hours after the conversation in the smoking-car related in the preceding chapter.

“Don’t believe I’ve got any,” replied the other, with a grunt, “because there’s only a numb feeling where it ought to be.”

“If you find your pack heavy now, Bluff,” Frank remarked, over his shoulder, “I’d like to know what would have happened if I’d let you fetch all that junk along you laid out to bring.”

“Please don’t mention it, Frank, but give us some good news. Tell us we’re close to Lumber Run Camp, won’t you?”

“If you listen you’ll not need any answer from me!” replied Frank.

“What’s that I hear?” exclaimed Bluff, in evident delight. “Sounds like the whack of axes away off there to the left!”

“And there goes a tree down!” added Will, who was staggering along under his weighty pack, though with compressed lips, and a determination not to show any weakness.

“Well, it’s high time we struck somewhere,” grumbled Jerry. “We’ve been on the hike all of three hours and perhaps nearer four. Must have covered a heap of territory in that time.”

“Oh! not many miles,” Frank told him, “because we made up our minds we’d take it easy. But I can see smoke rising above the trees ahead and pretty soon we’ll be at the lumber camp.”

“Anyhow, I’m glad we had a chance to say good-by to that pigpen of a smoking-car, and have been getting fresh air ever since,” Will added.

“Huh! the car wasn’t the worst part of it,” Bluff remarked bitterly. “That Bill Nackerson got on my nerves. I’d just like to see somebody give him the punching he needs.”

“Small good anything like that would do,” Frank told him. “A licking only makes such a man more bitter than before. He is sure to take it out on some person or object that can’t resist.”

“Either poor Teddy, you mean, or the hunting dog,” Jerry suggested. Frank nodded his head to show that this was what he had in mind.

A short time later they found themselves approaching a number of long, low frame buildings that were evidently used by the lumbermen for sleeping and eating quarters. A couple of men were hammering as though engaged in making the new additions more secure against the cold.

Standing in the doorway of what seemed to be the kitchen was a black man. He appeared to be genial, and so Frank led his comrades in that direction.

“We’re looking for Mr. Darrel; can you tell us where he is to be found?” Frank asked, as the others dropped their packs to the ground, and sought any kind of seats nearby.

“I done ’spects him in et enny minnit, now, sah; he allers shows up afore de time foh distributin’ de grub, tuh see dat eberything is correct,” was the reply. “An’ dar he kirns right now, trudgin’ through de woods. Speakin’ ob an angel an’ yuh suah am gwine tuh heah dey wings.”

A heavy-set man was approaching. He was evidently no ordinary person, for his strongly-marked face told of considerable character.

“Hello! what have we got here; and where under the sun did you boys drop from?” was the way he saluted them.

Apparently visitors were next to unknown in Lumber Run Camp. Later on an occasional sportsman, with his Indian or native guide, might bob up; but the sight of four boys must have surprised the lumberman very much.

He was even more taken aback when Frank explained.

“We have come up here to see you, Mr. Darrel. We’re carrying an important paper from a gentleman you have had business dealings with, and who was so crippled with lumbago that he couldn’t make the journey himself.”

“Do you mean Felix Milton?” demanded the other quickly.

“Yes, sir, and this is his nephew, Will. My name is Frank Langdon; this is Jerry Wallington, and the other boy is Bluff Masters. We are fond of living in the woods, and in our section out toward the Mississippi they call us the Outdoor Chums.”

The bluff lumberman seemed pleased to meet such self-reliant boys. He shook hands all around with considerable enthusiasm.

“Glad to know you,” he said, “and I can easily believe that you are pretty well able to take care of yourselves. And so you’ve come all the way up into Maine to find me? Well, that’s a pretty big journey.”

“Mr. Milton was ready to send us three times as far, so that he might keep his word, and have that document signed,” Frank continued. “There are only a couple of weeks left, and he had neglected it longer than he intended. The journey meant little to us, for we are used to traveling long distances. Twice we’ve been away down South, and once hunting in the Rockies.”

