

# **The Rambler Club's Gold Mine**

**BY W. CRISPIN SHEPPARD**

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# The Rambler Club's Gold Mine



THERE WAS MUCH WAVING OF HANDS

## Introduction

The boys who appear in this story are those who had the adventures related in "The Rambler Club Afloat," "The Rambler Club's Winter Camp," and "The Rambler Club in the Mountains." They are now in the state of Washington, where we meet them just after the close of some lively weeks described in "The Rambler Club Among the Lumberjacks."

During a forest fire the boys have saved the life of Wanatoma, an aged Indian warrior, and he, out of gratitude, has imparted to them a secret long guarded—the location of a rich deposit of gold in the far-off mountains.

The boys determine to set out in search of "The Rambler Club's Gold Mine," as they call it, undaunted by the thought of possible dangers which the wilderness may have in store for them. Life amid the solitudes of nature, with only the sky as a canopy, has taught them the lesson that hardships and discomforts are sure to come, and must be met with a cheerful spirit.

During the journey both men and wild animals put their courage to a severe test. But each set-back arouses within them only a more determined spirit to conquer every difficulty.

In "The Rambler Club's Aeroplane," the next book, is related how the boys learned to use an airship and the many stirring adventures which befall them while navigating the air in Wyoming.

W. CRISPIN SHEPPARD.

# **The Rambler Club's Gold Mine**

# CHAPTER I

## THE MAP

"Yes, fellows, I guess we're in for a lot more adventures; finding that mine isn't going to be so easy—mountains to climb, swift streams to ford, and—"

"Lots of wild animals between us and the gold, Bob Somers," finished Dick Travers, with a chuckle, as he shied a towel in the direction of stout Dave Brandon, who lay in his bunk, with one leg hanging over the side.

"And whoever imagined that good old Wanatoma, just because he thinks the Ramblers saved his life, would have given us his great secret, so that—"

"Listen to him," chirped little Tom Clifton. "Thinks!—thinks! Why, the Ramblers did save his life; isn't that so, Jacky Conroy?"

He turned toward a tall, athletic-looking boy sitting near the stove.

"No mistake about it, Tommy; that forest fire was almost the end of poor old Wanna. And the way he's acted about this gold mine shows he's made of the right stuff. Still—"

The big lad rose to his feet, began to whistle discordantly, and grinned as five pairs of scornful eyes were leveled toward him.



The boys were on a visit to Tim Lovell's uncle, a lumberman and mill owner whose logging camp was situated on the Columbia River in the state of Washington. At first Jack, who was a city boy, had found that roughing it was not altogether to his liking. There were many discomforts; bugs and other insects, both crawling and flying, seemed to have no manners whatever; and his nice white hands sometimes got sadly begrimed with dirt.

But, gradually, life in the deep forest among the lumberjacks had awakened another spirit within him—a determination to show his chums that he could, if he chose, be just as good a woodsman as they. With this dawning of a new feeling, his dislikes began to vanish—that is, when the weather wasn't rainy or cold and the boys didn't drag him too far away from camp.

The big lad's loud whistling was brought to an abrupt close by a pillow which thudded hard against him.

"Oh, you rude Tim!" he cried; and stout Dave Brandon smiled, as he watched his six friends sending the soft missile from one to another, and kept on smiling even when it collided violently with his head.

"For goodness' sake, Jack, don't have any more doubts," he drawled. "When you do, something nearly always hits me. What do I think? Don't think—I'm trying to sleep." He gave the pillow a mighty shove which sent it in a shapeless mass on the floor, and closed his eyes.

"As we were sayin'," grinned Jack Conroy, when a hearty chorus of groans had subsided, "it was mighty nice of the old Indian to do it; but, honest, I don't like to see you poor chaps goin' around thinkin' you'll be millionaires before the winter's over."

"You can't see us think," chirped Tim Lovell.

"Nor discover it, either—very often," said the big lad, witheringly. "Quit jokin', Timmy. Now, for savin' his life, old Wanna gives the crowd his mine; he's too old an' feeble to bother about it himself, he says. But—" He paused impressively.

"Well?" demanded Tim.

"Who knows whether it's really a gold mine or not? Maybe Wanna is mistaken—"

"Mistaken nothing!" snorted Tim. "Didn't we have the quartz in our hands? Didn't we see the yellow specks shinin' all through it like little stars in a cloudless sky?"

