CHAPTER XI

The night was still and sultry, and the air hung heavy. The stars glittered dimly in the sky, and the occasional breath of wind brought no relief to the sweltering heat. The camp was huddled close together, for the scouts and riders all felt the need of sleep.

Jim sat up in the saddle of his half-bred, muttering to himself.

"'Ain't nothing to this,' he muttered. "'Gonna go all the way to Grand Ronde and back.'"

It was after dark, and the moon was high in the sky.

"'I'll get my horse,' said Jim, "'and I'll go back with the men."

He turned to his horse, and started off.

"'You don't have to come,' he called back to the others. 'I'll be back in time.'"

But Ed had had enough of this nonsense, and he saddled up his horse and followed Jim.

"You can ride back with me,' he said. "'I'll see that you get there in time.'"

Jim was surprised, but he didn't argue.

"'All right,' he said. 'You can come along.'"

They rode off in the darkness, each man determined to prove himself.

CHAPTER XII

The next morning the sun rose early, and the air was cool and fresh. The men started off at daybreak, each one determined to make the best of his horse.

"'I'll take my horse,' said Jim. "'I'm going to show you how to ride a horse.'"

Ed was surprised, but he didn't argue.

"'All right,' he said. 'You can come along.'"

They rode off in the morning sunlight, each man determined to prove himself.