



The BOY SCOUTS
at the
PANAMA CANAL
LIEUT. HOWARD PAYSON



All the time the trail kept getting fresher.
(Page 266) (*The Boy Scouts at the Panama Canal*)

THE BOY SCOUTS AT THE PANAMA CANAL

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"The Boy Scouts of the Eagle Patrol," "The Boy Scouts
on the Range," "The Boy Scouts and the Army
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"The Boy Scouts for Uncle Sam," etc."



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. BOY SCOUTS TO THE RESCUE	5
II. AN ANGRY FARMER	16
III. ON A MISSION	27
IV. SOME UP-TO-DATE ADVERTISING	35
V. A BIG SURPRISE	43
VI. BASEBALL	53
VII. A TEST FOR THE EAGLES	66
VIII. SKILL VS. MUSCLE	85
IX. FIRE!	91
X. A SCOUT HERO	100
XI. THE FIRE TEST	113
XII. IN PERIL OF HIS LIFE	122
XIII. THE ENEMY'S MOVE	131
XIV. A NOVEL PROPOSAL	148
XV. OFF FOR THE ISTHMUS	156
XVI. SOMETHING ABOUT THE CANAL	167

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVII. AT OLD PANAMA	181
XVIII. BETWEEN EARTH AND SKY	191
XIX. THE GATUN DAM	200
XX. A DYNAMITE VOLCANO	209
XXI. "RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!"	217
XXII. THE BOYS MEET AN OLD ACQUAINT- ANCE	223
XXIII. ALONG THE CHAGRES	232
XXIV. THE TRACKLESS JUNGLE	241
XXV. A CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS	257
XXVI. THE RUINED CITY	270
XXVII. "BE PREPARED"	284

The Boy Scouts at the Panama Canal

CHAPTER I.

BOY SCOUTS TO THE RESCUE.

Farmer Hiram Applegate had just finished breakfast. For this reason, perhaps, he felt exceptionally good-humored. Even the news he had read in his morning paper (of the day before) to the effect that his pet abomination and aversion, The Boy Scouts, had held a successful and popular review in New York and received personal commendation from the President failed to shake his equanimity.

Outside the farmhouse the spring sun shone bright and warm. The air was crisp, and odorous with the scent of apple blossoms. Robins twit-

tered cheerily, hens clucked and now and then a blue bird flashed among the orchard trees.

As Hiram stepped out on his "vendetta," as he called his verandah—or, to use the old-fashioned word and the better one, "porch"—he was joined by a rather heavy-set youth with small, shifty eyes and a sallow skin which gave the impression of languishing for soap and water. A suit of loud pattern, new yellow boots with "nobby" toes, and a gaudy necktie did not add to young Jared Applegate's general appearance.

"Pop," he began, after a glance at the old man's crabbed and wrinkled features, just then aglow with self-satisfaction, "Pop, how about that money I spoke about?"

Old Applegate stared at his offspring from under his heavy, iron-gray brows.

"A fine time to be askin' fer money!" he snorted indignantly, "you just back frum Panamy—under a cloud, too, and yet you start a pesterin' me fer money as ef it grew on trees."

“What d’ye want it fer, hey?” he went on after a pause. “More Bye Scut nonsense?”

Jared shook his head as if denying some discreditable imputation.

“I’ve had nothing to do with the Boy Scouts since the day I was kicked out of—that is, since I left the Black Wolf troop in New York.”

“Dum glad of it, though you never tole me what you quit for,” muttered the old man.

“But to get back to that money,” said Jared; “as I told you when I got back from the Isthmus, I need it. Need it bad, too, or I wouldn’t ask you.”

“Makes no diff’rence. What d’ye want it fer,—hey?” he repeated, coming back to his original question.

Jared decided that there was nothing for it but to tell the truth.

“To go over what I told you the other night once more, I’m in debt. Debts I ran up on the Isthmus,” was the rejoinder. “A chap can’t live down there for nothing you know, and—”

“By heck! You got a dern good salary as Mr. Mainwaring’s sec’ty, didn’t yer, an’ a chance ter learn engin-e-ring thrun in. You git fired fer misbehavin’ yerself an’ then yer come down on the old man fer money. I ain’t goin’ ter stand it, I ain’t, and that’s flat!”

The old man knocked the ashes out of his half-smoked pipe with unnecessary violence. Jared, eying him askance, saw that his father was working himself up into what Jared termed “a tantrum.” Taking another tack, he resumed.

“Sho, pop! It ain’t as if you weren’t going to get it back. And there’ll be interest at six per cent., too.”

This was touching old Applegate on a tender point. If rumor in and about Hampton spoke correctly, the old man had made most of his large fortune, not so much by farming, but by running, at ruinous rates, a sort of private bank.

“Wa’al,” he said, his hard, rugged old face softening the least bit, “uv course you’ve tole me all that; but what you h’aint tole me is, how yer

a goin' ter git ther money back,—an' the interest."

He looked cunningly at his son as he spoke. Jared hesitated an instant before he replied. Then he said boldly enough:—

"I can't tell you just what the business enterprise is that I expect to go into shortly. I'm— I'm under a sort of promise not to, you see. But if everything goes right, I'll be worth a good round sum before long."

"Promises ain't security," retorted the old man warily. "I—Gee Whitakers! 'Thar's that spotted hawg out agin!"

Across the dusty road the animal in question was passing as the farmer's eyes fell on it. In the center of the track it paused and began rooting about, grunting contentedly at its liberty.

