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ROY BLAKELEY, PATHFINDER



"I GAVE THEM THE SCOUT SALUTE."

ROY BLAKELEY, PATHFINDER

By

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

AUTHOR OF
TOM SLADE, BOY SCOUT, TOM SLADE
WITH THE COLORS, TOM SLADE ON
THE RIVER, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

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CHAPTER I
HELLO, HERE I AM AGAIN

This story is all about a hike. It starts on Bridge Street and ends on Bridge Street. Maybe you'll think it's just a street story. But that's where you'll get left. It starts at the soda fountain in Warner's Drug Store on Bridge Street in Catskill, New York, and it ends at the soda fountain in Bennett's Candy Store on Bridge Street in Bridgeboro, New Jersey. That's where I live; not in Bennett's, but in Bridgeboro. But I'm in Bennett's a lot.

Believe *me*, that hike was over a hundred miles long. If you rolled it up in a circle it would go around Black Lake twenty times. Black Lake would be just a spool—*good night!* In one place it was tied in a bowline knot, but we didn't count that. It was a good thing Westy Martin knew all about bowline knots or we'd have been lost.

Harry Donnelle said it would be all right for me to say that we hiked all the way, except in one place where we were carried away by the scenery. Gee, that fellow had us laughing all the time. I told him that if the story wasn't about anything except just a hike, maybe it would be slow, but he said it couldn't be slow if we went a hundred miles in one book. He said more likely the book would be arrested for speeding. I should worry. "Forty miles are as many as it's safe to go in one book," he said, "and here we are rolling up a hundred. We'll bunk right into the back cover of the book, that's what we'll do." Oh boy, you would laugh if you heard that fellow talk. He's a big fellow; he's about twenty-five years old, I guess.

"Believe *me*, I hope the book will have a good strong cover," I told him.

Then Will Dawson (he's the only one of us that has any sense), he said, "If there are two hundred pages in the book, that means you've got to go two miles on every page."

"Suppose a fellow should skip," I told him.

"Then that wouldn't be hiking, would it?" he said.

I said, "Maybe I'll write it scout pace."

"I often skip when I read a book, but I never go scout pace," Charlie Seabury said.

"Well," I told him, "this is a different kind of a book."

"I often heard about how a story runs," Harry Donnelle said, "but I never heard of one going scout pace."

"You leave it to me," I said, "this story is going to have action."

Then Will Dawson had to start shouting again. Cracky, that fellow's a fiend on arithmetic. He said, "If there are two hundred pages and thirty lines on a page, that means we've got to go more than one-sixteenth of a mile for every line."

"Righto," I told him, "action in every word. The only place a fellow can get a chance to rest, is at the illustrations."

Dorry Benton said, "I wish you luck."

"The pleasure is mine," I told him.

"Anyway, who ever told you, you could write a book?" he asked me.

"Nobody *had* to tell me; I admit I can," I said.

"How about a plot?" he began shouting.

"There's going to be a plot forty-eight by a hundred feet," I came back at him, "with a twenty foot frontage. I should worry about plots."

Harry Donnelle said he guessed maybe it would be better not to have any plot at all, because a plot would be kind of heavy to carry on a hundred mile hike.

"Couldn't we carry it in a wheelbarrow?" Will wanted to know.

"We'd look nice," I told him, "hiking through a book with the plot in a wheelbarrow."

"Yes, and it would get heavier too," Westy Martin said, "because plots grow thicker all the time."

"Let's not bother with a plot," I said; "there's lots of books without plots."

"Sure, look at the dictionary," Harry Donnelle said.

"And the telephone book," I told him, "It's popular too; everybody reads it."

"We should worry about a plot," I said.

By now I guess you can see that we're all crazy in our patrol. Even Harry Donnelle, he's crazy, and he isn't in our patrol at all. I guess it's catching, hey? And, oh boy, the worst is yet to come.

So now I guess I'd better begin and tell you how it all happened. The story will unfold itself or unwrap itself or untie itself or whatever you call it. This is going to be the worst story I ever wrote and it's going to be the best, too. This chapter isn't a part of the hike, so really the story doesn't begin till you get to Warner's Drug Store. You'll know it by the red sign. This chapter is just about our past lives. When I say, "go" then you'll know the story has started. And when I finish the pineapple soda in Bennett's, you'll know that's the end. So don't stop reading till I get to the end of the soda. The story ends way down in the bottom of the glass.

Maybe you don't know who Harry Donnelle is, so I'll tell you. He was a lieutenant, but he's mustered out now. He got a wound on his arm. His hair is kind of red, too. That's how he got the wound—having red hair. The Germans shot at the fellow with red hair, but one good thing, they didn't hit him in the head.

He came up to Temple Camp where our troop was staying and paid us a visit and if you want to know why he came, it's in another story. But, anyway, I'll tell you this much. Our three patrols went up to camp in his father's house-boat. His father told us we could use the house-boat for the summer. Those patrols are the Ravens and the Elks and the Solid Silver Foxes. I'm head of the Silver Foxes.

The reason he came to camp was to get something belonging to him that was in one of the lockers of the house-boat. I wrote to him and told him about it being there and so he came up. He liked me and he called me Skeezeks. Most everybody that's grown up calls me by a nickname. As

long as he was there he decided to stay a few days, because he was stuck on Temple Camp. All the fellows were crazy about him. At camp-fire he told us about his adventures in France. He said you can't get gum drops in France.

Gee, I wouldn't want to live there.

CHAPTER II
AN AWFUL WILDERNESS

After he'd been at camp three or four days, Harry Donnelle said to me, "Skeezeks, are you game for a real hike—you and your patrol?"

I said, "Real hikes are our specialties—we eat 'em alive."

"I don't mean just a little stroll down to the village or even over as far as the Hudson," he said; "but a hike that *is* a hike. Do you think you could roll up a hundred miles?"

"As easy as rolling up my sleeves," I told him. "We're so game that a ball game isn't anything compared with us. Speak out and tell us the worst."

He said, "Well, I was thinking of a little jaunt back home."

"*Good night*," I told him, "I thought maybe you meant as far as Kingston or Poughkeepsie, But Bridgeboro! Oh boy!"

"Of course, we wouldn't get very far from the Hudson," he said, "and we could jump on a West Shore train most anywhere, if you kids got tired."

"The only thing we'll jump on will be *you*—if you talk like that," I said; "Silver Foxes don't jump on trains. But how about the other fellows—the Elks and the raving Ravens? United we stand, divided we sprawl."

He said, "Let them rave; I'm not going to head a whole kindergarten. Eight of you are enough. Who do you think I am, General Pershing?" And then he ruffled up my beautiful curly hair and he gave me a shove—same way as he always did. "This is not a grand drive," he said, "it's a hike. Just a few shock troops will do."

"We'll shock you all right," I said, "but first you'd better speak to Mr. Ellsworth (he's our scoutmaster), and get the first shock out of the way."

"I think I have Mr. Ellsworth eating out of my hand," he said; "you leave that to me. I just wanted to sound you and find out if you were game or whether you're just tin horn scouts—parlor scouts."

"Well, do I sound all right?" I said. "Believe *me*, there are only two things that keep us from hiking around the world, and those are the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean."

"Think you could climb over the Equator?" he said, laughing all the while. And he gave me another one of those shoves—*you* know.

Then he said, "Well then, Skeezeks, I'll tell you what you do. You call a meeting of the Foxes and lay this matter on the table——"

"Why should I lay it on the table?" I said; "you'd think it was a plate of soup. *I'll stand* on the table and address them, that's what I'll do."

He said, "All right, you just picture the hardships to them. Tell them that for whole hours at a time, we may have to go without ice cream sodas. Tell them that we'll have to penetrate a wilderness where there is no peanut brittle. Tell them that we'll have to enter a jungle where gum drops are unknown. Tell them that we may have to live on grasshoppers. Tell them about the vast morass near Kingston, where you can't even get a piece of chocolate cake; miles and miles of barren waste where the foot of white man has never trod upon a marshmallow——"

"Sure you can find marshmallows in the marshes," I said. "We should worry."

"You ask Willie and Tommy and Dorrie and the others if they are prepared to make the sacrifice—and I'll do the rest. I'll speak to Mr. Ellsworth. But remember about the heartless desert with its burning sands just above Newburgh. Now go chase yourself and round them up. I guess you know how to do it."

So I got all the Silver Foxes into our patrol cabin and gave them a spooch. I guess I might as well tell you who they all are. First there's me—I mean *I*. Correct, be seated. You learn that in the primary grade. I'm patrol leader and it's *some* job. Then comes Westy Martin; he's my special chum. My sister says he has dandy hair. Then comes Dorry Benton—he's got a wart on his wrist. Then comes Huntley Manners—Badleigh, that's his middle name. Sometimes we call him Bad Manners. Then comes Charlie Seabury and then comes Will Dawson and then come Tom Warner and Ralph Warner—they're twins. They're both better looking than each other—that's what Pee-wee Harris said. He's a scream—he's in the raving Raven patrol. Thank goodness he isn't in this story—not much anyway. Ralph says Tom is crazy and Tom says Ralph is crazy and Will Dawson says they're both right. I guess we're all crazy. Anyway, Ralph and Tom came from Maine, so they're both maniacs, hey?

This is the speech I spooched:

Fellow Foxes:

Shut up and give me a chance to talk. Sit down, Bad Manners. I've got something to tell you and don't all shout at once——

Good night! They all began shouting separately. Then I said:

Harry Donnelle says he's going to hike it all the way home to Bridgeboro. He says we can go with him if we want to. Our time is up Saturday, but we'll have to start three or four days sooner.

He said for me to sound you fellows, but believe me, there's so much sound that I can't. I suppose the other patrols will go back down the Hudson in the house-boat. Every fellow that's in favor of hiking it home with Mr. Harry Donnelle, will say *aye*—but don't say it yet. He said to tell you that we take our lives in our hands——

"Why can't we put them in our duffel bags?" Westy shouted.

"Did you think we'd take them in our feet?" Dorry yelled.

Then they all began shouting, "*Aye, aye, aye!*" even before I told them about the forests and morasses and jungles and deserts and things. Honest, you can't do anything with that bunch.

CHAPTER III
UNDAUNTED! (THAT'S PEE-WEE'S HEADING)

One thing about Harry Donnelle, he was a dandy fixer. When he fixed the camouflage for us so we could watch a chipmunk, I knew he was a good fixer. He said he learned how in France. He fixed the chimney on the cooking shack, too. That fellow could fix anything.

But a scoutmaster isn't so easy to fix. Lots of times I tried to fix it with Mr. Ellsworth and I just couldn't. He'd make me think that I wanted to do his way. He's awful funny, he can just make you think that there's more fun doing things his way. And I was trembling in my shoes—I mean I was trembling in my bare feet—for fear Harry Donnelle wouldn't be able to fix it with him. But that fellow could fix it with the sun to shine—that's what Mr. Burroughs said.

Pretty soon he came strolling down to the spring-board where a lot of us were having a dip in the lake.

"All right," he said, "how about you?"

"Did you fix it?" I asked him.

"All cut and dried," he said; "are you ready for the big adventure?"

That afternoon we had a special troop meeting, to find out how the fellows felt about splitting the troop for the journey home. Because you see our three patrols always hung together. Mr. Ellsworth made a speech and said how Harry Donnelle had offered to lead the fierce and fiery Silver Foxes through the perilous wilds of New York State. He said that the journey would be filled with interest and data of scientific value (that's just the way he talked) and how we hoped to cross the Ashokan Reservoir and visit other wild places. He said that we planned to enter the heart of the Artists Colony at Woodstock and see the artists in their native state and stalk some authors and poets, maybe, and study their habits.

Oh boy, you ought to have seen Harry Donnelle. He just sat there on the edge of Council Rock (that's where we have important meetings at Temple Camp) and laughed and laughed and laughed.

Mr. Ellsworth said, "It is hoped that these brave scouts may succeed in capturing a poet and bringing him home as a specimen, and that they may find other fossils of interest. Meanwhile, the Ravens and the Elks and myself will drift down in our house-boat and endeavor to find someone to tow us from Poughkeepsie to New York and up our own dear river to Bridgeboro. The Ravens and the Elks wish me to offer the brave explorer, Mr. Harry Donnelle, a vote of thanks for taking the Silver Foxes away. They appreciate that he does this for the sake, not of the Silver Foxes, but as a good turn to the Ravens and the Elks. The Ravens and the Elks hope to have a little peace meanwhile. They thank him. In the familiar words of one of our famous patrol leaders, '*we should worry.*' And we wish you all good luck in your daring enterprise."

I could see that he winked at Harry Donnelle and Harry Donnelle was laughing so hard that he couldn't make a speech. So I climbed up on Council Rock and shouted, "Hear, hear!" Then I made a speech and this is it, because afterwards I wrote it out in our troop book.

The Silver Foxes thank the Ravens and the Elks for their kind wishes. I bequeath all my extra helpings of dessert to Pee-wee Harris of the Ravens—up to three helpings. After that it reverts to Vic Norris of the Elks. Reverts means *goes to*. Who ever reaches Bridgeboro, New Jersey, first will send out a searching party for the others. The searching party will bring their own eats. If we're never heard of again, that's a sign you won't hear from us. If we get to Bridgeboro and don't find you, that'll be a sign that you're not there. If you are there it won't be our fault. We should worry. We go forth for the sake of prosperity—I mean posterity. So please tell posterity in case we don't reach home safely. If our friends and parents are anxious, tell them to wait at Bennett's on Bridge Street, because that'll be the first place we go to.

The next day was Wednesday and we started early in the morning. The others were going to start down in the house-boat on Saturday. I think the Ravens and the Elks must have sat up all night making crazy signs on cardboard just so as to guy us. And Mr. Ellsworth helped them, too. They had the whole camp with them—even Uncle Jeb; he's manager. He used to be a trapper.

When we got out onto the main road, we saw signs tacked up on all the trees and I guess every scout in camp was there. One of the signs read, *Olive oil, but not good-bye*. Another one read *Day-day to the brave explorers*. Another one read, *Don't forget to wear rubbers going through the Newburgh morass*. Another one read, *Beware of the treacherous Ashokan Reservoir*. A lot we cared. Didn't people even make fun of Christopher Columbus?

CHAPTER IV

GO!

But remember, I told you that the hike didn't really begin till we got to Catskill. The reason I don't count the hike from Temple Camp to Catskill is because we were all the time hiking down there. It wasn't a hike, it was a habit. I wouldn't be particular about three or four miles. Besides, I wouldn't ask you to take them, because they've been used before. I wouldn't give you any second hand miles.

When we got to Catskill we bought some egg powder and bacon (gee, I love bacon) and coffee and sugar and camera films and mosquito dope and beans and flour and chocolate. You can make a dandy sandwich putting a slice of bacon between two slabs of chocolate. Mm-um! We had a pretty good bivouac outfit, because the Warner twins have a balloon silk shelter that rolls up so small you can almost put it in a fountain pen—that's what Harry Donnelle said. Dorry Benton had his aluminum cooking set along, saucepans, cups, dishes, coffee pot—everything fits inside of everything else. One thing, we wouldn't starve, that was sure, because we had enough stuff to make coffee and flapjacks for more than a week, counting six flapjacks to every fellow and fourteen to Hunt Manners; oh boy, but that fellow has some appetite! We had plenty of beans, too. Don't you worry about our having plenty to eat.

When we got through shopping, we went to Warner's Drug Store for sodas. Harry Donnelle said he'd treat us all, because maybe, those would be the last sodas that we'd ever have. As we came along we saw Mr. Warner standing in the doorway and he was smiling with a regular scout smile.

"There's something wrong," I said; "there's some reason for him smiling like that."

"Have a smile for everyone you meet," Will Dawson began singing.

But, believe me, I know all the different kinds of smiles and there was something funny about Mr. Warner's smile. When we got inside we saw a big sign hanging on the soda fountain. It read:

A LAST FAREWELL TO THE SILVER PLATED FOXES BEFORE THEY ENTER THE JUNGLE

By that I knew that some of the fellows up at camp had been down to Warner's the night before and put it there, because they knew that would be the last store we'd go to.

Harry Donnelle said, "All right, line up." So we all sat in a row and some summer people who were in there began to laugh. What did we care? One girl said she wished she was a boy; girls are always saying that. So that proves we have plenty of fun. I could see Harry Donnelle wink at Mr. Warner while the latter (that means Mr. Warner) was getting the sodas ready. Then all of a sudden Harry said:

"Attention! Present spoons. Go!"

So then we all started at once and that was the beginning of the big hike. Just as I told you, it started at the top of the glasses in Warner's and ended in the bottom of the glasses at Bennett's. When you hear me say *M-mm-that's good* in Bennett's, you'll know the hike is over.

CHAPTER V
I GO ON AN ERRAND

"Now to skirt the lonesome Catskills," Harry said.

"Now to what them?" Dorry Benton asked him.

"Skirt them," he said, "that's Latin for hiking around the edge of them. We don't want to be all the time stumbling over mountains."

"Believe *me*, if I see one in the road, I'll tell you," I said.

"And we don't want to get mixed up with panthers and wild cats either," Harry said. And he gave me a wink.

"There aren't any wild animals in the Catskills," Charlie Seabury said.

"There are wild flowers," I said, "but they won't hurt anybody."

"How about poison ivy?" Westy Martin said.

All the while as we hiked along the road toward Saugerties, we kept joking about the wild animals in the Catskills. Harry Donnelle said there used to be lots of wild cats and foxes, but not any more. He said there were some foxes, though.

Westy said, "I bet there are some bears; once Uncle Jeb saw a bear; he said there weren't any foxes any more."

"I guess there are some grey ones and maybe a few silver," Harry Donnelle said.

"Silver?" I shouted. "Oh boy!" Then I asked him what they fed on mostly.

"Mostly on ice cream sodas," he said; "they're very dangerous after a half dozen raspberry sodas."

We didn't go near Saugerties, because we wanted to keep in the country, so we hit down southwest along the road that goes to Woodstock. Then we were going to hike it south past West Hurley so we'd bunk our noses right into the Ashokan Reservoir. And the next day we were going to spend trying to keep out of Kingston.

When it got to be about five o'clock in the afternoon, we hit in from the road to find a good place to camp. Maybe you think that's easy, but you have to find a place where the drainage is good and where there's good drinking water.

Pretty soon we found a dandy place about a quarter of a mile off the road, and we put up our tent there.

Harry Donnelle said, "There's one kind of wild animal that I forgot to mention and I guess we'll be hunting them all right; that's mosquitoes. I guess one or two of you kids had better hit the trail for the nearest village and complete our shopping before we get any further. What do you say? We're a little short on mosquito dope and we ought to have some crackers, and let's see, a little meat would go good. I'm hungry."

When we turned into the woods from the road, we knew that we were coming to a village and I guess that's what put the idea into Harry's head to have somebody go there and get two or three things that we hadn't been able to get in Catskill. I told him that I'd go, because the rest would be busy getting in fire wood and I said it would be good if two or three of them tried to catch some fish in the brook.

Oh boy, I had hardly said that, when Ralph Warner shouted that he had a perch and that the brook was full of them. Harry Donnelle went over and saw for himself how it was, and then he came back and said to me that as long as there seemed to be plenty of fish I needn't bother about meat, but that I'd better go and see if I could scare up some more mosquito dope and some sinkers for fishing and a trowel to dig bait with, because if we liked the place we might stay there till noon the next day. That's the best way on a long hike—take it easy.

"How about Charlie Seabury?" I said; "he doesn't like fish."

"All right, get him a couple of chops, then," Harry said; "now can you remember all the things you're going to get? Mosquito dope, fishing sinkers, a writing pad and some stamps, and let's see ___"

"Some crackers," I said.

"Righto," he shouted after me.

CHAPTER VI

I DISCOVER SOME TRACKS

I went back through the woods and when I got to the road I noticed how it curved, and just then I saw a very narrow path on the opposite side of the road that led into the woods. I decided it must be a short cut to the village. So I started along that path.

Pretty soon the woods grew very thick and it wasn't so easy to follow the trail, because it was all overgrown with bushes. But I managed to keep hold of it all right, and after about fifteen minutes I came to a little stone house with the windows all boarded up and the door standing a little open. There was a staple on the door with an old padlock hanging on it, but I guess the padlock wasn't any good. One thing sure, nobody lived there. I went and peeked inside and saw that it wasn't meant for people at all, because there wasn't any floor and it was all dark and damp and there were lots of spider webs around. Even there was one across the doorway, so by that I knew that nobody had been there lately.

Right in the middle, inside, were a couple of rocks and water was trickling up from under them. That's what made me think that the place was just a spring house. Anyway, I didn't wait because I was in a hurry. When I came out I pushed the door open a little and then I closed it all but about a foot or so. Inside of an hour I was mighty sorry that I hadn't left it wide open, and you'll see why.

I guess I had gone about a hundred yards further when I noticed something in the trail that started me guessing. It was the print of an animal; or anyway, if it wasn't, I didn't know what else it was. There were six prints, something like a cat's, only the paw that made them had five toes. The other mark was the paw mark. It was the biggest print that I ever saw.

The first animal I thought about was a wild cat. But of course, I knew there weren't any wild cats right there. Even if there were any in that part of the country, they wouldn't be roaming around near villages. Anyway, the five toe prints had me guessing, because a wild cat has only four. I could see that the animal must have been crossing the path, because the print was sideways and the bushes alongside of the path were kind of trampled down.

You can bet I took a good look in those bushes for hairs, but I couldn't find any and I kept wondering what kind of an animal had a paw as big as a man's hand and five toes.

After I had gone a little further, I came plunk on a whole line of them along the path. I wasn't exactly scared, but anyway, they made me feel sort of funny, because they were so big and printed so plain. The animal that made those tracks must have been a pretty big animal, I knew that.

Then, all of a sudden, I discovered something else. Some of the prints had five toe marks and some of them only four. Maybe that means the animal was lame, I said to myself, and doesn't make a full print with one of its feet. But in a minute I had sense enough to see that wasn't the way it was, because there were always two of one kind pretty close together and then two of the other kind pretty close together. This is the way it was; there was a five toe print then another one about a foot in back of it, then about three or four feet in back of that a couple more about a foot apart with only four toe marks.

