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Title: Tom Slade on the River

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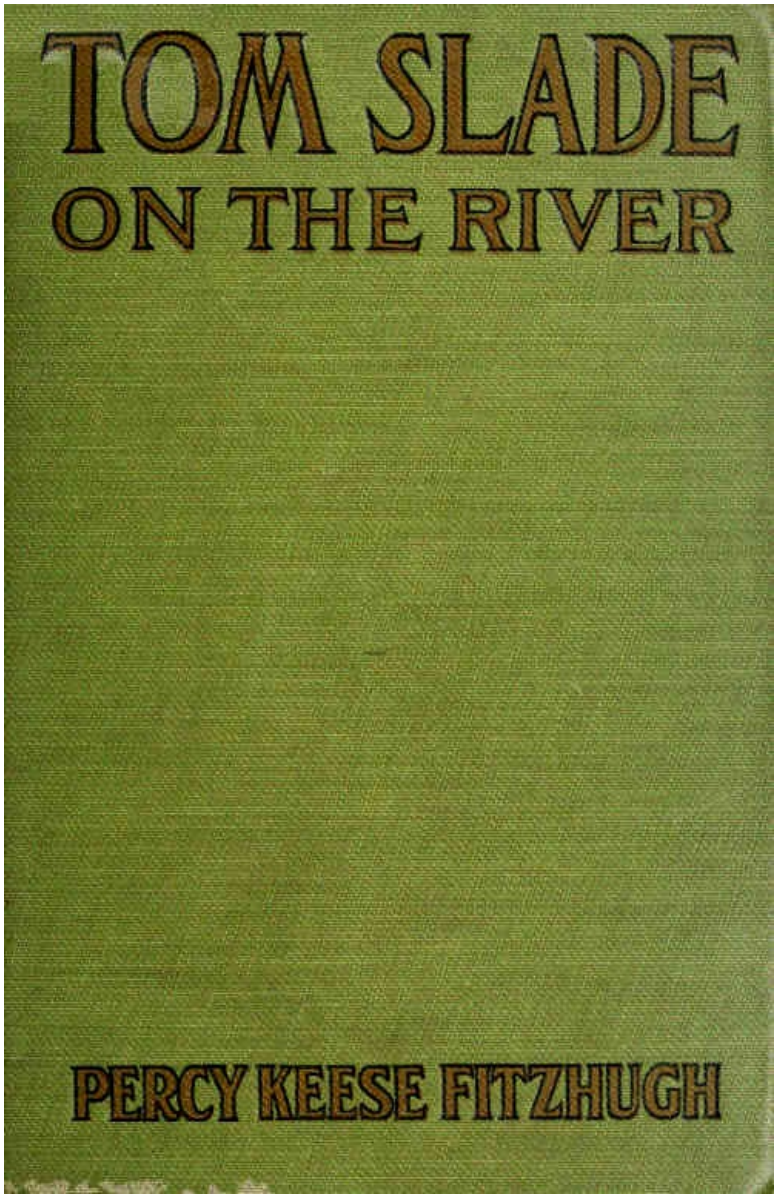
Release date: February 22, 2013 [EBook #42155]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Stephen Hutcheson, Brenda Lewis and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net (This book was produced from scanned images of public domain material from the Google Print project.)



TOM SLADE
ON THE RIVER

BY
PERCY K. FITZHUGH

AUTHOR OF
"TOM SLADE, BOY SCOUT OF THE MOVING PICTURES,"
"TOM SLADE AT TEMPLE CAMP" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
WALTER S. ROGERS

PUBLISHED WITH THE APPROVAL OF
THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS :: NEW YORK

Made in the United States of America

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TOM SLADE
ON THE RIVER

CHAPTER I
THE FIRST ARRIVAL

"But suppose they shouldn't come."

"Son, when I wuz out in Colorady, in a place we called Devil's Pass, I gut a grizzly backed up agin' a ledge one day 'n' heving ony one bullet 'twas a case uv me or him, as yer might say. My pardner, Simon Gurthy, who likewise didn't hev no bullets, 'count uv bein' stripped b' the Injins, he says, 'S'posin' ye don't fetch him.' 'N' I says, 'S'posin' I do.'"

Jeb Rushmore, with methodical accuracy, spat at a sapling near by.

"And did you?" asked his listener.

Jeb spat again with leisurely deliberation. "'N' I did," said he.

"You always hit, don't you, Jeb?" [2]

"Purty near."

The boy edged along the log on which they were sitting and looked up admiringly into the wrinkled, weatherbeaten face. A smile which did not altogether penetrate through the drooping gray mustache was visible enough in the twinkling eyes and drew the wrinkles about them like sun rays.

"They'll come," said he.

The boy was satisfied for he had absolute confidence that his companion could not make a mistake.

"But suppose you *hadn't* hit him—I mean fetched him?"

"Son, wot yer *got* to do, yer do. When I told General Custer onct that we'd get picked off like cherries offen a tree if we tried rushin' a pack uv Sioux that was in ambush, he says, 'Jeb, mebbe it cain't be done, I ain't sayin', but jest the same, we *got* ter do it.' Some on us got dropped, but we done it."

"Did General Custer call you by your first name?"

"Same's you do."

This was too much for the little fellow. "Gee, it must have been great to have General Custer call you by your first name." **[3]**

"Wal, now, I ben thinkin' 'twas purty fine this winter hevin' *yew* call me by my fust name, 'n' keep me comp'ny here. We've got ter be close pards, me an' you, hain't we, son?"

"Gee, I'm almost sorry they're coming—kind of."

They were certainly coming—"in chunks," as Roy Blakeley would have said, and before night the camp would be a veritable beehive. All summer troops would be coming and going, but just now the opening rush was at hand, and the exodus from eastern towns and cities, following the closing of schools, would go far to fill the camp even to its generous capacity before this Saturday's sun had set.

The Bridgeboro Troop, from the home town of the camp's generous founder, Mr. John Temple, would arrive sometime in the afternoon "with bells on" according to the post card which little Raymond Hollister had brought up from the post office the day before.

They were cruising up the Hudson to Catskill Landing in their cabin launch, the *Good Turn*, and would hike it up through Leeds to camp. The card was postmarked Poughkeepsie, and read: **[4]**

Desert Island of Poughkeepsie,
Longitude 23, Latitude 40-11.

"Put in here for gasoline and ice-cream soda. Natives friendly. Heavy gales. Raining in sheets and pillow-cases. Mutiny on board. Pee-wee Harris, N. G. Mariner, put in irons for stealing peanuts from galley. Boarded by pirates below Peekskill. Coming north with bells on. Reach camp Saturday late. All's well with a yo-heave-ho, my lads."

"That sounds like Roy Blakeley," Raymond had said to his companion.

"Does sound kinder like his nonsense," the camp manager had answered.

All through the long winter months Raymond had lived at the big camp with no other

companion than Jeb Rushmore. They had made their headquarters in Jeb's cabin, the other cabins and the big pavilion being shut tight. Raymond had often thought how like the pictures of Valley Forge this vacant clearing in the woods looked in its covering of snow, and sometimes when Jeb was busy writing letters (it was a terrible job for Jeb to write letters) the little fellow had been lonesome, but he had gained in weight, he had slept like a bear, he had ceased entirely to cough, and he ate—there is no way to describe how he ate!

In short, a great fight had been fought out in the lonely camp that winter, and little Raymond Hollister had won it. He could trudge into the village and back without minding it now and he could raise the big flag with one hand. Just the coming summer to top off with and he would be well. **[5]**

Raymond lived down the Hudson a ways and he had come to Temple Camp with his troop the previous summer. His patrol leader, Garry Everson, had won the Silver Cross, which, according to the rule of the Camp, entitled him and his companions to remain three extra weeks, and when Mr. John Temple had heard of Raymond's ill health from the Bridgeboro boys on their return from camp, he had called his stenographer and sent a couple of home-runs over the plate in the form of two letters, one to Raymond's grandmother telling her that she had guessed wrong when she had "guessed that Ray would have to go to an orphan asylum when he came back," and the other enclosing a check to Jeb Rushmore and telling him that Raymond would stay with him for the winter and to please see to it that he had everything he needed.