"Oh, my! What book have you been reading now?" asked Bob.

"Do you think that a real, live, bona fide Indian like Wanatoma could be mistaken?" persisted Tim. "You make me tired, Jacky Conroy."

The big lad came back to the attack with an exasperating grin.

"Supposin' there is a mine, are any o' you chaps really silly enough to imagine for eight seconds at a stretch that we can find it by that queer scrawl o' yours, Bob Somers? Looks to me like those Egyptian hiero—hiero—"

"Help him out, somebody—do," sniffed Tim.

"Hieroglyphics," came in sepulchral tones from the bunk.

"Score another for the literary boy," laughed Sam Randall. "Bet he even knows how to spell it."

"Jack's limit is nine letters," said Tim.

"See here, fellows," broke in Bob Somers, warningly, "we're making too all-fired much racket about this thing. Your voice isn't any gentle whisper, Jack; and if it should ever get noised about the camp that we're going off on a search for a gold mine, why—"

"The noise would become a perfect din of hurrying feet," interrupted Dick Travers. "No joking, Conroy. I don't know how many times you've been howling out loud, just as though you wanted to advertise the whole business."

"I'll bet there wasn't anybody around," growled Jack.

"But a chap can't always tell. And the idea of Conroy being sure about anything! Doesn't that jar you?"

"Something else will, if you keep up that line o' talk much longer."

"Trot out your map, Bob," went on Dick, with an air of scorn. "You may laugh, Jack, but we're crackerjack woodsmen. I know it seems hard to a chap who doesn't understand—"

"Cut it out!" howled Jack. "An' see here, Tommy Clifton, don't giggle like that again—mind now. Bring out your great gold mine map, Bob Somers, an'—"

"For goodness' sake, Jack, put a muffler on that voice," cried Dick, aghast; "curb it! Suppose Pete Colliver should be hanging around—or Ben Vincent—or Booney—or some of the men! Remember what Mr. Lovell told us—keep mum, mum, and mummer."

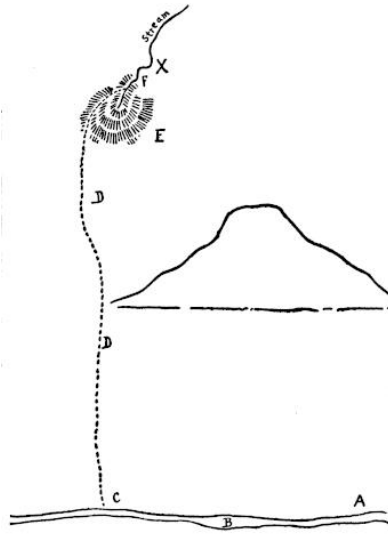
"Let's form the United Society o' Whisperers," scoffed Jack.

"Quit scrapping. Here's the map, fellows," interposed Bob.

He carefully spread out a sheet of brown paper upon a table in the center of the cabin, while Jack rudely elbowed the others aside.

"I'll let you see it one at a time," he announced, kindly.

Heavy lines traced the rude plan shown here.



THE MAP THAT BOB DREW

"Why, it doesn't look a bit like that Egyptian thing with a jaw-breakin' name Jack spoke about," remarked Tim, after a critical glance over Bob's shoulder. "I'd call it a picture of a tree in a hurricane."

"Or struck by lightning," suggested Tommy, squeezing in between the others.

"But it's plenty good enough for our purpose," said Bob, with a smile. "A represents our present position on the map; B the Columbia River; C our first stop;" he ran his finger along the lines; "D the direction we have to take; E one of the Cascade Mountains; and F, away around on the opposite side,"—he lowered his voice to a whisper—"a stream which flows down

the slope—Wanna called it 'Gold Creek.' We have to follow its course until a big bend is reached, and there, marked on this map by an X, is located—"

"Whisper it," murmured Sam Randall.

"The Rambler Club's Gold Mine."

"Ah! That has a mighty fine sound, Bob."

"Now the problem is simple—"

"Corkin' simple," scoffed Jack. "Why on earth don't you make a problem in algebra out o' it? Let A, B, C, D, E, F represent the line o' most resistance, an' X—er—er—"

"Stuck again," laughed Bob. "We have to settle it on earth, Jack. Now, fellows, this sketch on the right gives an idea of the shape of the mountain."