Good night! I They had me all flabbergasted.

Pretty soon they left the path altogether and I looked in the bushes for hairs, but I couldn't find a single one.

"Anyway," I said to myself, "one thing sure, that animal has five toes on his front feet and only four on his hind feet and I never saw any tracks like that before or even pictures of them."

I wasn't exactly scared, but just the same I was kind of glad when I got to the village.

CHAPTER VII
I MEET THE STRANGER

Anyway, that was the smallest village I ever saw to have such big tracks right near it. All I could see was two houses and the post office, and the post office was so small that you could almost put your arm down the chimney and open the front door. But, one thing sure, you could buy everything you wanted in that post office. You could buy a plough or a lollypop or anything. It smelled kind of like corn inside.

I got some lead sinkers and some crackers and a couple of chops for Charlie Seabury, because it makes him thirsty to eat fish—that's what he says. The man didn't have any mosquito dope, but there were some boxes of fly paper on the counter and I just happened to think that if we stayed in our bivouac camp the next morning, it might be good to have some on account of the flies at dinner time. So I bought a box full.

Then I said to the man, "I guess there are wild animals around here."

He said, "Wall, I reckon thar daon't be many no more. Yer ain't expectin' ter catch 'em with fly paper, be yer?"

"Just the same," I told him, "I saw the tracks of one that must be big enough to eat this whole village. You'd better put the village in the safe before you go home. Safety first." You can bet I know how to jolly if it comes to jollying. "I want to get some rope, too," I told him.

He just leaned back and pushed his great big straw hat to the back of his head and looked over his spectacles and began to grin. He kept his spectacles 'way down near the end of his nose.

"Ye're one of them scaouts, hey?" he said. "Yer ain't thinkin' to lead any elephants home with that thar rope naow, be yer?"

I said, "No, I'm going to use the rope to lasso mosquitoes as long as you haven't got any mosquito dope."

He said, "Wall naow, ye're quite a comic be'nt yer?"

I told him I was a little cut up and my mother and father couldn't do anything with me.

"'N what else can I do fer yer?" he said, laughing all the while. "Them tracks wuz caow tracks, youngster, so daon't yer be sceered of 'em."

I told him I wasn't scared of any tracks, not even a railroad track and that I'd buy the village for seventy-five cents, if he'd send it C. O. D. He just stood there laughing. Anyway, it makes me mad when grown up people jolly scouts about tracking and signaling and all that, just as if it was only play. Because what do *they* know about tracks? Who ever heard of a cow with feet like a cat? *Good night!* And, besides, often it turns out that scouts are right. You wait and see.

Now the things I bought I had in a kind of a flat bundle and I hung it over my back, because I like to have my hands free. What's the use of wasting your hands? You'll never find anything out with your back; all your back is good for, is bundles.

I didn't have any adventures on the way back till I got to that spring house in the woods. I was in such a hurry that I didn't even notice the tracks again. That's how much I was afraid of them. When I got to the spring house, I went in for a drink of water, and believe *me*, it was good. I squeezed in, instead of opening the door wide, because it scraped so hard on the ground that it was easier to do that than to open it; and I did the same coming out.

I was just going to start along the path again, when I got a good idea. That's just the way you get them, sudden like. I decided to shinny up a tree that was there and see if I couldn't squint our camp over in the west, because if I could once see it, maybe I'd be able to get to it by a shorter way than by the path. I did that because it was getting late.

When I got up to the second branch I looked off to the west, but all I could see was a little smoke curling up into the sky, and I wasn't sure whether it was from our camp or from some house. The sun was going down over that way and all the clouds were kind of red on the edges and the sky looked dandy. At Temple Camp they'd be just about washing up for supper then. I thought I could tell about where the road was, but I couldn't decide about the camp and I was just going to shinny down and hit the trail when I heard a kind of a sound like leaves rustling and then a funny sort of growl, different from anything I had ever heard before. I looked around and then I saw, coming through the woods, an animal with big spots on it and a long tail. I guess it was almost as big as a tiger; anyway, it was a good deal bigger than a wild cat. It was making a noise as if it was grumbling to itself, then all of a sudden, it opened its mouth wide, as if it was going to roar, but it didn't. It came almost up to the tree and stood still and its tail hung on the ground and wriggled like a snake.

I have to admit that I was good and scared. I just held onto the tree and didn't make a move; I guess I hardly breathed. Then, all of a sudden, the branch I was standing on cracked.

CHAPTER VIII UP A TREE

Good night!

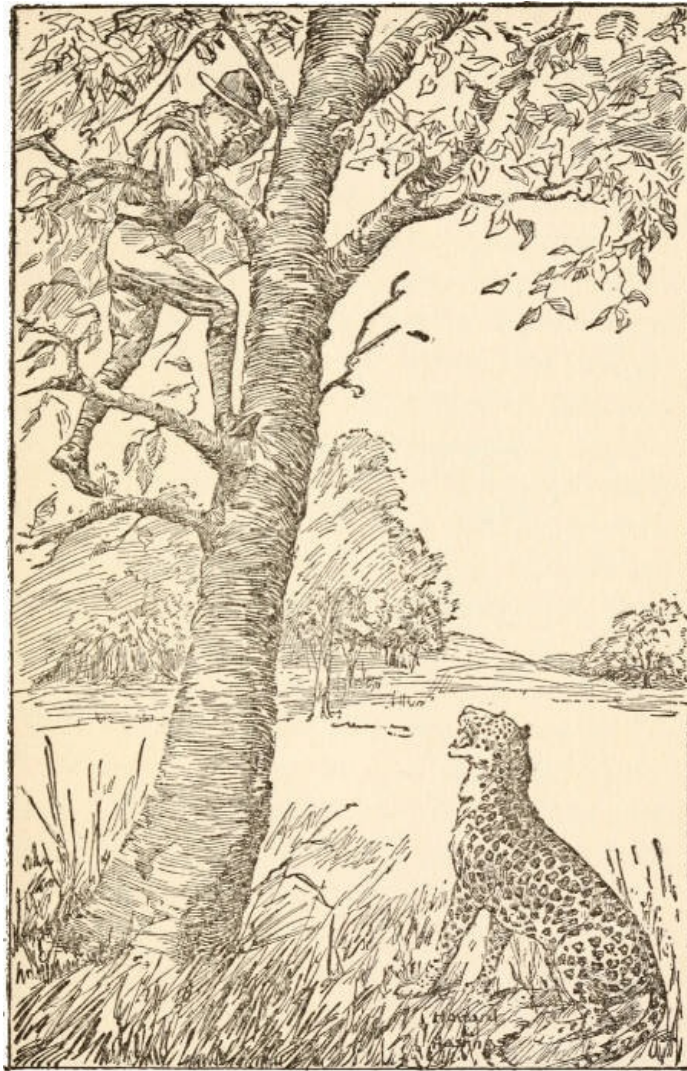
First I thought I was going to fall, but I reached up and got hold of the branch above and scrambled up to it. The animal was crouching on the ground, looking up, and its eyes were just like fire. Its tail was wriggling just like a snake. *Oh boy*, I was scared.

But anyway, I wasn't rattled. There's a difference between being scared and rattled. That's one thing scouts don't get—rattled. I looked down and saw him there and I knew I was in a mighty dangerous fix, but that only made me think harder. It seemed to me that that animal must be a leopard because he had spots, but of course, I knew there weren't any leopards in America. Africa is where *they* hang out. But you can bet I didn't think much about how he happened to be there. He was there, and that was enough for me. Gee, I like natural history all right, but not when there's a wild animal just below me. Nix! He was crouching and he looked just as if he was going to make a spring for the tree. Mr. Ellsworth says that most fights are won by quick thinking, so I knew that if I could only think of something to do quicker than that animal could spring, I'd be all right.

First I thought I'd just shinny down and run and maybe he wouldn't follow me. That was a punk think. All of a sudden he opened his mouth wide and kind of hissed at me and came just about two or three inches closer to the tree.

Then, all in a jiffy I had a—you know—what do you call those things? *An inspiration*. I pulled the bundle around from my back and tore it open and tore open the paper that the two chops were in. Charlie Seabury says he ought to have the gold cross because he saved my life, but I don't see it. Do you? Just because I was bringing the chops to him. He says he made a sacrifice. I should worry.

Even the sound of the paper crunching made the animal move a little nearer and hiss louder and paw the ground with one of its fore feet. I guess in a couple more seconds he would have had me, but I just threw one of the chops right at him and he pounced on it.



THE ANIMAL WAS CROUCHING ON THE GROUND, LOOKING UP.

That gave me two or three seconds to think. Because you can see for yourself that if an animal is ready to eat a boy scout it wouldn't take him very long to eat a chop. Maybe you'll say it wasn't good to give him raw meat, but how about me. Wasn't I raw meat? It was better to give him the chop and have a few seconds to think than to let him do the thinking and get me.

That was the time when I did some thinking in four or five seconds. Gee whiz, you have to think quick at school exams, but cracky, leopards are worse than school principals, I should hope. Anyway, they're just as bad.

Now was the time I wished that I had left the door of the spring house open a little wider, because I had a dandy idea. As long as the animal knew what it was I was throwing, he'd go after the other chop when I threw it. Because chops were his favorite food, I could see that. So if I could only just throw the other chop into the doorway he'd go in there after it, and while he was eating it I'd shinny down in a hurry and shut the door and wedge a board against it. I said to myself that I could do that quicker than he could eat the chop, and one thing sure, he wouldn't bother with me while he was doing it. An animal can never think about two things at once and he thinks about food most of all. Maybe scouts think about food a lot, too, but anyway, they can think about two things at once. That's the difference between scouts and wild animals.

Oh, if I had only left that door wide open! Then I could have thrown the other chop right through the opening and 'way into the house. But now I had to throw it down and almost around a corner, as you might say; and even if the meat went in at all, it wouldn't go in far. But if I could only throw it in far enough so that I could slam the door shut, that would be enough.

Anyway, I saw that if I didn't throw it quick I'd be worse off than before, because the animal had had a taste of raw meat and he'd be on the war path. I could see he was looking up at me and his eyes were blazing and he was making a sound that gave me the shudders. It seemed as if he was giving me notice that he was going to spring for the tree. I guess he would have done it that very second, too, only he noticed a leaf stuck to his paw and I guess it bothered him, because he raised his paw just as a cat does when she washes her face, and rubbed it off.

Oh boy, that made me think of something, but you can bet there wasn't any time to stop and think then. I guess I felt as nervous as William Tell when he was going to shoot the apple off his son's head. Only I had the chop in my hand instead of a bow and arrow. Oh, didn't I watch that open space and take a good aim! My heart was just pounding and my wrist hurt, because my pulse was going so fast. Because, suppose I should miss? *I'd* be the third chop, I knew that. I just couldn't throw the chop for fear I'd miss. You can see for yourself that was the only chance I had. All of a sudden I happened to think about tearing the chop in half and that would give me two chances. But if one of the pieces landed inside maybe it wouldn't be big enough to keep him busy two or three seconds. So I decided to take a good careful aim and throw the whole chop. If it went in, all right; maybe I'd have time enough. If it didn't—

All of a sudden, I heard the animal give a kind of a hissing growl and I just closed one eye and braced myself against the tree and took a good, long, careful aim and threw the chop.

It struck the edge of the door and fell outside the little stone house. Almost before I saw where it landed, the animal had it.

I just crouched there in that tree shuddering and waiting for what would happen next. First I thought I'd take a chance and drop down and run. Then I decided I wouldn't. I didn't exactly *decide*. I stayed where I was, because I was too scared to move. I didn't even dare to climb higher for fear the animal would hear me and give a spring. I could even feel my teeth chattering.

CHAPTER IX

AWFUL STICKY

Now that it was too late, I could see that if I had only landed that meat inside the house, it would have been easy to get away. And the animal would have been a prisoner, too, because he could never have got out of that house. The windows were boarded on the inside and the door was good and heavy. But what was the good of thinking about that when it was too late?

I have to admit that for about half a minute I wasn't a good scout. I was just scared and excited and I didn't do anything. Then I saw the animal prowling around the tree and looking up and heard him making that noise. Oh boy, it was terrible!

Then, *bang*, just like that, I remembered about him wiping the leaf off his paw by rubbing it on his face. It was lucky for me he did that, because it put into my head something I had read, about the way the natives in India catch tigers. I read it in a natural history book. There's a kind of a tree in India named the prauss tree; anyway, it's something like that. And it has big flat leaves. So the natives spread gum on those leaves. They get the gum from the trees, too. Then they put the leaves in the path and when the tiger comes along he steps on them and rubs his paws over his face, so as to get the leaves off. But that only makes it worse for him, because they stick to his face and over his eyes and everywhere. He gets just plastered up with them. Then he gets excited—gee whiz, you can't blame him. And he rolls around on the ground and can't see and just rolls and rolls and bangs against trees and gets all played out and then he lies still just like a horse does when he falls down. And that's when the natives come and get him. And it's easy, too, because he can't see and all the fight is knocked out of him.

Oh boy, wasn't I glad I remembered that! I just tore out that box of fly paper and pulled the sheets apart and dropped them on the ground. Some of them fell upside down. I should worry. I tried to drop them so they'd fall around the foot of the tree and a lot of them did. More than half of them fell right side up. A couple of them stuck to the trunk, but I didn't care. Maybe that would be good, I thought. Believe me, in about ten seconds I had the ground around the tree covered with fly paper. He'd have to do a fancy two-step if he wanted to get between them.

All the while he was crouching and watching me with those two eyes that were just like fire. Pretty soon a sheet of fly paper drifted down right near him and he pawed it. Maybe he thought it was a chop, hey? It just caught his paw and he tried to wipe it off against his face. Good night! There he was with one of his eyes and the whole top of his head plastered flat. He looked as if he had been in a fight.

Then he came closer to the trunk, pawing at his head all the time and stepped, kerflop, right on another sheet—plunked his foot right down in the middle of it. Oh bibbie, then you should have seen him! He tried to rub it off against his head and it stuck there and then there was a circus. He rolled over on the ground and caught another sheet against his side. In another second he had one flopping on the end of his tail and he kept going around after it until pretty soon it got stuck to one of his legs. Jiminetty! But you should have heard him howl. I bet he was mad clean through.

But safety first—oh boy! I dropped another one and it landed right on his nose; lucky shot.

By now he was acting just like a cat having a fit and howling like mad. I guess he couldn't see at all, because he went, kerplunk, up against a tree and then rolled away and went banging against the spring house. He had two sheets on his face and another one on his paw and the whole front of him was all mucked up with gum and the grass and dirt were sticking to him. Believe me, he was a sight. He didn't look much like a lord of the jungle; he looked more as if he was on his way home from the hospital.

You can talk about tanks and machine guns and poison gas and hand grenades, and all the other new fangled weapons, but tanglefoot for mine; that's what *I* say. If the Allies had used tanglefoot, the war would have been over three years ago. And if they had spread it all along the banks of the Marne, the Germans would never have gotten across, that's one sure thing.

CHAPTER X

I MAKE A PROMISE

Honestly, inside of five minutes that wild animal was a wreck. Every time he tried to claw the paper from his head he howled, because it pulled his hair and hurt him. I don't say I was glad to sit up there and watch him, because there isn't much fun in seeing animals suffer. Maybe he wasn't suffering, but anyway, he was half crazy. But how about me? Safety first.

Pretty soon he kind of half rolled and half staggered over against the trunk of my tree and I knew he couldn't see at all. Then he lay there with his back up against it trying to rub the sheet off his back, and all the while he kept pawing his head and making it worse for himself. I guess even if he had gotten the paper off, he'd still be blind, because the gum would keep his eyes shut.

By that time I knew I was safe, because he was even more helpless than he would have been if I had shot him and not killed him. It was mostly because he couldn't see, and that got him rattled, and you're no good when you're rattled. All I wanted was for him to get away from the tree so I wouldn't have to be too near him, and then I'd shinny down and hit the trail for camp.

But just then I had another thought. Maybe you won't believe me, but I felt sorry for that wild animal. I knew how *I'd* feel if I was in such a fix as that. If I had only had a pistol I would have shot him, but boy scouts don't carry pistols—only in crazy story books. We never shoot anything, except the chutes in Coney Island, and you can't call that cruelty to animals.

And if I just went off and left him there, maybe he'd stagger around in the woods and claw at himself and tear himself all to pieces and get all bloody and just die. That wouldn't be much fun, would it? As soon as I wasn't scared any more I felt sorry for him—that's the honest truth. I saw how he was beaten and I felt sorry for him. I knew he was really stronger than I was, and that it wasn't a fair fight. I don't care what he intended to do, it wasn't a fair fight. Even if I had shot him he might have looked brave and noble, kind of. But with all that stuff on him and the dirt and grass sticking to his fur, I just sort of felt as if nobody has a right to make an animal look like that.

So I took the rope and made a lasso knot in it and let myself down the trunk as far as I dared. I have to admit I was sort of scared, but you have to be decent when you win. You have to be, even if it's only a wild animal.

I tried two or three times to get the noose over his head, but I couldn't, because he wasn't still enough. But after a couple of minutes I managed it and then I tied the other end of the rope to the tree. After that, I climbed away out to the end of the lowest branch and it bent down with me and I dropped to the ground.

First I thought I'd go over and touch him to see how he felt, but I just didn't dare to. I was scared of him even then. So I just started off along the path, going scout pace, and when I got a little way off so I *knew* I was safe, I looked back and said, "You stay where you are and don't get excited, and I'll fix it for you."

Because anyway, I hadn't done my good turn yet and it was pretty near dark.

CHAPTER XI

SEEING IS BELIEVING

The fellows were just thinking about sending a couple of scouts to hunt for me when I went running pell-mell into camp, shouting that I had captured a leopard.

"A what?" Westy asked.

"A leopard," I shouted, "as sure as I stand here. Come and see for yourselves. He's tied by a rope; he's got fly paper all over him!"

"How many sodas did you have?" Harry Donnelle asked me.

I said, "That's all right, you just come and see. It's a leopard; you can see it for yourself."

Harry said, "Sit down, Kiddo, and rest and have a cup of coffee. Guess you fell asleep by the wayside, hey? Tell us all about your dream. Here's a plate of beans. Did you see any mermaids?"

"Never you mind about beans and mermaids," I told him; "one man told me already that they were cow tracks I saw. I guess he wouldn't want to go through what I've been through since then. The animal had five toes on his fore feet and four on his hind feet—that's a leopard, I'm pretty sure. Anyway, he's got spots. You come and see."

"You don't think it could have been a spotted calf, do you, Kid?" Harry said in that nice easy way he has of jollyng. "I don't know much about calves' toes, but I've eaten calves' feet."

Even after I had told them all about it, they all said I must have been seeing things and that probably the animal was a raccoon or maybe *possibly* a wildcat. Anyway, Harry Donnelle said they'd all go back with me to the place, because they thought maybe we'd get in trouble on account of plastering some honest, hard working calf with fly paper. But just the same he took his rifle, I noticed that. I carried the lantern.

All the way through the woods they were jollyng me and calling me *Roy the Leopard Killer*, and Harry Donnelle said I must have been carried off on the magic carpet to India, just like the people in the Arabian Nights. All the while I didn't say anything and when we came to the tree and the spring house, I went ahead and saw that the animal was lying close to the tree, as if he were asleep. I guess he was all exhausted. The rope was fast around his body just behind his fore legs where it couldn't choke him and where he couldn't get free of it. He started up when I went near him, but didn't seem to get excited.

I just held the lantern and said, "You see what a fine calf this is. He ought to win a prize at the County Fair. He's disguised as a leopard, but he can't fool us—I mean you fellows. You can bet boy scouts know a calf when they see one."

They just stood there about fifteen or twenty feet off, staring. Even Harry Donnelle stood stark still, staring. "What's the matter?" I said. "Are you afraid of a poor calf? Come down in the front row; I won't let him hurt you."

Then Harry came nearer, but the other fellows stood over near the spring house, so they could scoot inside, I suppose. The Safety First Patrol!

Harry Donnelle just looked and then he said, "By—the—great—horn—spoon! It's a *leopard*."

"I thought maybe it was a nanny goat," I said.

He just shook his head and looked at the animal all over and said, "Jumping Christopher! That's a *leopard*, as sure as you live."

"Well, if you insist," I said.

"I never heard of a leopard on the North American Continent," he said, shaking his head.

"I guess he swam over, hey?" I said.

"Jingoes, I hate to shoot him," he said.

By now all the bold, brave, heroic Silver Foxes began coming closer to get a good pike at the leopard. Every time the animal stirred, they'd back away again. Once the leopard stood up and pulled against the rope and rubbed his paw over his face, and gee whiz, you should have seen that bunch scatter. Dorry Benton went scooting into the well house.

But pretty soon they all saw that there wasn't any fight left in that wild beast. He wasn't suffering, but he was blind and all exhausted. Even still none of us exactly liked to touch him and we didn't get too near; even I didn't, I have to admit it.

Harry Donnelle held the lantern over toward the animal and looked at him ever so long, as if he just couldn't believe his eyes. "He's a magnificent specimen," he said; "I'd give a good deal to know how he happened in these parts."

"Oh," I said, "the woods are full of them, they were prowling all around here when I came through. One of them was about twice as big as that." Oh boy, you should have seen those fellows look around through the woods. Will Dawson went into the spring house to get a drink of water; he was thirsty all of a sudden.

All the while Harry Donnelle was kind of pondering and then he said, "A couple of you kids go into the village and get a wheelbarrow or a cart or something. I don't think this fellow is in pain; I'm going to take him alive. I can't put a bullet into him. I never saw such a magnificent specimen."

"Suppose we should meet some more," Hunt Manners said, just as he and Westy were starting along the path.

"Take some fly paper with you," I said, "and think of your brave patrol leader."

"You won't meet any more," Harry Donnelle said; "this fellow must have strayed down out of the mountains. There is a species of leopard found in America, but I never knew they grew to such a size as this, or had spots either. Trot along and get back as soon as you can."

While the two fellows were gone, Harry tied the leopard's fore feet and then his hind feet together with rope. He wound it around good and plenty and tied it fast, you can bet, and then we just sat around waiting.

