

Buck And Tag.

From the first week in October until the middle of November Van had some interesting visitors. One Saturday two bright looking boys knocked on Van's kitchen door. "Do you mind if we occupy the shack by the spring tonight," asked the taller boy.

"Glad to have you," said Van cordially. "Sike told me about you boys, I've been expecting you. Where did you get your camp name? I've been looking at the name over your door."

"It's Spanish," said Buck - "La Casademonas - The Castle of the monkeys."

At seven o'clock that night Sike knocked on Van's door. He was carrying a basket.

"I'm on my way to the boy's camp, want to come along," he asked. "Zoe is right fond of those boys and she made this basketful of doughnuts for them after they arrived."

"I reckon sweet cider would go well with doughnuts," said Tom, and he fetched a half-gallon jug from his store-room.

The two men set off down the hill. The boys had just finished eating a supper of flapjacks and bacon when Tom and Sike appeared. "Would you like for us to make some flapjacks for you," invited the boys.

Sike pushed the basket and jug over in front of them. "We'll

share cider and doughnuts with you later. Tell us how you make your flapjacks."

"We just mix up a good batter with pancake flour, grease our griddle, and bake them brown," said Buck.

"Sometimes we eat them with bacon; sometimes with sausage, when mother puts it in our pack, and sometimes we stack up five pancakes at a time with a chunk of butter between each one, and pour a lot of maple syrup over them."

"Sounds good," said Van.

"You should be here with us in August when we roast corn. We make a smudge fire, then we get a dozen ears of corn from Sike, put them in

the coals with the husks on, then Tag and I place about a pound of butter on the log where we sit and we go to it, dig out the corn, pull the husks off and slather on the butter. Oh Boy!"

"Sike calls you boys Buck and Tag. What do you want me to call you."

"The same," said Buck. Mother says it sounds like a team of mules. Dad says Buck suited me from the day I was born. Tag's name is Taggart, so he gets called Tag."

"How old are you boys?" asked Van.

"I'm fourteen," said Buck, "and Tag is thirteen."

"You're two fine healthy looking boys," said Van. I want you to

make yourselves right at home around the farm. Eat all the apples you want, and take some home with you. Stop in at the cabin to see my shell and mineral collection, and I have a few other trophies you might be interested in."

"Our dad is interested in minerals, it's his hobby," said Buck. He has a small Lapidary, a diamond saw, and a polishing machine. He had his stones all over the house. Mother made him take his Lapidary and stones to the cellar."

Two weeks later the boys arrived in a car with their father. The man and Sam sized each other up with

a good straight look, and liked what they saw.

"Come in," invited Van.

The boys and their father spotted the tall glassed-in cabinet containing minerals and shells at once. The man handed Van a handsome specimen of deep pink Rhodonite and a small polished stone.

"These are to add to your collection," he said. "This piece of Rhodonite came from Franklin up in Sussex County. I have quite a number of stones from the Franklin mines.

This pink gem is a piece of Rhodonite I polished it on my polishing machine you see this ring," and he held out his right hand. Charlie Stalter,

watchman in the Fire Lookout on Bearfort Mountain gave me this piece of Rock Crystal Quartz and showed me the ledge from which he chipped it. I polished it and had it set in this ring."

The boys looked over Sam's collection. They were particularly interested in the Indian trophies on the bottom shelf of the cabinet. They soon left and made a bee-line for their shack. When the door closed on them their father said - "The boys think you are just about all right, and I appreciate your interest in them. They are crazy about this old farm.

They raised objections when I sold it. Their mother doesn't like it here, and wouldn't come up even for week-ends. If my wife had consented, I'd have built a good house here. I'm glad you put your cabin on the site of the old house. It looks as if it had always been here with its background of old trees and shrubs; the finest spot on the farm I think."