“That sounds fine,” remarked Mr. Darrel, his eyes showing appreciation, “and I hope that now you’ve come to Maine you’ll not think of hurrying back home without a little sport. They tell me that game is unusually plentiful this year.”

“Oh! we made sure to get our licenses to hunt, sir; Mr. Milton insisted that we do that part in the beginning,” Jerry spoke up.

“That’s right,” returned the lumberman, evidently relieved on hearing this, “and as soon as you are rested we’ll get the signing of that paper through with. By that time the men will be coming in, and supper will be ready. I hope you are used to rough woods fare.”

“Just what we are, sir,” Frank assured him. “We like nothing better.”

“Of course we haven’t had time as yet to get venison, or any kind of game,” he was told by the genial lumberman, “but Cuba, here, is a master hand at slinging appetizing dishes together, and if you’re hungry you’ll give him a vote of thanks when the meal is over.”

Cuba grinned from ear to ear at this compliment and nodded his woolly head in appreciation.

“I suppose we’ll have to ask you to put us up somewhere for to-night, Mr. Darrel; to-morrow we’ll get a tip from you, and start into the woods, so as to get some miles away from the wood cutting.”

“Plenty of room here for a dozen, because we haven’t got our full force up in the woods yet,” the owner of Lumber Run Camp answered. “And after supper I’ve got something to say to you about a certain little shack that belongs to me, and which I’d like you to occupy while you’re up here.”

“Do you mean in the woods, sir?” asked Bluff eagerly, for the thought of having to go to all the trouble of building some sort of shelter had been worrying him.

“Just what I do, son,” the lumberman told him. “I spent one winter in it, and that gave me a chance to travel over this whole section, so finally I organized the company that purchased this tract.”

The boys exchanged pleased looks. Really, things were coming out better than any of them had dreamed.

Mr. Darrel showed them where they could leave their packs. There was a bunk for each in the building where he had his own sleeping accommodations. This suited Frank much better than if they had had to stay with the loggers, some of whom were a rough lot, as he saw when they came trooping in.

It was an experience the boys enjoyed to the full. At the supper table they heard considerable talk about lumbering, and picked up some valuable information by using their ears.

Afterward they sat with Mr. Darrel before the fire in his smaller building, and listened to what he had to tell them. The paper had been duly signed in the presence of witnesses. One of the lumberjacks, really the foreman of the crowd, being a duly appointed notary public, was in a position to handle the affair according to law.

The paper was now safely fastened in Frank’s inner pocket, where it could hardly be lost, no matter what happened.

After the lumberman had spoken of many things of which the boys manifested an eager curiosity to hear, he in turn began to ask questions. This resulted in their telling him some of the queer happenings that had accompanied their numerous past outings; in all of which he evinced great interest.

“I must say you are boys after my own heart,” he said, as the evening grew late, and Bluff had even yawned openly as many as three times. “If my little fellow had lived I would have wished him to be built on just the same pattern. I meant that he should love the Great Outdoors, and yet never be cruel in his pursuit of what we call sport. But he was taken away from me. What I am piling up now will some of these days go to a poor little crippled nephew in a New England town.”

As Bluff again yawned at a fearful rate their kind host realized that the boys were more or less played out after their long journey, and the task of “toting” their heavy packs into the Big Woods.

So he told them it was about time they all turned in, an invitation that was joyfully accepted by every one, not even excepting Frank.

It is doubtful whether they knew anything from the time they rested their heads on the pillows, made of hemlock needles stuffed into cotton-sacks, until there was a tremendous din that made them think of the fire signal at home.

“That’s the getting-up gong!” they heard Mr. Darrel call. “Breakfast will be ready in fifteen minutes, so perhaps you’d better hurry. My men have big appetites these brisk days, and might clear off the table before you had a show.”

Of course the lumberman was only joking, for Cuba had gone to extra pains to have an abundance of food prepared. He had made fresh biscuits, and there was also oatmeal and coffee, with some fried ham and potatoes, as well as an egg apiece for the favored young guests of the “boss.”

