



The Scouts of Silvermine

By GEORGE MITCHELL

When the Fur Rug Came to Life

WHEN Biff, the bear, laid Slim low, the others came quickly to his rescue. Biff knew he was no match for five or six huskies armed with clubs, so he took to the woods, and though the Leather Man wanted to follow he waited to find out the extent of Slim's injuries. On examination these were found to be a lacerated scalp and a flesh wound in the left shoulder. "Good," said the Leather Man. "It might have been worse." So having given him first aid, they prepared to give chase, for there was no telling how far Biff might stray nor how much real damage he might do. What he was most afraid of, he said, was that the bear might get out of the woods and be inquisitive enough to call at the kitchen door of some house on the roadside.

So they propped Slim up on some skins where he might sit in the sun. It was with great difficulty that they induced him to stay behind, so much so that Squak, who had a particularly chummy feeling for the fat lad, determined to give up the hunt to stay with his wounded pal. In vain Slim urged him to go, but Squak had made up his mind and that was final. So the Leather Man, praising Squak's unselfishness, started off with the other boys.

Provided with stout clubs, they made their way to the place where Slim had his encounter with the beast and there picked up the trail. The Leather Man was deeply interested to see how the boys acted in the woods and kept himself in the background. "You lead," he said. "I'll follow and do as I'm told." And so they started, the Chief in the lead, Freckles, Bait and the Leather Man following in the order named.

The trail was at first rather easy to follow, for the bear in his first flight had made such rapid strides as to leave a wide gap in the bushes through which he ran. For a while the course was straight ahead, and the Leather Man assured them that at the rate he was travelling he'd reach the edge of the woods in short order. A little farther on, however, they found a space had been cleared and the bushes well pushed apart. Here they paused and studied the ground, and the Chief thought that the bear had stopped to rest. "Right," said the Leather Man. "Come," said the Chief. "We must push on."

So they took up the trail again and doubled their speed. The bear here had made a wide right angle. At that the Leather Man stopped short. "What's the matter?" asked

the Chief, seeing his anxiety. "Why, nothing much," said he, "but it suggests something to me." "I've got it," said Freckles; but the Chief had it also. "He's making for something to eat," they shouted together. So they followed close to the trail, which now made a wide circle.

Meantime Slim and Squak sat in the sun at the rear of the cave and guessed at what was happening to their companions. "I wish I were with them," said Slim. "They'll have a wonderful adventure to tell us. It's hard luck, that's what I say. Besides, I've kept you from the hunt."

"Never mind me," said the good-natured Squak. "I'd like to have an adventure, but . . ." As if in answer to his wish, there was a movement in the brush close by, and both boys sat still to listen. Soon it was repeated, and Squak got up and walked a few paces in the direction from which it came. Instantly he, thrilled with excitement and



running back to Slim, shouted: "It's Biff; what shall we do?"

Slim was on his feet in a moment, in spite of the pain in his head and shoulder, as the bear advanced slowly toward them—the boys retreating before him. "I've got it," said Squak. "I'm going to try to catch him myself," and telling Slim to follow he circled around the rock and got inside the cave, though there was little safety there. "Don't shoot him," cried Slim as Squak took down the