

MEN OF THE MIST

The Exciting Adventures of
Two Boys Among the Indians

Told by T. C. Bridges,
the C.N. Storyteller

What Has Happened Before

Two boys, Clem and Billy Ballard, whose mother is dead and whose father has been unjustly imprisoned for theft, receive mysterious instructions to sail for America.

They set out, and are met at Seattle by Bart Condon, who takes them to a steamer bound for Alaska. On board they hear two men planning to re-stake the gold claim of a fugitive from justice known as the Big Britisher. They discover that these men, Craze and Gurney, intend to follow them when they land, but by Bart's manoeuvring they manage to elude them.

Later, Clem and Billy go out to hunt dogfish. The boat is upset, and the two boys are swept upstream. Making their way back, Clem falls almost on top of a bear.

CHAPTER 12

The Third Class Bear

IT was a bigger drop than Billy had supposed, and he came down so heavily that he pitched face forward on the shingle, and lay half stunned. Next thing he knew Clem was kneeling beside him, anxiously asking, "Billy, are you hurt?"

"N-no," gasped Billy. "I'm not hurt, but where's the bear?"

"Gone. When you came down flop like that he simply hooked it."

"Hooked it?" repeated Billy in a bewildered voice. "I thought bears were dangerous."

"This one wasn't. You wouldn't have believed that such a clumsy-looking brute could travel so fast. He simply vanished." He paused.

"But, Billy, it was very decent of you to come to help me," he added.

"Shut up, Clem," growled Billy. "We've got to get home."

"I'd like to know how," said Clem ruefully. "Now we've got down this bank it's going to be a sweet job to climb up it again. And I'm just about fed up with that wood. I've a jolly good mind to camp here till daylight."

"Not good enough," replied Billy decidedly. "We're both as wet as can be, and we can't light a fire. We shall only get fever or something nasty of that kind. Come on. It can't be very far."

Billy was so plucky that Clem felt a little ashamed.

"Right you are," he said. "I'll give you a leg up."

Billy got to his feet. To say truth, he felt horribly shaky, and his arm was hurting abominably. But he set his teeth and vowed to himself that, somehow, they would get back.

Clem gave him a back; he grabbed a branch and tried to scramble up the bluff. But the bough broke and let him down. He had another try, and this time got hold of a thick tuft of grass, only to have the whole thing come out by the roots and drop him once more on the shingle.

"I've half a mind to do as you say and chuck it, Clem," he said at last. "There doesn't seem to be any foothold."

"We can't, Billy," replied Clem gravely.

"Why not, I should like to know?"

"Because the tide is still rising, and in about half an hour all this shingle will be under water."

"That settles it then," grumbled Billy. "You——" He stopped short and slung up one hand.

"Listen!" he cried.

"Hi-yah! Halloa!"

The shout came ringing faintly up the river out of the darkness, and both boys spun round and stared breathlessly in the direction from which the sound came.

"Hi-yah!" came the call again, and Clem managed to collect his scattered senses and answer. His ringing "Halloa!" sent the echoes flying weirdly up the steep hillside among the giant trees.

"It's Bart," said Billy sharply. "What luck!"

There was a splash of paddles, and soon the shape of a canoe paddled by two Indians came shooting up at a great pace. Billy thought that the sound of her bows grating on the shingle was the pleasantest he had ever heard.

"You all right?" questioned Bart, as the boys came clambering in, and both of them could plainly hear the anxiety in his tone.

"Right as rain," answered Clem, "only Billy got stung by something. But Sam—is Sam safe?"

"Sam's all right. Trouble was the tide swept him right across the other side of the river and it was an hour before any one heard him shouting. Where did you boys land?"

They told him, while the two Indian paddlers drove the canoe swiftly back down the river.

It was but a very few minutes before they were safe on the wharf again, where they were met by Joe Western. He took them straight to the house, and made them each take five grains of quinine washed down by big mugs of steaming hot coffee. Then they had to tell their story all over again.

"Stung, was you?" said Joe.

"No, it wasn't no snake. I reckon it were that 'devil's club.' Let me see. Ay, that's it. Like nettle only a sight worse, but I guess I got some stuff as'll take the pain out."

He went to a shelf, took down a bottle, and, putting some of the contents on a rag, applied it to Billy's hand and arm.

"Why, it's wonderful!" exclaimed Billy. "It's taking all the pain away. But, I say, I didn't tell you we met a bear."

"Met a bear!" repeated Joe.

"What sort was he?"

"He didn't stop to tell us," said Billy. "He simply cleared out."

