

CRUISE OF THE LAKERIMMERS

A Day of Rest to the Dozen Boys on the Tug.

All of the dozen slept like alligators that night—all except Tur, who, in spite of his great weariness, could not help worrying over the very success he had been working so hard for. While the others only realized that B. J. was safe among them once more, and that the dozen was again complete, Tur tossed about, thinking of what might be the result of their desperate attack on Captain Mudd and his boat.

To his lively imagination the Lakerimmers had committed burglary, assault and battery, highway robbery, disturbance of the peace, obtaining B. J. under false pretenses, kidnapping and almost every crime in the law book. Tur felt sure that Captain Mudd had come at once to the police at Keokuk, and that they were even now in search for the dozen. He lay awake wondering at what moment their little bivouac would be discovered and surrounded. Every leaf that cracked or crinkled, every bough that wobbled in the cool of the night, was a footstep.

Tur was not half so much worried about the punishment that might be inflicted on the Lakerimmers as he was worried with the fear that they would take away B. J. and give him back to Captain Mudd. So it was a restless night of torment that Tur spent.

As a matter of fact, Captain Mudd was just as much worried and was lying awake in his own cabin. To his restless imagination, the Lakerimmers must have gone immediately to the police at Keokuk and sworn out a complaint against him for kidnapping B. J., and for cruel treatment. So Captain Mudd saw himself thrown into a dungeon for years or trampled by a mob of infuriated citizens. As he lay there in his cabin every slap, slap of the ripples against the side of the boat seemed to be the footsteps of the police or a mob of infuriated citizens who wished to punish the wretch who could carry off and maltreat a young boy.

At the first glimmer of daybreak Tur woke up the sleepy Lakerimmers and found them in a comfortable position, with their sleeping bags and their heads tucked up in their pillows. He told them that if they did not make great haste Captain Mudd would take B. J. back and leave them all in chains.

"We don't want to spend the rest of our vacations breaking stones for the Keokuk streets."

It was something of a question where to go, but Tur had a plan. He pointed across the river and noticed what seemed to be a heavily wooded and uninhabited island. There he felt sure they could remain in concealment till Captain Mudd had given up and some other party would soon have the rest of the dozen very uneasy about their prospects, and he drove them like a herd of sheep across to the other side of the river.

The war canoe and B. J.'s little canoe were moored. It was no easy task picking up that canoe and carrying it up the sharp slant of the stone wall. The whole party came up the river, and Tur more than once they had to dig their feet into the crevices with great care to retain their balance. Once it was up the wall it was hardly a matter of carrying it down the same slant on the other side. But at last the portage was done, and the carrying of the small canoe was no so difficult, especially as it was unladed before it was lifted from the water.

The sun had just poked his head up over the hills when the dozen pushed out into the river. The water was red with the morning glow, and the boys were as merry as the water, and looked after a great battle.

But Sleepy, who had no poetry in his soul, said: "It reminds me of a river of sweet water, and goodness knows I wish it was."

The current here at the Rapids was very swift, and in order to get straight across the river, the boys were obliged to paddle almost straight upstream. When they neared the other side they found that a better spot for their camp was below the bridge, so they dropped it with the current under the bridge.

A short distance below they found a little stream or sluiceway, and rowing up it found themselves in a creek that ran through a forest of green trees. The ground showed that at high water it was flooded. But now it was dry and well covered with foliage. From the trees great vines hung like ropes and made swings large enough for grown men.

There was a tropical wilderness about the place, and the Lakerimmers could not help feeling that it was the proper thing to give their war whoop. But they made so much noise in this still early morning place that the yell stopped short in their throats. They were especially afraid that Captain Mudd might hear them and come after them.

But the last thing on earth that Captain Mudd was thinking of doing was following the Lakerimmers. When the sun was waking his bruised and battered crew to their tasks, he was eager for an early start, and the moment the lock would admit him he was knocking at his gates. It seemed to him that the task of getting the raft through by piecemeal would never be ended. He was almost too scared to wear at his men for their awkwardness. At last, however, the raft was through the lock and the steamer after it. The draw of the bridge opened and let him through, and as it closed after him he felt that he was at last safely out of jail.

By this time the Lakerimmers had fried their bacon and eaten their breakfast and pitched their camp. Then they set out to do a little exploring. They were up within the edge of the woods, but made a careful study of the opposite shore, with its tall cliffs. As they were gazing they saw the drawbridge open and through it came puffing a boat with a man on a raft. They were too far away to read the name on the pilot-house, but they knew the features of that boat all too well. They exclaimed in amazement: "The Hiram B. Mudd!"

Then they stared at her in silence and bewilderment till finally Bobbles exclaimed: "I'll tell you what!"

"What?" chorused the rest.

"I don't know, but I'll bet he is afraid to meet us again."

"Well," said Sawed-off, "whether he is afraid or not, he is gone, and we can come out of hiding."

