

THE ROVER BOYS ON SUNSET TRAIL

BY
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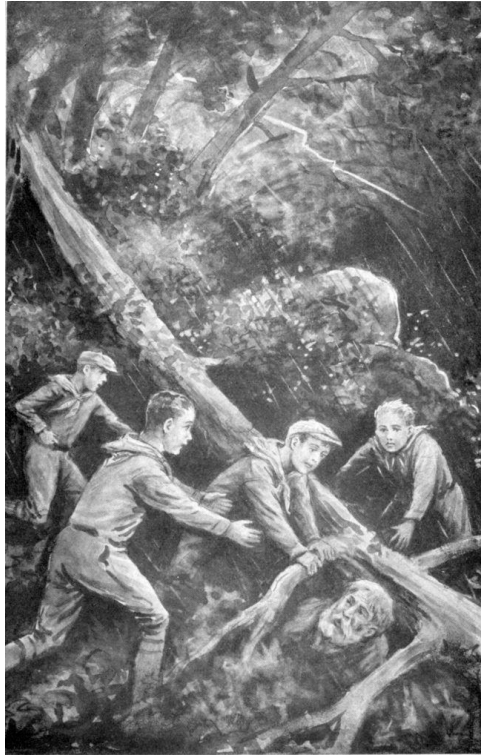
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THE ROVER BOYS ON SUNSET TRAIL



THE FOUR LADS BEGAN TO TUG AT THE TREE TRUNK.

INTRODUCTION

MY DEAR BOYS: This book is a complete story in itself, but forms the ninth volume in a line issued under the general title, "The Second Rover Boys Series for Young Americans."

The volumes issued in the First and Second Series so far number twenty-eight, and of these the publishers have already sold *over three million copies*! To me this is an astonishing number, and I must confess that I am tremendously pleased over the way in which the boys and girls, as well as their parents, have stood by me in my efforts to entertain them.

In the initial volume of the First Series, "The Rover Boys at School," I introduced my readers to Dick, Tom and Sam Rover and their friends and relatives. This book and those which immediately followed related the adventures of the three Rover boys at Putnam Hall Military Academy, Brill College and while on many outings.

Having graduated from college, the three young men established themselves in business in New York City and became married to their girl sweethearts. Dick Rover was blessed with a son and a daughter, as was likewise his brother Sam, while Tom Rover became the proud father of twin boys. As the four youths were of a lively disposition, it was considered best by their parents to send them to a boarding school, and in the first volume of the Second Series, entitled "The Rover Boys at Colby Hall," I related what took place while they were attending that institution. From Colby Hall the scene was shifted to "Snowshoe Island" and then to stirring adventures while "Under Canvas." Then the boys went

“On a Hunt” and later to “The Land of Luck.” Then came further adventures at “Big Horn Ranch,” at “Big Bear Lake,” and then when “Shipwrecked,” where we last met them.

In the present book the scene is laid first during the final days at Colby Hall and then on Sunset Trail in the far West. The boys had good times and also some strenuous adventures, all of which are related in the pages that follow.

Once more I wish to thank the young people for their interest in my books and for the many pleasing letters they have written to me. I trust that the reading of these books will do them all good.

Affectionately and sincerely yours,

EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

THE ROVER BOYS ON SUNSET TRAIL

CHAPTER I

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE LAKE

“Some baseball game, if you ask me!” exclaimed Andy Rover, as he threw his cap high into the air in satisfaction.

“Jack had the whole bunch from Longley guessing from the start,” added Andy’s twin brother, Randy Rover.

“What got me was the way Tommy Flanders was batted out of the box in that fatal sixth inning,” put in Captain Fred Rover. “It was worse than the time we batted him out before,” and he grinned broadly.

“You mustn’t give me too much credit for winning that game,” came modestly from Major Rover, as he smiled at his cousins and the other cadets of Colby Hall who were with him, all togged out in their natty baseball uniforms. “Remember, I made only one of the eleven runs we got. Fred made two and so did Dan, while Gif brought in three.”

“Of course we all helped, Jack,” returned Gif Garrison, the captain of the Colby Hall nine. “But what counts big with us is that you held Longley down to a sum total of one big goose egg. Wow! that’s enough to keep them off the diamond for a year or two.”

“And I hope it does,” came from Spouter Powell, who had gone with the team as a substitute. “Remember, our team has got to be thoroughly reorganized next season, with Jack and Fred and Gif dropping out.”

“It’s a good thing that Colonel Colby didn’t enforce that rule he was going to put through of keeping officers out of athletic contests. If he had done that, we’d have been minus Jack and Fred for this game.”

“Gosh! how I’m going to miss old Colby Hall,” sighed Fred Rover. “At first I thought graduating and getting away was going to be fine. But when I think of what we’re going to miss in baseball and football and in the gymnasium and on the campus—well, I’m not so sure,” and his face clouded.

“Oh, well, we can’t be cadets and schoolboys all our lives,” consoled his cousin Jack. “Just the same, I’ll hate to give up baseball, and I’ll hate to give up being major of the school battalion, too.”