At the same moment a humming sound, almost like the drone of a big bumble bee, came out of the distance. As he heard the peculiar drone, a quick glance of recognition flashed across old Applegate's face.

“It’s that pesky Mainwaring gal an’ her ’lectric auto!” he exploded vehemently. “That makes the third time in ther last two weeks that Jake’s bin out when she come along. Ther fust time she knocked him over, ther second time she knocked him over, an’ now—”

A smart-looking little electric runabout, driven by a pretty young girl in motoring costume, whizzed round the corner. The ill-fated Jake looked up from his rooting as the car came dashing on. Possibly the recollection of those other two narrow escapes was upon him. At any rate, with a scared grunt and an angry squeal, he whisked his stump of a curly tail in the air and dashed for the picket fence in front of the Apple-gate place.

But either Jake was too slow, or the electric was too fast. Just as the girl gave the steering wheel of the auto a quick twist to avoid the pig, one of the forewheels struck the luckless Jake “astern,” as sailors would say.

With an agonized wail Jake sailed through the

air a few feet and then, alighting on his feet, galloped off unhurt but squealing as if he had been mortally injured.

“Goodness,” exclaimed the girl alarmedly, and then, “gracious!”

The quick twist of the wheel had caused the car to give a jump and a skid and land in the ditch, where it came to a standstill. Farmer Applegate, rage tinting his face the color of a boiled beet, came storming down the path.

“This is the time I got yer, hey?” he shouted at the alarmed occupant of the auto. “That makes three times you run over Jake. You got away them other times, but I got yer nailed now. Kaint git yer car out uv ther ditch, hey? Wa’al, it’ll stay thar till yer pay up.”

“I’m—I’m dreadfully sorry,” stammered the girl, “really I had no intention of hurting—er—Jake. In fact, he doesn’t seem to be hurt at all.”

There appeared to be good reason for such a supposition. Jake, at the moment, was engaged

in combat over a pile of corn fodder with several of his fellows.

“Humph! Prob’ly hurt internal,” grunted the farmer. “Anyhow, it’s time you bubblists was taught a lesson.”

“Oh, of course I’m willing to pay,” cried the girl, and out came a dainty hand-bag. “Er—how much will satisfy Jake’s—I mean your—feelings?”

The old farmer was quick to catch the note of amusement in the girl’s voice.

“You won’t mend matters by bein’ sassy,” he growled; “besides, your pop fired my boy down on the Isthmus an’ I ain’t feelin’ none too good toward yer.”

“I have nothing to do with my father’s affairs,” said the girl coldly, noting out of the corner of her eye Jared’s figure slinking around the side of the porch; “how much do you want to help me get my car out of the ditch, for that’s really what it amounts to, you know?”

Ignoring the quiet sarcasm in her voice, old Applegate's face took on its crafty expression.

"Wa'al, it's three times now you've run over Jake. Say five dollars each time,—that ud be yer fine for overspeedin', anyhow,—that makes it fifteen dollars."

"Fifteen dollars!" The girl's voice showed her amazement at such a figure.

"It ort'er be twenty," snorted old Applegate; "thar's ther injury to Jake's feelin's. You bang over him at sixty mile an hour an' scare him out'n all his fat an' six months' growth. Fifteen dollars is cheap, an'—you don't go till yer pay up, neither."

"Why, it's simply extortion. I'll pay no such sum. Send your bill to my father. He'll settle it. And now help me out of this ditch, if you please."

"Now, don't you git het up, miss. Thar's a speed law on Long Island, an' by heck, you pay er I'll hev yer up afore the justice. Lucindy!" he raised his voice in a call for his wife; Jared had

vanished. A slovenly-looking woman, wiping her hands on a gingham apron, appeared on the porch.

"Lucindy, how many miles an hour? Jake's bin run over agin," he added suggestively.

"Wa'al," said Lucindy judicially, "it looked like sixty; but I reckon h'it warn't more'n twenty-five."

"Humph!" snorted Applegate triumphantly, "an' ther speed limit's fifteen."

"Why, I wasn't going more than ten miles!" cried the girl, flushing with indignation.

"Huh! Tell that to ther justice. I'll git my son to push yer machine out'n ther ditch an' then I'll hop in aside yer an' we'll drive into town."

"You'll do no such thing! Why, the idea! Take your hand off my car at once, or—oh, dear! What shall I do?" she broke off despairingly.

"You'll drive me inter town or pay fifteen dollars, that's what you'll do," declared Farmer Applegate stubbornly; "now then—hullo, what in ther name uv early pertaties is this a-comin'?"

Around the same corner from which the auto had appeared with such embarrassing results to its pretty young driver came three well-built lads. One of them was rather fat and his round, good-natured face was streaming with perspiration from the long "hike" on which they had been. But his companions looked trained to the minute, brown-faced, lithe-limbed, radiating health and strength from their khaki-clad forms. All three wore the same kind of uniform, gaiters, knickerbockers, coats of military cut and broad-brimmed campaign hats. In addition, each carried a staff.

"Hullo, what's all this, Rob?" cried one of them as they came into full view of the strange scene,—the ditched auto, the flushed, embarrassed yet indignant girl, and the truculent farmer.

"Consarn it all, it's them pesky Boy Scouts from Hampton," exclaimed Farmer Applegate disgustedly, as, in answer to the girl's appealing look, the three youths stepped up, their hands lifted in the scout salute and their hats raised.