

The Boy Scout Pathfinders

OR

Jack Danby's Best Adventure

BY

Major Robert Maitland

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I HO! FOR THE ADIRONDACKS

CHAPTER II THE LOGGING CAMP

CHAPTER III THE OLD SNAKE HUNTER

CHAPTER IV THE FIGHT

CHAPTER V THE BEAR'S SURPRISE PARTY

CHAPTER VI THE PLOT

CHAPTER VII TRAPPED IN THE CAVE

CHAPTER VIII THE BOY SCOUTS TO THE FORE

CHAPTER IX DICK CRAWFORD GIVES WARNING

CHAPTER X "BUSY AS BEAVERS"

CHAPTER XI THE BOG

CHAPTER XII OLD SAM TO THE RESCUE

CHAPTER XIII THE BROKEN TRESTLE

CHAPTER XIV THE SAVING OF THE TRAIN

CHAPTER XV A STRANGE DUEL

CHAPTER XVI TOO LATE!

CHAPTER XVII JACK'S RUN FOR LIFE

CHAPTER XVIII BALKED OF THEIR PREY

The Boy Scout Pathfinders

CHAPTER I

HO! FOR THE ADIRONDACKS

“Ding-dong! Ding-dong! Ding-dong! Ding-dong!” clashed the great bell on the locomotive, and with much creaking and clanking and letting off of steam, with iron scraping on iron and one last, long drawn whistle of the air-brakes, the train came slowly to a stop.

As if vying with the locomotive to see which could make the greater noise, a score or more of khaki-clad boys came tumbling to the platform of the little mountain station, amid whoops and cat-calls and shouts of, “Here we are!” “Hurrah for the Adirondacks!” “Say, fellows, this is the backwoods and no mistake!”

And then in rapid succession came the further inquiries:

“Which way do we go? Up this road?”

“See that big rock away down there? I’ll race you to it!”

The big collie Don, not to be behindhand when there was any noise or capering to be done, and more glad than anyone else to be released from the many hours of close confinement in that awful baggage car, ran wildly about, darting in and out between the boys’ feet, at the imminent danger of upsetting the whole procession, and added his joyful bark to the general noise and confusion.

A couple of boys did go down, but were at once on their feet and after Don, who—knowing and wise dog that he

was!—understood well that his pursuers were his loyal friends, as he was theirs, and felt no fear, but ran and doubled, and ran on again, treating it all as the very best kind of a joke.

A half hour of racing and tearing to given points and back again, and impromptu games of leapfrog and follow my leader gave vent to the bubbling spirits held in check during the long journey and the Scouts, once more looking like self-controlled boys instead of cavorting wild Indians, settled down to a walk.

This was the opportunity for which Mr. Durland had been waiting to discuss plans for the season's camp.

The call to camp had been sent out so late that most of the Scouts knew little beside the location and duration of the camp; and now Scout-Master Durland proceeded to enlighten them.

Late in the autumn of the previous year Mr. Scott, a very wealthy gentleman, had purchased a large section of land in the Adirondacks—many, many acres of ground, nearly a whole county, in fact.

As it was late in the season, he had been forced to postpone the inspection and surveying of the tract until the next year, but in order to be ready early in the summer, he had had a stout log house erected, to serve as a shelter for whomever should be sent out for the survey, and after that as a temporary hunting lodge until a larger and more elaborate one should be built.

Mr. Scott and the Scout-Master were warm friends, and knowing the proposed plans for the new lands, Mr. Durland had suggested making the work the object of the Boy Scouts' summer camp. Mr. Scott, a firm believer and warm advocate of the Boy Scout movement, had readily consented.

Because there was more or less danger in this region of encountering a bear, or even a wildcat, and as a rattlesnake was not altogether an impossibility, it was thought advisable to use the lodge as sleeping quarters instead of the usual tents or lean-tos. A large shack would have to be built for a mess tent, and a place to store provisions.

This tract of newly purchased land was in a section uninhabited for a distance of many miles around, as far as had been ascertained. The county town was twelve miles away—not too far for an occasional trip for provisions, but as the mountain roads were steep and rough, making the going very difficult, an unusual amount and variety of provisions had been sent with the Troop. One or possibly two trips during the season would be all that would be necessary to keep the camp well stocked.