"What worries Sleepy," whined Sleepy, "is this. How are we ever going to get home? We can't row all the way up against this current, and we can't walk in a thousand years, and we haven't money enough to pay our railroad fares. So what are we going to do?"

"We'll have to think it over," said Tur. "Meanwhile we might as well make the best of it."

They continued their explorations till the sun grew hotter and hotter and the cool water of the sluiceway looked more and more tempting. So with one accord they all went in for a swim.

They swam and swam, and basked in the sun on the sand, and then swam again. It seemed that they were determined to stay there till they grew blue and turned fishes. Sleepy was the first to realize that tim was flying, as he was informed by that unflinching clock, his stomach. He insisted on the cooks for the day getting to work. "The Hiram B. Mudd!"

B. J., Pretz, Quiz and Bobbles, who were all ardent swimmers, refused to leave the water even for dinner. But finally, the sight of the rest of the dozen munching and guzzling was too much for them. Then an idea smote Pretzy. He took two pieces of driftwood and laid across them the ends of a seat from the canoe, and placed upon this



STOOD THERE, UP TO THEIR ARMPITS, EATING.

floating table the dinner for the four conformed swimmers. The other three speedily saw his purpose, and they pushed the dining-room table gently out to the middle of the stream, and stood there up to their armpits eating. The current began to float the table into deeper water, and Quiz was for holding it back, but Bobbles said:

"I'll bet you fellows can't tread water and eat your dinner at the same time!"

The bet was immediately taken, the dinner table was allowed to drift out into deep water and the four cronies followed it, keeping upright and treading water vigorously. They kept their jaws going in rhythm with their feet, and to the disgust of the other Lakerimmers enjoyed both the dinner and the swim. But just as the floating dinner was little more than half finished, Quiz accidentally gave a kick that sent it over, and with it all the edibles went floating or sinking; then those who had stayed ashore were then sorry that the rudder of the steamer should have been at the same time.

It was a great relief to the boys when they saw the steamer at Greenvale, and Jimmie and Charlie had managed always to get under the tent walls somehow. But this year the increase in the number of men connected with the show worried them.

Jimmie counted up the chances and turned to his companion in disappointment.

"It's no use, Charlie," he wailed. "I bet they've got 20 more men than they had last year, and we've most got caught then."

Charlie hit a hole in the huge slice of gingerbread which was destined to be his sole breakfast on this memorable day, and nodded assent.

In gloomy abstraction they viewed the railing of the cook tent, until a piping voice at their very feet made them start.

The speaker was a very small girl, with a very nice and unchildish face. To them her hair was a mass of spun gold, and the traces of last night's make-up on her small, somewhat pinched face was the hall-mark of her profession. She certainly belonged to the intermost circle of the great show.

"Please," she said, "do you know where the pond holes grow? I want some."

Charlie jumped from his perch.

"Sure, certain, we know. Want to come get some?"

The slow-thinking Jimmie had followed suit, and now the two boys handed the little girl over the fence, knowing full well that if caught by the circus bands the little fairy would be snatched from their grasp. Then hand in hand they

started across lots towards Benson's pond, where a few early bloomers shone clear white against the gray-green of the huge pads.

Once outside the confines of the show lot the little girl strangely clasped skipping and dancing along between her two escorts, and answering their questions in a high-keyed, almost happy voice.

Yes, she was the circus, and her name was Ethel when she rode the horse bareback, but when she was on the trapeze (doing a trap turn she called it) she was Zazelie, the flying wonder. Then she rode in a small Roman chariot drawn by Shetland ponies in the street parade, and was learning to walk on a wire, and could dance a little on a running globe.

All these accomplishments she recounted without any sense of pride and boasting. In fact, there were times when apparently it all bored her shockingly. But the boys regarded her with respect that amounted almost to awe, and when she demonstrated the truth of her statements by keeping perfect balance while walking unaided atop the first board fence they were obliged to climb, they were charmed beyond expression.

After filling the child's arms with the wet, sweet-scented blossoms, the boys reluctantly guided her back to the show lot. As she tripped over the fence a shout went up from the helpers and performers, who seemed to be vastly excited.

A moment later a stout woman, who looked like the one in pink tights who the year before had hung from a trapeze by her heels, rushed toward them, and catching Ethel in her arms, alternately scooped and kissed her.

The child was so delighted with her trip to the pond, and distributed her flowers so sweetly, that by the time order was restored the runaway was not only forgiven, but the two boys were quite the heroes of the occasion. When Mr. Cardale, "sole manager and proprietor of the greatest show on earth," came hurrying up in response to the news that the

lost was found, he forgot his annoyance and anxiety in the pleasure of his little girl, who occupied the one soft spot in his show-hardened heart, and he invited the boys to remain with the show as Ethel's guests during their Greenvale engagement.

The unveiled delight of the two youngsters so amused Mr. Cardale, and the pathetic eagerness in which Ethel clung to her little country friends so touched her father, that he instantly decided to give the boys the time of their life, merriment and fun, and he invited them to remain with the show as Ethel's guests during their Greenvale engagement.