That was in the previous autumn. Jeb had gotten out his bespattered, pyramid-shaped ink bottle and his atrocious pen and laboriously scrawled his signature on the back of the check and had it cashed in Leeds. He had kept the little roll of bills carefully in his pocket all winter, buying such things for Raymond as were needed, and as the roll grew thinner Raymond had grown stouter, until now, in the spring, he weighed ninety-one pounds and the roll was all gone except the elastic band. **[6]**

It seemed a pity that just at the opening of the new season he should have to think of going home and perhaps to an orphan asylum, but if he had entertained any wild hope that some fortunate circumstance might prolong his stay into the open season it had been dissipated when word had come that the Temples had gone to South America. Either John Temple had forgotten about the boy up in the lonely camp or else he felt that he had done as much for him as could be expected. Raymond might still remain for two weeks of the new season as any scout might do, but then he would be at the end of his rope. For the rule of Temple Camp was that any scout or troop of scouts might spend two weeks at the camp free of all cost. If a scout won an honor medal it entitled his whole troop to additional time, the time dependent on the nature of the award. No scout might remain at camp longer than two weeks except in accordance with this provision, but permission might be granted on the recommendation of one of the trustees for a scout to *board* at camp for a **[7]**

longer time if there were good reason.

One day, however, a registered letter had come for Jeb. It contained fifty dollars and a slip of paper bearing only the words: *For Raymond Hollister to stay until September first*.

"So he remembered 'baout yer arter all," Jeb had said, as pleased as Raymond himself. "I kinder knowed he would. If *he* ain't a trusty (Jeb always said *trusty* when he meant *trustee*) 'n' got rights, gol, I dunno who has. They wuz jest goin' on th'boat, I reckon, when it popped inter his head like a dose uv buckshot 'n' he sent it right from th'wharf.——' N' I dun't hev ter get out my ink bottle 'n' my old double-barrelled pen ter *in*dorse, neither."

There they were—two twenties and a ten; to Raymond they seemed like a fortune as he watched Jeb fold them up and slip them into his home-made buckskin wallet. **[8]**

All this had happened before this auspicious Saturday, but the dispelling of Raymond's fears had given rise to new apprehensions.

"Even if they come," said he, "maybe Garry won't be with them—maybe they won't stop for him." Garry Everson was all that was left of the little troop he had striven to keep together the previous summer and the Bridgeboro troop had promised to stop for him and bring him along.

"An' then agin, mebbe they will," laughed Jeb.

"Who do you think will be the first to get here, Jeb?"

"Mebbe them lads from South New Jersey, mebbe the Pennsylvany youngsters," said Jeb, consulting his list from the home-made buckskin wallet. The trustees kept these lists in the neatest and most approved manner, but Jeb had a system of record keeping all his own. "Let's see, naouw, thar's thet troop with the red-headed boy from Merryland—'member 'em, don't ye? They'll be comin' all week, more'n like. Seems ony like yist'day, thet that ole hill over thar wuz covered with snow—'member how me an' you watched it? We had a rough winter of it, didn't we. Here, lemme feel yer muscle agin now. Gee-williger! Gittin' ter be a reg'lar Samson, ain't ye?" **[9]**

"Now that it's time for them to come," said Raymond, slowly, "I'm almost sorry—kind of. It was dandy being alone here with you."

Jeb slapped him on the shoulder and smiled again that smile that drew the wrinkles like sun rays around his twinkling eyes, and went about his work of preparation. Perhaps he, too, rough old scout that he was, felt that it had been "dandy" having little Raymond alone with him through those long, cold winter months.

All day long Raymond kept his gaze across Black Lake, for he knew that the Bridgeboro boys, hiking it from the Hudson, would come that way; but the hours of the afternoon passed and there were no arrivals. The hills surrounding the camp began to darken in the twilight, save for the crimson tinge upon their summits from the dying sun; the dark waters of the lake grew more sombre in the twilight and the still solemnity of **[10]**

evening, which was nowhere more gloomy and impressive than at this lakeside camp in the hills, fell upon the scene and cast its spell upon the lonely boy as it always did. But no one came.

Jeb Rushmore strolled down to where Raymond sat on the rough bench outside the provision cabin, facing the lake.

“Still watchin’? If yew say so, I’ll light a lantern and we’ll tow a couple uv skiffs across and wait on ’tother side.”

“I wasn’t thinking about them just now, Jeb; I was looking at those birds.”

High up, through the fading twilight, a bird sped above the lake, toward the south. Its course was straight as an arrow. Above it a larger bird hovered and circled but the smaller bird went straight upon its way, as if bent upon some important mission.

Then, suddenly, the larger bird swooped and there was only the one object left in the dim vast sky where, a moment before, there had been two.

“Get me my rifle,” said Jeb. **[11]**

As Raymond hurried back with it, he could see the wings of the big bird flapping in the fury of its murderous work. What was going on up there he could only picture in his mind’s eye, but the thought of that smaller bird hurrying on its harmless errand—homeward to its nest, perhaps —and waylaid and murdered up there in the lonely half darkness, troubled him and his hand trembled perceptibly as he handed the weapon to Jeb.

“You always hit ’em—fetch ’em—don’t you?” he asked, anxiously.

“Purty near.”

The sharp report rang out and echoed from the surrounding hills. Even before it died away there lay at Raymond’s feet a hawk, quite dead, while through the dim light in a pitiably futile effort to fly, the smaller bird, a vivid speck of white in the fading twilight, fluttered to the ground.

It proved to be a white pigeon, its feathers ruffled and stained with blood and several of the stiffer feathers of the tail were gone entirely. One wing drooped as the bird stumbled weakly about and an area of its neck was bare where the feathers had been torn away. It seemed odd to Raymond that the poor stricken thing should resume its clumsy strut, poking its head this way and that, even in its weakness, and after such a cruel experience. **[12]**

But what he noticed particularly was a metal ring around the bird’s leg from which hung a little transparent tube, like a large medical capsule, with something inside it.

“Look, Jeb,” said he. “What’s that?”

Jeb lifted the bird carefully, folding the drooping wing into place, and removed the little tube.

“You fetched him anyway, didn’t you, Jeb?”

“’Cause I *had* ter—see?”

“We won’t have to kill it, will we, Jeb?”

“Reckon not. He don’t seem to be sufferin’ much uv any. Jes’ shook up, as the feller says. Lucky he fell amongst friends. Let’s see wot he’s brought us—he’s one of them carriers, son.”

Raymond said nothing, but watched eagerly as Jeb, leisurely and without any excitement, opened the tiny receptacle and unrolled a piece of paper. The boy knew well enough what carrier pigeons were and he was eager to know the purport of that little roll of script. But even in his excitement there lingered in his mind the picture of that faithful little messenger, intent upon its errand, struck down by the ruthless bandit of the air. He was glad the hawk was dead. **[13]**

“Let’s hear wot he’s got ter say fer himself, son. You jes’ read it.”

The paper was thin and about the size of a dollar bill; it had been folded lengthwise and then rolled up. It read:

> “Come right away. Governor hurt. Serious. Can’t leave. Will try to get to nearest village but am afraid to leave now. He fell and is bleeding bad. Think there’s something else the matter, too. Spotty died or would send.
>
> Jeff.”

Raymond gazed for a moment at Jeb, then down at the dead hawk, then at the pigeon which Jeb still held, stroking it gently.

“It’ll never be delivered now, son, ’cause nobuddy ’cept this here little feller knows whar he come frum nor whar he wuz goin’—do they, Pidge?”

“But somebody’s dying,” said Raymond.

