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# Our Boys and Girls

BY AUNT BECKY

## The Secret of the Silver Lake

By Henry Frith, Author of "Under the Queen," etc. Bayard's Banner, "For King and Queen," etc.

### CHAPTER X.—Continued.

"Seems to me they did not intend to prevent our entrance. There are no guards, and young master's escape must have been discovered before this. So if they meant any mischief they would have met us before," said an elderly Scotsman of the party.

"Never mind: we are in the 'pah' now, and that is half the battle gained," said Mr. Manton. "Be very cautious. Ernest, which is the way?"

Ernest looked around him, and then pointing to his right, rather in front of where the party stood, said "I think our hut is over there. The chief's house is there," he continued, indicating its direction. "We shall most likely find the Scout bound in our hut."

"Very good, my boy," said his father. "You hear, friends? Let us go and rescue the Scout. But I wonder we are not attacked!"

"There is something very unusual to be feared," remarked Mr. Manton. "Do be careful! We shall fall into an ambushade. Let us keep within the ditch."

This suggestion was acted upon. The invaders, as we may term them, proceeded in the "covered way," or ditch, while Ernest looked around every now and then to mark his place.

"There is the hut," he whispered; "that old tumble-down shanty."

"I cannot distinguish it," replied his uncle. "Which hut?"

"This one by the ditch on your left, near the palings," said Ernest. "I am sure of it."

"I see! Now, men, to the attack. Steady: have your fire-arms in readiness. Go gently. Get up, form into line and charge. Hush!"

Hush! Anything stirring? No, all is quite still. The gloom is rather alarming. Along the ground the darkness is thickest in the centre of the camp. The party peeped out. No one saw them, they felt sure; one by one the men got up and stood in a line: twenty-two only! Twenty-two men against a host of Maoris, who would resent any insult, and who, when fully aroused, are as cruel as death, and very revengeful.

But the brave fellows did not think of these things. They were intent upon the rescue of their friends—and on that only.

"Charge!" cried Mr. Manton, who took the leadership of the party. "Hurrah! Scout! Scout!"

Everyone dashed on, crying "Scout! Scout!" and were actually in the open space in front of the huts, when suddenly, and with a most surprising swiftness, a circle of fire enwrapped the invaders of the "pah." The whole village was brilliantly illuminated. In front and behind the Europeans, and all around them in a circle, stood a line of dusky warriors, nearly every third man holding a burning torch which shed a lurid smoky light upon the "pah" and the surrounding scenery.

The travellers were immediately discovered; they stood gazing around them, almost dismayed for the moment at the success of the trick which the chief had played.

While they were deliberating and wondering what would happen to them, a number of warriors advanced quickly, and made as if they would surround and take the Europeans prisoners. This the Englishmen were determined to prevent. They formed themselves into a tiny square, the boys in the centre, and made up their minds to sell their lives as dearly as possible. But suddenly the chief stopped forward, and in commanding tones checked the brown warriors.

Then he beckoned to the Englishmen, and made friendly signs, inviting them all to enter his wharfed with him. But they naturally hesitated.

"What do you think he intends?" asked Mr. Belton of his brother.

"He wants some conference. Perhaps he has taken the Scout prisoner, and wishes to take us also. Shall we go?"

"I think we had better," said one of the party. "If he meant mischief he could have killed us all in the dark. Besides, his men have the Scout as interpreter. See, they have all gone away. Let us chance

off. We shall not be molested now, but in a few hours we may be seized and tortured."

"Well, I am ready," replied Mr. Manton. "My lads," he continued, turning to his men, "we must all put our full confidence in the Scout. We shall perhaps have trouble and we may have to fight; but we are near the Silver Lake, which, I believe, contains riches enough for us all. The Scout will guide us. Will you follow the directions my brother and I may give you, or will you choose another leader?"

"No," they cried. "We will follow your lead, Mr. Manton."

"Very well. My niece and nephews must be our first care. The Scout here will find us provisions, I daresay."

Bond, who had been conferring with the old woman, nodded, whispered to her, and said as she quit the large hut—

"She will not go with us; she will not betray the heritage of the tribe. I confess I have no such sentiment. The tribe must soon disappear as the white man advances, and I am more white than Maori. So let us try to find our way. In half an hour we must go. I will take care that we are not molested."

The pretended chief sent a runner round, commanding all men, women and children to remain indoors until after sunrise, as the White Queen would go forth to greet the rising sun. The message was received by the guards, who attended to it; and in half an hour—the time the day began to break—not a native was to be seen in the "pah."

But in spite of this command, a curious eye or two beheld the departure of the chieftain and the White Queen. The English had carried her off! But why, then, did the chief accompany them? This caused the spies some uneasiness, and as soon as possible they communicated their suspicions to the chief men and to the priests, and a search was afterwards begun; which ended in the discovery of the real chief in the deserted hut, and then all the facts became apparent to the Maoris.