Pretty soon along came the whole village, postmaster and all, and Hunt and Westy with a wheelbarrow. Some escort! You'd think Westy and Hunt were General Pershing getting home from

France. I should think they would have been afraid someone would steal the village while they were gone. Because you know yourself that there are lots of robberies and hold-ups and thefts and things since the war.

CHAPTER XII MARSHAL FOCH

I was sitting up on a branch of a tree when they came along and I heard the postmaster saying that Cy Berry had lost his heifer and he guessed maybe now it was found.

I shouted, "You have one more guess. I think the leopard ate his heifer; he was terribly hungry."

Well, you should have heard them as soon as they had a look at the animal. One of them said, "I haint seed no leo-pods around these parts—*neverrr*. And I been livin' here nigh on to forty year."

Harry Donnelle said, "Well, the animal is a leopard just the same. Either you've been staying home most of the time or else he has." I had to laugh, it was so funny the way he said it.

Another one said, "There be'nt no leopards in the Catskills, that's sartin."

"Well, maybe he was just spending the summer here then," Harry said; "but here he is, anyway, and I'd like to get him away from here."

"Yer be'nt goin' ter try to keep him, be yer?" the man asked.

Harry said, "Yes, I'm just that reckless. I think he's worth more alive than dead, if I can spruce him up a bit."

"Ye'll get yer hand bit off," one of the men said.

Then Harry said that all he wanted was a place to put the animal till morning, and he'd see if he couldn't get some kind of medicine to dope him with, while he tried to get the fly paper off. I guess they didn't like the idea very much, but one of the men whose name was Hasbrook, said we could put the leopard in his barn till morning if we wanted to. So they got him into the wheelbarrow and it wasn't hard doing it on account of his legs being tied. Then we all started back to the village.

While we were going along Harry said, "I've often heard of a man having an elephant on his hands, but never a leopard. Maybe we'll have to shoot him, but I just hate to do it. I have an idea that gasoline will melt that stuff, only we'll have to be careful about his eyes. I'd try it to-night, only I'm afraid to use the gasoline near a lamp. I'm going to send a line to the Historical Museum people though, to-night, and one of you kids can drop it at the office. I daresay there's a train out of this burg in a few days."

I just couldn't help saying to him, "I'll be glad if you don't shoot him—I will."

He laughed and gave me a rap on the head and said, "You see I know what it is to be shot, Kiddo. I was shot twice in France. Maybe I'm not much use, but I'd be less use if I was shot, wouldn't I? Nobody's much good after they're shot. Ever think of that?"

"Maybe I didn't," I said, "but anyway, I know you're right. I guess you're always right. Anyway, I think the same as you do."

"Shooting is no fun," he said; "don't shoot till you have to. What do you say?"

I said, "You're right, that's one sure thing and I'm glad I met you, you bet." And you bet I was glad, because he was one fine fellow. Maybe he was kind of wild sort of, but he was one fine fellow. Mr. Ellsworth said so, and he ought to know.

When we came into the village, there was a Fraud car standing in front of a house and a man just getting out of it.

"Whatcher got thar, Cy?" he called.

"A leo-pod," Cy called back, "an honest ter goodness leo-pod."

"Who's them fellers? The posse?" the man asked.

"What posse?" Cy called.

"I thought mebbe you'd caught up with that beast from Costello's. That you, Hiram? Taint no reg'lar leo-pod is it?"

"Reg'lar as church goin'; look on 'em yourself."

Harry Donnelle just stood there smiling. Then he said, "Have a look; it won't cost you a cent."

After the man had looked and Harry had told him all about it, he hauled out of his overalls a newspaper and said, "Lookee here."

We all crowded around him and Harry held the lantern so we could see the paper.

"Jest fetched it from Kingston," the man said.

Then Harry began reading out loud. This is what he read, because I pasted that article in our hike record book:

WILD ANIMAL AT LARGE

INFURIATED LEOPARD ESCAPES FROM VISITING CIRCUS—ARMED POSSE SEARCHING WOODS

While transferring one of the leopards from a cage to a parade wagon at Costello's Circus yesterday, the animal becoming frightened at the sudden striking up of the brass band, forced his way between the two barred enclosures and made its escape from the circus grounds.

An attempt to shoot it as it crouched beneath a Roman chariot in panic fright was unsuccessful, and before its keeper was joined by others with revolvers, the animal had sped through the adjacent fields, frightening some boys who were playing ball, and was last seen at the foot of Merritt's hill, near the west turnpike road. It is supposed that the animal entered the woods and made for the mountains where a party of circus attaches and volunteer citizens, fully armed, hope to encounter and destroy it.

No serious damage was done by the animal, except the tearing of a tent which had not yet been raised, as it tore at a rope in which its leg became entangled.

When seen this morning Mr. Rinaldo Costello, owner of the circus, said that no fear need be entertained by citizens, as the animal would undoubtedly avoid human haunts. He added that little hope is entertained of catching the beast alive, as these animals are always taken

when cubs, and when grown, fight to the death all efforts to capture them. The escaped animal, a magnificent specimen of the leopard family, was imported by Mr. Costello at a cost of more than six thousand dollars. In captivity it was said to be comparatively docile. The leopard is distinctive among animals of the cat family, in having five toes on its fore paws and four on its hind paws, this being its unique characteristic. It is said that few full grown leopards have ever been captured by man, and their value is hence greater than that of all other animals save the giraffe, which is said to be all but extinct. This leopard was known as Marshall Foch, and was a favorite with all the circus people.

CHAPTER XIII
AROUND THE CAMP-FIRE

As soon as we got the leopard into Mr. Hasbrook's barn, we made a hay bed in one of the stalls and laid him there. I felt awful sorry for him now that I knew about his history. And I wished that he had never come near me, but got away into the mountains. Harry Donnelle held the lantern into the stall and he looked so helpless lying there, with his feet tied together and grass and dirt all over him and the fly paper on his face, that I kind of blamed myself. Anyway, I was glad that his people liked him and missed him. Maybe he'd be glad to get back, hey?

Harry said, "Good night, Marshal Foch, and good luck to you. Just have a little patience."

He was awfully nice, Harry was. That was just the way he talked.

Before we went into the house he said, "Suppose three or four of you kids go back and bring our stuff here and we'll camp right here on the spot till we get through with this business." So the Warner twins and Will Dawson went back by the road and the rest of us went in the house with Harry and Mr. Hasbrook.

When we got in the parlor, Harry looked over the paper and found a big ad. This is how it read:

COSTELLO'S MAMMOTH SHOW!
THREE DAYS IN KINGSTON.

BEASTS OF THE JUNGLE.
WORLD'S CONGRESS OF FREAKS.
DARING ACROBATS.

JIB JAB, THE WORLD'S MYSTERY.
SEE HIM!
IS HE HUMAN?
GRAND STREET PARADE TO-MORROW.
AT THREE P. M. SEE THE ELEPHANTS.
FREE! FREE! FREE!

TWO PERFORMANCES DAILY.
COME!

GRANDEST COMBINATION OF WONDERS
EVER GATHERED UNDER CANVAS.
SUPERB SPECTACLE

GORGEOUS! STUPEFYING!
ASTOUNDING!

Harry Donnelle said, "I rather like Mr. Costello already; he's so modest. I bet he's one of those quiet, retiring little '*after you, please*' men that blushes when you speak to him. We'll just drop him a line and one of you kids can hike it over to Saugerties and catch an early train down to Kingston and hand it to him."

I said, "I'll go."

But he said, "No, you've had adventures enough and if they ever get you in a circus they'll keep you there in the *congress of freaks*." So it was decided that Dorry Benton would go.

While we were waiting for the fellows to come back with our stuff, Harry wrote the letter and this is what he said. It's copied word for word out of our hike record:

Mr. Rinaldo Costello, Proprietor,
Costello's Mammoth Show.
Kingston, N. Y.

Dear Sir:

This is to inform you that your leopard, Marshall Foch, has been captured by a boy scout and is alive and well, save that he is suffering from nervous shock and requires to have his face washed.

You may call in your armed posse. You are greatly mistaken in supposing that leopards may not be captured alive. It requires only the proper apparatus.

The bearer of this letter will give you any further information which you may require, and we shall be glad to see you here, as soon as it may be convenient for you to call.

Respectfully,
HARRY C. DONNELLE,

In charge of Boy Scouts en route. Silver Fox Patrol,
Bridgeboro, New Jersey. Stopping on farm of Mr. Silas
Hasbrook, Bently Centre, N. Y.

After a little while the fellows came back with our stuff and we put up our tent between a couple of trees in Mr. Hasbrook's orchard. He said we could camp in the house if we wanted, but how can anybody camp in a house, I'd like to know? You might as well talk about going swimming in a bath tub. No siree, the orchard for us. Mr. Hasbrook said we could eat all the apples we wanted to, but we didn't eat many. I ate five—that isn't very many.

We gathered some sticks and started a camp-fire and I made coffee and flapjacks and scrambled eggs with egg powder. Mr. Hasbrook's daughter brought us out some pie and *um, um*, wasn't it good! Oh boy, it was nice sprawling around there. But anyway, we turned in early—one o'clock in the morning is early. You couldn't turn in much earlier or it would be the night before. I guess we wouldn't have turned in then, except that Dorry had to roll out at about six, so as to catch the train down to Kingston.

Harry Donnelle said, "I suppose Mr. Rinaldo Costello will send a mammoth, astounding, bewildering, astonishing, amazing, stupifying, extraordinary, remarkable, dazzling, baffling, cavalcade after Marshal Foch, as soon as he gets our staggering, unbelievable, incredible letter."

We were all of us just sprawling around the fire and Harry was sitting on a little three legged milking stool and kind of guying Costello's mammoth show, in that funny way he had, and saying that Mr. Costello would probably say I was a matchless, intrepid, dauntless, fearless hero and adventurer, when all of a sudden that word adventurer put a thought into my head.

I said, "When it comes to being a dauntless, fearless adventurer, I guess nobody has anything on you, that's one thing sure."

"Oh, I've had a few games of basketball," he said.

"I bet you've been to lots of places," I told him.

He said, "Well, I've attended one or two pink teas and strawberry festivals. Once I was usher at a concert in an Old Ladies' Home. The wildest time I ever had was umpiring a game of checkers."

"You didn't win that Distinguished Service Cross umpiring a game of checkers," Westy said.

"No, I won that playing hide and seek with Fritzie in No Man's Land," he said. "Chuck a little more wood on the fire, Roy."

I said, "There's one thing you never told me about, and you promised to tell it, too. It's an adventure, but it's a kind of a mystery, too."

"Well," he said, "adventures aren't so much, but I'll have to make an extra charge for mysteries. The high cost of mysteries is something terrible. I don't know what the mystery may be, but if you'll go in the house and get my cigarette case out of the pocket of my coat that's hanging in the sitting room, I'll let you have any mystery I happen to have in stock at the wholesale price."

Oh bibbie, didn't I scoot in after that cigarette case. He was always smoking cigarettes, that fellow. He told us never to do it, but he was always doing it himself. He said he was too old to reform.

When I came back I said, "It's about that money of yours—that two hundred dollars that we found in the locker of the house-boat. It made a lot of trouble in Temple Camp, that's one sure thing. Don't you remember how you said that you'd tell me all about how you got it, some day?"

He said, "Oh that; that wasn't an adventure; that was just an episode."

"I know what episodes are all right," I told him; "didn't my father have a couple of them. If there's a narrow escape, that's a sign it's not an episode; it's an adventure. You can have episodes any day.

"Well, there wasn't a very narrow escape to that one, anyhow," he said, laughing all the while; "it was about six feet wide, I guess. But here goes, if you want it. Gather closer around the fire, because this adventure is mighty wet."

"That's a sure sign it's an adventure," I told him, "because how can an episode get wet?"

"I guess you're right," he said; "it might get a little damp, but not really wet. Anyway, do you think you can keep still for about ten minutes?"

CHAPTER XIV
BUT I DIDN'T WRITE IT

The reason I said that about the two hundred dollars causing a lot of trouble at Temple Camp was, because a little fellow there named Skinny McCord (you'll see him after a while) was suspected of stealing it. A lot of fellows thought he took it from a fellow while he was saving the fellow from drowning and then hid it in the house-boat. They thought *that* just because he went to the house-boat, and because they found out that he had a key to the locker. But all the while that money belonged to Harry Donnelle and he came up to Temple Camp and claimed it, after I wrote and told him all about Skinny. That's how he happened to visit Temple Camp and you can bet I'm glad he did. Anyway, that's all part of another story, and maybe you read it.

Now part of the story that Harry Donnelle told us, I knew already, but the other fellows didn't, because I never told them how I had met him before. So this is the story just the way he told it to us that night, because afterward I got him to write it out for our hike record. And the reason I put it in here is, because it has something to do with the story that comes after this. So here it is, and oh boy, didn't we listen as we sat around that camp-fire in Mr. Hasbrook's orchard. That's where stories are best—around the camp-fire.

HARRY DONNELLE'S YARN

Well, messmates, when my father told you that you could have the old house-boat for the summer, you never knew he had a son in the army, now, did you? But just the same, little Harry was trotting around in Camp Dix, all dolled up in his lieutenant's uniform, waiting to be mustered out. Little Harry had just come home from France where he had been mixed up in the big—*episode*.

One fine day I said to myself, "While I'm waiting here, I guess I'll go home." So I got a short leave and the next that was seen of me I was stepping off the train in Bridgeboro. That was early in the morning; the dawn was just breaking. Pretty soon it broke. Just as it was all broken I saw Jake Holden, the fisherman, standing near the milk train. You'll see that this is a fish story. It is a fishing *episode*.

That man persuaded me to go fishing with him. I knew that if I went home I'd have to meet all my sister's friends and maybe drink tea and play tennis. So I decided to go fishing with Jake. I thought I'd be safer. I was a coward. I was afraid to go home and drink tea and play tennis. So I went up to the old house-boat where the governor had it tied up in the creek near home. The scene was dark and gloomy. It was early in the morning. Even the swamp grass wasn't up; it was all trampled down. Not a sound could be heard—except the milkman rattling bottles up near the house.

I crept into the house-boat, took off my uniform, put it into a locker that I had the key of, and togged myself out in a set of old rags which I found there. Many were the times I had fished in those rags. I don't know how long I stayed in the house-boat. Jake was to come through the creek in his motor boat and I was to meet him. But I was foiled—foiled by the Boy Scouts. I heard voices in the distance and pretty soon I recognized my father's voice and the voice of Skeezeks Blakeley and the uproarious clamor and frantic utterances of Pee-wee Harris. I can hear it now, it haunts me night and day.

I didn't wait to meet those unexpected guests. I didn't know that the house-boat was to become theirs on an extended loan. I sneaked out and beat it through the marsh grass for all I was worth.

I love, I love, I love my home,
But, oh, you yellow perch!

So now you know of my miraculous escape from the boy scouts and the awful peril I averted of drinking tea and playing tennis. I am now approaching the darkest scenes of that frightful adventure.

After my escape from the boy scouts and my honored parent, I went fishing off the bleak and barren coast of Coney Island. I was swept by ocean breezes and the smoke from Jake Holden's pipe. In the distance we beheld the wild and rugged scenery of Luna Park. I caught some perch, some bass, a couple of crabs, an eel, two blue fish and a bad cold. We landed at the iron pier and sold our catch to a man who keeps a restaurant and serves shore dinners.

Then we went forth again. The wind was starting to blow a gale and the smoke from Jake Holden's pipe enveloped me like a fog. The sky grew dark. Jake wanted to lift anchor and go ashore, but I said, "No, let's stay out, because the fish are biting."

What happened next was my fault, not his. We stayed out there fishing in a blinding gale, the sea coming in in great rollers. Pretty soon the Luna Park tower was 'way around the corner. Either they had moved it or else our anchor was dragging.

"Jake," I said, "we're tearing the bottom of the ocean all to pieces; it's a shame. We'll be off Rockaway in about ten minutes, if this keeps up."

"The boat'll be all tore to pieces, you *mean*" he said, "and *we'll* be in the bottom of the ocean if this keeps up. We're shipping water by the bucketful. Let's get out of this."

So we hauled in the anchor and tried to get our power started, but it was too late. Our plug was short circuiting, the coil was gone plumb crazy, and most of the Atlantic Ocean seemed to be in the carburetor. The rest of it was on the floor. Besides all this, the pump was on a strike—shorter hours, I suppose.

Kids, we were in one dickens of a fix. It was late afternoon and there we were blowing around the ocean, bailing to keep on top, and with the land moving farther and farther away all the time. By dusk the shore was just a misty line, that was all. Every wave that hit us, meant bailing like mad to keep our gunwale above water. We took off the muffler and used it to bail with.

A dozen times we lighted our lantern and a dozen times the wind or the sea put it out. It was water-soaked, useless. I said, "Jake, it's all up with us," and he said he guessed it was.

Boys, I've gone forty-eight hours without sleeping, in France. I've gone three days without food. I've seen a shell burst into smithereens ten feet from me. But I'd rather go through all that again, I'd rather play tennis and drink tea, even, than to go through another night like that. All night we couldn't so much as see each other's faces. Our arms were stiff. We just bailed, bailed, bailed and kept her from swamping.

In the morning the weather eased up a little and if we had only had her running, she would have taken the seas all right. She's a filthy little boat, but game. But an engine is never game; it's always the boat that's game. A gas engine is a natural born coward and a quitter. A hull will fight to the last. If our engine hadn't lain down, we could have hit the sea crossways and we'd have skimmed over it like a car on a scenic railway. But the swell got us sideways and we swung like a hammock.

Anyhow, we could ease up a little on the bailing and before the sun was well up, we were able to use the oar. We had only one, because the other one was carried away. But we managed to keep that little jitney head-on, and pretty soon we knew it wasn't a case of drowning, but more likely a case of starving. There wasn't a speck of land in sight. We might have been half way to Europe for all I knew.

Well, after a while Jake said, "What's that? Looks like a log floating."

It didn't look like anything much, but it wasn't the ocean, that was sure, and we tried to make it with our oar. The thing was drifting in on us, so we didn't have to do all the work—just get in its path. We could slacken our own drifting with the oar, so pretty soon we were alongside it and saw it was a swamped life boat. There was one man floating around in it—dead. That two hundred dollars belonged—or rather was in his pocket. There were some other things in his pockets too; some things that started me guessing. I think you kids had better tarn in now; it's getting late.

CHAPTER XV
NO! NO! NO! GO ON! GO ON!

All right, there isn't much more. We had no guess how long the man had been in the boat or whether he had starved or what. He might have been dead several days, I thought. The life boat was awash. There was the name of some ship or other on the bows, but the boat had been painted since the name was printed there, and all I could make out was a few indistinct letters under the fresh paint. I made out an L, then DY, then NNE. I have a hunch the name was *Lady Anne*, but maybe not.

The man must have been a pretty rough character from all I could judge; a sailor, I daresay. It was out of the question rescuing the body. Every ounce of weight in our own boat made it worse for us, and we couldn't have hauled it over the side without danger. So we did the next best thing and that was to go through his pockets in the hope of finding something to identify him.

You getting sleepy? No? Well, we found a weather wallet on him. Know what that is? It's a pocket-book made of rubber. You can see them in ship supply stores all along South street in New York. In there he had two hundred and seven dollars and a letter. The writing was all smeared and some of it I couldn't read at all. I couldn't make out the address, but I *think* it was signed "Father."

That was no place to be doping things out, with the seas rolling us goodness knows where, so I just stuffed the money in my trouser pocket, because it made too big a wad to go in my wallet. But I dried the letter as best I could and put it away in this little case I always carry. Here's the case and here's the letter now. And I suppose that if there's any mystery, as you call it, why this is *it*.

Now just wait and don't get excited and you'll see the letter. Just let me finish. We pushed off from the life boat and I think it must have sunk soon afterward. The sea got pretty calm after a while and late that afternoon we were picked up by a schooner and set ashore.

Jake and I agreed to say nothing about our discovery; I'll tell you the reason in a minute. He forgot and blurted out something about our finding a life boat and it got into the newspapers, but no harm was done, because after our rescue we gave the names of Mike Corby and Dan McCann and after we had started home, no one knew who to hunt for, even if they wanted to.

But the principal reason we gave false names was, because my leave from camp was already up and I didn't want anybody, my own folks especially, to know that I had sidestepped home and mother to go off on a crazy fishing trip. Get me?

Jake went home and I haven't seen him since. I hustled to Bridgeboro by train, sneaked over to Little Valley in a big hurry to change my duds and—the house-boat was gone. The boy scouts had carried away my uniform and Lieutenant Donnelle was a ragged outcast, a couple of days overdue at camp.

How to get my uniform, that was the question. The boy scouts had done me a bad turn. I traced the fugitive house-boat to St. George, Staten Island. I lurked near shore till dark, and when a party of you kids came ashore and one of you mentioned to another that a certain Roy had remained on board, I said, "Here is my chance."

I rowed over, made his acquaintance, took him into my confidence, obtained his promise of silence, and changed my clothes. I found him a bully little scout. The old rags which went by the name of trousers I put into the locker, forgetting in my hurry, to take the two hundred and seven dollars. After fastening the locker I took some change out of my uniform to reward our young friend, but he spurned my offer. I must have dropped the locker key when I pulled the change out of my pocket. As you all know, little Skinny found it and got himself suspected of hiding the money in the locker. So much for that. I returned to camp and got slapped on the wrist for being late.

But the letter which I had taken from that dead man I had with me, and here it is now. When I visited Temple Camp upon the urgent plea of my old pal Skeezeks, I claimed the two hundred and seven dollars, but it was not mine.

It wasn't the dead man's either.

Now listen to this water-soaked letter, or as much of it as I can make out:

—hundred dol—is a good deal of money. — to —be careful. —such places— are likely —get robbed.

thought you—glad—get the ring. —wear —on second finger of left hand —war. —these fifty years. —real cameo—head— Lincoln. —getting along—to—make two ends meet—to each one who left our village—

There is quite a lot more, but I can't make it out.