“Sure enough, but we don’t know who ’tis nor *whar* he is—nor whar his friends is neither. An’ this here messenger here won’t tell us—he’s got his own troubles. That thar hawk done more mischief than he thought for.” **[14]**

For a few moments there was silence and Raymond gazed up into the trackless, darkening sky through which this urgent call for help had been borne. Where had it come from? For whom was it intended? Then he looked down at the limp body of the bird whose cruel, bloody work had snatched the last faint hope of succor from someone who lay dying.

“I—I’m glad you kil—fetched him, anyway——” said he.

The thought of those two unknown persons, the stricken one and his frightened companion, waiting all in vain for the help which that faithful messenger of the air should summon, and of that steadfast little emissary, on whom so much depended, fallen here into strange hands, sobered and yet agitated the boy, and he was silent in the utter helplessness of doing anything.

“Naow, if yer could ony tell whar yer wuz goin’ or whar yer wuz comin’ frum, Pidge, we’d be **[15]**

much obleeged," said Jeb; "but you wouldn't, would yer," he added, stroking the bird, "'n' I ain't much uv a hand at pickin' trails in th'air, bein' as I growed up on th'hard ground."

"Nobody can follow trails in the air," said Raymond by way of comforting Jeb. "Gee, nobody could do that. But it's terrible, isn't it?"

He looked up into the sky again as if he hoped it might still show some sign of path or trail, and as he did so a loud bark, a sort of harsh *Haa-Haa*, came through the growing darkness from across the lake, and reverberated in swelling chorus from the frowning heights roundabout. Then there was a long, plaintive bellow which died away as softly and as gradually as the day itself dies, and this again was followed, as it seemed, by the happy music of applauding hands, as if in acknowledgment of the long echoed refrain.

"Oh, they're here! They're here!" cried Raymond. "That was the Silver Fox call—and the Elks—and Garry's with them—he made that Beaver call to let me know——"

Just at that moment the dense brush across the lake parted and a boy, bareheaded and wearing a grey flannel shirt, emerged on the shore. **[16]**

"Oh, Tom! It's Tom Slade!" cried Raymond, forgetting all else in his ecstasy. "Hello, Tom, you big—you big——" But he couldn't think of any epithet to fit the occasion.

[17]

CHAPTER II

TOM SURPRISES THE CAMP

"Believe *me*, it was good to get our feet on terra-cotta—I mean terra firma. I don't want any more life on the ocean wave for at least two weeks. I'm sorry we didn't christen that boat the *Sardine Box*. *Good Turn*—you can't even turn around in it!"

"You shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth," someone laughed.

"You can look a gift boat in the cabin, can't you," continued Roy. "We were crowded in the cabin, not a soul would dare to move. That boat is all right for three scouts like last year, but for three patrols—go-o-d night! There wasn't even room to flop a rice cake over—we had to eat them browned on one side—there was a wrong and a right to them. Never again! What we want is a sump-tu-ous yacht like that one moored at Catskill Landing!"

"Wal, ye did hev quite a crowd aboard, sure enough," laughed Jeb, who always enjoyed Roy's nonsense. **[18]**

"Sure, pick out the one you want and I'll drown the rest," said Roy; "except Pee-wee, we're going to keep him till he gets his eyes open."

Pee-wee Harris, Silver Fox and troop mascot, splashed the oar from his seat in an adjoining boat, giving Roy a gratuitous bath.

“Did you have any adventures?” Raymond managed to ask.

“Oceans of them—I mean rivers. We got three points out of our course and went twenty miles up a tributary.”

“That’s some word,” someone called.

“That’s a peach of a word, comes from the Greek word *Bute*, meaning beautiful, and the Irish word *Terry*. It was all on account of Pee-wee’s ignorance of geography. He thought the Hudson rose in Roseville, Pennsylvania.”

“What!” shouted Pee-wee.

“I’ll leave it to our beloved scoutmaster.”

“Our beloved scoutmaster,” who was rowing one of the skiffs, only smiled.

“I know more about geography than you do,” shouted the irrepressible Pee-wee; “*he* thought Newburgh was below Peekskill,” he added, contemptuously. **[19]**

“*He* thought Sandy Hook was a Scotchman,” retorted Roy. “Well, what’s the news, Jeb, anyway?”

“Yer didn’t give us no chance ter tell yer,” drawled Jeb, as they drew the boats up on shore. “Mebbe yer think yer wuz the fust arrivals, but yer wuzn’t.”

It was good to hear Roy’s familiar nonsense; Raymond, who was quiet and easily amused, saw with joy that the ancient hostilities between Roy and Pee-wee were still in full swing; and for all Roy’s dubious picture of an overcrowded boat (and so it must have been) they had found it possible to stop down the river for Garry Everson and bring him along.

“Last of the Mohicans,” said Roy, as he dragged Garry forward; “all that’s left of the famous Edgevale troop—left over from last summer. The only original has-been. Them wuz the happy days.”

There was Tom Slade, too, quiet and stolid as he always was and with no more sign of the scout regalia than he had shown when he was a hoodlum down in Barrel Alley. His gray flannel shirt and last year’s khaki trousers were in odd contrast to the new outfits which the other members of the Bridgeboro Troop wore. But then Tom was in odd contrast with everything and everybody anyway. **[20]**

Two troops which had come up by the train had joined them at Catskill Landing so the new arrivals descended like an all-conquering host upon the quiet monotony of the big camp.

“And I’m going to stay till September,” said Raymond, clinging to Garry and talking to both Garry and Roy. “Mr. Temple sent the money. Do you remember how I couldn’t raise the flag last summer?”

“You were about as tough as a Welsbach gas mantel last summer,” laughed Roy.

“Well, now I can raise it with one hand and I can hike to Leeds and back. But listen—*listen*; we’ve

got a mystery—it just happened——”

“Give it to Tom,” laughed Roy. “He’s the fellow for mysteries.”

But in another minute he had abandoned his gay tone as the little company stood gazing down upon the dead hawk, while Jeb held a lantern, and listened to Raymond’s breathless account of what had happened. **[21]**

It had a sobering effect upon them all, and as Mr. Ellsworth, the Bridgeboro Troop’s scoutmaster, held that pathetic note and read it in the lantern light, with the scouts clustering about him, he shook his head ruefully.

The note was passed about among the boys, who fingered it curiously.

“It’s a stalking blank, isn’t it,” said Tom, as he handed it to Westy Martin, of the Silver Foxes, who wore the stalking badge. “The printed part has been torn off so’s to get it into that little holder. See?” he added, rubbing his finger along the edge, “it came off a pad—a stalking pad—one of——” and he named the sporting goods concern which made them. “It’s the same kind you and I used at Salmon River.”

The announcement, made in Tom’s usual stolid, half-interested way, fell like a bombshell among them.

“Oh, can we find them? Can we find them?” cried Raymond.

“I’m afraid that doesn’t do us much good,” said Mr. Ellsworth. “We already knew that the message was sent from some isolated place or help would have been procurable. That being the case, I don’t see how the sender happened to have a pigeon handy.” **[22]**

“He had more than one, don’t you see?” said Tom, quietly, “but the other died—Spotty. It must have been sent by some one who’s stalking and a fellow who’s that much interested in birds would be just the kind of a fellow that might have carrier pigeons—it’s good sport.”

“Yes, but where is he—or they? There’s two of them, anyway,” said Doc Carson.

“That’s for us to find out,” said Tom. “I’m not going to sit down here and eat my supper with someone dying.” He kicked the body of the hawk slightly as if to express his disgust that this insignificant creature could cause such trouble and baffle even scouts. “We don’t know much about it but we’ll have to use what little we do know. I know that when people try out carrier pigeons they always get a high ground, and I know that up on that hill over there—in the woods—there were chalk marks on the trees last summer. Maybe someone was stalking there then. Anyway, I’m going to get to the top of that hill and see if I can find anyone up there. I want Doc to go with me. Anybody else can go that wants to. If there’s anybody there we’ll wigwag or [1]smudge it to you in the morning.”