Their first act was to torture the poor old woman, who would not betray her son, just as she had declared that she would not betray the cavern and the underground passage leading to it. The cruel chief could not obtain any information from her dying lips; so, collecting a band of fifty followers, he set out in pursuit of the settlers and the White Queen, who would no doubt lead them to the happy land—to riches and power!

Meantime the explorers, guided by the Scout, quitted the "pah" without any difficulty, and made their way in the direction of the Maori Lake, which looked like a sheet of ice in the early dawn: cold, unrippled and perfectly still.

"Where are we going, Scout?" asked Mr. Manton, who was greatly excited at the prospect of realizing his dreams of silver-mining.

"Beneath yonder lake if we find the cave," replied the Scout.

"Have you sufficient food for our journey?" inquired Mr. Belton. "It will be difficult to procure if we remain underground."

"I have plenty of Maori food," replied Bond. "What do you say to mutton-birds and kumeras?"

"What are mutton-birds?" inquired Ernest. "Are they anything like mutton chops?"

"Quite as nourishing, and a good deal more oily," replied the Scout; "they are not unlike mutton, though. The kumera is a kind of potato. But if they fail we can chew the fern-pith and the pig-face leaves, which are very nourishing."

"This is a curious country," murmured Stephen. "Mutton in birds, and pigs' faces in plants! We shall have puddings in trees next!"

The Scout was leading the way as rapidly as possible up the rugged slope beyond the spot where the party had camped. He then went down the opposite side, keeping rather to the right above the little lake. Then suddenly he plunged into a gully or ravine, separated from the lake by a considerable hill. Thence he made his way, after many a pause, through the scrub and tangled vegetation, over rocks and boulders which had fallen from the mountains in bygone days, and at length came to a dead stop before some thick shrubs which concealed the boulders effectually.

"The cavern is somewhere here," said Bond. "Many years ago my father was shown the place, and he told me that within the rock is a passage which leads underground, and under the lake, to a small pond or pool in the depths of the earth, where he was told silver can be obtained. Now the entrance is blocked up, but it is a very curious fact that the tribe should have a tradition that the silver would be discovered by a white stranger—a girl. Missy here is the young lady who will help us. Let us look for the cavern."

Some of the men exchanged incredulous glances. "Was it likely that any such place would have been permitted to remain unsought for if there were riches in it?" they said.

"It is not unknown," said Mr. Manton. "As some here can testify, I have been trying to find the place, and would have discovered it, too, before long. My information led me so far as these hills."

"Well, suppose we set to work to clear away these plants?" said Mr. Belton.

This suggestion was acted on at once. They all plunged into the overgrowth, and for some time their efforts were not successful. Amy, with her brothers, kept rather to the left, facing the hill, at a little distance from the others, preferring to escape the thorns and burrs of the thicket.

"Boys," cried Amy suddenly, "look here! here is an opening, isn't it?"

"I believe Amy has discovered the cave!" cried Stephen. "Holloa, father—uncle, here is the cavern!"

All hurried up, and in a moment the Scout plunged in.

He returned in a few minutes and said—

"I believe it is the cave. Now, let us twist up some twigs into torches, and penetrate as far as we can. We may find something. I wish we had candles."

"We can make some of this pine wood burn very quickly. Now, my men, to work!" cried Mr. Manton.

He was greatly excited. His long-wished-for silver mine, he fancied, was at length within his grasp. Fortune for himself and all his relatives and friends would result. The mine could be worked, and then hurrah for home!

"Suppose you find the mine inside the mountain, or suppose you find the traces of silver, you will have to purchase the land," said the Scout.

"From whom?" asked Mr. Manton.

"From the Maoris—or the Government will!" said the Scout. "Don't be too sure of it. Now come along!"

(To be continued.)

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In this room have been gathered for ages curios and gems from Spanish possessions the world over, at a time when Spain was mistress of the world. And here in front of the throne hang chandeliers of rock crystal, which have for generations been the envy of other European rulers—New York Globe and Commercial Advertiser.

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### LIGHT COMEDIAN.

Prof. Brander Matthews, the spelling-reform advocate, was ridiculing at Columbia College high-sounding names for commonplace things—tonorial parlor for barber-shop, funeral director for undertaker, and so on.

"Two scrub-women were talking the other day," he said.

"What's your son Billie doin' now, Mrs. Smith?" asked the first.

"He's on the stage," the other answered.

"Drivin' a stage, do you mean?"

"Drivin' a stage? Nonsense! Willie is an actor. He's a light comedian."

"A light comedian? What part does he play?"

"He plays a silent part behind a black curtain, with his mouth to a hole forst a candle, and when Abanil Ike shoots at the candle, Willie blows it out."

He—So they got married and went off in their new motor car.

She—And where did they spend their honeymoon?

He—in the hospital.

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