Pretty soon the big lumberjacks started off to their daily work of chopping down trees. These would be trimmed into logs, and eventually be drawn by teams of horses to the river, where their voyage down to the sawmills or the pulp factories would begin.

The boys had never been in a lumbering region before, and numerous things interested them. Each brawny axman shouted good-by to the boys ere departing, for they were as jovial as well as a brawny lot. Frank could see how a life like this must develop any one physically.

Having received full directions from their host how to find his lonely lodge in the heart of the Big Woods, the four chums set out. Mr. Darrel would have accompanied them but for the fact that he had his hands full just then, and was expecting a new lot of employees to arrive that day.

“But a little later on you can expect a visit from me, lads,” he told them, as he squeezed each boy’s hand in a way that made them wince. “I’ll be looking forward to seeing you again with considerable pleasure.”

So the chums started off. Being fresh after a good night’s sleep, they did not mind the weight of their packs so much now. Later on in the day, if the tramp proved protracted, they might murmur again, particularly Bluff. He was addicted to that habit, though he really did not mean anything by it, as Frank knew from experience.

They tramped for more than an hour. Frank was always on the watch. He had been given explicit directions, which he was following closely. For a mile they had kept along the little creek, now beginning to freeze. Arriving at a spot where a spruce tree hung half-way across the bed of the stream, they had turned sharply to the left, and commenced making their way through a dense wilderness of firs.

In this way the second mile had been covered, while a third had taken them to what seemed to be quite a little hill.

“Sure we’re on the right track, are you, Frank?” asked Will, when they had left this elevation behind them nearly half an hour.

“Yes, we’re going as straight as a die,” Bluff hastened to say, before the leader could utter a word. “I know it because right ahead of us I can see that other little stream Mr. Darrel was saying we’d strike. Down that two miles and we’ll come to his cabin.”

“I only hope we find it unoccupied, that’s all,” ventured Will.

“No danger of anybody breaking in,” Frank declared. “Up here in the Maine woods there’s a queer sort of law among the natives. They are honest as the day in that way. Nobody ever thinks of locking his door at night.”

“Small game seems to be plenty enough,” Bluff went on to say. “But where are all the deer they’ve been telling us about? I’d like to run across something worth taking a crack at with my pump-gun.”

“Then there’s your chance, Bluff!” suddenly remarked Will. “Why, it looks for all the world like a gray wolf to me!”

“It must be a wolf, because Mr. Darrel said they sometimes come down here from over the Canadian border!” exclaimed Jerry.

“I’ll wolf him with that buckshot charge I’ve got ready for a deer!” muttered Bluff fiercely, as he dropped his pack and started to bring his repeating shotgun up to his shoulder.

“Hold on!” cried Frank, pulling the weapon hastily down. “Look again, Bluff, and you’ll see that’s no wolf, but a dingy dog. Yes, and we’ve seen that dog before, too!”

## CHAPTER VI – THE LONE CABIN

“Here’s trouble ahead!” declared Jerry, in evident disgust; “because sure enough that’s certainly the ugly beast we saw on the train.”

“Bill Nackerson’s dog!” exclaimed Will.

Bluff was still staring. He seemed half-inclined to doubt his eyesight. Just then the dingy-looking animal gave a series of snappy barks; after which expression of defiance to the boys he turned and scampered away at a rapid pace.

“For three cents I’d knock him over,” muttered Bluff angrily.

“It would be silly for you to try it, Bluff,” Frank told him, “and only give the dog’s owner a good reason for taking the law in his own hands.”

“But, just think of it, that crowd must have got off at the next station, Frank!” declared Bluff.

“Well, they had a right to, if they felt like it, I suppose,” he was told. “Since when did the railroad company give us charge over the trains up here in Maine, that we could object to anybody leaving the cars? We did that when we felt like it.”

“Yes, but we’re going to have that bunch around here, and they’ll be our rivals in the hunting,” Bluff continued vigorously.

“If half they tell us is true,” laughed Frank, determined not to cross rivers before he came to them, “there’ll be plenty of game here for us all.”

“But when that Nackerson knows we’re here he’ll just as like as not try to make things uncomfortable for us,” Jerry broke in, showing that he felt the same way Bluff did.