Well, kids, I've studied that letter like a spelling lesson and this is what I make out of it. I can kind of see a picture of an old fellow that fought in the Civil War. I don't know who he is or where he is. But I can see him in an old faded blue uniform. I kind of like him. Look in the fire, every one of you, and keep your eyes fixed on the blaze. See him? I do. I can see him just as plain—poor old codger. Funny thing, a camp-fire, isn't it? I can see him better now than I could before. He's got white hair and he's writing a letter to that kid of his in France and telling him to be careful of that money. He's having a hard time trying to make two ends meet. Poor old fellow, he's warning that son of his about places in France where soldiers get robbed. I've seen some of those places, sailors' hang-outs, in Brest, and I can back him up there.

I have a kind of hunch that the old fellow—put some more wood on, Roy—I have a kind of a hunch that he sent the kid a ring, a cameo ring, with the head of President Lincoln on it. I can see old honest Abe now—right there where the new sticks are blazing up. Huh? Maybe it's only a crazy notion; what do you say? But I've doped out a kind of a notion that that old fellow got the ring when he started off to war; that somebody or other presented one to each fellow that left the village. I'd give a doughnut to know where that village is.

Anyway, the old man wore it on the second finger of his left hand and I kind of think he wanted that kid of his to do the same—over there in the trenches.

Maybe I'm just a sort of a day dreamer, but that's the picture I've had in my mind ever since I was fishing with Jake Holden. And it seems to all fit together now when I look right there in that blaze. Pretty good camp-fire yarn, hey? Not so worse? Just look into the fire yourselves and think about that letter. Nothing but a kind of fancy, hey? Faces in the blaze and all that sort of stuff. Never saw me get sentimental before, did you—Skeezeks?

The funny part of the whole thing is that the man we saw in the boat *didn't have any second finger on his left hand*. It couldn't have been his finger the writer of the letter meant.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MYSTERY

Gee whiz, I didn't even know that he had stopped talking. I was just looking into the blaze and I could see the whole thing right there. Maybe it wasn't true at all, but anyway, I could see it. Especially I could see the old man. That's just the way it is with camp-fires.

Then, all of a sudden Harry Donnelle poked up the fire and began to laugh. "Funny, hey?" he said.

I said, "Do you think the dead man in the boat stole the money and the letter?"

"The letter happened to be with the money," Harry said; "I don't know that I think anything in particular. But how did a sailor with the second finger of his left hand gone, happen to have a letter asking him to wear a ring on that finger. How about the soldier who is warned against going where he will get robbed? Maybe he went, after all, and got robbed. We might start a search for a soldier who happens to have a second finger on his left hand. But then, quite a few soldiers enjoy that distinction. So there we are—up a tree. But here is a sailor with two hundred odd dollars and a letter referring to two hundred dollars. There is something about him wearing a ring on a certain finger and he doesn't happen to have that finger. Funny.

"Well then, here's a query—as long as queries don't cost anything. Might not the sailor have robbed the soldier of his two hundred and odd dollars? And just neglected to destroy the letter that was with it? You see, kids, I just ran plunk into the middle of the thing and I'd like to get hold of one end or the other. Somebody or other got a ring when he went away to war fifty years ago. He lived in a village. Who was he? Whoever he is, he's having a hard job making two ends meet. If I could find him I think I'd turn over this money to him. Now at the other end of the line, somewhere, is a fellow that ran chances of being robbed—reckless, like your Uncle Dudley. He's got a ring with President Lincoln's face cut on it—a cameo. I'd like to find *him*.

"But you see I haven't any way of finding either of them. The only thing I'm sure about is that the dead sailor couldn't have worn the ring. His finger had been gone many years, that's sure. So what are we going to do about it? I guess we'll go to bed. But that isn't getting us anywhere, is it?"

"Funny, hey? Kind of a mystery after all—Skeezeks."

I guess every one of us lay awake thinking about it that night. Anyway, I know I did. And most all the time till the day we got home, we kept talking about it. Harry Donnelle would always laugh and say maybe there wasn't anything to it at all and that if he knew who the sailor was, he'd go and give the money to his people—probably.

He said he guessed the camp-fire up at Temple Camp was what started him seeing pictures. But always he would say how it was funny that a man without his second finger should have that letter on him. But he said that as long as there wasn't any finger, it couldn't point anywheres, and we should worry.

But just the same all the way home, whenever we started a camp-fire, we'd look into it and kind of see an old soldier with white hair and a blue coat and then we'd see a young fellow, wearing khaki, and a ring with Lincoln's head cut on it.

In the fire we made near Orange Lake just before we hit Newburgh, we saw a soldier in a kind of a restaurant where there were a lot of sailors and we saw them take something away from him. But that's always the way it is with camp-fires. Mostly we saw the old soldier.

Harry Donnelle always laughed about it and said the camp-fire was a regular art gallery and he guessed he'd give that unlucky two hundred dollars to an orphan asylum, or to the widows and orphans of the poor garage keepers or to the destitute Standard Oil Company. So it got to be a kind of a joke, and that's the way it was till the whole thing was solved. And I'm going to tell you all about it, too, but I can't bother now, because I have to tell you about our hike and the crazy thing that happened next day.

CHAPTER XVII
APPALLING! WONDERFUL! MAGNIFICENT!

Anyway, there was one person we never saw in the camp-fire blaze and that was Mr. Costello. If we had, we wouldn't have seen the blaze. He was so big that he would have filled the whole fire. Harry Donnelle said he could even have blown a camp-fire out if he wanted to—even the big one at Temple Camp.

I wasn't awake when Dorry started for Kingston in the morning, so I didn't hear him go. But I knew when he came back all right. If I hadn't known it, it would have been because I was dead.

He got back before noon and the first I saw of him he was sitting on a big, high fancy seat of a cage wagon, wedged in alongside a great big man with a high hat on and a cutaway coat and a red vest. The big man was driving and the two horses had sleigh bells on them and fancy harness and they made an awful racket. They were dandy white horses, though. Dorry looked awful scared and little alongside the big man. The cage wagon was all gold color and fancy on the top and the wheels looked like Fourth of July pinwheels.

Harry said, "Mr. Costello doesn't exactly look as if he had sneaked off, does he? He's not ashamed to be seen. What's that, a searchlight?"

I said, "No, it's a diamond; he's got diamonds all over him. Somebody must have sprinkled him with diamonds before he started. He had them everywhere except on his feet. He had a big long whip in his hand, too. There was a man in the cage, besides; I guess he was a keeper."

Harry said, "Get me a pair of smoked glasses, will you?"

As soon as the big man got down he took off his high hat and waved it and said, "How do you do, sir." He said it in a big round voice, kind of.

Then he said, "I am Mr. Rinaldo Costello, proprietor of Costello's Mammoth Show." He talked so loud that he almost scared us.

Harry just said, "When I saw you coming I thought it was the village undertaker. We're glad to welcome you to our temporary camp. We are also touring the country; this is my mammoth show." Then he pointed to all of us fellows who were standing around, and Mr. Costello took off his hat again and waved it and bowed very low and held his whip so that I thought he was going to give us a crack with it, only he didn't. I guess he was used to cracking that whip. It was awful funny the way Harry sat on the fence talking to him. I don't know how it was, but that fellow could be awful funny.

Mr. Costello said, "This young gentleman who you were kind enough to send, has told me a very *thrilling* story. If it is all true I must pay my tribute to the dauntless young scout whose valor in combat is truly matchless."

"Excuse me while I blush," I said. I just couldn't help saying it.

"He is known as Roy the Leopard Catcher," Harry said. "In the wilds of Catskill village he is known by the natives as Skeezeks—Skeezeks the Bold. Allow me to introduce him." Then he grabbed me by the hair and shoved me right out in front. Then he said, "Like all true heroes, he is modest. But perhaps you will wish to see Marshal Foch. We shall be sorry to part with him."

Then they all followed Mr. Costello and Harry to the barn. Mr. Costello walked as if the whole world was looking at him. He looked awful funny, all dressed up that way in the country. I bet he was hot. I didn't go, because I wanted to look at that cage wagon. It had gold mermaids on the corners of it, and oh boy, wasn't it fancy. The mermaids' tails went all along the sides. Inside there was hay on the floor. I bet it was fun for Dorry, riding on that thing. Every time the white horses stamped the bells would jingle afterward. Harry said it sounded like a junk wagon, but I liked them anyway.

I wished I was the man to ride inside of that cage with Marshal Foch. I guess he knew how to handle leopards all right, hey? Maybe they were good friends even. Gee whiz, I like hiking better than anything else, except apple pie, but anyway, I'd like to be in a parade, that's one thing. That's just what I said. I said it out loud to myself.

CHAPTER XVIII
ON TO GLORY

When they came back the keeper was leading Marshal Foch with a rope, and the fly paper was gone from his head and his body. Harry Donnelle said they melted the stickum with gasoline and that it didn't hurt the leopard much. He said it came off easier than a porous plaster does. You bet I was glad; because that leopard and I were kind of friends. Anyway I would have been glad. The keeper had a pistol but I guess it was just safety first because the animal walked along by him just as meek as could be and walked right up the slanting board into the wagon. I guess he knew that keeper all right. His eyes were kind of half shut and all sticky like, and his nice fur was all stuck up but the men said they could fix him all right as soon as they had time.

I just couldn't help saying, "So long, Marshal Foch, I'm sorry I had to do it; see you later." He just walked back and forth in the cage, awful graceful, as if he was looking to see if everything was all right, and maybe he was glad to get back, hey?

Then Mr. Costello said in his big loud voice, just as if he was making a speech, "I am going to give the people of Kingston, *absolutely free*, an opportunity to view for the first time in America, the dauntless young hero of two continents." I don't know why he said two continents, because I only live on one, and believe me, that's enough.

But most everything he said had *two continents* in it. Harry said it was a wonder he forgot Mars and the Moon. "The dauntless young hero scout, pride of two continents," that's what he said. Oh boy, didn't I blush! And didn't Harry Donnelle laugh!

"May I ask your name, sir?" Mr. Costello said.

I told him, "Roy Blakeley."

"I would like you to ride with Marshal Foch in the parade," he said, "and later at the performances. I think I will call you *Roy the Redoubtable*; or perhaps *Blakeley the Bold* would be better. This is an opportunity of a lifetime to the people of Kingston. It will rejoice the scouts of two continents to see their intrepid young hero riding in triumph with the savage, man eating, beast that he subdued."

Harry said, "That would be delightful. What do you say, Roy?"

I said, "*Good night*, I won't have to ride in the cage with him, will I? I like him all right, but—but we're not—kind of, we're not yet well acquainted yet."

Mr. Costello said, "You will ride on the seat outside, as his triumphant conqueror. You will outrival the gladiators of ancient Rome. You will listen to the plaudits of the multitude. Are you able to look fierce? Just a little fiery? Just a little suggestion of fearless courage and intrepid power in your eyes? Something like *this*." Oh boy, he gave me a look that nearly knocked me over.

Harry said, "Try it, Roy."

I looked as fierce as I could, and all the fellows broke out laughing.

"That will be fine," Mr. Costello said; "just a little glance of the eye to strike terror as you look from left to right. Our advance agent will do the rest. There is not much time, but he will see that the people are advised of their opportunity. The boys of Kingston will thrill with pride and glory. Step up to the seat, my young friend."

I said, "I don't believe I can look fierce enough, honest I don't."

Harry Donnelle was just sitting there on the fence laughing so hard I thought he'd fall off. All of the fellows began guying me and saying I was a fool to be scared and that they wished they had the chance. But gee whiz, I was never part of a circus before, and I didn't want to sit 'way up on the top of that fancy wagon and just look fierce. I bet you wouldn't, either.

Pretty soon we were driving away and Mr. Costello looked awful big sitting there beside me. He kept cracking his whip all the time.

"So long, see you at the parade!" the fellows shouted.

"Don't get nervous," Harry called.

"I should worry," I called back; "I don't care what becomes of me now."

They had big red shutters with gold designs to cover up the cage so no one could see Marshal Foch, and the keeper sat on the step in back. Oh boy, how that Mr. Costello did drive; and he could crack the whip so it sounded like a rifle going off.

Pretty soon we came pell-mell into Kingston and I could see the circus posters in all the store windows and on the fences. The pictures of Mr. Costello looked just like him, kind of brave and bold like, and he always had a whip in his hand. I guess he slept with that whip under his pillow, hey?

While we were passing along one of the streets, a half a dozen scouts shouted to me and I gave them the scout salute.

Mr. Costello said, "Those intrepid young gentlemen will be proud of their young comrade; the whole city will do you honor for your daring and dauntless deed." I noticed that whenever he strung together a lot of words they all began with the same letter. It sounded fine, too.

I said, "I know one thing, and that is I'd like to have a rich, red, rare, racy, raspberry soda, just now."

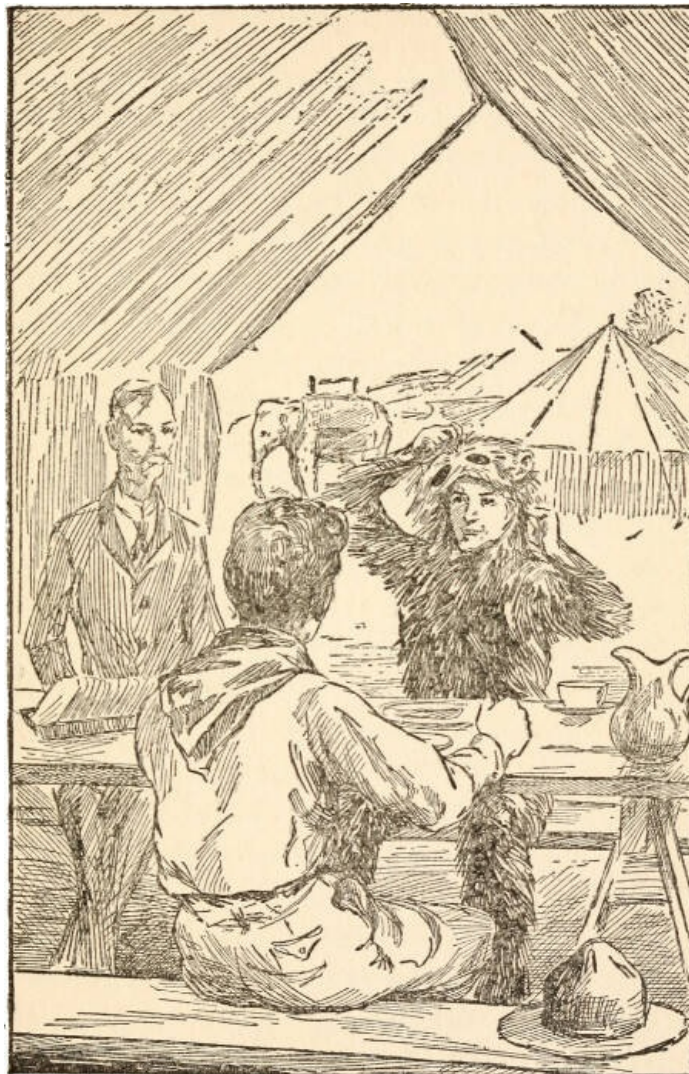
"You will soon be able to regale your ravenous and rapacious capacity among the freaks of two continents who will accord you a warm and wonderful welcome," he said.

Gee, you couldn't beat him at it, that was one sure thing.

CHAPTER XIX
JIB JAB, IS HE HUMAN?

Jiminy crinkums, I may be a nut (that's what the troop calls me anyway), but I'm not a freak and, believe me, when I saw who I was going to have dinner with that day—*good night!*

They all sat around a big mess board that stood on horses just like at Temple Camp. It was in a side tent. Judge Dot sat right next to me; he was a midget. I guess he was only about three feet high, and he had a special chair. On the other side of me was Lieutenant Lemuel Long; he was the thin man. He was about as fat as a clothes pole. He didn't eat much, but it wasn't because he didn't have any appetite. He said he had a contract with Mr. Costello not to eat much, because that would make him fat. He said he had a contract not to weigh more than eighty pounds. Gee, you've got to keep a contract if you make one, that's one thing.



HE TOOK THE FUR RIGHT OFF HIS HEAD.

But anyway, Madame Whopper could eat all she wanted to; she was the fat lady. She was a marvelous mammoth—that's what it said under the picture. She ate nine pieces of pie. I ate four, but anyway, she was a professional. They kept bringing her more pie. Judge Dot said once she ate eleven pieces. I liked Judge Dot, because he said he was sorry about Marshal Foch. He gave me his picture with his name on. He said if it was anyone else but me, it would cost a quarter.

But anyway, the one I liked best was Jib Jab, is he human? He had fur just like a bear, but a head like a man, only his face was brown and it had long hair on it. His face didn't look exactly like a man and it didn't look exactly like animal. First I was kind of scared, because in the pictures he was in a cage and he was grabbing hold of the bars and glaring awful fierce and wild. And, gee whiz, I didn't want to eat dinner with a wild animal. Oh boy, didn't I have a good scare when I saw him coming to the table!

He jumped over the board seat and sat down right opposite me and took the fur right off his head, just as if he was scalping himself and laid it on the ground. He looked more like a man then.

He looked across and said to me, "Hello, old top, how are they treating you?"

I said, "I'm feeling pretty well."

"Going into the parade, I hear," he said. "That was quite a stunt you pulled. You'd never catch me like that if I once broke loose. Think you could?"

I said, "Maybe I couldn't, but anyway, I guess you're human, all right."

Then he began to laugh and said to the thin man, "How goes it, Skinny; you going to ride?"

I guess he meant the parade. The fat woman said, "I wouldn't do no ridin' fer no proprietor, not me. The public has got to come to *me*; I wouldn't never go to *them*."

Jib Jab said, "All in the game."

Judge Dot said, "It's different with you, Jib; you ain't human and you can't say for yourself. You're in the menagerie class. You got to ride in your cage. You ain't a regular freak. I never heard of no parade work in a freak contract."

Madame Whopper said, "I wouldn't do parade work fer no proprietor, ride or walk, I wouldn't not even Barnum hisself, I wouldn't."

Jib Jab said for me to pass him the butter and then he winked at me and he said, "You're too particular, Ma. Parade work is all right. I like parade work, except I can't smoke. How about it, Kid?"

I said I didn't mind being in a parade, but I wouldn't want to ride in a cage like he had to do.

He laughed and said it was all in the game. He said if he ever broke out of that cage, I'd never capture him until he came back for his money on Saturday night.

I said "Sometimes boy scouts find people; sometimes they hunt for people that are lost. In our magazine there's always a notice if a scout is lost and all the scouts are on the look out for him."

"Yes, but those people are human," he said.

I said, "Gee whiz, I can't deny that."

"You never hunted for a *what-is-it*, did you?" he asked, awful funny like.

I told him, "No, I never did, but once a troop of scouts found a girl that was lost on a mountain, and there was another troop that found a fellow just from seeing his name in the newspapers."

He said, "You're a wide awake bunch, you kids. They don't have any boy scouts in the jungle where I was captured alive. If you ever get on my trail, I'd give you a run all right."

I asked him where that jungle was where he was captured alive, and he said it was on Washington Avenue in the Bronx.

He was an awful nice fellow.

CHAPTER XX

THE PARADE

Before we were finished I could hear the band playing outside and when I went out all the wagons and chariots and things were in a line ready to start. There were two elephants, a big one and a baby one, and about a half a dozen cage wagons with animals in them and a steam calliope and a lot of things, all gold and red. There were some dandy white horses.

On Marshal Foch's cage was a big sign that said:

MARSHAL FOCH
THE RETURNED LEOPARD
AND
SCOUT BLAKELEY
PRIDE OF TWO CONTINENTS!
HIS DARING AND DAUNTLESS CAPTOR.

I climbed up to the seat and sat by the driver. He had an awful fancy hat and kind of tinsel stuff all over him. He had a tassel on his hat and it kept blowing in my face. I didn't know what they were waiting for, but pretty soon Jib Jab came out and he had a chain around his leg. He looked pretty fierce and savage. A keeper was holding the chain and Jib Jab pulled and jerked on it, so a lot of people who were standing around backed away. The wagons were all around in a circle so I could see him in his cage, and he winked at me while the keeper was fixing the chain to one of the bars.

Oh boy, but that was some parade! The streets were all full of people and the steam calliope made so much noise you'd think you were in a boiler factory. Oh, didn't everybody stare at me! I guess my face was as red as the fancy wagons, but what did I care? On one of the streets I saw Harry Donnelle and the other fellows coming out of a candy store. They were all wiping their mouths with their handkerchiefs and Westy was rubbing his stomach with his hand, as if he had been eating something good. They just did that to jolly me, I bet. I should worry about them. Then they all began laughing at me, because I was trying to look fierce and bold. Maybe you think that's easy.

Gee, I guess we went through every street in Kingston, with people staring at me all the while, and kids hooting, but I didn't care. Anyway, I was proud to ride on that wagon.

Just when we were coming back into the circus grounds, I saw Harry Donnelle and the patrol and some other scouts waiting, so I climbed down, because I wanted to be with them. Mr. Costello came out and talked to us and said that I did fine. He said I was the idol of thronging multitudes—that's just what he said. I was good and thirsty, I know that. Gee, didn't Harry Donnelle laugh.

Mr. Costello said, "The boy scouts are an honor to this great and glorious country and I should like to take our intrepid young friend to Europe to appear before the high nobility." Harry said that I was a modest kid and that he guessed one continent was about all I could carry in my pocket. He said that some day maybe I'd pick up Europe if I happened to be passing that way.

Then Mr. Costello gave us all tickets to the show that night and after that he made me a speech and said how I was beloved by all the world renowned personages in the side show. He said that Madame Whopper told him I was a little gentleman. A scout is courteous—oh joy. Then he put his arm over my shoulder and walked away with me and told me not to talk very much about Jib Jab being human, because he wanted the people to decide for themselves. He said it wasn't telling a lie, because he never said Jib Jab wasn't human. He just said, "Is he human?"

He said it's all right to ask a question.

Gee whiz, nobody can deny that.

CHAPTER XXI

WE VISIT THE SIDE SHOW

Those scouts that we met were nice fellows. They were hiking back to Newburgh; that's where they lived. They told us they had hiked up along the river to visit a place named Elm Center, about ten or fifteen miles west of Kingston. They said they had a bivouac camp just outside the city and that they had stayed there for a couple of days, so as to take in the circus.