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side on, like some great wounded whale in its dying agony.

There was a great shrieking of whistles and jangling of bells on the boat, and much running here and there on the top deck.

Now even the passengers began to see their danger and to feel a panic. There was nothing for them to do but rush here and there like a swarm of flies in a fly trap. There was no escape for them.

The Lakerimmers were so horrified at what they were seeing that without knowing it they stopped rowing and allowed the two canoes to drift down on the current. Their hands seemed to be paralyzed. They were all eyes.

And now the immense strength of the old Mississippi showed itself strangely. The big steamer that had laughed at its current and its eddies was now helpless, having lost the aid of the little plank that served as a rudder.

Swiftly, as it seemed, and then very slowly, the steamer was turned and carried aside. It swept past the side of the draw it was steering for, and past the other side. Then just as it was opposite the narrow section of the bridge, the current hurled the steamer straight forward like a mighty battering ram.

It smote the sharp edge of the stone masonry waters below. Some grasped whole sections of steel and wood, making paths, railroad tracks, girders and all, and flung it all into the river.

So tremendous a sledge-hammer blow it dealt that it carried away, with a deafening ripping and thunderous crash, that whole section of steel and wood, making paths, railroad tracks, girders and all, and flung it all into the river.

And then the Golden Eagle, all bruised and battered, with its hull carved in and its deck splintered, was seen turning through and over the steel section of the bridge that it had carried away, and floated downward on the angry current, filling with water as it went.

Others were not so lucky in their choice, and the things they had chosen for life-preservers sank with them. Here and there were men fighting with each other for some small piece of timber.

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TALE OF JOE, THE JUNGLE BOY

Adventure III—He Tells How He Defied the Chief and Saved a Life.



I WAS about midnight that I was captured by the Makololos, as described in the last chapter, and from that hour until daylight the village was greatly excited. I was placed in a hut and two guards stationed over me, and all night long the women and children crowded as near as they could, calling me names and telling what my punishment should be. The guards did not insult me or try to hurt my feelings. On the contrary, one of them said:

"Boy, it was a brave thing for you to come spying into our village, and we know you would have escaped safely but for the trap into which you stumbled. We are sorry that you have got to die."

Soon after daylight I was given something to eat, and was then taken to the chief's house. I had often heard the chief spoken of in our village, and I knew that he was a man without mercy. He was jealous of my father and hated him, and of course would delight in torturing me. The chief and ten of his leading men sat within the house, and when I stood before them he said:

"Boy, I am more pleased than if I had captured ten of your father's bravest warriors. It will make his heart sore when he hears how you died. Ah! but you are ready to weep and beg of me to spare your life."

"It is not so," I replied. "The Mwais do not weep before their enemies."

"But I will make you weep like a sick babe, and you shall wish you had never been born. The Mwais are only children."

"And the Makololos are only dogs!" I replied.

You see, among savage people, even the children are expected to be brave. The prisoner who is afraid is looked upon with

contempt. Had I shed tears and begged for my life, the chief would have thrown me to the dogs to be eaten alive, and all the people of my tribe would have been ashamed of me. I wanted to die the death of a man, and so I used bold language. My words angered the chief, and yet he saw that I was a brave boy. He looked at me a while, and then said:

"One time you ran very fast and warned the people that we were coming to attack the village. Yes, you ran very fast, but I think I can make you run faster."

I knew what he meant by that, for I had heard our warriors boast that if they would have women and children spread hot coals over the ground and then make me run over them, I was taken back to the hut with my head in my hands, and I was built, and it was an hour before they were ready for me.

I was about to be taken out, when the chief's favorite wife was bitten by a poisonous snake as she moved through a patch of weeds. There was great excitement at once, and for a few minutes I was forgotten. I heard the people saying that she must die, and that the people would mourn her loss, and I said to my guards:

"Your chief is going to put me to a cruel death, but his wife is not to blame. Go and tell him that I can cure her of the bite."

One of the men hurried away, and it was only a couple of minutes before the chief came to the hut and called out:

"Boy, do you mean what you say? Can you stop the poison and save my wife's life?"

"I surely can," I replied.

"I do not want her to die, but yet if you save her I shall not let you go. This much I will do, however. We will burn you not cut you with knives, but tonight we will let you go to the forest and let you be eaten by lions or hyenas."

Every one in our tribe knew what to do for snake bites. A certain weed that grew in the woods was a sure cure, and most of our people carried a little bag of it suspended from the neck. They had not taken mine away from me, and when I was hurried into the presence of the weeping woman I made her chew some at once. She did so, and before the contents of the bag had been used she was out of danger. When the chief saw this he was greatly pleased, and, smiling at me, he said:

"My Mwais are great people, and you are indeed a clever boy. I wish I could send you home in safety, but my people would not permit it. Tonight you shall be tied to a tree in the woods and the wild beasts will give you a quick death."

In my heart I will tell you how the chief's orders were carried out, and how the prisoner who is afraid is looked upon with

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