Joe burst into a great laugh.

"I reckon he was only a third-class bear," he chuckled. "But it might ha' been different if you'd met his big brother."

"Tell us," begged Billy.

"Not tonight, son. You get right to bed. I'll tell ye tomorrow, and maybe I can show ye one in the daylight."

CHAPTER 13

More About Bears

"WHAT'S the barrel for?" demanded Billy.

It was three days later, and Joe Western and Bart, together with the two boys, were tramping up a steep, narrow trail through the woods, while Joe was carrying on his great shoulder an empty molasses barrel.

Joe laughed.

"All in good time, son. I'm going to try to show ye a bear."

That was all the boys could get out of him, and anyhow they had not much breath left for asking questions, for the path they were following was somewhat steeper than the roof of a house. It wound up the hillside among trunks of trees which were the biggest Clem and Billy had ever seen.

They were cedar and Douglas fir, and towered fully two hundred feet toward the blue sky. Some of the stems were so huge that it would have taken five grown men to encircle them with outstretched arms.

What utterly amazed the boys was that now and then humming-birds flashed like living jewels above the tangled undergrowth, while other birds, that looked like canaries, flitted in front of them. And yet they were farther north than the most northern point of Scotland.

At last, very hot and very blown, they got to more open ground above the heaviest belt of forest.

"Guess I've carried this here barrel about far enough," remarked Joe, and dumped it down just on the edge of the steepest part of the slope and under cover of a low-spreading birch tree. Then he walked straight on without offering any explanation. His long legs covered the ground at a great pace,

and Clem and Billy were both grateful when at last he stopped close to a big tree and pointed to the trunk.

"See anything, Billy?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Billy, staring with interest at the tree. "The bark's all torn."

"My word, that was a big one, Joe," said Bart, in his quiet way.

"A big what?" asked Clem.

"A big bear"—he pronounced it "bar."

"You don't tell me that was a bear?" exclaimed Clem. "Why, the bark's clawed up to a height of ten or eleven feet."

"It was a bear all right, son," said Joe. "What I calls a first-class bear."

"It must be a giant," said Billy, in an awed voice.

"What we calls a silver tip," explained Bart. "Grizzly's the name the books give him. We get 'em mighty big here. Some of 'em are as large as an ox and a sight heavier."

The boys could not answer. They only stared at the clawed trunk.

"Then there's second-class bears," said Joe. "Them's the cinnamons, and cunning chaps they are. The third-class is the brown bears, same as you met t'other night. But sit yourselves down," he continued. "We'll rest a while, and eat."

He took a packet of sandwiches from his pocket. They were of baking-powder bread with cold fried bacon and mustard inside, and very good indeed. While they ate he told them more about bears.

"The Injins calls the bear his brother," he said, "and there's one thing you boys have got to remember. If you're in camp with Injins, don't you go mentioning 'bear.' It ain't good manners, according to the Injin way of thinking. You can talk of Mister Fur Jacket or anything o' that sort, but don't say 'bear.'"

"But if we meet a grizzly, what do we do?" asked Billy.

"Walk right on and don't take no notice. Unless he's mighty hungry or got mad about something he's not a-going to hurt you."

Billy stared. He had always supposed that wild beasts went for you on sight.

"Same with all the rest o' the wild things," continued Joe. "They won't meddle with man unless they're in bad need of food. Only don't you leave your stores unguarded, for that's Mister Bear's chance, and he'll eat 'em all."

He stopped, and the boys saw that he was listening keenly. Suddenly he jumped up.

"I said I'd show you a bear. Come right along. But quiet now. Don't you make a noise. Watch where you set your feet."

It was the boys' first lesson in woodcraft, and neither had ever had a notion how difficult it was to

walk quietly until they tried to imitate Bart and Joe Western.

Joe led straight back to the spot where they had left the sugar barrel, then motioned them to a hiding-place among some shrubs. He pointed, and through a little opening the boys saw the oddest sight imaginable.

CHAPTER 14

As Mad as a Burned Cat

A BEAR, a great big beast that must have weighed four or five hundred pounds, was busy with the barrel. He had turned it over on its side, and was lying by it, with his head right inside, licking the sides of it. They could hear him smacking his lips and grunting delightedly. He was evidently enjoying himself.

Gradually, as they watched, he worked farther and farther in, until his head and shoulders and forepaws were all inside the barrel. A very tight fit it was, but Mister Bear didn't seem to care. He was having the time of his life.