We all went to the show together that night, and I sat on Marshal Foch's cage wagon and rode around in the parade at the beginning of the show. All the fellows cheered me, even those new fellows. After the show I told them all that I wanted to go into the side show and say good-bye to my friends. We were all standing outside and Dorry Benton said, "I'll go with you."

Of course, as soon as he said that, they all wanted to go, but Harry said he guessed two were enough. So Dorry and I went in and made a call. The freaks were getting ready to go to bed, but anyway, they were glad to see us. I guess Madame Whopper slept in another tent; anyway, we didn't see her. Maybe she had a whole tent to herself.

Mr. Lemuel Long said he was hungry and he wished he could eat a lot like scouts do. Gee, I have to admit that scouts eat a lot—especially dessert. You can bet I wouldn't want to be a human skeleton. Judge Dot said he should worry, because he couldn't grow any taller no matter what happened. He said he was fifty-two years old and after you get to be fifty-five you begin to shrink. He said everybody does, mostly. He said if he shrunk, he was going to make Mr. Costello give him more money. Gee whiz, I couldn't blame him, especially on account of the high cost of living. He said Madame Whopper had gained fifty pounds and she made Mr. Costello give her a raise.

While we were talking with Judge Dot, Jib Jab came in and said, "Hello, Scouty, how did you like the show?"

I said, "You looked good and wild, that's one thing, especially with that chain on." He said that chain was his own idea.

I guess he had just been washing his face, anyway, there wasn't any hair on it and the brown was all cleaned off. I could see now that he was a mighty nice looking fellow. His hair was kind of curly and his eyes were awful bright. He took off his fur covering and put on a kind of a bath robe and then sat down on a chair and stuck his feet up on Madame Whopper's platform. Oh boy, you should have seen Dorry stare. First he looked at the fur covering. It had paws and claws on it just like an animal. Then he looked at Jib Jab. I guess he didn't know what to make of him.

Jib Jab said, "Now for a smoke," and he lighted a cigarette; "nothing like a quiet smoke after the day's work is over. Back in the jungle I never had all this bother of dressing and undressing. Civilization is just killing me. Fact is I can't be tamed. Anybody got a newspaper? I suppose I ought to be thankful I haven't got my face all plastered up with fly paper. Where's old Sky Scrapper?" That's what he called the giant.

"Gone to bed," Judge Dot said.

"How about you, Shorty; got a match?" he asked Judge Dot.

Judge Dot just said very stiff like, "I'll bid you good night, sir."

"Happy dreams, Shorty," Jib Jab called after him. Then he said, "That's the trouble with all these freaks—uppish, especially the giant. Why he looks down on everybody. Ma's about the best of the lot. Shorty thinks he's the whole circus just because he has three rings on his hands. Same with Skinny. I'd rather be back in the jungle than living with this bunch. Half the time they don't speak to me. You see I'm not a regular freak; they look on me as a kind of a butt-in."

I said, "Gee, I'm sorry; I should think they'd like you."

"They're all jealous," he said; "that's the trouble. They're all down on parade work, even Ma. They couldn't stand for me making a hit with that chain. Last week, up in Albany, I started to growl just as Shorty started selling his photographs. The louder he piped away with that silly little squeaky voice of his, the more I roared. When it comes to roaring, I've got even the lions jealous. Fact is I'm not liked; they are all jealous, even the animals. And I feel it, too; any honest hard working *what-is-it* would. Especially if he's human. The little two-headed boy we had was about the best of the lot, only he was double faced. He's with Barnum's now—fifty a week and overtime."

"I don't see why you want to be a *what-is-it*," I told him; "especially if they don't treat you right."

He just went on smoking, awful funny, kind of. Jiminy, I couldn't make him out at all.

He said, "Now you take Teddy Roosevelt, the elephant. He's what you'd call a big attraction—very big. Do you suppose he'd refuse to pal with me just because I'm a poor, neglected *what-is-it*? Only this morning we had a bag of peanuts together; he and I and little Ruth. He's just as plain and democratic as he can be. But you see my position isn't easy. I'm human and yet I'm not. I don't know where I fit in. The animals are kind of leary; you can't blame them. And the freaks are as stuck up as poor old Marshal Foch was. Sometimes I wish I was back in the jungle."

Jingoes, I didn't know how to take him at all, and I could see Dorry was just staring at him as if he didn't know whether he was jollyng us or not.

"Anyway, we have to be sorry for you," I said. He just kept puffing on his cigarette and he said, "Well, it's good to sit back here when the freaks have turned in and have a quiet smoke. Pretty strenuous work jerking and pulling on that chain. It's a hard life being a question mark."

"You said something," I told him; "cracky, I wouldn't want to be a *what-is-it*."

He just said, "No, when you grow up, make up your mind whether you're going to be human or not. Don't try to be two things. Don't be a question mark. Why away down in my savage, primeval heart, I wouldn't hurt a kitten. Yet here I am growling and roaring and wrenching at my cage bars and straining at that old chain, and the children and old ladies back up on the street when they see me, frightened out of their lives. I'm not loved by anyone. It's mighty hard. Either one of you kids got a cigarette about you?"

I told him no, that scouts didn't smoke cigarettes.

He said, "Well, drop in and see me down at Poughkeepsie or Newburgh if you happen in when we're there. You're always welcome."

Gee, we just couldn't make heads or tails of that fellow. Anyway, I liked him. And I had to admit that that was good advice he gave me about making up my mind whether to be human or not.

CHAPTER XXII
BRENT GAYLONG

The fellows were all waiting for us when we came out and we hiked out to where those scouts had their camp. There were only five of them, one patrol, and the biggest one was a kind of scoutmaster and patrol leader rolled into one. His name was Brent Gaylong. I walked with him behind the others and he told me all about his patrol and the troubles they had. He was an awful nice fellow, kind of quiet like; but he was funny, too. Christopher, that little troop must have been started on Friday the thirteenth, that's one thing sure.

I said, "What's the name of your patrol?"

"Well," he said, "we call ourselves the Church Mice, because we're so poor. First we were going to call ourselves the Job's Turkeys, but we decided that a church mouse was poorer than Job's turkey."

I had to laugh. I said, "I've heard of most every kind of an animal's name used for patrols, but never a church mouse. My patrol is the Silver Fox."

"That's a bully name," he said.

"Anyway," I told him, "the name hasn't got so much to do with it. There was a patrol up at Temple Camp named the Pollywogs and they were all nice fellows. But they couldn't keep still, they were always wriggling. Maybe they're frogs by this time, hey? A fellow up there told me about a patrol named the Caterpillars and afterwards they changed it to the Butterflies. He said there's a patrol out west named the Mock Turtles. There's a lot of crazy fellows come to Temple Camp. One of them said there was a fellow in his troop named Welsh and he was chosen leader of a new patrol and they wanted to call it the Welsh Rabbits. Church Mice is all right, I think."

He said, "It's appropriate anyway. I'd like to see a camp like that Temple Camp; it must be great. Trouble with us is we've had such plaguey hard luck. I guess there's only one thing harder than our luck and that's the biscuits we make."

I said, "I can make hard ones."

Then he said, "You see, first our scoutmaster had to go to war. We were just starting then. It hit us a good whack. We tried to get another, but scoutmasters were pretty scarce; they were scarcer than coal and sugar. They were all in France. So I took the job. I suppose we could get one now, but since we've worried along all this time without one, we decided to wait till our scoutmaster gets back. He'll be back in a couple of weeks, I understand, and we want to give him a welcome. We've got two dollars and fourteen cents toward it so far—two dollars and four cents, really, because there's a Canadian dime. If there are any Canadian dimes around, we're sure to get them. Then our little shanty burned down. It was about the best camp-fire I ever saw, only it left us without a meeting-place. We still have our scout smiles; they don't cost anything. If they did, we couldn't afford them."

I said, "That's one thing about scout smiles; they're the only things that haven't gone up."

"So here we are," he said, "hiking back home after one of our fool enterprises. We intended to go down on the train, but we went to the circus instead."

"It's about thirty miles down to Newburgh," I said; "you'll have to bivouac twice anyway."

He said, "I guess we've got eats enough."

"We might as well all hike that far together," I told him.

"Good idea," he said, "if you don't mind chumming up with a travelling poor-house."

"We should worry about being poor," I said; "I know a man that's rich and he can't hike at all. He goes on crutches. How would you like to be him? Anyway, don't you fellows get discouraged."

"Don't worry," he said; "first it was hard, but now we've come to like it. You can get a lot of fun out of hard luck. And all we need is time, I suppose. This winter we're all going to work on Saturdays. Trouble is that isn't going to help us give our scoutmaster a *welcome home*. We've done more crazy things this summer trying to get a little money together! I guess it would have been better if we'd all knuckled down to jobs. But I wanted these poor kids to get a taste of scouting. Too late now, anyway. Why if I told you why we hiked up to Elm Center, you'd just laugh in my face. You'd say we were crazy. But we've had a good time anyway."

I said, "One thing sure, everything will come out all right and it's better to go on a hike and camping and all that in the summer than to be working in the city. One of those fellows ahead of us is named Dorry Benton and he's kind of—not exactly poor, but—Anyway, he's crazy to get a motorcycle and he was going to stay home and work this summer, but Mr. Ellsworth (he's our scoutmaster) told him no, that it was better for him to go up to Temple Camp. That big fellow with us isn't our regular scoutmaster. Anyway, Dorry is crazy to have a motorcycle and you can bet he'll have more fun with it if he has to wait for it, won't he? Anyway, I wish you'd tell me what you came up this way for. I won't tell any of the fellows if you don't want me to."

"Oh," he said, "they might as well all have a good laugh. And I don't want you to think that I'm grouching about hard luck, either. We'll land right side up—scouts mostly do. The woods are free, thank goodness. All that's troubling us is that when Mr. Jennis went away he gave us a spread and presented each one of us with a scout knife and we'd like to return the compliment, that's all. We'd like to show him how much we think of him. I had a crazy notion we'd all go down to New York and meet him and give him something or other when the transport arrives. Happy dreams. I guess all we'll give him is the scout salute. But we'll come out right side up yet, even if we have to sweep up the streets in Newburgh. Principal trouble with us is that we're a lot of dreamers; I guess I'm the worst of the lot. Not much money in adventures. So now we're up against it. You don't make money *scouting*, you make it *working*."

I said, "I wish you'd please tell me why you came up this way, will you?"

"Sure I will," he said; "it's a joke—it's a peach of a joke. Only I tell you beforehand, we're a band of wild adventurers. Here we are at our luxurious camp. Pretty big tent, hey?"

"I don't see any tent," I said.

He said, "Don't you see that big blue tent?"

"Where?" I asked him.

"With the little gold spots all over it?"

"Oh, you mean the sky?" I said.

"Some tent, hey?" he said. And then he began laughing.

"There's no man can make a tent like that," I told him.

"It's only intended for rich scouts," he laughed; "we don't even bother to take it with us when we go; we just leave it here. Oh, we're a reckless, extravagant bunch."

CHAPTER XXIII BRENT'S STORY

The Church Mice didn't even make up a full patrol, because there were only five of them counting Brent Gaylong. Maybe the rest of them stayed home. Only three of them had the uniform, and Brent didn't have any. They didn't even have duffel bags or a camp kit and when I saw how it was with them, I just had to admire that fellow who was keeping them together. Especially I felt sorry for them, because our troop has about everything and that's mostly the way it is with all the troops that go to Temple Camp.

Anyway, we made up some pretty good late eats and after that we got a good big fire started and all sat around it. Brent lay on his back near the blaze and had his knees drawn up and was looking up at the sky. That's just the way he lay all the while he was telling us about his patrol and why they came up that way. It seemed as if he thought it was all just a big joke, but I could see he thought a good deal about scouting and about those fellows. I had to laugh at him, but I liked him a lot just the same. He was kind of happy-go-lucky, I could see that. Harry Donnelle liked him, that was sure. I guess it was because he was kind of happy-go-lucky, too.

"Buried treasure is all right," that's what he said, "and so are missing people, and people lost in the woods and all that; and liberal rewards are very nifty. But if you're after fifty or so buckarinos, the best thing is driving a grocery wagon or selling the Saturday Evening Post on street corners. You don't get much adventure mowing people's lawns, but it's sure money. The trouble with us is we've been speculating in adventure and now we're going to walk back home. Take a lesson from our terrible example—and don't read the newspapers."

Harry Donnelle said, "There's seventy-five per cent profit in adventures. I'd go to South Africa if I thought there was a ten cent piece buried there." That was just exactly like him.

"Anyway," I said, "I'd like to know why I shouldn't read the newspapers."

"Because they will lead you astray. They sent us off on a get-rich-quick enterprise," Brent said.

Of course, I knew he was half joking, but that was always the funny way he talked. He reached over and held a stick in the fire till the end of it was all flaming, then he stuck it in the ground near his head and pulled a clipping out of his pocket. He kept lying on his back all the time and he looked so funny, I just had to laugh.

Then he said, "Well, now, this is what brought us up into these woolly wilds", and he began to read the clipping. This is it, because he gave it to me afterwards:

BOY SCOUTS ASKED TO SEARCH FOR MISSING DOUGHBOY.

Boy scouts in all sections of the country have been asked to watch for Horace E. Chandler, late of the American Expeditionary Forces in France, who has been missing since his discharge from Camp Upton several weeks ago.

Private Chandler was mustered out on August third, having served with great courage and distinction in the Argonne Forest, where he received honorable mention for unusual heroism in raiding single handed an enemy machine gun nest.

Private Chandler's home is in Greendale near Plattsburg in New York. He is reported to have been seen in Albany several days after the date of his discharge, by several young men who had known him formerly, but on being questioned they were not certain of the identity of their former friend.

His whereabouts are now a mystery and no reason can be ascribed to his disappearance.

It is thought that he may have been the victim of foul play while on his journey home.

A wealthy and public spirited citizen of Greendale, Mr. Horace E. Wade, whose namesake Private Chandler was, has offered the sum of one hundred dollars for any information leading to the discovery of young Chandler's whereabouts.

Boy scouts have often succeeded in discovering missing persons. Their large organization, covering as it does, the entire country and their predilection for long tramps and journeys afford them some of the best facilities for such quests.

Mr. Wade has offered his reward after the futile efforts of the police in many large cities to locate the returned soldier.

"And here's his picture to go by," Gaylong said; "good looking chap, huh? Here's what it says underneath it, '*Private Horace E. Chandler from a photo taken the week before he sailed for France.*'"

Nobody said anything for a minute and Dorry, who was nearest to Brent Gaylong, leaned over and looked at the picture. "I'd like to read it over in a better light," he said.

Brent said, "Take it; it's no use to us. It gave us a good hike, that's all. We thought we might come back with the hundred. We had scout uniforms and everything all bought—in our minds. We had a sumptuous gold headed cane for Mr. Jennis. We had a meeting shack all furnished up. Oh, we were regular prosperous scouts for a couple of days—in our imaginations. I think I ought to have the badge for day dreaming, if there is one. I think I could get a job in a dime novel. Up to Elm Center and back again chasing a rainbow!"

He was so funny about it that I didn't know how disappointed he really was. He was kind of funny and serious at the same time. But I could see they were all disappointed.

All of a sudden Harry Donnelle said, "What started you up to Elm Center near Kingston, when our wandering warrior lived away up near Plattsburg?"

"Oh, yes," Brent said; "I forgot the best part of it. Quite some time after we read that accursed article, little Willie here and I happened to drop in at a movie show in Newburgh—ten cents counting the war tax. Cheap but filling. There was a picture in the Pathe jigamerig of an aviator landing in the village of Elm Center near Kingston, New York. I had never heard of Elm Center

before. But anyway, an aviator had to come down there and so Elm Center got on the screen. There were a lot of people standing around looking at the machine and little Willie wide-awake here, said to me, 'Do you see that soldier in the film? The one leaning against the fence and kind of glancing this way? He's the fellow whose picture was in the paper.' I took a good squint at him and, by jingo, it was! It was Horace E. Chandler. 'Caught at last,' I said."

"So here we are on our way home from Elm Center. It's a pretty little village—post office, two stables, a hardware store where you can buy cake, and a watering trough. One of the nicest watering troughs I ever saw.

"And Horace E. Chandler? Oh, they never saw him or heard of him. Maybe he went up in the airplane, huh? If I only had a Curtis biplane, I'd search the skies."

CHAPTER XXIV
THE LIGHT IN THE WOODS

Gaylong just rested his leg on his other knee and clasped his hands in back of his head and kept looking up at the sky. He said, "So that's the story of the adventurous Church Mice. The next time we go in for a hundred dollars, we're going to get jobs in grocery stores. Hey, kids?"

I could see he thought an awful lot of those fellows.

All the while Harry Donnelle was whistling to himself, as if he didn't care much. Pretty soon he said, "You had your fun; what more do you want? What's a hundred dollars?"

"It's a good deal to *us*," Gaylong laughed.

"You said something about treasure hunting," Harry said; "you don't suppose anybody ever goes treasure hunting on account of the treasure, do you? They go on account of the adventure. So treasure hunting is *always* a success; even if you only find a tin spoon. You had your hike; you had your fun; you made a hundred per cent profit. That's the difference between a scout and a detective. It's *going after* something that makes the fun; not *getting* it."

Brent Gaylong said, "I get you."

"I've flopped around all over the world and I haven't got a cent to show for it," Harry said, "and if anybody told me there was a lead pencil buried up near the North Pole, I'd go after it. What fun is there buying a lead pencil in a store? Poor old John D. Rockefeller could do that much."

"I get you," Gaylong said.

"Besides, didn't you meet *us*?" Harry said. "We're better than a hundred dollars, I hope. Fun hasn't cost a cent; it's the *only* thing that hasn't gone up in price. Maybe the wandering warrior is having the time of his life, too. And you'd go and spoil it all for him. Maybe he doesn't want to be found. Never thought of that, did you? What you fellows need is not a hundred dollars. You need the scout idea. Adventure!"

"Righto," Gaylong said.

"But we'd like to have that hundred dollars," the little fellow named Willie piped up.

"True again," Gaylong said—awful funny.

Of course, I knew that was the way Harry would think about it, because's he's one of that reckless, happy-go-lucky sort. I guess Brent Gaylong was kind of the same way. Anyway, before we lay down to go to sleep, I said to Gaylong:

"Would you mind letting me have that article to read by our lantern while you fellows are spreading the balsam?^[1]"

He said, "Sure," and began feeling in his pockets. "Guess that other fellow has it," he said, sort of careless; "it's no use anyway."

Pretty soon we were all fixed for the night. We made those Newburgh scouts sleep under our balloon silk shelter. They didn't want to, but we told them we'd like to sleep in the open for a change.

I guess I must have been asleep for an hour or so, when all of a sudden I was awake again. Anyway, it couldn't have been more than an hour, because the wood from our fire was still warm. It was awful nice and dark and quiet. There wasn't any sound at all, except a cricket. Pretty soon I could hear the whistle of a train very far away; I guess it was way over at the Hudson. I just lay there kind of thinking and wondering what made me wake up. Because, oh boy, I'm usually dead to the world when I sleep outdoors.

All of a sudden I saw a little light not very far away, in among the trees. As soon as I saw it it went out, and then it came again. First I thought it was a fire fly. Then I knew it couldn't be—it was too big. Then I saw it steady for about a minute and then it went out.

I sat up and just stared at the spot where I had seen it and I didn't make a sound. I wasn't exactly scared, but I wondered what it could be. Then I crept away and started over that way in the dark. I wasn't scared, but I was kind of nervous, sort of.

^[1] Balsam is used for making beds.

CHAPTER XXV
IN THE DARK

Just then I heard a rustle and I could see a black form quite near. I saw it move behind a tree.

"Who's there?" I said; but there wasn't any answer.

I stopped for two or three seconds, because I didn't know just what to do, then I walked up to the tree and just as I came near, the form stepped out from behind it.

Then I heard a voice say, "What do *you* want here?"

I said, very surprised, "Dorry? Is it you?"

He said, "What do *you* want here?"

"I don't want anything," I said; "I just saw a light and I came to see what it was. What's the matter?"

He said, "Nothing, I'm going to bed."

"Did you have the light?" I asked him. "Maybe you only saw it same as I did. Only you act awful funny, sort of."

He said, "I've got as much right to be up as you have. Nobody can sleep on that hard ground."

"Why didn't you dig a hollow for your hip?" I asked him, "same as I do. Hard ground will never keep a fellow awake. It's your hip. Gee, you're a scout; you ought to know that."

"Come on back," he said.

I don't know, but something about the way he acted made me feel sort of funny—suspicious, kind of.

I said, "Were you hunting for something with your flashlight? What's the matter? Why don't you tell me what you came out for?"

"There isn't any reason, and why should I tell you anyway?" he said.

"Well," I said, "because I'm your patrol leader for one thing. And as long as Mr. Ellsworth isn't here, I have a right to ask you. I'm not mad. Only I wonder why you got up and came away, that's all. Anyway, I got a splinter in my finger grabbing one of these trees, I know that."

"You want to find out if I've got the flashlight?" he said.

"No, I don't want to find out if you've got your flashlight," I said, "because I know you have. I'm not that kind. First you have to say I didn't speak about the splinter for that reason," I said; "you have to take back what you said."

"I never said you were sneaky," he said; "here, take it."

"It's no crime to have a flashlight, I hope," he said; "here take it."

"I wouldn't try to find out that way," I told him.

"I know you wouldn't," he said.

So then he held his flashlight to my finger and I said, "What do you know about that? I'm carrying a lumber yard around with me. I *thought* I felt kind of heavy."

"Have you got a needle?" he asked.

"A crowbar would be better," I told him.

"Hold still," he said, and then he just pulled it out with his fingers.

"That ought to be worth a couple of dollars, hey?" I said, "with the high cost of timber."

So then we both laughed. Anyway, Dorry and I were always good friends, you can bet.

He was just going to turn off the flashlight, when I noticed that piece of newspaper sticking out of his jacket pocket and I pulled it out, just kind of half joking, and I said, "Here's what I want. Gaylong said I could read it."

Gee whiz, there wasn't any harm in that. Oftentimes I'd do things like that with fellows, and especially Dorry, because I'd known him so long.

"You put that back," he said, kind of mad.