For a moment there was silence. It was exactly like Tom to blurt out his plans with a kind of stolid bluntness, and if he had contemplated a trip to the moon he would have announced it in **[23]**

the same dull way. He seldom asked advice and as seldom asked authority. He was a kind of law unto himself. If anyone knew how to take Tom it was Roy Blakeley, but Roy often threw up his hands in despair and said he gave it up—Tom was a puzzle. He stood there among them now, his face about as expressionless as an Indian's—coarse gray flannel shirt open halfway down to his waist, a strap by way of a belt, and his shock of thick hair down on his forehead. Why he had eschewed the scout regalia while the others came resplendent in their new outfits was a mystery. What advantage over a belt the thin strap had, no one knew.

"Oh, I'll go with you! I'll go with you!" shouted the irrepressible Pee-wee. "I'll——"

"You'll just sit down and have some supper," laughed Mr. Ellsworth.

It is to be feared that the scoutmaster had small hope of anything coming from Tom's proposed expedition, but he was not the one to discourage his scouts nor obtrude his authority. So the little party was made up (for whatever slight prospect of success it might afford) of Tom, Doc Carson, Raven and First Aid Scout, Connie Bennet of Tom's patrol, and Garry Everson who, though not a member of the troop, was asked because of his proficiency in signalling. Roy, who would naturally have gone, was asked by Mr. Ellsworth to remain at camp to help him get the troop's baggage distributed in the several cabins that had been reserved for them. **[24]**

So the four scouts, having taken a hasty bite of supper, set out in the darkness on their all but hopeless errand. Tom carried a lantern; across Doc Carson's back was slung the folding stretcher; Connie Bennet carried the bandages and first-aid case, and all wore belt axes, for the hill which they meant to climb was covered with a dense thicket and even in the lower land between it and the camp there was no sign of path or trail after the first mile or so.

[25]

CHAPTER III

ROY'S CAMPFIRE YARN

"That's what you get for being small," sighed Pee-wee to Raymond Hollister, as they strolled about together while waiting for supper. "When you say you want to go with them or tell them about an idea you have, they just laugh at you, or don't pay any attention. It just goes in one ear and out the other—because there's nothing to stop it, as Roy says. Gee, you have to laugh at that feller. He makes me awful mad sometimes—when he gets to jollying—but you have to laugh at him."

"Do you know what he told me last summer?" said Raymond; "he was telling me about the echoes and he said if I called Merry Christmas good and hard it would answer Happy New Year!"

"That's just like him," said Pee-wee, "you have to look out for him. When I first joined his patrol he **[26]**

told me a lot of stuff. He said if a feller had a malicious look it was a sign he belonged to the militia. He'll be jollying you and me all the time we're here—you see if he isn't. He calls me a scoutlet. And it'll be the same with you, only worse, because you're even smaller than I am. What do you say we stick together?"

"I'll do it," said Raymond, "but I like Roy," he added. "I like him better than any of your patrol —I like him better than Tom Slade—a good deal."

"Tom isn't so bad," said Pee-wee, "but he's kind of queer."

"He doesn't look like a scout at all—not this year," said Raymond.

"He's thinking mostly about his patrol," said Pee-wee, "he's nutty about his patrol. He needs one more member. Roy and two or three others —Westy, he's pretty near as bad—they made a big rag doll with a punkin for a head and brought it to scout meeting as a new member for Tom's patrol. Coming up the river there was a scarecrow in a field and Roy said, 'There's your new member for you, Tom.' Oh, gee, but we did have some fun cruising up. Sometimes I got mad when they kidded me, but most of the time I had to laugh—especially when Roy gave an imitation of a dying radiator—gee, that feller's the limit!"

Raymond enjoyed these tidbits of gossip about the Bridgeboro Troop, the members of which were all more or less heroes to him. **[27]**

"I like Garry best of all," he suddenly announced.

"Everybody likes him," said Pee-wee.

"He's just as smart as any scout in your troop," Raymond added, with the faintest note of challenge in his tone.

The welcome sound of the supper horn brought their talk to an end. It was a merry company that gathered about one of the three long boards (the other two were as yet unused) and to the scouts who were visiting Temple Camp for the first time this late evening meal, served by lantern light under the sombre trees with the still, black lake hard by and the frowning hills encompassing them, was most delightful.

There were few among them (least of all Jeb and the scoutmaster) who believed that anything would be accomplished by Tom's expedition but even a hopeless enterprise seemed more scoutish than doing nothing and Mr. Ellsworth was certainly not the one to deny his scouts any adventure even though it offered nothing more than a forlorn hope. **[28]**

After supper some one suggested campfire and soon the cheerful, crackling blaze which seems to typify the very spirit of scouting was luring the boys back from pavilion and cabin and they lolled on the ground about it as it grew in volume and glittered in the black water.

"What d'you say we tell riddles?" suggested Pee-wee.

"All right," said Roy, who was poking the fire. "Riddle number one, How much is twice?"

“Do you stir your coffee with your left hand?” shouted Pee-wee.

“No, with a spoon,” said Roy; “no sooner said than stung!”

“Tell a story, Roy,” some one called, and half dozen others, who had already fallen under Roy’s spell, chimed in, “Sure, go ahead—story, story!”

“Well,” said Roy, drawing his knees up and clasping his hands about them. “Once there was a scout—anybody got a harmonica for some soft music? No? Well, once there was a scout and he was tracking. He came to a stone wall and in climbing over it he fell.” **[29]**

“Scouts don’t fall,” shouted the irrepressible Pee-wee.

“Who’s telling this?” said Roy. “As he was climbing over the stone wall he fell. He fell on his face—and hurt his feelings. He was self-conscious—I mean sub-conscious—I mean unconscious. He shouted for help.”

“When he was unconscious?” ventured Raymond.

“Sure. But no help came. The sun was slowly sinking. The scout was a fiend on first-aid. He opened his case and got out a bottle of camphor. He smelled it. He opened his eyes slowly and came to——”

“You make me sick!” shouted Pee-wee.

“There was a big scratch on his knee,” Roy continued. “There was a hole in his stocking—about as big as a seventy-five cent piece. He looked about but could not find the piece of stocking the size of a seventy-five cent piece that had come out of the hole. Where was it? The hole was there—the whole hole; but where was the part of the stocking that had been in the hole? He looked about.”

“Topple him over backwards, will you!” called Pee-wee, in a disgusted appeal to Roy’s nearest neighbor. **[30]**

“He looked about some more. Then he sat up. Then he sat down. He was a scout—he was resourceful. He happened to remember that once he had eaten a doughnut. The doughnut had a hole in it. The hole disappeared. He said to himself——”

But he was not allowed to go further, for somebody inverted him according to Pee-wee’s suggestion, and when the general laugh had subsided a boy who had said very little spoke up, half laughing but evidently in earnest and greatly interested in Roy.

“While we were rowing across the lake,” he said, “you made some remark about your motor-boat being overcrowded on the trip up and I got an idea from some things that were said that two or three of you came up here alone last year. It struck me that you might have had some interesting experiences from the way you spoke. I wanted to go with your friends off to that hill, but I didn’t just like to ask——”

“That’s the trouble with him,” a smaller boy **[31]**

beside him, who was evidently his friend, piped up. “He doesn’t like to butt in—gee, you’d never think he was a hero from the way he acts—or the way he talks either.”

The older boy took the general laugh good-naturedly. “I was just wondering,” he said, “if you wouldn’t tell us something about your trip.”

“*He’s* had a lot of adventures, too,” piped up the smaller boy, “and saved people’s lives—and things—and won plaudits——”

“Won *what*?” someone queried.

“Plaudits,” he repeated; “they are things like—like—well, applause, kind of. But he don’t know very much about girls, though.”

“And what is *your* name?” asked Mr. Ellsworth, amid the general laughter.

“Gordon Lord—and his is Harry Arnold—he can swim two miles and back and he can—he can—he can make raisin pudding,” he concluded, lamely. “And he’s got a tattoo mark on his arm.”