“How the Longley Academy fellows hated to see that silver trophy going to us,” put in Phil Franklin, who had gone along as scorer. “Some of the fellows looked as black as a thundercloud when the committee wrapped it up in that cloth and turned it over to Gif.”

“Well, I guess the fellows from Hixley High and Columbus Academy felt just as bad,” came from Spouter Powell. For the trophy was one which had been fought for by four of the schools on and in the vicinity of the lake.

“We’ve got the goods! We’ve got the goods!
Because we played good ball.
No matter what we try to do,
Old Colby’s got the call!”

chanted Andy Rover gayly. "I don't see why Colonel Colby can't add a Chair of Baseball to the curriculum," he added, with a grin. "We'd have a whole lot of professors to fill it."

The cadets from Colby Hall were on their way to the boat-landing, where they intended to embark on several motor boats which were to take them across Clearwater Lake to where the military academy they attended was located. Behind them came a motley collection of other cadets and spectators in general, including not a few girls from Clearwater Hall. Two of the members of the ball team—the second baseman and the right fielder—carried between them an object carefully wrapped in a bit of dark cloth. This object was a tall silver vase beautifully engraved. It had been put up as a prize by the owners of the rival institutions of learning on the lake, and now, having been won three times by the Colby Hall nine, had become the permanent property of that organization.

"What will we do with the vase, now we've won it?" questioned Fred.

"Better melt it up and make souvenirs of it," suggested Randy Rover, with a smile. "Each cadet might get a medal the size of a quarter, stamped, 'In Memory of the Time that We Licked Longley out of Its Boots,'" and at this there was a general laugh.

"I guess we'll have to put it in that glass case in the gymnasium along with the other Hall trophies," said Gif. "It doesn't belong to any one in particular, you know. It belongs to the whole school."

When the cadets reached the lake front they began to separate because the various motor boats were tied up at different landings. As the four Rover boys went forward they heard a girlish cry

behind them and, turning, saw four young ladies hurrying toward them.

“Oh, Jack! Wait a minute!” cried Ruth Stevenson, a tall and exceedingly good-looking girl, as she came up and extended her hand. “I want to congratulate you on your splendid victory. It was simply great!”

She caught the young major’s hand and squeezed it warmly.

“Oh, Fred, to think you really won that trophy!” burst out May Powell, another of the girls. “Oh, I could just have hugged somebody when I heard the good news!”

“Dad will be awfully glad to hear of this new victory of yours, Jack,” said Martha Rover.

“I’m going to write a long letter home to-night,” added Fred’s sister Mary quickly. “I’m just going to let them know what real heroes you two boys are.”

“Oh, say, Mary! don’t pile it on so thick,” interrupted her brother. “Remember, a baseball game is only a baseball game, after all.”

“All aboard!” shouted one of the cadets from a motor boat near by. “Remember, fellows, it’s getting late and we’ve got quite a trip before us.”

“Yes, and remember that we’ve got to get ready for the celebration to-night,” added another cadet.

“Oh, I wish we could see the celebration!” cried Ruth Stevenson.

“You don’t wish it any more than I do,” answered Jack quickly. “But I don’t see how it can be done.” And then, after a few words

more, the boys and girls separated and the four Rovers boarded one of the Colby Hall motor boats, along with Gif, Phil Franklin, and half a dozen others.

“Who’s got the silver trophy? Where is the silver trophy?” came from others on the boat-landings.

“We’ve got it safe and sound,” sang out Phil Franklin.

“Well, take good care of it,” came from another cadet. “That trophy is worth just about a million dollars to Colby Hall.”

“Make it nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, and I’ll believe you,” answered Andy Rover loudly, and this produced a general chuckle. Then, one after another, the motor boats bound for Colby Hall set off across Clearwater Lake.

It was an ideal day in late June, with bright sunshine and just sufficient breeze to make the air bracing. There had been a good attendance at the ball game, and now the surface of the lake was alive with all manner of craft carrying spectators to various points on the water front. There were canoes and rowboats, motor boats and steam yachts, as well as catboats and several small sloops. From the shore, where a road ran up and down the lake front, could be heard the sounds from numerous automobiles and motorcycles.

“I’ll bet the hole in a button against the hole in a doughnut that there won’t be much of a celebration at Longley to-night,” remarked Randy Rover, as the motor boat, under the guidance of Pud Hicks, one of the school employees, proceeded cautiously out from among the mass of craft near by.

“You’ll be able to cut the gloom with a knife,” answered his twin.

“And the gloomiest boy of the bunch will be Tommy Flanders,” put in Fred.

“I hope it takes some of the conceit out of him,” answered Jack. “I haven’t forgotten how he treated us when we were in camp up at Big Bear Lake,” he went on, referring to some happenings which have already been related in detail in another volume.

“I wonder if Tommy Flanders and his bunch will be at Longley next season,” mused Fred.

“I heard so,” returned Spouter Powell. “Tommy and his cronies didn’t pass some of the examinations last year, so they have got to hold over another term.”

“Gee! I hope we pass in our final examinations,” said Andy wistfully. “I’d hate awfully to flunk at the last minute, wouldn’t you?”