"What's the use of getting mad?" I said. "You're grouchy because you can't sleep. Here, let's have your flashlight." And I just grabbed that out of his pocket, too.

I guess he was going to grab them both away from me; anyway, it seemed that way for a couple of seconds.

Then he said, "Now you'll go and spoil it all."

"Spoil what?" I asked him.

"Go on, read it," he said.

"Sure I'll read it," I told him; "what's all the excitement about?"

"I hope you can keep your mouth shut," he said.

But, believe *me*, I didn't read very much of it, because all I could see was the picture. I held the flashlight on it and just stared and stared and stared.

Then I said, "Dorry!—You know—?" I was just flabbergasted and I could hardly speak.

"Sure I know," he said; "it's Jib Jab. I'm going to get my motorcycle after all."

CHAPTER XXVI
DORRY AND I AND THE CRICKET

For a couple of minutes I could hardly speak, I was so surprised. The picture in that article was the picture of *Jib Jab, is he human?* I knew by the wavy hair and the look he had, that made me not know whether he was jollyng me or not. He had that very same look in the picture. I could almost hear him speak to me. And I just couldn't take my eyes off it. Even that funny kind of twinkle in his eye was there, just the same as when he made Judge Dot mad.

"You and I are the only ones that saw his real face; that's one good thing," Dorry said; "It's Jib Jab all right, hey?"

"Yes, it's Jib Jab," I said, kind of half dreaming, I was so surprised. "And that's why you came out here; so as to read it and look at it all alone. Dorry, if you got the hundred dollars and bought a motorcycle, you'd fall off it and break your neck. You'd never get any fun out of a motorcycle you bought that way."

"Give me the paper," he said.

"Here," I said, "take it."

I guess neither of us spoke for about a minute. All the while I could hear the cricket chirping, it was so quiet.

"You heard what Harry told him about how they'd had their fun already," Dorry said; "you heard what he told them—about how they'd had their fun already—didn't you? Now it's *our* turn. If we can find him—"

"Shut up," I said.

"You heard him," he just kept up, "and you know it's true. They had their adventure. They had their hike—didn't they?"

All the while I could hear the cricket, just chirping, chirping, chirping. It was awful dark and quiet.

I said, "Dorry, don't talk like that, because you know you don't mean it. If you meant it, you wouldn't be a Silver Fox, you wouldn't. And it's just the same as telling lies about Harry Donnelle. I dare you to go and ask him about it; I *dare* you to; and see what he says. Maybe he's reckless and crazy about adventures and doesn't care anything about having money, and maybe he's kind of as you might say wild. Maybe he flirts a lot with girls and likes to risk his life, maybe, but anyway, he's fair and square, and he never did a mean thing in all his life. Mr. Ellsworth said so, and I guess he ought to know. If you think you've got a right to do that, go and ask Harry Donnelle. I *dare* you to. Go and tell him you know where that soldier is and that you're going to notify his people up there near Plattsburg and claim the hundred dollars so you can get your motorcycle. Just go and do that."

"Why should I do that?" he asked me. "What's that noise?"

"It's a hawk," I said; "he's after little birds in their nests. Don't you remember how we wouldn't name our patrol the Hawks, because they sneak— You voted against it yourself—you did."

"I mean that other—"

"It's just a cricket," I said. "I'm glad we're out here all alone. I'm glad it's so quiet and dark. Maybe you can't see in the dark, but you can see what's right or wrong better in the dark, because I'm not mad—honest I'm not. You know what Tom Slade said about trails. Maybe he's dead now, over in France; but anyway, you know what he said about trails."

"He wanted a motorcycle, too," Dorry said.

"Yes, but you know what he said about trails? How if you get thinking about doing something that isn't fair and square, it just means you're on the wrong trail. And you know yourself how hard it is to find the right trail if you once get started on the wrong one? Maybe you don't think much about Tom Slade, these days, but I do. Often when nobody knows it, I do."

"I don't see anything wrong in it," Dorry said; "we were the first to see him."

"Then what makes you feel so mean about it?" I asked him. "What makes you ask me about a little sound like a cricket? It's because you're kind of rattled and you're not sure, that's why. Once a murderer went and confessed after hearing a cricket all night. Maybe you don't know that it's in a book how crickets start your conscience—maybe you don't. Listen!"

He said, "You mean you'll tell and you won't help me?"

"No, I won't tell," I said, "and I *will* help you. I'll help you to put the Church Mice on their feet. I'll help you to give that scoutmaster a good welcome. I'll help you to fix it so those poor little codgers all have uniforms. I'll help you to fix it so you can look Harry Donnelle in the face—and Mr. Ellsworth, when you see him. And Tom Slade. And if it's a case of sneaking, I'll help you with that too. We'll make those fellows think that *they* discovered Jib Jab, otherwise satisfactory, you can go and ask Harry Donnelle they'd never take the reward. And if that isn't if it's all right for you to get the reward. And if he says yes, I'll say so too. I bet he has no use for motorcycles anyway."

Dorry didn't say anything, only just stood there.

"What do you say?" I asked him.

He didn't answer me.

"What do you say—Dorry?" I asked him.

"How does a cricket make that sound, anyway?" he asked.

"I should worry about how he makes it," I told him.

He just said, "Funny, isn't it?"

CHAPTER XXVII
WE TAKE HARRY INTO OUR CONFIDENCE

One thing, I wouldn't let anybody talk against Dorry Benton. Even I wouldn't have told you about that, only he said it was all right. I knew all the time that he would never cheat those fellows out of their reward. He didn't say anything more that night, but in the morning he came after me when I went to get sticks for the fire, and then I knew everything was all right.

He said, "You and I are the only ones that know who Jib Jab is. What are we going to do about it? And another thing, would it be all right for scouts to take a reward like that? Something for a service?"

"Sure it would be all right," I told him; "something for a service means tips and things like that. Scouts can take presents and win rewards, I hope. Didn't Pee-wee win an extra helping of pie up at camp for keeping still all through dinner? Mr. Ellsworth said it was all right."

Gee, Dorry couldn't answer that argument. "You should worry about it's being all right," I said; "but, oh boy, if we make a mistake we'll spoil everything. We have to watch our step. We've just got to make Brent Gaylong discover that fellow without any help. If we don't, *good night!* he'll never claim the reward. I know that fellow."

"Maybe we'd better tell Harry Donnelle," Dorry said.

"That's just what I was thinking," I told him; "because maybe he can think of a way."

So as soon as we could, we got Harry off in the woods alone. There wasn't much time, because we were all going to hit the trail for Newburgh after breakfast.

I said, "Harry, that freak fellow in the circus is the same fellow who's picture was in the paper; he's Horace E. Chandler, I'm positive."

He said, "I told you if you ate too many of those flapjacks last night, you'd be dreaming dreams."

"All right," I told him, "you remember about Marshal Foch; how you said he was a calf?"

"Let's have a squint at the picture," Harry said; "these remarkable discoveries of yours are getting to be a bad habit. A leopard is bad enough, but a *what-is-it!*"

So we showed him the picture and he screwed up his face and looked at it awful funny. Then he read the article all through.

"Well, so you think that's Wandering Horace, do you?" he asked.

I said, "Yes, because his hair is the same, and that funny kind of a look in his eye and everything. You've got to admit Jib Jab is human. He's a nice fellow, too. I bet he'd want to see these fellows get the reward."

Harry said, "Yes, I don't exactly hold it against him that he's human; he couldn't help it I suppose. I'm kind of human myself. But just suppose, for the fun of it, that you're right——"

"There's no fun about it," I told him; "Dorry and I both saw him."

"All right," he said; "and you want to sacrifice him to the Church Mice. You want to put them on his trail. How do *we* know he wants to be discovered?"

"It's a good turn," Dorry said.

Harry said, "Well, I'm not a scout and I don't deal much in good turns——"

I said, "I bet you did hundreds of them." And I bet he did, too.

He just said, "But who is the good turn going to hit? What is it you want to do?"

Dorry said, "We want these fellows to find out who Jib Jab is; we want to start things going so they can find out of their own accord, before it's too late."

"Yes, and how about poor Jib Jab?" Harry said. "If you harm one person to help another, do you call that a good turn? How do we know why he's traveling with that circus and living in an animal's skin? Seems to me we've got to consider *him* when we act."

Gee, by that I saw that there's a lot more to good turns than some fellows think.

"But anyway," I said, "Harry, that fellow is reckless just like you. Do you mean to tell me his mother and father haven't got a right to know where he is? Just because *you* went all over the world doesn't say——"

"Well, there isn't any mention of his mother and father here," he said; "only Mr. Horace E. Wade, up there in Greendale, or whatever they call it."

For a couple of minutes, Dorry and I didn't say anything, and Harry just sat there on a log whittling a stick.

Then he said, "Let's see that picture again."

Dorry handed it to him and he looked at it in that funny, squinty way, same as before, then handed it back.

"Then can't we do anything about it?" I asked him.

"How about getting the reward ourselves?" he asked me.

"What do we want it for?" I said. "We're having plenty of fun. We don't need anything."

He just went on whittling and looked up kind of funny like, at Dorry.

"How about you?" he asked. "You saw the picture first, and recognized him. Come in handy, that hundred, I dare say?"

Dorry just said, "Nix."

"Bully for you," Harry said, and he gave him a push in the chest. Didn't I tell you I knew how he'd feel about it?

"Well, then," he said, "since you are the only ones who would have any claims, we'll have to see what kind of a scout the Honorable Mr. Jib Jab is. I kind of like that fellow's face——"

"Don't you go and ask him to go off to South Africa with you," I said. Because I knew Harry Donnelle, all right.

"We'll just have to see if he's game for a little conspiracy. I kind of think from that twinkle in his eye, that he will be. We'll just have to lay the whole thing before him. We'll tell him about Gaylong and the poor Church Mice and if he's human——"

“Sure he’s human!” I said. “Doesn’t he smoke cigarettes and jolly the freaks, and wink at us and all that? *Sure* he’s human—he’s *especially human!*”

CHAPTER XXVIII
IN THE WOODS

So you see it's best to always think twice before you do a good turn. Don't be in too much of a hurry about it. Because a good turn might go wild and cause a lot of trouble. You've got to take a good aim.

As long as Jib Jab had told us we'd always be welcome, Harry said, it would be best for him and Dorry and I to wait till the show was over that night and then go in and make a call on him. So he told the fellows that we'd hang around in the woods for one more day and hike it for Newburgh in the morning. He said that would give us a chance to get some provisions in Kingston and to stalk in the mountains. They all liked the idea, only Brent Gaylong said his fellows didn't have many eats and they didn't want to be sponging on us.

Harry said, "We're all one family and I'm sick of this Silver Fox outfit, anyway. It'll help to vary the monotony." That was always the way he talked.

In the afternoon I took a walk through the woods with Brent Gaylong and the little fellow he called Willie Wide-awake. He was a nice little fellow. He found a four-leaf clover and he said, "Maybe that will change our luck."

I said, "Maybe; you never can tell." And, oh boy, didn't I just laugh to myself. *You wait*, that's what I said to myself.

Gaylong said, "The trouble with us fellows is that we started our great and glorious troop during the war. Everybody was organizing troops—France, Germany, Uncle Sam, Italy—and we got lost in the shuffle. Too much competition. We'll land rightside up yet. But when I look over that scout magazine and see all the ads of things scouts want, it sort of makes me discouraged. Knives, cameras, bicycles, canoes, magic lanterns, toy steam engines, tin railroads, fancy memorandum books, electric motors! I suppose I'm behind the times, but just about all we want is a little place to meet in, and our scoutmaster back again and the price of a welcome for him, that's all. That, and the woods."

"You said it," I told him. "You should worry about all those ads; they have nothing to do with scouting. All they've got to do with scouting is that they're good to kindle a camp-fire with. Scouting doesn't cost anything when you once get started."

"It would cost about ten dollars a minute if some people had their way," he said.

"Sure," I said, "they'd have you looking like Santa Claus. You should worry."

"But I ought not to kick," he said; "because I'm to blame for this wild goose chase. You see I wanted to get the kids out of doors. I wanted to get their minds off patent sleds and go-carts, and goodness knows what all. I was brought up in the country and I wanted them to have a taste of adventure—the kind of stuff that isn't advertised, you know."

I said, "You bet I know; and I have to admit you're right, too."

"Of course, there wasn't any chance of finding that fellow, Chandler," he said; "but what's the difference? We had about seven dollars, and the kids wanted to buy one of those moving picture machines, '*Boy Scouts, Attention! Here is just what you want!*' You know. So I just took the seven plunks and brought them up this way on a hike. Something they *really did* want. I thought maybe there was one chance in twenty of finding that Chandler, but I didn't say so. I let them think the chance was fair. Anyway, we had a hike. We were out for adventure. They forgot about the cornets and the clock-work gew-gaws that they *really didn't want*. We've been scouting. We're broke, but we've been scouting. We hiked up to a remote village after a missing person. Romance! Adventure! We've been *scouting*. Hurrah, and a couple of bravos! That fellow Donnelle has the right idea; and he's a brick."

"Believe *me*, that's the biggest compliment you ever paid a brick," I said.

"So here we are," he said; "cleaned out and happy, and living on our scout brothers. That's the idea, isn't it? Brothers? Poor relations, hey? But we're real, honest-to-goodness, scouts. None genuine unless labeled *Church Mice*. Boy Scouts, Attention! Here is something you *really* want. Hiking! Adventure! Some day or other we'll stumble into fifty or a hundred dollars, but by the Big Dipper we'll get it *scouting*. That fellow Donnelle has the right idea; he's a peach."

"Believe *me*, he's a whole orchard," I said

Then neither of us said anything for about a minute, only we kept wandering along through the woods and we stopped and watched a chipmunk in a tree and kept good and still so he wouldn't be scared. And Brent Gaylong picked up a locust, awful careful, and held it in his two fingers and showed Willie Wide-awake how its wings went and how it was different from a bird. And Willie Wide-awake held it in one hand, because he had the four-leaf clover in the other hand. It was nice in the woods. I found a red lizard, too; the kind that come out after it rains. I guess he made a mistake, hey? There are lots of them up that way.

I said, "You just keep that four-leaf clover and it'll bring you luck. If you can stand a pine cone on your thumb and hold it that way till you count ten, then you can make a wish and it'll come true."

So Willie Wide-awake balanced a pine cone like that and counted ten and then he said, "I wish we'd get a hundred dollars and I wish Mr. Jennis would hurry up and come back."

And then I batted the pine cone away with a birch stick, so as to make the wish come true. You've got to be sure the stick is made of birch.

CHAPTER XXIX
JIB JAB AND HARRY

Anyway, the day passed soon enough, even if we didn't have much to do, and after supper, Harry said very innocent sort of, "Roy, suppose you and Dorry hike into Kingston with me and carry home some stuff. The rest of you start a fire."

Little Willie Wide-awake piped up, "I'll go with you." But Harry just ruffled up his hair, the same as he was always doing with me and said, "You just sit here and watch the fire. See what you can find in the fire. The other night we were seeing all sorts of things in the fire—pictures and things. You can find all kinds of pictures in fires, can't you, Brent?"

Brent Gaylong said, "That's the idea."

So then Harry gave the little fellow a kind of a push so he went sprawling right down all over the other fellows. Gee, I bet those kids liked him. I don't know, but he had a way about him that everybody liked. After we started I told him he ought to be a scoutmaster, and he said he would only he had a date in Labrador. He said he had a date to go hunting seals. Another time he told us he had a date to kill a man in Australia. He had a lot of dates.

On the way to Kingston he said to us, "Did you give that newspaper article back to Gaylong?" And I told him, "Yes."

"All right," he said; "we don't want that in our possession. We have nothing to do with this business; see?"

Dorry said, "Sure, we understand."

Then Harry said, "Now I don't want you kids to be disappointed if this wild man of Borneo turns out not to be wandering Horace at all; see?"

"I can't be mistaken," I told him.

He said, "Well, Columbus was mistaken when he thought he'd reached India, and he was smarter than you."

"Gee whiz," I said, "I don't deny he was smarter than I am. But anyway, I know we're not mistaken."

"All right," he said; "but I want you to let me do the talking. All I know about this savage beast is the twinkle in his eye. Twinkles are good things; you can usually bank on a twinkle. But you kids leave it to me; understand?"

I said, "It'll be so still you'll be able to hear the silence."

"Because this is a pretty delicate business," Harry said. "Even if Jib comes across all right, there's still Gaylong. Our fingers mustn't be seen in this pie. We're going to try to make something *happen*, that's all. If he knows that we had anything to do with it, he wouldn't *touch* the reward. Gaylong is as white as a snowstorm."

I said, "Take it from me a snowstorm is dark brown compared to him. I know that fellow."

"Well, if we can just handle this wild *what-is-it*, we'll put one over on Gaylong all right," Harry said. "We'll buy that cane for what's-his-name and we'll build that scout meeting-place. I'm getting kind of interested myself now. I haven't been so worked up since I sold a phonograph to a king over there in the Cannibal Islands. As soon as he heard it talk, he wanted to eat it. Come on, get a hustle."

When we got to Costello's Mammoth Show, the people were crowding out. Harry went up to the wagon where they sold tickets and said, "Hello, Mr. Costello, how's business?"

"Marvellous, magnificent!" he said in that big voice of his. "The town is spellbound by our sumptuous show. How are the young scouts?"

Harry told him we were all well, and asked him if I might go in and say good-bye to my friends.

"They will be proud to receive the young hero and his companions," he said. And he waved his whip toward the door of the small tent. I kind of liked that man. You can like a person, even if he's a kind of a faker.

In the side show tent, Lemuel Long was playing checkers with Judge Dot. Over in the corner, Jib Jab sat with his feet up on one of the platforms, smoking a cigarette. He had his bathrobe on and his face was all clean. I guess he was tired after pulling at that chain all day. He turned his head and said, "Hello, Scouty, glad to see you."

I said, "Jib Jab, this is the fellow who's looking after us on our hike; it's Mr. Donnelle. I thought I'd come and see you before we go away and I brought him, too. He wouldn't tell anybody about you being human."

Harry Donnelle put out his hand in that nice off-hand way he had, to shake hands with him, and Jib Jab started to reach out too. Then, all of a sudden he stood up and raised his arm and saluted.

"How are you, Lieutenant?" he said; "I see you're mustered out, but I salute you just the same, because you saved my life in France. I know you even if you don't know me, Lieutenant."

Just then Dorry whispered in my ear, "Did you notice his hand when he saluted. There's a cameo ring on it. Look close and see if that's Abraham Lincoln's head carved on it. It's awful old and clumsy looking."

Just then Jib Jab took my hand and I had a good look at that ring. Oh boy, you can bet I was excited. And you can bet a scout knows Abraham Lincoln's head when he sees it. But even if I was flabbergasted, I could seem to just hear those words, "*saved my life*."

I bet that fellow Harry Donnelle had hundreds and hundreds of adventures that he never told *us* about. I guess he didn't even notice the ring. That's one thing about a scout, he's observant.

CHAPTER XXX
JIB JAB IS SURPRISED

Just then Mr. Lemuel Long and Judge Dot got up to go to bed and Jib Jab called, "So long, Shorty! So short, Longy!"

While he was laughing at them, I whispered to Harry, "Notice the ring on his finger." I guess Harry noticed it all right, only he didn't say anything.

He just said, "Your face seems familiar to me; you were in my regiment, eh?"

"I was one of those in the machine gun nest," Jib Jab said; "don't you remember the four privates you saved?"

Harry said, "Oh, you were one of those fellows, eh? Glad to see that you got back to the States all right. I came to see you, but I didn't know who you were; that is, I didn't know you had been in France. You're Horace E. Chandler, I think, aren't you? I'm glad to see that you're human; there seems to be some question. Will you have a cigarette?"

Gee, it was awful funny to watch the two of them. Jib Jab just stared at him while Harry lifted himself up on the edge of the exhibition platform and lighted a cigarette, kind of off-hand and friendly like.

"How's the savage beast business?" he asked him.

"What makes you think I'm Chandler?" Jib Jab said.

Harry said, "Oh, I've suspected you were Chandler ever since these boys saw your picture in the paper, but of course, I didn't know you had been mixed up in the big scrap with me. Funny how things come about, huh?"

"Well, I suppose I'll have to admit it," Jib Jab said; "I hope you're not going to shout it out loud."

"No, I just want your assistance. I think you're a good sport. Far be it from me to criticise you for being a *what-is-it*. I'd like to be one myself. Must be kind of nice flopping around the country with a lot of freaks. How much does that skinny fellow weigh, anyhow? He looks like a ramrod. Little fellow's kind of pesky, isn't he?"

The two of them just sat there smoking cigarettes. Harry was dangling his legs from the platform and Jib Jab had his feet resting on it and his chair tilted back. It was awful funny to see them. For a couple of minutes neither of them said anything, only Harry kept looking around at the platforms where the freaks usually were.

Pretty soon he just blurted out, "How'd you happen to hit this job, Chandler?"

Jib Jab said, "Oh, I don't know; it's a long story. It's a pretty good job when you want to lie low."

"Lie low, huh? Why, what's the matter?" Harry asked.

Cracky, I never saw Jib Jab so serious before. He said, "Oh, I was just one of the heroes that didn't get a job, that's all. I'm a happy-go-lucky."

"Same here," Harry said, and he just kept looking at him, awful sharp and searching, kind of.

"I came back from France broke."

"Same here," Harry said.

"And I just thought I'd try to pull together a bit before I hit the trail for home," Jib Jab went on. "I had a little over two hundred dollars to bring home to my old dad, but they relieved me of it in a sailors' dance hall over in Brest."

"Live up near Plattsburg, eh?"

"Yop, and I started home as soon as I was mustered out, but didn't make it. Just couldn't face the old folks—busted. I tried to get a job in Albany, in Poughkeepsie; nothing doing. Worked for a couple of days for a farmer over here in Elm Center, then hit the circus. Circus is a great place when you're down and out. Ever work in a circus?"

"I kinder think I'd like to," Harry said; "I've done most everything else."

"So here I am among the missing till I can save as much as I promised to bring home. I sent the old gent a letter saying I had two hundred bucks. I don't know who's got that two hundred, but I know one thing; I'm not going up to Greendale till I have that much. I'm not human till then."