"Draw it all yourself?" grinned Jack.

"Yes; Wanatoma supplied the description, and I furnished the motive power," laughed Bob. "He says we can't help recognizing it by the peculiar blunt top. How's this for a plan? Suppose we take a lumber schooner as far as C—that's a good-sized town—buy our outfit and horses and—"

"An' who's goin' to carry the grub?" broke in Jack, sarcastically. "Wee Tommy, here? Or is each fellow supposed to take along his own sandwiches an' canteen o' water, an' shoot at every bird or animal that pops into sight? Why, this gold mine is—"

"Sh-sh!" began Dick, warningly. "Don't, Jack; curb it."

"It's in the deep wilderness; an' if the bunch should ever get lost, sure as thunder it would be when there wasn't a speck o' grub within twenty-eight miles."

"Oh, float away, Jacky," put in Sam Randall, scornfully. "When you find the Ramblers lost just let me know. Since Bob Somers formed this club we've had all sorts of adventures in Wisconsin, Oregon and Wyoming, and aren't going to get lost in any Washington forest, eh, fellows? You and Tim don't know us yet. Go ahead, Bob; horses, you were saying? Then, of course, we'll need a couple of pack animals."

"Pack animals?" grinned Jack. "Maybe you mean pachyderms, Sammy?"

"Oh, you're really too funny for anything," broke in Clifton, whose forehead was still puckered into a fierce frown from Jack's allusion to "Wee Tommy."

"Well, boys, I move that we start day after to-morrow," went on Bob. "Hit the trail, and hit it hard, until we reach X."

A long-drawn-out groan, coming from the direction of the bunk, attracted general attention toward Dave Brandon.

"Well?" asked Bob.

The stout boy's eyes beamed quizzically.

"Only thinking, Bob," he answered.

"What about?"

"Well, don't you know, we really ought to be back in Kingswood now, deeply absorbed in the acquisition of knowledge?"

"Acqui-acqui-sition! You don't let any o' those big ones get by you, I notice," grunted Jack.

"Yes; we have already overstayed our time," went on Dave, "and this trip—"

"It'll only take a week or two," supplied Bob.

"And do you think for a moment, David Brandon, that we could do any studying without settling this thing first?" demanded Sam Randall. "Well, I rather guess not!"

"Then we must hurry it up, and get back to the high school as soon as possible. As it is, there's a lot of hard work before us in catching up with our studies."

"It won't be difficult, with nearly the whole term before us," said Dick, in positive tones.

"Education is the lever which uplifts the world," sighed Dave. "Now—"

"Switch off!" cried Jack.

"Such gems of thought are lost upon him," laughed Sam.

"Let's get back to business," said Bob. "We needn't expect to have any picnic on this trip." He glanced toward Conroy, whose face failed to indicate the slightest enthusiasm. "If you want to back out, Jack, now's the time."



"Who said anything about backin' out?" growled the big lad.

He walked off and threw himself at full length on a bench at the end of the cabin. His eyes began to rove over the cheerful interior. Somehow, it was just the sort of a den to fill any healthy boy's heart with delight. Seven bunks were built against the walls; two lamps suspended from the ceiling swung over the center table, while a number of tasteful prints were scattered about.

Jack felt that on a cold day, with the wind howling past the corners of the cabin, and the whirr and clank of the windmill blending in with the blasts, it would be a mighty pleasant place in which to stay. And yet here were these boys ready to leave its comforts and start off on a difficult and perhaps dangerous expedition with as much unconcern as though they were merely going on a visit to the sawmills at the base of the cliffs.

"I do wish to thunder old Wanna hadn't said a word 'bout that wonderful secret o' his," reflected Jack, his forehead knit into a frown. Perhaps, even if they did succeed in reaching their destination, it might be to have all their fond hopes dashed to the ground. "But still," the frown vanished and a quizzical smile played about the corners of his lips, "if stout, easy-going Dave Brandon is willing to take the risk—why—"

And just then his eyes caught sight of a youthful face flattened against the window-panes eagerly peering in at the group of boys who still surrounded the table, animatedly discussing their plans.

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