“Delaware?” Roy queried, smiling across the blaze at Arnold.

“No, New Jersey—Oakwood, New Jersey—First Oakwood Troop—Hawk Patrol, we are. I guess we’re a little bit ashamed of our patrol name just now.”

There was silence for a minute as all thought of the tragic message which had fallen into the camp. **[32]**

“You should worry about the name,” said Roy.

“I don’t suppose there’s anything we can do,” said Mr. Ellsworth, voicing the thought which held all silent, “but sit here and wait, and if we’re sensible we won’t hope for too much. Come, Roy, let our new friends hear about you boys coming up in the *Good Turn*.”

“It isn’t that big cruiser down at Catskill Landing, is it?” Arnold inquired. “We saw that as we got off the train.”

“No, that’s the kind of a yacht boys have in twenty-five cent stories,” said Roy; “I saw that one; it’s a pippin, isn’t it? Guess it belongs to a millionaire, hey? No, ours is just a little cabin launch—poor, but honest, tangoes along at about six miles an hour and isn’t ashamed. Do you want the full story?”

“If there aren’t any stockings and stone-walls in it,” someone suggested.

“All right, here goes,” said Roy, settling, himself into his favorite posture before the fire, with his hands clasped about his drawn-up knees and the bright blaze lighting up his face.

“You see, it was this way. Pee-wee Harris is the what’d you say his name is—Lord? Pee-wee Harris over there is the Gordon Lord of our troop. And Tom Slade is our famous detective—Sherlock Nobody Holmes. **[33]**

“Well, Tom and Pee-wee and I started ahead of the others last summer to hike it up here. Pee-wee got very tired (here he dodged a missile

from Pee-wee) and so we were all glad when we got a little above Nyack and things began to happen. They happened in large chunks.

“On the way up Pee-wee captured a pet bird that belonged to a little girl (oh, he’s a regular gallant little lad, he is); he got the bird down out of a tree for her and to show how happy she was she began to cry.”

“Gee, they’re awful funny, ain’t they?” commented Gordon Lord.

“Well, we beat it along till we hit the Hudson, then we started north. The shadows of night were falling.”

“You read that in a book,” interrupted Pee-wee.

Little Raymond was greatly amused. So was Mr. Ellsworth who poked up the fire and resumed his seat on the old bench beside Jeb Rushmore. **[34]**

“Team work,” someone suggested, slyly, indicating Gordon and Pee-wee.

“The kindergarten class will please be quiet,” said Roy. “I repeat, the shadows of night were tumbling. It began to rain. And it rained, and it rained—and it rained.

“Suddenly, we saw this boat—we thought it was a shanty at first—in the middle of a big marsh. So we plowed our way through the muck and crawled into it. Pity the poor sailors on a night like that!

“Well, believe me, it was too sweet for anything in that old cabin. Pee-wee wasn’t homesick any more (here Roy dodged again) and we settled down for the night. The rain came down in sheets and pillowcases and things and the cruel wind played havoc—I mean it blew—and shook the old boat just as if she’d been in the water. But what cared we—yo, ho, my lads—we cared naught!

“Well, in the morning along came an old codger with a badge and said he was a sheriff. He was looking for an escaped convict and we didn’t suit. He told us the boat was owned by an old grouch in Nyack and said if we didn’t want to be arrested for trespassing and destroying property we’d better beat it. He told us some more about the old grouch, and I guess Pee-wee and I thought the best thing to do was to hike it right along for Haverstraw and not wait for trouble. We had chopped up a couple of old stanchions for firewood—worth about two Canadian dimes, they were, but our friend said old What’s-his-name would be only too glad to call that stealing and send us to jail. Honest, that old hulk was a *sight*. You wouldn’t have thought anybody would want to admit that he owned such a ramshackle old pile of junk and that’s why we made so free with it. **[35]**

“Well, zip goes the fillum! Here’s where Tom comes on the scene. He said that if that was the kind of a gink Old Crusty was we’d have to go and see him and tell him what we’d done. He just blurted it out in that sober way of his and Pee-wee was scared out of his——”

This time Pee-wee landed a wad of uprooted grass in Roy’s face.

"Pee-wee, as I said, was—with us (dodging again). The sheriff must have thought Tom was crazy. He gave us a—some kind of a scope—what d'you call it—when they read your fortune?" **[36]**

"Horoscope?" suggested Arnold, smiling.

"Correct—I thank you. He told us that we'd be in jail by night. You ought to have seen Pee-wee stare. I told him *he* ought not to kick—he'd been shouting for adventures and here was a good one. So we trotted back to Nyack behind Tom and strode boldly up to Old Crusty's office and—here's where the film changes—"

"Go ahead," said Arnold. "You've got me started now."

"Well, who do you think Old Crusty was?"

"Not the escaped convict!"

"Not on your life! He turned out to be the father of the little girl whose pet bird Pee-wee had captured the day before."

"The plot grows thinner," said someone.

"Well, he had all the signs of an old grouch, hair ruffled up, spectacles half-way down his nose—but he fell for Pee-wee, you can bet.

"When he found out who we were (the girl must have told him about us, I suppose) he got kind of interested and when Pee-wee started to explain things he couldn't keep from laughing. Well, in the end he said the only way we could square ourselves was to take the boat away; he said it belonged to his son who was dead, and that he didn't want it and we were welcome to it and he'd send us a couple of men to help us launch it. He seemed to feel pretty bad when he mentioned his son and we were so surprised and excited at getting the boat that we just stood there gaping. Gee, how can you thank a man when he gives you a cabin launch?" **[37]**

Arnold shook his head.

"Well, we spent a couple of days and eight dollars and fifty-two cents fixing the boat up and then, sure enough, along came two men and Mr. Stanton's chauffeur to jack the boat over and launch her for us. The girl came along, too, in their auto, and oh, wasn't she tickled! Brought us a lot of eats and a flag she'd made, and stayed to wish us—what do you call it?"

"Bon voyage?"

"Correct—I thank you. Understand, I'm only giving you the facts. We had more fun those three days and that night launching the boat than you could shake a stick at. Well, when we got her in the water I noticed the girl had gone off a little way and kept staring at it. Gee, the boat did look pretty nice when she got in the water. I thought maybe she was kind of thinking about her brother, you know, and it put it into my head to ask one of the men how he died. She didn't come near us while we talked, but stood off there by herself staring at the launch. You see, it was the first time she'd seen it in the water since he was lost, and she was almost crying—I could tell that. **[38]**

“Well, this is what the man told me. They said this Harry Stanton and another fellow named Benty Willis were out in the launch on a stormy night. There was a skiff belonging to the launch, and people thought they must have been in that, fishing. Anyway, the next morning, they found the skiff broken and swamped to her gunwale and right near it the body of the other fellow. The launch was riding on her anchor same as the night before. The men said Mr. Stanton was so broken up that he had the boat hauled ashore and a flood carried her up on the marsh where she was going to pieces when we found her. He would never look at her again. They said Harry Stanton could swim and that made some people think that maybe they were run down by one of the big night boats on the Hudson and that Harry was injured—killed that way, maybe.

“Anyway, when the girl got in the auto and said good-bye to us I could see she’d been crying all right, and she said we must be careful and not run at night on account of the big liners.” **[39]**

“Hmph,” said Arnold, thoughtfully.

“Gee, I’ll never forget that night, with her sitting in the auto ready to start home and the boat rocking in the water and waiting for us. I can’t stand seeing a girl cry, can you? I guess we all felt kind of sober when we said good-bye and she told us to be careful. Tom told her we’d try to do a *real* good turn some day to pay her back, because we really owed it to her, you know, and there was something in the way he said it—you know how Tom blurts things out—that made me think he had an idea up his sleeve.