So much for the camp-building and welfare. Now for an explanation of the work laid out for the Scouts by Mr. Scott.

They were to be pathfinders in this hitherto almost totally unexplored region. They were to locate springs, brooks, streams, lakes, perhaps rivers; note the kinds of fish to be found in these waters and in what numbers; make lists of the different trees, birds and animals to be found upon it,

and to group and classify them. They were to ascertain the nature of the soil in different sections, explore by-paths, and outline the best and safest and shortest routes to the section where any desired water or soil or bird or animal was to be found.

Beside all this, they were to become so familiar with the country for five miles around the camp as to be able to guide any person at any time, day or night.

A great work, surely, and one which, if well and satisfactorily handled, might well cause any boy's heart to leap with pride.

The Scouts, sober enough now, had listened with absorbed interest to all that Mr. Durland had said. At the mention of bears and bobcats, every boy had felt his heart thrill. Was there a possibility of a real encounter with one of these animals which, when seen even in the zoo, had been terrifyingly fierce? Mr. Durland had said that the possibility was so small that it was hardly worth considering, but that there was even the faintest chance was enough to make your heart beat faster.

However, when he spoke so earnestly of the great work outlined for them, and showed the eager Scouts what splendid opportunities for mental growth it would open to them, and what a part this knowledge they were sure to gain would play in their future success in life, each Scout determined to do his very best and to make the most of every opportunity.

So, at last, just at high noon, they came to the place where they were to pitch their new camp, and again the excitement broke out.

Catching sight of the log house or lodge, with one accord they made for it, and in a great deal less time than it takes to tell it, every nook and corner of that house was explored.

They saw with satisfaction that the building was very strong, and that the many windows, beside being set with very thick glass, were provided with perforated shutters of inch-thick solid oak wood, closing from the inside. Ben Hoover expressed the general sentiment when he said, "Those shutters certainly look good to me!"

Mr. Durland's voice reminded them that if everything was to be made shipshape in the new camp before nightfall, there was no time now to play, and from that moment the camp was a busy scene.

The two Scouts who were detailed as cooks were soon busy making a small fireplace on which to cook their dinner. Placing three stones together, they laid between them some whittled shavings for kindlings, applied a match and, as the fire commenced to burn, they placed over it some twigs and dry wood, quantities of which lay scattered about, and soon had a fine fire over which to place their frying-pan.

In the meantime the hamper was opened and when, in shorter time than you could have thought possible, the call to dinner was sounded, everyone came running. No one needed a second call, and the way that bacon and crisp fried potatoes and cornbread disappeared was a marvel.

Dinner over, one small squad was detailed to unpack, while all the rest were pressed into service to build the mess shack. This was finished by five o'clock, and then each Scout gathered branches of the fragrant balsam and hemlock for his bed. Over these he spread his rubber blanket, and over that his sleeping blanket, and he had a bed soft and springy and comfortable enough for a king.

Everything being in first-class order at last, and ready for the night, a tired, hungry lot of boys gathered around the supper table. As they ate they talked of their impressions of the new camp site, eagerly discussed the probable adventures they would have, and then someone asked Scout-Master Durland what kind of animals they would be likely to find here.

Mr. Durland smiled and said he would rather they would find that out for themselves.

“Well,” said Jack Danby, “from what I have read, I am dead sure there is one little animal who lives up here whose acquaintance I shall be very glad to make.”

“What is that?” eagerly asked Bob Hart.

“The otter,” replied Jack.

“Oh,” said Bob, disappointedly, “there’s nothing so very interesting about an otter!”

“Perhaps,” said Jack, smiling, “after you have had a chance to see him in his home and at work, you will change your mind. I know you will, for he is one of the most interesting of animals. In certain parts of England, especially near

rivers, there used to be a great many otters, and some of the fishermen trained them to catch fish for them.”

“Say, Jack, you really don’t believe that, do you?” said incredulous Bob.

“I have to believe it if it is true,” said Jack.

“How can they be trained to do that?” asked Tom Binns.

“Well,” explained Jack, “it is something like this. A string was tied about the otter’s neck in a sort of slip-knot that could be lightened when the trainer wished. Then the trainer would say, ‘Come here!’ and pull on the string, so that the otter would be drawn toward him.

“This was done several times, until the otter connected the action with the words, and then the string was dropped and he came obediently without it at the words of command.