"Old gent write you a letter?" Harry asked, kind of careless.

"Yop, and warned me. Didn't do much good." For about a minute Harry just sat there smoking and Jib Jab did the same thing. Neither one of them spoke. Harry was whistling *Over There*. Then he reached down into his pocket and threw a roll of bills into Jib Jab's lap.

"Here's your two hundred, Jib," he said; "and here's part of the letter. Let's have a squint at that ring, will you?"

Gee whiz, I guess you could have knocked Jib Jab down with a feather.

CHAPTER XXXI
JIB JAB'S STORY

Then Harry told him all about his adventure out on the ocean and how he found the dead man in the boat, and the money.

"Funny thing, too," he said; "but we were trying to dope out the meaning of that letter, all sitting around the camp-fire. We even thought we could see the old gent. Old veteran, isn't he? Huh, that's just what we thought. Blamed funny thing, a camp-fire."

Jib Jab didn't say anything, only just looked straight ahead of him. Harry just kept smoking and swinging his legs.

"Guess we hit it about right, hey?" he said.

Jib Jab just kept looking straight ahead of him.

"Pretty near," he said. He sounded kind of strange. Even still he didn't put the money in his pocket, or the water-soaked letter either, but they just stayed where Harry threw them, on the bathrobe.

"Pretty tough, being broke," Harry said.

"Bet the old gent'll be proud to see you. Under Grant, I suppose?"

"Sherman," Jib Jab said, very quiet.

Then neither of them spoke for about a couple of minutes, only Harry asked him for a light.

"Ever get mixed up with the boy scouts, Jib?" Harry asked him.

Jib Jab just shook his head.

"Well, listen here," Harry said; "and here's the test of whether you're really human."

"I guess I'm pretty human," Jib Jab said, very low.

Then Harry said, "We ran into a party of scouts, Jib, who went up to Elm Center to see if a fellow they saw in a moving picture was you. I guess it was all right. They had an idea of winning that reward; you know about the offer, of course?"

"Yes, I knew," Jib Jab said.

"How about this old gent you're named after? Friend of your father's? I thought as much. Pretty rich, I suppose? Good. Now, Jib, you and I know what it is to go broke. I've gone broke forty-eleven times. And we're both keen for adventure; that's our trouble, I guess. There's a fellow over where we're camping, a young fellow, with a bunch of little tenderfoot scouts. They came up to hunt for you and to get that reward. They're broke. They need some mazuma to start in with. They need a hundred. Do they get it?"

Jib Jab said, "What do you mean?"

"Well, first you're willing to go home?"

"Do you have to ask me that?"

"All right then," Harry said; "here's the plan of campaign and General Pershing himself couldn't plan it better. You're going home, that's settled. Prodigal son, and all that stuff. But first you've got to be discovered. Give us another light, will you? I put it to you from man to man, or from tramp to *what-is-it, you can't go home without being discovered*. You've got to come over our way and get yourself discovered. These scouts need a shack to meet in and a lot of stuff. They want to give their scoutmaster a welcome home. He was in the scrap same as you and I. It all hangs on that hundred dollars, Jib. I'm sorry, but you'll have to be the goat. That young fellow Gaylong is a double barrel scout and he's trying to pull through with that outfit of kids. He wouldn't take a cent as an ordinary present. I've got his number. Of course, if you've got the instinct of a baboon that doesn't mean anything to you. But all over the fences in this happy berg, Costello is wanting to know if you're human. You can't show you're human just by taking off that bear skin and washing your face. I want to know if you're *human* or not."

"Run out and ask Costello for a couple of marvellous, matchless matches, will you, Roy?"

CHAPTER XXXII
JIB JAB TURNS OUT TO BE HUMAN

So that's all I can tell you about their talk, because when I went back Harry was waiting for us near the entrance. All I can tell you is what happened. On the way back through the woods Harry wouldn't talk at all, only he said that the scouts were a blamed nuisance and he guessed he'd go and work in a circus. Gee whiz, I hope he doesn't. But, oh boy, he'd make a dandy *what-is-it*.

When we got to camp there was a peachy big fire and they were all sitting around it. Brent Gaylong was lying on his back, same way as he always did, with his knees up.

"Move up and give us a chance here," Harry said; "we're tired." And he squeezed right in between little Willie Wide-awake and another one of those kids. "Regular sewing circle, huh?" he said. "Well, Bill old top, what did you see in the blaze?"

"He's been seein' things," Brent said, kind of laughing.

"Get out—*no*," Harry said.

"I saw a transport," Willie Wide-awake said; "that long log looked like a transport. Then it crackled and I didn't see it any more."

Harry said, "Torpedoed, I guess. Didn't see anything of that scoutmaster of yours, did you?"

"I looked, but I didn't see him," Willie said.

"Down in the cabin eating his dinner, probably," Harry said. "Chuck on a couple more logs, Westy old boy."

"He saw a meeting-shack, too," Gaylong said.

"It was just like real," the kid piped up.

"That point on the blaze made the roof. You can see things better if you half shut your eyes."

"That's the idea," Harry said; "you've got to get kind of dreamy. You're getting the hang of it all right. Over in France one night I saw the house I live in at home. There was a new chicken coop. Once I saw Teddy Roosevelt."

"One good thing," Brent said in that funny way he had; "the things you see in the fire don't cost anything."

Harry said, "Yes, but they're going up like everything else. They go up in smoke."

"Like everything else," Gaylong said.

"There you go," Harry said; "Hard Luck Gaylong, the boy grouch. How do you know when you may strike luck. Look at Charlie Collins over there on the west front; ran plunk into his own brother while he was on sentry duty; brother said, 'H'lo Charlie'—just like that. Neither one knew the other was in France. You've been looking at maps and things and you believe everything the geography tells you. I've been all around this world and you can take it from me, it's about the size of a cocoanut. Look how Stanley met Livingstone in South Africa. You take a tip from me and keep that newspaper picture."

Brent said, "I'd paste it in a scrapbook only we haven't got a scrapbook."

"We haven't got any paste either," Willie shouted.

"Poor, but honest," Gaylong said.

Then Harry put his arm around little Willie Wide-awake's shoulder, awful nice and friendly like, and he said, "Don't you mind him, Bill old boy. Let him grouch. Now let's you and I see what we can find there."

Gee, he was awful nice and it made me like him a lot. Because, anyway, it showed that even if he was kind of wild and reckless, he could be nice to a little fellow like that. I wish he'd be a scoutmaster, but I don't believe he ever will. He's got too many dates. We all looked into the fire and listened when he began.

He said, "I can see old Grouch Gaylong, there, with a fine scout uniform and one of those big long sticks and about 'steen hundred badges; badges for being sarcastic, badges for lying on his back and sticking his feet up in the air, Calamity Jane badges—all kinds. I can see you head of the Church Mice patrol, only the Church Mice have struck it rich. They won't speak to the Silver Foxes any more. See that long, thin flame? That's one of their tails."

"I can see the American flag," Willie Wide-awake said.

"Sure, Old Glory;—right underneath it is a little kind of a bungalow all fixed up, and a canoe right near it. See the canoe? And I can see a face—yes sir, I can see a face. Mr. Jennis, is it? See, right through the middle of the flame? That's Mr. Jennis, all right. And——"

"I can see it!" Willie Wide-awake shouted.

"Sure you can," Harry said, "plain as day——"

"*Look! Look!*" the little fellow shouted, and he clutched Harry by the arm, all excited. "*I see it! It's real! Look!*"

I was looking, too, and I saw it and then I knew. And I wanted, I just wanted to go over and clutch Harry Donnelle by the arm, just like that kid was doing. I could see Brent Gaylong roll over and look, kind of curious, through the blaze. And all the fellows seemed to start, all except Dorry and I. But I didn't budge, only sat there watching Brent Gaylong. His face looked kind of strange. Then he stood up. And the other face behind the blaze rose up, too. And Jib Jab was standing there and the fire was shining on his face. And even I could see the twinkle in his eye.

Then I heard Harry Donnelle speak and his voice sounded queer, because it was so still around there. And there wasn't any sound except the fire crackling.

He said, "Who are you? What do you want here?"

"Just a stranger after food and shelter," I heard; "I've been wandering in the woods. I am a discharged soldier and I'm in hard luck."

But I didn't notice him, because I was looking at Brent Gaylong. He was standing up straight and looking steady, right across the fire, into that face. And he didn't take his eyes off it; just stared.

CHAPTER XXXIII
WE PART COMPANY

Oh, it was great to watch Harry—the way he acted. He just said, “A soldier, eh? Sit down, we were just going to have a bite to eat. I was in the big scrap, myself.” That’s what he always called it—the big scrap. He didn’t pay any attention to Brent Gaylong, and Brent just stood there staring.

Pretty soon Brent said, “Your name isn’t Chandler, is it?”

“Maybe, and maybe not,” Jib Jab said. “Who are you?”

He didn’t admit he was Chandler right away and Harry Donnelle said, kind of careless sort of, “If you’re the missing Chandler you might as well so say. We’re all tramps and wanderers here. All broke, too.”

So pretty soon *Jib Jab, is he human?* admitted that he was Horace E. Chandler, and Harry Donnelle said it was mighty lucky we had decided to stay over night in that neighborhood. He said he had always thought that the world was about as big as a cocoanut, but now he knew it was the size of a green pea. He said the trouble with it was there wasn’t enough elbow room, and scouts couldn’t get away into the woods and be alone, because on account of the crowds—crowds of missing people. Oh, he was great and, believe me, we liked that fellow.

None of those Church Mice even knew that Horace E. Chandler was Jib Jab who was in the circus. On the quiet, Jib told us that Mr. Costello didn’t mind his leaving like that, because *what-is-its* were easy to get, on account of so many of them being out of work—I mean people. But Jib said, Mr. Costello told him he was the best *what-is-it* he ever had, and he would give him a good recommendation, if he wanted it.

So that’s the end of *Jib Jab is he human?* And, gee, you’ll have to admit he was human, all right. He said he wouldn’t go home to Greendale unless the Church Mice went with him and stayed for a few days on his father’s farm. Harry Donnelle stood up for him and said that was right. I bet he knew about it all the time. He said that he wouldn’t trust Chandler to go home alone.

“Now you’ve got him, hang onto him,” that’s what he said to Brent. “Safety first, don’t take any chances. Go up there and get your hundred. These discharged soldiers are a bad lot. See what kind of a farm he lives on, and if it’s any good we’ll hike up there next summer and strip the apple trees. Got any good russets up there, Horace?”

So that’s the way they fixed it, and the next morning Horace Chandler and the Church Mice started off on their journey to Greendale. Brent Gaylong said he was going to ‘phone home from Kingston, so that their people would know. Anyway, I guess their mothers and fathers wouldn’t worry much, because Brent was the kind of a fellow they could trust, that was one sure thing.

Harry told Horace Chandler to start off with them just as if they were going to hike all the way, and then when they got good and tired, to buy tickets on the railroad. Do you know what I think? I think Harry had some money and that he gave it to Horace so he could do that. That’s what I kind of think. It would be just like him anyway.

One thing, you’re going to meet all those fellows again, but not in this story. Because after a while we went up to that farm in Greendale and camped there, and met old Major Chandler and Mr. Wade and Horace, and had a lot of fun, you can bet. It’s a whole story all by itself. They have dandy russet apples up there, and, oh boy, can’t Horace’s sister Betty make apple dumplings. I ate four one night. Hunt Manners ate six, but anyway he started before I did.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A GOOD IDEA

That same day we hiked out through Woodstock. Harry Donnelle said we had to be careful, because the woods were infested with poets and authors and artists, but I should worry, who's afraid of a poet? We saw a lot of them and they wore funny big neckties and long hair. But anyway, Harry said they were harmless. They live in little shacks.

We went around the Ashokan Reservoir and then along the road down through Atwood and Stone Ridge till we got to the Wallkill River, and that night we camped near New Paltz. There's a great big abnormal school there, or a normal school, or whatever you call it. I should worry. Anyway, there's one thing I like about school, and that's vacation.

The next day we followed the Wallkill River and caught some perch and cooked them for supper, and that night, around the fire, we made Harry tell us how he saved four privates on the West Front. The next morning we started off again and passed a place named Great Bluff. It was a great bluff all right, because it was so small you could send it by Parcels Post.

Pretty soon we came to a place named Tanner's Crossroads. I couldn't see anything so cross about them. But anyway Mr. Tanner was cross enough to make up. He wouldn't let us take a short cut across his land. What cared we?

I don't know how big the village was, because I didn't have a ruler with me. I guess somebody must have dropped the village there and never noticed it. That night we slept just inside of a village named *Slow*. Anyway, that's what it said on a sign alongside the road. Harry said it meant for autos to go slow. I made flapjacks that night.

In two days we came in sight of the Hudson. I knew it would be there. Oh boy, but we climbed some hills. Pretty soon we could see Haverstraw, but we didn't go near it. We camped in a dandy place outside the town. And that's the place where we had our big adventure. Maybe you'll remember how I said our hike got tied in a knot in one place. Well, that was the place.

So now I'm going to tell you about that adventure. It has girls in it and everything. And it shows you how boy scouts can be heroes. It has two heroines, so maybe if you don't like one, you'll like the other. One's an emergency heroine, that's what Harry said.

Now maybe if you've read all about our adventures up at Temple Camp, you'll remember that my sister Marjorie was going to have a birthday party. I told Mr. Ellsworth that I would like to go home for that party and go back to Temple Camp the next day. Maybe you will remember about it, on account of my saying that she was going to have cocoanut frosted cake.

Now on that night that we were camping near Haverstraw, I happened to think about it being my sister's birthday. I just happened to think of it while we were sitting around our camp-fire.

I said, "This is my sister's birthday and she's going to have a party and cocoanut frosted cake and things, and I'd like to be there. I wish I had thought about it yesterday—I'd have sent her a postcard." Because, one thing, I never forgot about my sister's birthdays.

Harry said, "Why don't you call her up?"

"Sure," Westy said, "they'll just about be having the eats now."

I said, "What good will that do me?"

"Anyway, where's the telephone?" Dorry said.

"I bet there's a booth over in that little station," Harry said; "why don't you go over and see? It would be a big surprise, hey?"

I said, "You bet it would. Come on over and we'll see if there's one there, Westy." The station that Harry spoke about was a little dinky station that we had passed about a half of a mile back. When we passed it, Harry said he guessed maybe it was the West Haverstraw Station. It was all dark even then. But anyway, Westy and I decided we would go back to it and see if it was open and if there was a 'phone booth there.

"Let's wait till half-past nine before we start," I said; "and then we'll call up at exactly ten o'clock, because that's the time they'll all be going in for the eats and they'll be giving the presents then, too. It'll kind of seem as if I were there just at the right minute."

So at half-past nine, Westy and I started down the road.

"Give her our best wishes," Harry called after us.

It was awful dark and we could hardly see our way going along the road. A couple of times I went stumbling into the ditch. But, anyway, all the while I kept thinking about Marjorie and how it would look at home with all those people there and lots of presents and things.

"I'm mighty glad Harry thought about that," I said.

Westy said, "Jiminies, it will be great. Just when they're all sitting down around the table, all of a sudden the 'phone will ring—"

"Yop," I said, "and Marjorie will answer it, because she always answers the 'phone, on account of Charlie Wentworth all the time calling her up. He's in Philadelphia. That's what makes the 'phone service so bad, because he keeps all the operators busy. Believe me, they ought to have a private wire. Anyway, that's what my father says."

"I bet you won't be able to get her," Westy said.

"There you go," I told him; "Calamity Jane!"

"To call her up, you'll have to call Central down," he said.

"I should worry," I told him.

CHAPTER XXXV
WHAT I HEARD ON THE TELEPHONE

That station stood all by itself, and it was pitch dark all around. It reminded me of the Grand Central Station, it was so different. First we tried the door and it was locked. Then we tried one of the windows and it opened.

I said, "Do you think it would be all right to climb in?"

"Sure it would," Westy said; "because the window doesn't open into the ticket agent's room, only into the waiting room. Go ahead."

I didn't see any harm in climbing in, because the window was part open and there was a sign outside that said "Public Telephone."

"Anyway," Westy said; "if anybody should come and find us here, we could say we just wanted to 'phone. And we could prove that's all we wanted, too, by our really getting the number."

First I didn't know what we ought to do, but as long as we didn't have to break anything open, and as long as all we wanted was to 'phone, I decided it would be all right.

So we climbed in and I saw there was a booth in the corner. I dropped a nickel into the 'phone and held the receiver to my ear and waited and waited and waited and waited. Gee, I waited about as long as three whole chapters would be.

Then I heard a girl's voice. It said, "Hello, hello."

I said, "I want three, two, one, Bridgeboro, New Jersey, and please hurry up, because my sister's having a party."

I guess the wire was crossed, the girl was awful excited, and every time I said hello, she'd say, "Hello, hello, is this you, father?"

I guess she was so rattled, she didn't know who she was talking to.

By this time I was getting kind of sore at the operator, because I wanted to get my sister the minute of ten o'clock, and she was sort of spoiling my plan. I had just three more minutes to get her, because Westy lighted a match and looked at his watch. Then I said, "Hello, hello."

The same voice kept saying, "Hello, hello, is this you, father?"

I said, "No, it isn't. How long does it take to get the operator in this berg?"

The poor girl was almost crying by now. She said, "I've been trying for an *age* to get my father. Won't you *please* let me get him? I want my father! Why *don't* they give me my father?"

Gee whiz, you'd think I had her father in my pocket. I said, "I'm trying to get my sister, too. If you happen to see her, tell her, will you?"

She said, "Oh dear; it's just *exasperating*. Won't you *please* get off the wire. I want Central. Why can't they help me? We're in such a *dreadful predicament*."

I said, "I guess Central went to the movies or somewhere. I'm a boy scout and I'm in a dark station somewhere or other near Haverstraw——"

"Oh, isn't that just too *provoking!*" she said.

I said, "Oh, it isn't so bad in here, only it's dark."

"Is there *anything* I can *do*?" she said; "we're lost on the top of Eagle's Nest Mountain. Oh, I wonder if you'd be willing to go to Haverstraw and tell my people—Judge Edwards. It's *dreadful!* We've been here since five o'clock. We haven't had a thing to eat and we're nearly perishing. The boys made a mistake about the trail. Oh, it's *terrible!* We're frightened out of our lives. I'll *never, never* come up this *horrible* mountain again!"

I said, "Are the boys scouts?"

She said, "No, they're regular young men and they're *utterly bewildered!*"

I said, "Now I *know* they're not scouts. But anyway, you don't need to worry, because we'll come up and get you. Trails are our middle names. You should worry about Central. But, one thing, I'd like to know how there happens to be a 'phone up there."

She said, "Oh, you're just a *dear*." That's just exactly what she said—honest.

I said, "Mountains aren't horrible. I've met a whole lot of them and they're all right. Don't you worry. I was trying to get my sister on the 'phone to tell her Many Happy Wishes, because it's her birthday, and she's having a party. She's just seventeen. We're on a hike."

"Oh, I'm just seventeen, too," she said; "and you're perfectly *wonderful*. I *know* you'll save us. We're up here at the fire observation station. If you'll go to my father and go to the police——"

"We should worry about the police," I said; "the only trail they can follow is a trail around the block. One of us fellows will go to your father's house and tell him, and meanwhile, the rest of us will come up there. Anyway, I'd like to see that observation station. So now maybe you'll calm down and tell me how to find the mountain road."

"Oh, do you *think* you *can*?" she asked.

"Sure, we can," I told her.

Just then somebody must have pulled her away from the 'phone. Anyway, a fellow's voice said, "Let me talk to him. What is he? Just a kid?" Then he said, "Will you please run to Haverstraw and notify Judge Edwards, 22 Terrace Street, that his daughter and three friends are on the top of Eagle's Nest, and to please have the authorities notified and a party formed to come here. I will see that you're suitably rewarded."

I said, "I'd be ashamed to have the whole town of Haverstraw coming up after me, and scouts don't accept rewards. We'll send to Haverstraw and tell Judge Edwards, and then we'll come up and get you. All you have to do is to sit there and tell riddles till you see us. Which road do you take for Eagle's Nest?"

Then he said how we should follow the west road from Haverstraw till we got to a big white house with a windmill in front of it. Pretty soon after we got past that, he said, we'd come to a cow path that led through the fields. He said we should follow that till we got into the woods where we'd see picnic grounds and then we'd find a trail that went up the mountain. He said other trails

branched off from it, so we'd have to be careful. He said it didn't go right to the top, and I suppose that's why they couldn't find it coming down.

He said, "Did you ever hit a mountain trail?"

"*Hit* one?" I said. "We give one a knock-out blow every couple of days. So long, we'll see you later. Tell that girl not to worry."

Gee whiz, I forgot all about Marjorie.

CHAPTER XXXVI
UP THE TRAIL

As soon as I told Westy about it, he said he'd go into Haverstraw so as to save time, while I went back to camp and got the rest of the fellows. Oh boy, didn't I hustle. I went running into camp shouting that there were two fellows and two girls on the top of Eagle's Nest, and that we had to go and rescue them.

"Are they human?" Harry asked in that funny way he had.

"Yes, they're human," I said.

"Five toes on their front feet and four on their hind feet?" he asked me. "Had we better take some flypaper?"

"All right, you can laugh," I said.

He said, "I've followed you through many wild adventures, but I never accompanied you in rescuing a maiden in distress."

"Two maidens," I said.

"All right," he laughed; "the more the merrier."

"And one of those fellows said I was a kid," I told him. "Anyway, if I took a girl out, I'd know how to bring her back, that's one thing. Wait till I see that fellow."

Harry just laughed and said he wouldn't miss it for anything. So we took two lanterns and started off along the road that ran north, and pretty soon we hit into the main road out of Haverstraw and came to the big white house with the windmill. Pretty soon we hit into the cow path that led up through the woods. It wasn't just like the fellow said, because it fizzled out in a pasture. Anyway, across the pasture were thicker woods and we picked up the mountain trail there. If he had told us that it started right near a big stone, it would have saved us a lot of hunting around with our lanterns. That's just the way it is with big fellows; they think they're so smart that they don't know anything. Gee whiz, you didn't need a microscope to see that rock, but he never even mentioned it over the 'phone.