“Well, it was about an hour later, while we were sitting on the cabin roof, that Tom sprung it on us. We were going to start up river in the morning; we were just loafing—gee, it was nice in the moonlight!—when he said it would be a great thing for us to find Harry Stanton! Go-o-d ni-i-ght! I was kind of sore at him because I didn’t like to hear him joking, sort of, about a fellow that was dead, especially after what the fellow’s father and sister had done for us, but he came right back at me by pointing to the board we had the oil stove on. What do you think he did? He showed us the letters N Y M P H under the fresh paint and said that board was part of the launch’s old skiff and wanted to know how it got back to the launch. What do you know about that? You see, we had run short of paint and it was thin on that board because we’d mixed gasoline with it. We ought to have mixed it with cod liver oil, hey? **[40]**

“So there you are,” concluded Roy; “Pee-wee and I just stared like a couple of gumps. Those fellows had been out in the skiff and they couldn’t have used it with that side plank ripped off. And how did it get back to the launch?”

“Sounds as if the man might have been right about the skiff being smashed by a big boat,” said Arnold. “Maybe Harry Stanton was injured and clung to that board. But why should he have pulled it aboard the launch? And what I can’t understand is that nobody should have noticed it except you fellows. Was it in the launch all the time?”

“Yup—right under one of the lockers. Pee-wee and I had hauled it out to make a shelf for the oil **[41]**

stove."

"But how do you suppose it was no one had noticed it till you fellows got busy with the boat?"

"A scout is observant," said Roy, laughingly.

"Hmph—it's mighty interesting, anyway," mused Arnold. He drummed on a log with his fingers, and for a few moments no one spoke.

"Some mystery, hey?" said Roy, adding a log to the fire.

[42]

CHAPTER IV
THE OLD TRAIL

Several things more or less firmly fixed in his mind had impelled Tom Slade to challenge that wooded hill the dense summit of which was visible by day from Temple Camp.

He knew that high land is always selected for despatching carrier pigeons; a certain book on stalking which he had read contained a chapter on this fascinating and often useful sport and he knew that in a general sort of way there was a connection between carrier pigeons and stalking; one suggested the other—to him, at least. He knew for a certainty that the message had been written on the unprinted part of a stalking blank and he knew also that on the slope of the hill he had seen chalk marks on the trees the previous summer. Tom seldom forgot anything.

[43]

All these facts, whether significant or not, were indelibly impressed upon his serious mind, and to him they seemed to bear relation to each other. He believed that the pigeon had been flying homeward, to some town or city not far distant, where the sender perhaps lived and he believed that the pigeon's use in this emergency had been the happy thought of some person who had taken the bird to the hill only to use for sport. He had no doubt that somewhere in the wilderness of these Catskill hills was a camp where the victim of accident lay, but the weak point was that he was seeking a needle in a haystack.

"I wish we'd brought along the fog horn from the boat," he said, as they made their way across the open country below the hill; "we could have made a lot of noise with it up there; you can hear a long way in the woods, and it might have helped us to find the place."

"If the place is up there," said Doc Carson.

"There's a trail," said Tom, "that runs about halfway up but it peters out at a brook and you can't find any from there on."

"If we could find the trees where you saw the marks last summer," said Connie Bennet, "we might get next to some clue there."

[44]

"I can usually find a place where I've been before," said Tom.

“What’s the matter with following the brook when we get to it?” said Garry. “If there’s anyone camping there they’d have to be near water.”

“Good idea,” said Doc.

“That settles one thing I was trying to dope out,” said Tom. “Why should people come as far as that just to stalk?”

“Maybe they’re scouts, camping.”

“They’d have smudged up the whole sky with signals,” said Tom.

“Maybe it’s someone up there hunting.”

“Only it isn’t the season,” laughed Garry. “No sooner said than stung, as Roy would say. Gee, I wish he was along!”

“Same here,” said Doc.

“They’re probably there fishing,” said Tom. “The stalking business is a side issue, most likely.”

“That’s what the little brook whispers to us,” said Doc.

They all laughed except Tom. He was not much on laughing, though Roy could usually reach him.

[45] The woods began abruptly at the foot of the hill and they skirted its edge for a little way holding their lantern to the ground so as to find the trail. But no sign of path revealed itself. Twice they fancied they could see, or *sense*, as Jeb would have said, an opening into the dense woods and the faintest suggestion of a trail but it petered out in both cases—or perhaps it was imaginary.

“Let’s try what Jeb calls lassooing it,” said Garry.

He retreated through the open field to a lone tree which stood gaunt and spectral in the night like a sentinel on guard before that vast woodland army. Climbing up the tree, he called to Tom:

“Walk along the edge now and hold your lantern low.”

Tom skirted the wood’s edge, swinging his light this way and that as Garry called to him. The idea of trying to discover the trail by taking a distant and elevated view was a good one, but the tree was either too near or too far or the light was too dim, and the four scouts knew not what to do next.

[46] “Climb up a little higher,” called Doc. “They say that when you’re up in an aeroplane you can see all sorts of paths that people below never knew about. I read that in an aviation magazine.”

“*The Fly-paper*, hey?” ventured Connie. “Look out for rotten branches, Garry.”

Garry wriggled his way up among the small branches, as far as he dared, while Tom moved about at the wood’s edge holding the lantern here and there.

“Nothing doing,” said Garry, coming down.

“We’re up against it, for a fact,” said Doc.

“That’s just what we’re not,” retorted Connie. “It seems we’re nowhere near it.”

“Gee-whillager!” cried Garry as he scrambled down the tree trunk. “Sling me over the peroxide, will you!”

“What’s the matter?” asked Doc, interested at once.

“I’ve got a scratch. What Pee-wee would call an artificial abrasion.”

“Superficial?” laughed Doc, pouring peroxide on a pretty deep scratch on Garry’s wrist.

“See there?” said Garry. “Feel. It’s sticking out from the trunk.”

As Tom held his lantern a small, rusty projection of iron was visible on the trunk of the tree about five feet from the ground.

“Is it a nail?” asked Connie. **[47]**

“Well-what-do-you-know-about-that?” said Garry. “It’s what’s left of a hook; the tree has grown out all around it, don’t you see?”

It was indeed the rusty remnant of what had once been a hook but the growing trunk had encased all except the end of it and the screws and plate that fastened it were hidden somewhere within the tree.

“That tree has grown about an inch and a half thicker all the way around since the hook was fastened to it,” said Doc.

“It’s an elm, isn’t it?” Garry said.

Tom thought a minute. “Elms, oaks,” he mused, “that means about ten or twelve years ago.”

“There are only two reasons why people put hooks into trees,” said Connie, after a moment’s silence; “for hammocks and to fasten horses to. Nix on the hammocks here,” he added.

“What I was thinking about,” said Tom, “is that if somebody used to tie a horse here it must have been so’s they could go into the woods. The trail goes as far up as the brook. Maybe they used to tie their horses here and go fishing. There ought to be a trail from this tree to where the trail begins in the woods.”

“Probably there was—twelve years ago,” said Doc, dryly. **[48]**

“The ground where a trail was is never just the same as where one wasn’t,” said Tom, with a clumsy phraseology that was characteristic of him. “It leaves a scar—like. When they started the Panama Canal they found a trail that was used in the Fifteenth Century—an aviator found it.”

“Well, then,” said Garry, cheerfully, “I’ll aviate to the top of this tree again and take a squint straight down.”

“Shut your eyes and keep them shut,” Tom called up to him; “keep them shut till I tell you.”

“Wait till Tom says peek-a-boo!” called Connie.

Tom gathered some twigs that were none too dry, and pouring a little kerosene over them, kindled a small fire about six feet from the tree.

“Can you see down here all right?”

“Not with my eyes shut,” Garry answered.

“Well, open them,” said Tom, “and see if the leaves keep you from seeing.”

“What he means,” called Doc, “is, have you an unobstructed view?” **[49]**

There was always this tendency to make fun of Tom’s soberness.

“Wait till I look in my pocket,” called Garry. “Sure, I’ve got one.”

“Shut your eyes again and keep them shut,” commanded Tom.

“I have did it,” came from above.