“Next a small, artificial fish was made and placed on the ground before the otter, the string pulled until he opened his mouth, when the fish was placed in it, while at the same moment the words, ‘Take it!’ were uttered. It would be a long time before he would learn to do this, but when he did, the string was again used while he had the fish in his mouth and the command, ‘Drop it!’ was given.

“At last he learned to obey these two commands without the use of the string. Then he was taken to the edge of the water and a small, dead fish thrown in and the command given him to take it. He at once seized it, and at the word, ‘Drop it!’ yielded it to his master.

“Next live fishes were thrown in, and when he had brought them, the heads were given to him as his reward, and the little fisherman was always ready for his work. In fact, one entire family was supplied with food for a long time in this way.”

The result of this story was to make all the Scouts wish that they might have a chance to make Mr. Otter’s acquaintance.

As everybody was very tired, it was decided to make no camp-fire that night, so after the roll-call all were glad to throw themselves upon their beds of fragrant balsam. They found them deliciously comfortable, and many a tired New York millionaire, tossing sleeplessly on his luxurious couch, might have envied these sturdy Scouts as they sank at once into the sleep that is the reward of a healthy body, a clear conscience, and muscles tired with honest effort.

Once in the night Mr. Durland was aroused by a sleep-bound voice asking, “Are those shutters closed? There might be a bear!” But no bear more formidable than Ursa Major peeped through the holes of the shutters, and sweet, restful sleep held the tired Scouts in her embrace.

CHAPTER II

THE LOGGING CAMP

The Scouts arose early the next day, in order to be able to march during the cool morning hours, and so escape the torrid middle part of the day, which is especially hot during the short northern summer.

But although hot after the sun is up, the nights seem all the colder by contrast. Fortunately, the Scout-Master had foreseen this and had provided for it by insisting that each Scout carry a warm woolen blanket. To many of the boys this had seemed a waste of energy at the time. Who on earth could want a blanket at that time of the year, they argued.

The first night in camp, however, proved the wisdom of Mr. Durland's course, and they were glad enough to wrap their blankets around and around them and lie close to each other for the sake of warmth.

Ben Hoover expressed the general feeling when he said, "We must all be crazy with the heat, I think. By this time we ought to realize that Mr. Durland knows what he is talking about."

It had been arranged that today they would make a visit to a logging camp which lay about five miles in a westerly direction from their camp.

All the Scouts were eager to see the lumber camp, and so stepped off smartly at the word of command from Scout-

Master Durland. If left to themselves, most boys would probably have run the first part of the way, but these Scouts knew that five miles through the woods on such a day as this promised to be was not any laughing matter, so they went along slowly.

This did not suit Don, but he submitted with good grace, like the Scout and gentleman he was. He usually traveled about three miles to every one that the boys made, anyway, darting off on his own doggish errands and returning with a wise look on his face. Whatever anyone else thought, he evidently considered his expeditions of the utmost importance.

Today, however, he restrained his exuberant feelings, and walked along sedately with the rest of his Troop, his magnificent brush waving slowly from side to side. Even when a squirrel darted across the path, he curbed his ardent desire to chase it, and Jack petted him lovingly on the head.

“You’re just as good a Scout as any of us, aren’t you, old boy?” he asked. “Even if you haven’t taken the Scout oath, I know well enough that you would if you could. When it comes right down to having good principles, I guess you are as good as any of us!”

“Perhaps you’re right,” said Mr. Durland, who had overheard the last part of his remark. “If every man had as good and upright instincts as that dog, the world would be a better place than it is now.”

Jack saluted, and said respectfully, “Yes, sir, I guess it would.”

It seemed no time after that until they were surprised to come suddenly upon an opening in the woods, and Mr. Durland said, smiling, "Well, Scouts, we have arrived! While you are here, I want you to keep your eyes and ears open, and learn all you can about logging. Everything you see will be interesting, so I have no doubt you will have a good time. Remember, we are to make a report on what we see, so we want to be on the job. Now, forward, march!"

The Scouts defiled out into the open, and started down the rough path toward the camp. This was situated at the bottom of a hollow, where it was sheltered somewhat from the wintry blasts.