One thing, who ever named that mountain Eagle's Nest ought to apologize to the first eagle he meets. It would have been a crazy eagle that would build a nest like that. As nearly as I could make out it was a lot of mountains all jumbled into one. Harry said it was a kind of a bouquet of mountains.

The trail led up through a pine forest and first it was easy following it. Then it went down into a hollow and got mixed up with a lot of rocks. I guess that must have been one of the rooms of the eagle's nest. Anyway, we couldn't follow it through there so we took a chance and picked it up on the other side.

That's where the climbing began. Oh boy, that was some tangle—all underbrush and scrub oak. *Good night*, I don't know how those girls ever got through there. Pretty soon I stopped and began sniffing.

"Do you know what it reminds me of?" I said. "It reminds me of raking up the leaves at home."

"It smells like a rake," Hunt Manners said, just joking.

"No, but I mean burning autumn leaves," I said; "you know how it smells in Bridgeboro in the autumn. Then you know it's getting cold and Thanksgiving and Christmas are coming. Anyway, you can laugh, but that smell always reminds me of Thanksgiving."

Harry just sniffed, but didn't say anything, and we started up again. There were lots of big hubbles, kind of valleys in the mountain, and most of them were rocky. I guess in the daytime it would be easy enough to keep the trail in those places, but at night, we had some job.

In one of those places we heard a sound as if some one was moving and we all stopped short and looked around. Pretty soon Dorry whispered for me to look, and he pointed to a dark thing kind of sneaking away.

Harry called, "Who's there?"

There wasn't any answer and the man, or whatever it was, was gone. It was so dark we couldn't see which way he had gone.

Harry said, "That's funny; this is a queer place to meet anybody."

Will Dawson said, "I guess it was just a tramp."

"Or a leopard," Tom Warner said.

"Or maybe a *what-is-it*," Charlie Seabury chimed in.

Anyway, we didn't want to run any risk of losing the trail, so we didn't bother about him, but kept on up the mountain.

The higher we got, the worse it was. There was what we call mongrel forest, tall trees and thick brush underneath. But it was straight going now, without any up and down places. The trail was easy to follow, only we had to go in single file, the first fellow (that was Harry) keeping it by holding a lantern low.

Pretty soon he stopped and said, "There's brush burning somewhere around here; I can smell it."

Ralph Warner said, "*Listen*."

We all stood stark still and just as plain as could be, I could hear a crackling sound quite a way off.

"I don't smell it now," I said; "I did a little while ago."

"Wait till the breeze is this way," Harry said.

And then, in just a minute we got a good whiff of it—strong, just like when I burned the leaves on our lawn at home. Then all of a sudden I couldn't smell it at all. Dorry tied his scout scarf on a stick and held it up, and when it blew out straight we got a strong whiff, and the crackling was louder. Sometimes it blew around the other way, up the mountain. Sometimes we couldn't smell anything at all, but mostly we could hear the crackling a little. It was too dark to see any smoke and there wasn't any blaze. Harry said he guessed it was pretty far away. He said the breeze could carry the

smell a long distance.

"It couldn't carry the sound so far, though," I said.

"Trouble is, a stiff breeze can carry most anything," Harry said; "well, let's move along and rescue the maidens."

Just then Hunt Manners said, "*Listen!*"

Far off we could hear the whistle of a locomotive and a kind of rattling, not very clear, but I knew it was the rattling of a train.

"That's 'way over at the Hudson," Harry said; "shows you how far sound will carry in the night."

Just then I looked at Dorry's scarf that was tied on the stick, and I saw it was blowing the way we were going—up the mountain.

I said, "That's why we hear the train; the breeze is blowing from the east. But I can't hear the crackling now."

"Guess the breeze is blowing that up the mountain, too," Harry said.

Then we started up the trail again toward the summit.

CHAPTER XXXVII
A VOICE

It was a jungle of underbrush, that's what Harry said. Pretty soon the trail just fizzled out in the bushes. We poked around with our lanterns and found a spring there. I guess the wood between there and the summit must have been where the party got lost. Sometimes we could hear the crackling and sometimes we couldn't, but we could smell the burning brush all the time.

"Guess we're pretty near the summit," Harry said; "let's call that we're coming. The breeze will carry our voices."

So we all called together, "Hello, we're coming."

There wasn't any answer, but anyway, we couldn't have heard on account of the breeze blowing up the mountain.

That was the only thing we had to guide us now—the breeze. We kept the scarf in the air and just followed it, pushing through the brush. Sometimes we had to stop and tear away an opening, so as to get through. There must have been an easier way or those girls and fellows would never have managed it, but Harry thought it was better to push right up than to be groping around for a path.

All of a sudden, Ralph Warner said, "*Look!*"

Good night! A long line of fire was coming up the mountain, maybe a quarter of a mile in back of us. First it seemed like a dotted line, kind of, because there were dark spaces. But even while we looked some of these filled up. The thing it reminded me of most of all was soldiers; it seemed like a line of soldiers, all bright and fiery, charging up the mountain. It was coming fast and I have to admit it scared me. Because even if we could get through the brush fast enough, I saw we couldn't get out of range of it. Kind of, the thought came to me that it was like soldiers who had just scrambled out of the trenches. That was just how suddenly we saw it. I remember I heard Harry say something about wind and fire being allies, but we didn't stop to talk, only pushed up through the brush as fast as we could, but all the while it kept gaining on us.

Pretty soon I said, all out of breath, "We can't keep this up; it's gaining; I can even feel the heat."

"We can't flank it, that's sure," Harry said; "hustle for all you're worth; that's all I can say."

Gee, I'll never forget that night. We just pushed on up through the brush, stumbling and falling and lifting each other and trying to run. Our clothes were all torn and we were panting like a lot of dogs.

"Watch and see that no fellow is left behind," Harry panted.

Every minute two or three of us were just dragging some fellow up out of the brush. I guess it was a case of more haste, less speed; it's pretty hard running through brush.

Harry just panted out, "Boys, we're in a pretty tight place; don't get rattled. Lift your feet high with each step and follow right in my tracks. If anybody falls, *shout!*"

I said, "We're losing all the time; what's the use?"

"We can keep ahead of it for a couple of hundred yards," he said; "maybe we'll strike clear land. Anyway, we can't do anything else than give it a race."

By that time we could feel the heat and sometimes sparks blew almost over our heads, but they were out when they reached ground. Harry just kept panting out, "Hustle," and "Keep your nerve."

By now the crackling was loud and I could taste smoke. I knew there wasn't much chance for us, but I didn't say so. Anywhere a blown fire is bad enough, but uphill it just rushes. It seemed funny that I'd have to die on Marjorie's birthday, and all of a sudden I thought how I had tried to 'phone her. Gee, she'd never even know that.

"Hustle," Harry said.

"Do you hear a voice?" Dorry asked; "*listen.*"

As plain as could be, I heard a girl's voice, crying. It kind of seemed as if it might be Marjorie crying, because I was dead.

Then I heard Hunt Manners say, "Yes, I hear it."

Harry just panted out, "Never mind, step high and hustle."

CHAPTER XXXVIII
WE FIGHT AND RUN AWAY

"Where are you?" Harry shouted; "all call together."

We could hear several voices answering all together, "Here."

"Keep shouting," he called; "we're coming. Is there any open land up there?"

"No," a voice said; "hurry!"

We followed the voices and pretty soon came to the observation station. It was just a little shanty with a trestle-work wooden tower close to it.

"Did you get 'phone connection yet?" Harry called as we came up.

"Guess the poles are burned down," a fellow's voice answered. "We can't even get Central. Have you got water?" he fairly wailed. "We're going to be burned alive! Have you got water?"

Inside were two girls and two young fellows.

One of the girls was wringing her hands and just sobbing, and the other girl was trying to calm her down. She just kept crying, "It's coming nearer and nearer! What shall we do? Oh, what shall we do?" One of the fellows was all gone to pieces, too, and he just clutched Harry's arm and said, "Save us; can't you save us?"

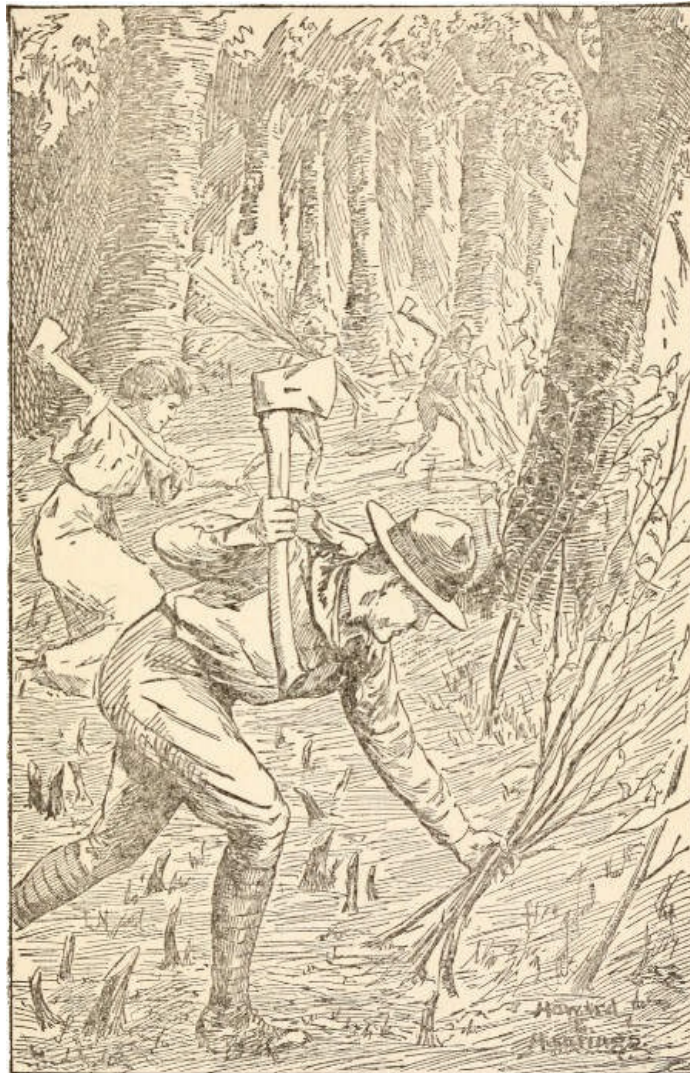
Harry just kind of threw him off. He said, "We're here to save you if we can, and die with you if we can't. The first thing is, not to be a coward. Remember, when the Titanic went down, the band was playing. There have been a couple of million people killed in the last two years. Who are you, to be standing here crying like a baby?"

Oh boy, that hit the girl if it didn't hit the fellow. She just got up and grabbed Harry by the hand and said, "I'm *not* a coward. I *can* be brave."

"All right," he said; "we've got about eight minutes. Sit down and be calm. These boys are scouts. Take a lesson from them."

Oh, didn't I admire that fellow! I bet the girl did, too. Gee, you couldn't blame her.

"There ought to be some axes here," he said; "hustle and turn things over."



WE CHOPPED AWAY THE BRUSH TO MAKE A LONG CLEAR SPACE

Oh boy, it didn't take us long to have that shanty inside out. We found five axes.

"All right," Harry said; "now we've got just one slim chance and it all depends upon how fast we can work. We've got to chop down and tear up a line of brush and start a fire back to meet the other one. Everybody get busy-woman's place is on the fire line; *hustle!*"

Oh boy, you should have seen that girl who had been crying. She just grabbed an axe and wouldn't give it up. Now this is the way we did, and all the while that line of fire was coming along,

nearer, nearer, nearer. We chopped away the brush so as to make a long clear space about ten or fifteen feet wide. Harry and three of the scouts and one of the girls used the axes; because that girl just wouldn't hand over the axe and we couldn't make her. And didn't she turn out to be a regular Mrs. Daniel Boone!

The rest of us threw the brush over toward the fire as fast as we could. Some of the small bushes we just dragged up out of the earth. Some hustling!

The fire was so near us now, that we could feel the heat good and strong and sparks kept falling among us, so we had to keep stamping them out. I don't know how long it took us, but pretty soon we had a long, narrow space cleared. I know my hands were bleeding. As fast as the brush was chopped away, some of the fellows dragged it over toward where the fire was, as near as they dared. That girl would go almost up to the blaze and push a big clump of brush toward it and then run back. Her dress was all torn, but she didn't care.

Then we lighted the brush along the edge of the cleared space that was nearest to the fire. If the wind had been blowing that way, the fire would have moved right out to meet the other one. But it had to buck the wind and that was bad. Anyway, the clearing we had made prevented it from coming our way, but the sparks kept blowing across the clearing, and we knew that all we had done was to check the fire long enough to get another good head start away from it.

Believe *me*, we didn't wait long.

Harry was panting so hard he could only just talk. "We've got to get down the other side of the mountain," he said, "I figure it'll be about ten minutes or so before the land this side of the clearing gets started. The sparks'll start it. The clearing isn't wide enough and the wind is wrong. Drop everything and follow me—quick."

Then Will Dawson spoke up. He never talked very much, but he was a good scout just the same. He was breathing so hard he just gulped. "Do either of you girls or fellows know where the man who lived here got his water? There must be water here somewheres or they wouldn't have built the house here."

"We can't stem this advance with spring water," Harry said; "we'd need a reservoir. Come on!"

"But if we could find the spring," Will said, "we could follow the trickle and get into a brook lower down. How are we going to find our way down the other side of the mountain? It's worse than this side. The west side of the mountain is always worse."

"The fire won't climb down as fast as it climbs up," Harry panted; "it doesn't work that way. The mountain itself acts as a wind shield. We've got to get over the top blamed quick. I'll find a way down. Don't let's waste time here!"

Will just said, "The best trail in the world is a brook. It goes the quickest way. If it takes us fifteen minutes to find the spring, even then it's best. It's better than getting lost. The brook knows its way and we don't. Water is a scout."

"Who says so?" Harry said, kind of impatient.

"Kit Carson said so," Will said.

"Well, I guess you're a pretty good scout, too," Harry said; "hike around, only *hustle!*"

In about two minutes we found the spring, about a hundred feet from the house.

"Lucky it's there," one of those new fellows said.

"It had to be there," Will answered him; "because people drink water. Where there are people, there is water."

Gee whiz, I never knew Will Dawson till that night. And I was mighty proud that he was in my patrol, you can bet.

That girl said, "Isn't he just *wonderful?*"

I said, "You're wonderful, too, and I'd like to have you in my patrol."

But, one thing, there wasn't any time to talk, because the sparks were blowing across the clearing and dropping all around the house. The fire that we had started back toward the other one had cleared some land between us and the blaze, but not enough.

The water from the spring trickled down over the rocks and we followed it. It went through a kind of cavern on the top of the mountain, and when we got through there, we could see plain enough that we were on the west slope. The mountain wasn't all down hill right there, but the trickle of water flowed down through hollows and anybody could see now that Will Dawson was right. He was right for three reasons.

First, because as long as we followed the brook there wouldn't be any going up and down, like there was climbing up the east side of the mountain. Second, because it took us down the quickest way. And third, because we'd always be near water. In some places we had to scramble down steep precipices where the water fell, but we always managed it, and every time we did that, we knew we were saving space.

After we got about half a mile, we could see points of flame up over the top of the mountain and we knew the fire had reached the spot where we had been. Harry said he guessed the shanty was on fire. Maybe it would come down the east side a ways, we didn't know, but anyway it wouldn't have such a breeze to drive it, and we were coming into open land, so we should worry.

The west slope of that mountain was easy, once we got down a ways from the top. That's the way it is with most all the mountains near the Hudson; the steep side faces the river. Pretty soon we were hiking across pastures and then we came to a road. We didn't bother with the brook after we passed the steep part. I don't know where it went, but it did us a good turn, that's one thing. Some fellows like fire better than water, and I'm not saying anything against camp-fires. And I don't say that water is always a friend, either, because look at floods and things like that. But I like water better.

Only, gee whiz, I don't like it to rain in vacation.

CHAPTER XXXIX

WELCOME HOME

Now this chapter goes from the bottom of that mountain to the top of a pineapple soda in Bennett's. That's in Bridgeboro where I live.

The first house we came to along the road we got the farmer up and told him about the fire on the east side of Eagle's Nest, and how we got away from it. He asked us if it was very bad.

"Jiminetty!" I said, "I don't know how bad it is, but I hope the eagles up there have their nests insured."

Harry asked him if he had a telephone and he said, "No."

"We probably couldn't get a number if you did," Harry said; "the telephone company reminds me of Rip Van Winkle; they seem to have gone to sleep at the switch-board for twenty years. Have you got a flivver?"

We kind of knew he had, because they raise flivvers on all the farms up that way. But he was a *regular* farmer—he had a Packard, 1776 model. And, believe me, we packed that Packard, and in ten minutes we were rolling over the road that runs around the mountain, headed for Haverstraw.

Harry kept talking to the girls; it was awful funny to hear him. Those other two fellows didn't have a chance at all. Gee, I was glad of it, because what right did that fellow have to say I was just a kid? That girl that helped us, said we were *just wonderful*. Cracky, I wouldn't say that we're so smart, but when there's a fire we don't stand wringing our hands as if they were a fire bell.

When we came into Haverstraw, we found the streets full of people, everybody watching the fire on the mountain. We could see the east side of Eagle's Nest and the fire, just as plain as if it were all on a movie screen. It seemed kind of funny, because while we were up there we never thought about how it would look from the village. The fire was right up on the top of the mountain now, with little patches in other places, and we could see a great big burned space. I guess that was the very part we had passed through on our way up.

I could see now, even better than before, the danger we had been in. I guess everybody in the village thought we were dead, because when we looked away up there it just seemed as if nobody could have escaped out of all that.

"We went out the stage entrance," Harry said, as the auto rolled up along the main street; "sneaked through the back yard, hey?"

"Oh, I think you're just *marvelous!*" one of the girls said.

Harry said to her, "Let it be a lesson to you never to throw a lighted cigar away in the woods."

"Oh, the *idea!*" she said; "I think you're just horrid. I wouldn't touch a *horrid* cigar!"

"Well, don't throw a good one away, either," Harry said; "the good ones are just as bad."

"Aren't you *perfectly terrible!*" the other girl said.

But she didn't think he was terrible.

Anyway, I knew from what he had said that the dark figure we had seen on our way up was probably to blame for the whole business. Cracky, I've got nothing to say against cigars, because my father smokes them, but anyway, a cigar isn't worth as much as a mountain, I should hope. And you bet it was a lesson to us never to throw matches in the woods and always to trample our camp-fires out before we turn in. But, jiminies, I guess all scouts know that.

When we stopped at Judge Edwards' house, a big crowd of people pressed all around us wanting to know how we escaped. They said that men had tried three times to get up the mountain, but were driven back by the flames; they thought we were all dead.

Mrs. Edwards came running out calling, "*You're not dead! You're not dead! Oh, you're not dead!*"

Gee, anybody could see that.

She just threw her arms around her daughter and around the other girl and around those two fellows. Oh boy, I thought I was in for it, too! I don't mind leopards and *what-is-its*, but nix on hugging and kissing. Then Judge Edwards and Westy came out and, oh, I can't tell you everything that happened, because everybody was talking all at once. Harry said it was a regular west front, all over again.

Mrs. Edwards made us all go into the house and have cake and hot coffee, and just to show you how things happen, what kind of cake do you suppose it was? I bet you can't guess. Yum, yum—m—m, it was cocoanut frosted cake.

And you can bet I thought about my sister Marjorie while I was eating it. I had three helpings and home in Bridgeboro I would only have had two, so that shows you that it's worth while doing a good turn.

After that we didn't have any more adventures. Good night, we had had enough of them, that's what I said. We bunked in Judge Edwards' house and the overflow bunked in the barn, and the next morning we hit the trail for home.

Believe me, we stuck to that trail as if it were a tight rope. Harry said if any one of us looked right or left, he'd put blinders on us. That night we camped near Nyack and early in the morning we said good-bye to the Hudson and struck in southwest till we came to our own little river—that's the Bridgeboro River. At about four o'clock that afternoon we went tramping over the River Road bridge and hit into Main Street. Right on the corner was Bradley's grocery wagon, and oh boy, it looked good to me, because it proved we were back home. "*Bradly's Cash Grocery,*" Dorry said; "those are the three sweetest words in the world."

"Wrong the first time," I said; "the three sweetest words in the world are *Bennett's Fresh Confectionery.*"

"Me for Bennett's!" Charlie Seabury shouted.

"Same here!" Dorry piped up.

"Bennett's or die!" screamed Ralph Warner.

"Lend me a dime, will you?" Tom Warner shouted at his brother.

"Lend me two dimes, somebody!" Bad Manners began howling.

Good night, it was some circus!

Harry said, "Come ahead, I'll take you all to Bennett's and treat you, and I hope I'll never get mixed up with this crew again. I've had enough."

"Hurrah for Harry Donnelle!" everybody yelled.

Cracky, everybody was staring at us and laughing as we went down Main Street. We should worry.

In Bennett's we all lined up and Harry told Mr. Bennett to please put arsenic or carbolic acid or some other nice flavoring in our sodas; something to keep us quiet.

I ordered a pineapple soda and yum, yum-m-m, didn't that first spoonful of ice cream taste good.

CHAPTER XL
MMM—MM-M-M!

This is the last chapter and it's very short. Maybe you'll say that's one good thing. But it's a good one just the same. It's a peach—I mean a pineapple. It's the best chapter I ever wrote. It goes from the top of the glass to the bottom of the glass. And that's the end of the story. So even if the story's no good, it has a good ending. It had a good beginning, too. Harry Donnelle said there should be a special chapter about that soda.

Of course, there were seven other sodas, too. I don't mean that I drank seven more. But mine is the best one to end with, because I always go right down to the bottom of the glass. The bottom is the only thing that stops me.

So that's the way it is with this story. It has a happy ending. It bunks right into the bottom of the glass. The plot is all cleared up. So is the glass. There's nothing left to tell—or to drink.

Harry Donnelle said if I didn't look out I'd scrape the polish off the glass with my spoon.

I should worry, a scout is thorough.

So long.

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