With a couple of sticks which he manipulated like Chinese chopsticks, Tom moved the fire a little to a spot which seemed to suit him better, then retreated with his lantern to the wood’s edge.

“Now,” he called; “quick, what do you see? Quick!” he shouted. “You can’t do it at all unless you do it quick!”

“To your left!” shouted Garry. “Down that way—farther—farther still—go on—more. Hurry up! Just a—there you are!”

The boys ran to the spot where Tom stood and a few swings of the lantern showed an unmistakable something—certainly not a path—hardly a trail—but a way of lesser resistance, as one might say, into the dense wood interior.

“Come on!” said Tom. “I hope the kerosene holds out—I dumped out a lot of it.” **[50]**

Instinctively, they fell back for him to lead the way and scarcely a tree but he paused to consider whether he should pass to the left or the right of it.

“What did you see?” Connie asked of Garry.

“I couldn’t tell you,” said Garry, still amazed at his own experience, “I don’t know as I saw anything; I suppose I sensed it, as Jeb would say. It was kind of like a little dirty green line from the tree and it kept fading away the longer I had my eyes open. It wasn’t exactly a line, either,” he corrected; “it was—oh, I don’t know what it was.”

“It was a ghost,” said Tom.

“That’s a good name for it,” conceded Garry.

“It’s the right name for it,” said Tom, with that blunt outspokenness which had a savor of reprimand but which the boys usually took in good part.

“That’s just about what I’d say it was,” Garry agreed.

“That’s what you ought to say it was,” said Tom, “because that’s what it was.”

Doc winked at Garry, and Connie smiled.

“We get you, Steven,” he said to Tom. [51]

“Even before there were any flying machines, scouts in Africa knew about trail ghosts,” Tom said. “They’re all over, only you can’t see them—except in special ways—like this. You can only see them for about twenty seconds when you open your eyes. If I’d have told you to look cross-eyed you could have seen it better.”

“Wouldn’t that have been a sight for mother’s boy!” said Garry. “Swinging on a thin branch on the top of a tree and looking cross-eyed at a ghost! I’d have had that Cheshire cat in *Alice in Wonderland* beaten a mile.”

“Captain Crawford who died,” said Tom, “picked up a lot of them. The higher up you are the better. In an aeroplane you needn’t even shut your eyes.”

“Well, truth is stranger than friction, as Roy says,” said Connie; “this trail we’re on now is no ghost, anyway—hey, Tomasso?”

Tom did not answer.

“I got a splinter in my finger, too,” said Garry.

“Must have been scratching your head,” said Connie.

“That’s what I get from seein’ things,” said Garry. [52]

“We’ll string the life out of Pee-wee, hey?” said Doc. “Tell him we saw a ghost——”

“We did,” Tom insisted.

“You mean Garry did,” said Doc. “Of course, we have to take his word for it.”

“Buffalo Bill saw them, too,” said Tom, plodding on.

“Not Bill Cody!” ejaculated Doc, winking at Garry.

“Yes,” said Tom.

“Is it *possible*?” said Doc, “Where’d you read that—in the *Fly-paper*?”

“There’s a trail ghost a hundred miles long out in Utah that nobody on the ground ever saw. Curtis followed it in his biplane,” said Tom.

“Fancy that!” said Doc.

Tom plodded on ahead of them, in his usual stolid manner. “I don’t say you can always do it,” he said; “it’s kind of—something—there’s a long word—sike——”

“Psychological?” said Doc. “We get you, Tomasso.”

[53]

CHAPTER V

ADVENTURE OF THE RESCUE PARTY

“I bet there are real ghosts in here,” said Garry, as they climbed the slope which became more difficult as they went along.

“Regular ones, hey?” said Doc.

“Sure, the good old-fashioned kind.”

“No peek-a-boo ghosts,” said Garry.

“Well, you can knock ghosts all you want to,” said Connie, “but I always found them white.”

“Slap him on the wrist, will you!” called Doc. “Believe *me*, this is some impenetrable wilderness!”

“How?”

“Impenetrable wilderness—reduced to a common denominator, thick woods.”

Withal their bantering talk, it seemed indeed as if the woods might be haunted, for with almost every step they took some crackling or rustling sound could be heard, emphasized by the stillness. Now and again they paused to listen to a light patter growing fainter and fainter, or a sudden noise as of some startled denizen of the wood seeking a new shelter. Ghostly shadows flitted here and there in the moonlight; and the night breeze, soughing among the tree tops, wafted to the boys a murmuring as of some living thing whose elusive tones now and again counterfeited the human voice in seeming pain or fear. **[54]**

The voices of the boys sounded crystal clear in the solemn stillness. Once they paused, trying to locate an owl which seemed to be shrieking its complaint at this intrusion of its domain. Again they stopped to listen to the distant sound of falling water.

“That’s the brook, I guess,” said Tom.

Their approach to it seemed to sober the others, realizing as they did that effort and resourcefulness were now imperative, and mindful, too, though scarcely hopeful, that these might bring them face to face with a tragic scene.

“Pretty tough, being up here all alone with somebody dying,” said Doc.

“You said something,” answered Garry.

They were entering an area of underbrush, where the trail ceased or was completely obscured, so that there wasn’t even a ghost of it, as Doc remarked. But the sound of the water guided them now and they worked their way through such a dense maze of jungle as they had never expected to encounter outside the tropics. **[55]**

Tom, going ahead, tore the tangled growth away, or parted it enough to squeeze through, the others following and carrying the stretcher and first-aid case with greatest difficulty.

“How long is this surging thoroughfare, I wonder,” asked Garry.

“Don’t know,” said Tom. “I don’t seem to have my bearings at all.”

After a little while they emerged, scratched and dishevelled, at the brook which tumbled over its pebbly bed in its devious path downward.

“We’re pretty high up, do you know that?” Doc observed.

“I don’t see as there’s much use hunting for marked trees,” Tom said. “I must have come another way before. I don’t know where we’re at. What d’you say we all shout together?”

This they did and the sound of their upraised voices reverberated in the dense woods and shocked the still night, but no answering sound could be heard save only the rippling of the brook. **[56]**

“We stand about as much chance as a snowball in a blast furnace,” said Garry.

“The thing to do,” said Tom, ignoring him, “is to follow this brook, somebody on each side, and look for a trail. If there’s anybody here they’ll be upstream; it’s too steep from here down. And one thing sure—they’d have to have water. Lucky the moon’s out, but I wish we had two lanterns.”

“We’ll be lucky if the oil in this one lasts,” Doc put in.

Following the stream was difficult enough, but it was easier than the forest they had just come through and they picked their way along its edge, Tom and Garry on one bank and Doc and Connie on the other.

“I don’t believe anyone’s been in this place in a thousand years; that’s the way it looks to me,” said Doc.

“I’d say at least three thousand,” said Garry.

Tom paid no attention. He had paused and was holding his lantern over the stream.

“Those four stones are in a pretty straight line,” he said. “Would you say that was a ford?” **[57]**

“Looks more like a Buick to me,” said Garry, but he added, “They *are* in a pretty straight line. I guess it’s a flivver, all right.”

“Look on that side,” said Tom, to the others. “Do you see anything over there?”

He was looking carefully along the edge; of the water when Doc called suddenly,

“Come over here with your light, quick!”

Tom and Garry crossed, stepping from stone to stone, and presently all four were kneeling and examining in the lantern light one of those commonplace things which sometimes send a thrill over the discoverer—a human footprint. There upon that lonesome mountain, surrounded by the all but impenetrable forest, was that simple, half-obliterated but unmistakable token of a human presence. Tom thought he knew now how Robinson Crusoe felt when he found the footprint in the sand.

The exposed roots of a tree formed ridges in the hard bank, where footprints seemed quite impossible of detection, and it was in vain that

the boys sought for others. Yet here was this one, and so plain as to show the criss-cross markings of a new sole.

