

showing that more than once the horse-thieves had gone to and fro. The word was passed that the trail had been found, and the three chums went on ahead, the men following.

"They are going on too quickly," remarked Rogers, "call 'em back, Brown."

"The less callin' the sooner we shall find them warmints we are arter," replied Brown. "Peg along!"

Striking the trail so soon was a piece of good fortune, and there was no break in it, save when the searchers came to a fallen tree or a cluster of undergrowth. Then it would be lost for a moment and speedily recovered. As the party advanced, now in a body and no longer in line, the forest grew denser, the trees stood thicker, and the daylight softened down.

Not a word was spoken. In grim silence they proceeded, in the wake of the pioneer youngsters. A small, unsuspected stream was come upon. The water in it seemed to have been frozen solid, and the ice had a coating of snow with the guiding footmarks crossing it.

On and on, two miles perhaps were traversed, though it seemed to be much more, and then the hitherto level surface of the forest begun to slope upward. None of the gathering had ever penetrated so far in the forest before. The trees near the cultivated land were mostly fine, here many were gigantic.

There was little lower foliage. Tall and straight, like huge columns, the trunk rose in the air, and high overhead topped with crowns of foliage that was largely there winter and summer, almost cutting off the light of day. Here and there some had shed their leaves, and grateful patches of brighter light rested on the ground below. But for the most part it was a journey through gloom.

Up and up sloped the way. Presently the trees begun to thin and huge stones were met with, resembling the boulders we find near a rocky seashore. But no sea was