“Don’t mention it, Andy!” returned his brother. “It’s enough to give a fellow the shivers.” The twins were given to so much fun and horseplay that it was next to impossible for them to buckle down to their studies, and, as a consequence, each successive examination became more or less of a nightmare to them.

“Oh, we’ve got to pass—every one of us!” burst out Jack. “Now that the games are all at an end, each fellow has got to buckle down for all he’s worth. Just think of what the folks at home would say if we failed!”

“I wonder what that silver trophy is worth,” came from Phil Franklin. “It certainly is a handsome vase.”

“I heard somebody say it cost over two hundred dollars,” answered the young major of the school battalion.

“Yes, and then there is a lot of engraving to go on it, and that will be extra,” put in Gif. “Remember, the name of the winning club and the date of the final victory are still to be put on it.”

“Wouldn’t it be fine if we could take it home and show it to the folks,” said Fred wistfully.

“I didn’t get a very good look at it,” remarked Randy. “Phil, let’s take a look at it now while we’re going home.”

“Be careful and don’t get it tarnished,” cautioned Gif. “We want to keep that as nice as possible until we can put it under glass.”

“Oh, looking at it isn’t going to hurt it any,” answered Andy.

As the motor boat bounded on its way across Clearwater Lake in the direction of the Colby Hall dock, Phil and Randy, assisted by Andy, took the dark cloth covering off the tall silver vase and set the trophy up on the forward deck of the motor boat where all might inspect and admire the object.

“Gee, it certainly is a peach of a vase!” exclaimed Randy, as he and his twin brother turned the object around and inspected it closely.

“It certainly is an art to turn out a vase like this,” answered Fred, who was also looking the object over. “Just look at that curve to the top, will you? And that little vine that trails around and down to the bottom? Why, you can see every leaf just as plain as if it was real!”

“It’ll look better yet when it’s all engraved,” observed Randy. “I wonder where they will put the name and the date? On this side, I suppose,” and he turned the vase around.

“Look out there! Watch where you’re going!” came in a yell from Pud Hicks.

The cry was so sharp and unexpected that all of the cadets started in alarm. As they glanced up they saw a steam yacht bearing almost directly across their bow.

“Gee, we’re going to be hit, as sure as guns!” exclaimed Spouter Powell.

“Back her, Pud! Back her!” yelled Jack.

“Sheer off! Sheer off to the right!” came from Gif.

Badly frightened by the proximity of the steam yacht which had come up without warning, Pud Hicks stopped his motor and then threw over his steering wheel in a wild endeavor to sheer to starboard. But the steam yacht was too close. There came frantic cries to “look out!” from the craft, a blast of a steam whistle and the jangling of a bell, and then motor boat and steam yacht slid up to each other sideways.

For a moment it looked as if the motor boat must be capsized. The craft careened at a sharp angle, shipping not a little water. The shock was greatest at the bow, and in a twinkling Phil Franklin shot overboard. Andy and Randy Rover followed, carrying the silver trophy with them.

CHAPTER II

SOMETHING ABOUT THE ROVERS

“Sheer off! Sheer off!”

“You’ll send us to the bottom!”

“Why don’t you look where you’re running?”

“It wasn’t our fault! You changed your course!” came from the steam yacht.

“Nothing of the sort! I was runnin’ as straight as an arrow!” yelled Pud Hicks, in reply.

Then the two boats sheered away from each other and presently both came to a standstill in order that the occupants might ascertain what damage had been done. In the meantime Phil Franklin, who had disappeared beneath the surface of the lake, reappeared and struck out lustily for the motor boat.

“Where are Andy and Randy?” gasped Fred, who had kept himself from being hurled overboard by a firm hold on the rear gunwale.

“Ouch! My fingers!” came in a wild yell from Spouter Powell. He had had the digits of his left hand severely pinched when the two craft came together.

“The trophy went overboard!” groaned one of the other cadets.
“Andy and Randy took the silver vase with them!”

“Never mind the trophy!” interrupted Jack quickly. “If only they are not hurt!” he added fervidly.

The youthful major had scarcely spoken when a head bobbed up on the surface of the lake about fifty feet away. It was Andy Rover, and he struck out somewhat feebly for the motor boat.

“Andy! Andy! Are you all right?” yelled Jack.

“I—I guess so!” gasped his cousin.

“Where is your brother?” screamed Fred. He was in mortal terror, fearing Randy had been seriously hurt and gone to the bottom.

The words were scarcely off his lips when the waters of the lake parted once more and Randy Rover reappeared. He threw up a hand feebly.

“Help! Help!” he gasped out. “Somebody help me!”

“He’s got a cramp, or something!” exclaimed Jack. “I’m going after him. Bring the boat over,” and without further ado he balanced himself on a seat of the motor boat and then dove overboard in the direction where his cousin had appeared. Randy’s head and hand had gone down slowly, and now he was once more out of sight.

As my old readers know, the young major was an excellent swimmer and he struck out with vigor for the spot where his cousin had disappeared.

In less than a minute after Jack left the boat Andy managed to reach the craft and was pulled on board by Fred and Gif. Then the motor boat was turned in the direction where Jack was swimming.

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