“Oh! let’s hope not,” murmured Will, whose motto was peace.

“If they bother us too much we can let Mr. Darrel know about it,” Frank went on calmly.

“That’s so,” Will burst out, “and I tell you if a bunch of those husky lumberjacks got busy, they’d chase Nackerson and his cronies out of the Big Woods in a hurry, believe me!”

At the same time, while Frank tried to make light of the impending trouble, deep down in his heart he feared they were to find the Nackerson set of sporting men unpleasant neighbors.

“The only bother it can make us that I can see,” Frank told the others, “is that we’ll have to do all our roaming around in couples. There must be no solitary jaunts. With two to handle they would hesitate to attempt anything serious. Remember that always, will you, boys?”

“It’s just as well,” remarked Will, “and whoever stays in camp with me can help with my photograph work. I’m in earnest about succeeding in my particular branch on this trip; and p’raps you’d like to know the reason why.”

“We certainly would,” Frank told him; “I’ve had an idea that you were keeping something back all this while; so out with it.”

Will chuckled, and took some papers from his pocket.

“That’s a folder issued by one of the big Maine railroads,” he explained. “You see, I happened to read in a paper that they had offered some pretty nice cash prizes for the best photographs taken this season that would show what woods life up here stood for. The offer holds good up to New Year’s Day.”

“And you mean to enter – to try for the money?” demanded Bluff.

“That’s what I expect to,” was the reply. “I’ve complied with all the conditions they impose, and if I’m lucky enough to get some first-class views while in the Big Woods, I mean to submit them in competition. It may be keen, and I’ll stand little show, but nothing venture nothing win.”

Bluff knew what splendid work Will had been doing in the line of sport he had taken as his especial hobby.

“Now, excuse me for differing with you there,” he said, “but I’d like to say right here that if you go in for those prizes they’re sure to drop into your hand like ripe plums. You know how to get results better’n any amateur photographer I ever ran across.”

They were once more pushing forward while discussing this latest matter. For the time being every one seemed to have quite forgotten the unpleasant feeling conjured up by the sudden appearance of the dog.

It was near the middle of the day when, after following the stream in its meanderings for quite two miles, Frank pointed out to them the object of their search.

“There’s the little cabin, sure enough,” said Bluff, his voice full of pleasure, “and let me tell you it looks all that Mr. Darrel cracked it up to be.”

“For my part I think we ought to be as comfortable as four bugs in a rug in such a cozy hut,” Will told them, happy in the thought that he could now drop that heavy pack, and before long start to taking some of the beautiful scenes of the snowy woods.

There was only an inch or so of the white covering on the ground, but it gave the landscape a wintry appearance. They had really had more of a fall in their far distant home town, Frank remembered, thinking of the snowball battle, and the broken window.

A few minutes later they were inside the cabin. Every boy expressed himself as delighted with the prospects. There was a huge fireplace, and just four bunks ranged around the interior, with a rude table, and a number of home-made rustic chairs.

It did not take them long to begin to make things seem homelike, once they had their packs open. The cheery sound of the ax at work told that a fire would soon add to the charm of that interior. Then would follow the delightful odors of cooking, with each boy taking his turn.

By the time the afternoon was well along they had managed to stow everything in the place where it was intended to be found. Their well-beloved blankets, that had accompanied them on numerous outings, were settled each in the particular bunk its owner had chosen.

“Now that I’ve hung our cooking things up on these nails alongside the fireplace there’s a cheery look about the place I like,” Will announced, with considerable pride in his voice.

“And that pile of firewood outside the door, cut by all of us in turn, stands for solid comfort in my eyes,” Jerry remarked, as he ruefully surveyed the first row of blisters on palms unused to such hard work.

“With plenty of game to be had,” announced Bluff, patting his favorite gun, “we ought to be as happy as the day is long – only for that tough crowd being somewhere close by.”

“Frank,” remarked Will, “have you any idea how far away they are camping?”