Now, the barrel, as has been mentioned, had been left on a little ledge with a very steep slope below it. The bear, in his efforts to get the last lick of molasses from the bottom, had at last wedged half his body into the barrel, and in doing so had managed to turn the barrel right round so that the butt of it projected over the lower side of the ledge. But he, of course, could not see his danger.

All of a sudden the barrel went over the edge. The poor bear was far too tightly packed inside it to get out in time, and he went with it. Next instant barrel and bear were rolling downhill, spinning like a catherine wheel.

Joe Western burst into a great roar of laughter.

"Did you ever see the like of that, Bart?" he asked.

Bart's face was one great grin.

"I never did," Joe said. "Let's see where he lands up."

Next minute all four were running helter-skelter down the hill in track of barrel and bear. For a wonder, this part of the slope, though steep, was fairly smooth, and they were just in time to see bear and barrel strike a patch of scrub fifty feet below and go through it like a shell.

"Gee, but old bear must be getting dizzy!" chuckled Bart as he went striding down the hillside.

"Billy," he shouted, "don't you go too far ahead. That beast'll be madder than a burned cat when he gets loose again."

Billy didn't hear. He was ever so far ahead, racing along, jumping everything in his path. Clem was close behind him. Below the scrub was another descent, ending in a sheer drop of ten or fifteen feet. The barrel and the bear wheeled down the slope at dizzy speed.

"Clem, he'll be killed!" shrieked Billy, as he saw the barrel whizzing toward the edge of the drop.

"So will you, if you don't stop," yelled back Clem, flinging himself flat on the ground.

Billy would never have been able to stop if it had not been for a small tree that he was able to grab hold of. The barrel reached the edge of the little cliff, hurtled through the air, fell with a crash upon the hard ground fifty feet away, and instantly went to splinters. Staves flew in every direction forming a sort of rainbow round the unfortunate bear.

Billy, gazing with all eyes, was amazed to see the bear pick himself up and stand, shaking his head in a muddled sort of fashion, yet seemingly very little the worse.

"Lie down, Billy!" came Bart's voice behind him, curt and sharp, and Billy dropped like a flash. "He's mad as a hornet," muttered Bart. "He'll go for anything as moves."

And just then something did move. Out of the trees not twenty yards below where the bear was standing a man appeared—a white man who wore knee boots, blue jeans, and a dark shirt.

"Look out!" yelled Bart.

It was too late. With a deep, rumbling growl, the bear lowered his pig-like head and charged straight at the stranger.

TO BE CONTINUED

Five-Minute Story

The Globe

IT was Blake who made the discovery. He had gone to the class-room to fetch something or other, and returned with the dire news that someone had knocked over the large globe of the world that stood on Mr. Furnival's desk and smashed it to atoms.

"It's a half-holiday, too, so unless the boy who did it owns up we shall all be kept in," said Smithers.

"And as we are playing a match—" began Blake.

"Whoever did it," interrupted Grayson, the leader of the Fourth Form, "has got to confess, for the honour of the form."

No one stood forward, so Grayson ranged us all with our backs to the wall, and began:

"Did you do it? Did you do it?"

He went right down the line, and got the same answer, "No!" from every boy.

Grayson was angry now.

"I'll give the chap who did it another chance to confess!"

he said sternly. "Whoever it was knows perfectly well that we shall all be kept away from the match, and as five of our fellows are playing it means that the game is as good as lost already if he doesn't own up. I'll go down the line again."

Again he got the same answer in every case. For myself, I thought Barker stammered a bit when he answered "No!"

but Johnson, my chum, thought that Blake was the culprit.

"He jolly well found it," he whispered to me. "And there's a proverb something about he who broke it knows where to find it."

And now old Grayson began to hit out.

"One fellow in this form," he said bitterly, "is a cad! He is also a coward! Other forms have been penalised because one of the boys was a coward, but up to now the Fourth has held a clean record. Now——" He paused. "Well, we must take our punishment, that's all."

Five minutes after we had filed into our places Mr. Furnival entered the class-room.

We all held our breath as he walked straight up to where the globe lay in pieces.

Grayson leapt to his feet.

"I'm sorry to say, sir," he said, going straight to the point, "that every boy in the form denies having broken it."

Mr. Furnival glanced round at us curiously.

"Is that so?" he inquired.

"That is so, sir," said Grayson. "Because one boy is too cowardly to own up we must all lose the half-day."

"That, of course, is the rule," said Mr. Grayson slowly. "But I'm afraid you jumped too hastily to a conclusion, Grayson."

"You mean you will not stop the half-day, sir?"

"I will not, Grayson."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"You see, I accidentally knocked that globe over myself this morning."



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