

within a thousand miles, and if ever the salt water had stained the rounded rocks it must have been ages and ages ago, long before man is reputed to have dwelt on the earth.

The trees became scanty and then entirely ceased. Ahead lay a wide stretch of rugged ground, fringed on the far side with another forest. A halt was made and the men looked round.

Snow lay between the rocks and the trail had vanished. It seemed as if the men they sought had come thus far and then turned back. So said one, and there were nods of assent. Jim Brown looked glum.

"We've been a pesterin' along an old trail," he said, "and now we must hark back."

Nobody had been paying much heed since the halt was made to the movements of Jack, Sam and Charlie. They had climbed to the top of a huge rock, which the wind had made barren of snow, and were surveying the uninviting landscape. Jack was pointing down below, and as Brown parted his lips to call them back, they suddenly disappeared.

"What's come of 'em?" said Jim Brown with a bewildered look.

"They slipped down out of sight in a moment," said Rogers, "jest as if they had fallen over a precipice."

There was a rush for the rock and the men scrambled up its uneven surface. It was a mode of progression that winded most of them, and, the summit gained, there was another halt to regain their breath. Then they went on to where the trio had been seen standing, and their minds were relieved.

There was no precipice, nothing more than a sharp slope down which Jack and the two other youngsters had slid as if they had been tobogganing. Knee deep they were, well on ahead, ploughing their way on, between the masses of rock with the eagerness of hounds in pursuit of a fox.