“Well, that would be a hard question to answer,” replied the other, smiling, “only for the fact that our friend, Mr. Darrel, happened to mention a little thing I expect might have a bearing on what you want to know.”

“But he couldn’t know anything about that Nackerson crowd?” objected Jerry.

“I don’t suppose he did,” Frank informed him, “but in telling me how to get over to his little lodge he mentioned another log cabin that lay in the woods on the way here. He said it was an old one that some trappers had used long ago. The roof was bad, but might be repaired. Sometimes hunters stopped there a night or two when passing through.”

“Then that must be where those men are putting up,” said Will. “Let’s hope two nights will be their limit, and that none of us run across them when off in the big timber.”

“Forget about such an unpleasant subject,” advised Frank. “Everything looks bright and promising around us, so what’s the use bothering with trouble that may never happen?”

He changed the subject, and soon the others had apparently forgotten all about the near presence of Bill Nackerson and his evil companions.

Supper that evening was a meal not soon to be forgotten. The boys all had a hand in its preparation. Soon they meant to adopt a system that would give each one his regular turn at this important duty.

And then afterward, how jolly it was to make themselves comfortable before a roaring fire, and talk of home, or the many interesting things that had happened to them on past outings.

Later on all were snuggled down under their blankets in their bunks. The fire burned low, and would perhaps go out entirely before dawn came.

The last thing Bluff remembered hearing was the far-off hooting of some owl that braved the winter's cold. It seemed to soothe him, for, listening, and occasionally hearing the cheery cackle of the fire, Bluff lost himself in sleep.

## CHAPTER VII – OUT FOR GAME

They had a peaceful night, with one exception. Along in the small hours Bluff was heard to give a sudden wild whoop:

“Get out, you cowardly beast!” he cried at the top of his voice. Of course there was considerable excitement.

Frank had been wise enough to bring a little vest-pocket type of electric torch with him, knowing how valuable such a contrivance may be at times. He instantly switched on the light; and, as he picked up his gun with one hand, he managed to turn the white glow upon the bunk occupied by Bluff.

The latter had apparently subsided, for no more shouts rang out. Frank discovered him lying there rubbing his eyes. He looked as though hardly knowing whether to burst out laughing or appear ashamed of having startled the others so.

“What’s all this row mean, Bluff?” demanded Frank sternly.

“Shucks! I guess I must have been dreaming, that’s all,” he was told.

“What nipped you? Because you acted as if it hurt,” Jerry asked.

“Why, you see,” explained Bluff, “I had come across that big Bill Nackerson, while roamin’ through the woods, and he managed to sneak my gun away when I wasn’t looking. Then what did he do but sic that mangy cur of his on me. I was kickin’ like everything at him. See how I sent my blanket out on the floor. All I wanted was one sound smack at his ugly jaws. I’m sorry I woke up so soon, because next time I’d have fetched him.”

“Well, go to sleep again, and let’s hope you dream of other things besides scrapping,” advised Jerry, as he proceeded to once more deposit his gun in a corner, and crawl under his blanket.

Bluff must have taken the advice to heart; at any rate his voice was not heard again until Frank pounded on the frying-pan to let the sleepers know it was time to creep out. Then each one in turn wanted to learn whether breakfast was ready.

As they ate they began to lay out plans for the day.

“Of course Bluff and Frank must try to get us some venison,” Will said; “and that’ll leave Jerry to assist me in camp. Besides, I want to find places to fix up my flashlight for the next night. If I can get a picture of some animal, taken by himself, it’ll please me a heap. What you know about the habits of these little creatures will help me out lots, Jerry.”

“I may be able to give a little advice, too, Will,” the latter remarked, as he helped himself to another flapjack; “because, you know, I went out with that gentleman who was stopping at our house late this fall. He had the flashlight habit about as bad as any one I’ve ever met.”

“Oh! you did mention it to me once, I remember,” said the other, evidently much pleased. “Then you may have picked up a few little wrinkles that will help me out in my game.”

“Leave that to me,” replied Jerry, swelling with importance. “I can put you wise to heaps of things. You see, I like to ask questions, and Mr. Mallon always gave me the straight answer.”

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