As the Scouts approached, they saw that it was composed of two rough log buildings, one considerably larger than the other. The larger structure was the bunk house, where the lumberjacks ate and slept, and the smaller one was the cook house, or kitchen.

As the boys came nearer, they could see the cook's helper, or cookee, as he was called, standing outside the door, washing an immense pile of dishes. He was engaged in a hot argument with the cook, who was a peppery little French Canadian.

"What you tink, by gar?" the latter was shouting as they got within hearing distance. "You tink I am goin' to cook for dees here bunch of hungry pigs, an' den help you wash dishes, also? Mon Dieu! What you take me for—what you call zee easy mark?"

“There, there, Frenchy, keep your hair on!” replied the cookee, a red-headed lad about the same age as the Scouts, and then added, with an exasperating grin, “If I couldn’t cook anything better than the sour dough biscuits and the sinkers you turn out, I’d be ashamed to take the boss’s good money! Why don’t you get a job in New York driving an ash cart? You’d look nifty in one of them white uniforms, and then you wouldn’t have a chance to kill off any more poor lumbermen with your bum grub! That’s what I’d do if I was you!”

This seemed to drive the excitable Frenchman nearly frantic.

“Pig! Dog! Vile one!” he screamed. “Is it zat you would mock me, child of ze gutter?”

The grinning boy appeared to take pleasure in teasing the peppery cook, and finally the latter seemed to go quite mad with rage. He grasped a huge wooden spoon from a table beside the door, and made a clumsy rush at his assistant. The nimble boy easily eluded him, however, but once or twice let the cook get so near him that the little man felt encouraged to keep up the chase in the hope of finally catching him. At last his breath gave out, and he came to a standstill and shook his fist wildly in futile rage.

“That’s right, Frenchy, fan the air all you please,” shouted the evidently delighted youngster. “It does you good, and doesn’t hurt me, so we’re both happy.”

“Wait, wait, zat is all!” gurgled the cook, his face purple. “Soon ze boss, he will come back, and zen you will see,

little devil! He will—what you call it? Make ze punching bag of you! Who will be happy zen? I will laugh at you, so, ha-ha!”

“Go ahead, laugh, old boy, it will ease your mind!” said the boy, whom the cook had so aptly described. “It may save you from having apoplexy and croaking. Fat old guys like you often go off just like that!” and he grinned and snapped his fingers.

The outraged cook could think of nothing to say to this crowning insult, and retired into his shack, muttering a string of variegated profanity. After a short interval the boy returned to his dish-washing, but kept a wary eye on the door, prepared to cut and run at the first sign of danger.

The Boy Scouts had been interested spectators of this scene, and now Mr. Durland stepped up to the boy who had been the cause of all the trouble, and said, “Can you tell me, my lad, where I can find the foreman, if he is in camp?”

“The boss is away just now,” replied the boy, civilly enough. “Wot’s yer business with him? Shall I tell him you were here?”

“That depends on when he will be back,” replied Mr. Durland. “Do you think he will be here soon? If so, we will wait for him.”

“I guess he will, if you want to see him bad enough to wait,” answered the boy. He seemed willing enough to oblige, and Mr. Durland felt sure that he was not a really

bad boy, although it is safe to say that the cook would not have agreed with him.

“Who’s them guys with you?” asked the boy, but with a note of respect in his voice that was seldom heard there.

“That is a Troop of three Patrols of Boy Scouts,” explained Mr. Durland.

“Boy Scouts?” echoed the boy. “I knew a feller once who was a Boy Scout, and he said it was nifty to be one. He said I could be one, too, if I wanted to, and I did, but I thought he was just kidding me. How is a guy like me, what can’t even talk straight, goin’ to be a Boy Scout?”

“There’s no reason on earth why you shouldn’t be one, if you really desire it,” said Mr. Durland, kindly. “You can soon learn to ‘talk straight,’ as you call it, and once you have taken the Scout oath, everything else will come of itself.”

The Scout-Master then went on to explain just what being a Boy Scout meant, and the boy listened attentively. When he spoke about the Scout oath, the boy inquired:

“Just what is the oath, mister?”

“It is the oath that every boy desiring to become a Scout must take, and once having done so, he must stick to it through thick and thin,” explained Mr. Durland.

“Well, I know now that I will want to join, but could I have a little time to think it over?” inquired Harry, for so his name proved to be.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