"It's from a rubber boot," said Garry. **[58]**

"There ought to be *some* signs of others even if they're not as clear as this one," said Tom. "Maybe whoever was wearing that boot slipped off one of those stones and got it wet. That's why it printed, probably. Anyway, somebody crossed here and they were going up that way, that's sure."

They stood staring at the footprint, thoroughly sobered by its discovery. They had penetrated into this rugged mountain in the hope of finding some one, but the remoteness and wildness of the place had grown upon them and the whole chaotic scene seemed so ill-associated with the presence of a human being that now that they had actually found this silent token it almost shocked them.

PRESENTLY ALL FOUR WERE EXAMINING—A HUMAN FOOTPRINT.

"Maybe the wind was wrong before," said Tom. "What d'you say we call again—all together? There don't seem to be any path leading anywhere."

They formed their hands into megaphones,

calling loud and long, but there was no answer save a long drawn out echo.

“Again,” said Tom, “and louder.”

Once more their voices rose in such stentorian chorus that it left them breathless and Connie’s head was throbbing as from a blow. **[59]**

“Hark!” said Doc. “Shhh.”

From somewhere far off came a sound, thin and spent with the distance, which died away and seemed to mingle with the voice of the breeze; then absolute silence.

“Did you hear that?”

“Nothing but a tree-toad,” said Garry.

They waited a minute to give the answering call a rest, if indeed it came from human lips, then raised their voices once again in a long *Helloo*.

“Hear it?” whispered Connie. “It’s over there to the east. That’s no tree-toad.”

Whatever the sound was, the distance was far too great for the sense of any call to be understood. The voice was impersonal, vague, having scarce more substance than a dream, but it thrilled the four boys and made them feel as if the living spirit of that footprint at their feet was calling to them out of the darkness.

“Even still I think it must be near the stream though it sounds way off there,” Tom pointed; “we might head straight for the sound or we might follow the stream up. It may go in that direction up a ways.” **[60]**

They decided to trust to the brook’s guidance and to the probability of its verging in the direction of the sound. It wound its way through intertwined and over-arching thickets where they were forced to use their belt-axes to chop their way through. Now and again they called as they made their difficult way, challenged almost at every step by obstructions. But they heard no answering voice.

After a while the path became less difficult; the very stream seemed to breathe easier as it flowed through a comparatively open stretch, and the four boys, torn and panting, plodded along, grateful for the relief.

“What’s that?” said Garry. “Look, do you see a streak of white way ahead—just between those trees?”

“Yes,” panted Connie. “It’s a tent, I guess—thank goodness.”

“Let’s call again,” said Tom.

There was no answer and they plodded on, stooping under low-hanging or broken branches, stepping cautiously over wet stones and picking their way over great masses of jagged rock. Never before had they beheld a scene of such wild confusion and desolation.

“Wait a minute,” said Tom, turning back where he stood upon a great rock and holding his lantern above a crevice. “I thought I saw something white down there.” **[61]**

They gathered about him and looked down into a fissure at a sight which unnerved them all, scouts though they were. For there, wedged between the two converging walls of rock and plainly visible in the moonlight was a skeleton, the few brown stringing remnants depending from it unrecognizable as clothing.

Tom reached down and touched it with his belt-axe, and it collapsed and fell rattling into the bed of the cleft. He held his lantern low for a moment and gazed down into the crevice.

“This is some spooky place, believe *me*,” shivered Connie. “Who do you suppose it was?”

A little farther on they came upon something which apparently explained the presence of the skeleton. As they neared the spot where they had seen what they thought to be a tent among the trees, they stopped aghast at seeing among the branches of several elms that most pathetic and complete of all wrecks, the tattered, twisted remnants of a great aeroplane. A few silken shreds were blowing about the broken frame and beating against the network of disordered wires and splintered wood. **[62]**

[63]

CHAPTER VI
THE MOUNTAIN SHELTER

For a few moments they stared at the wreck and said nothing.

“Maybe it was Kinney,” suggested Doc, at last. “Do you remember about Kinney?”

“Come on,” urged Tom.

Half reluctantly the others followed him, glancing back now and again till the tattered mass became a shadowy speck and faded away in the darkness.

“He started from somewhere above Albany,” said Doc, “and he was never heard of again. I often heard my father speak about it and I read about it in that aviation book that Roy loaned me.”

“He’s going to loan it to me when he gets it back from you,” said Connie; “he says you’re a good bookkeeper.”

“Put away your little hammer,” laughed Garry.

“Some people in Poughkeepsie thought they heard the humming of the engine at night,” said Doc, “and that’s what made people think he had got past that point—but that’s all they ever knew. Some thought he must have gone down in the river.” **[64]**

“How long ago was it?” Garry asked.

Tom plodded on silently. It was well known of Tom that he could not think of two things at once.

“Five or six years, I think,” said Doc.

“That would be too long a time for the wreck, seeing the condition it’s in,” said Garry, “but anything less than that would be too short a time for the skeleton.”

“Do you mean they were lost here at different times?” Connie asked.

“Looks that way to me.”

“If there are buzzards up here a skeleton might look like that in a month or so,” Connie suggested.

“There aren’t any buzzards around here.”

“Sure there are,” said Doc. “Look at Buzzard’s Bay—it’s named for ’em.”

“It’s named for a man who had it wished on him,” said Garry. “You might as well say that Pike’s Peak was named after the pikers that go there.”

“How long do you suppose that aeroplane’s been there?” **[65]**

“Five or six years, maybe,” Doc said. “The frame’ll be as good as that for ten years more. There’s nothing more to rot.”

“Well,” said Garry, “it looks to my keen scout eye as if that wreck had been there for about six months and the skeleton for about six years.”

“Maybe if you had tried shutting your keen scout eye and opening it in a hurry—— Hey, Tomasso?” teased Doc.

“Maybe they got here at the same time but the man lived for a while,” Tom condescended to reply.

“You’ve got it just the wrong way round, my fraptious boy,” said Doc. “The skeleton’s been here longer, if anything.”

“Did you see that hickory stick there—all worm-eaten?” Tom asked. “It had some carving on it. None of these trees are hickory trees.”

“I saw it but I didn’t notice the carving,” said Doc, surprised.

“Didn’t you notice there weren’t any hickory trees anywhere around there?” Tom asked.

“No, I didn’t—I’m a punk scout—I must be blind,” said Doc. **[66]**

“You’re good on first-aid,” said Tom, indifferently.

“How’d you know it was hickory?” Connie asked.

“Because I can tell hickory,” said Tom, bluntly, “and it’s being all worm-eaten proved it—kind of. That’s the trouble with hickory.”

They always had to make the best of Tom’s answers.

“I don’t know where he got the hickory stick,” he said, as he pushed along through the underbrush, “but he didn’t get it anywhere around here, that’s sure.”

“And he probably didn’t sit down that same day

and carve things on it, either," suggested Garry; "Tom, you're a wonder."

"He might have lived up here for two or three years after he fell," said Doc reflectively. "Gee, it starts you thinking, don't it?"

Connie shook his head. "It's a mystery, all right," said he.

[67] The thought of the solitary man, disabled crippled, perhaps, living there on that lonely mountain after the terrible accident which had brought him there lent a new gruesomeness to their discoveries. And who but Tom Slade would have been able to keep an open mind and to see so clearly by the aid of trifling signs as to separate the two apparent catastrophes and see them as independent occurrences?

"Tomasso, you're the real scout," said Doc. "The rest of us are only imitations."

Tom said nothing. He was used to this kind of talk and was about as proof against such praise as a battleship is against a popgun. And just now he was thinking of other things. Yet if he could have looked into the future and seen there the extraordinary explanation of his discovery and known the strange adventures it would lead to, he might have paused, even on that all but hopeless errand of rescue, and looked again at those pathetic remains. But those things were to be reserved for another summer.

"Is there anything we can do? What do you suggest, Tom?" Garry asked, dropping his half flippant manner.

"I say, let's shout again," said Tom. "We must be nearly a mile farther on by now, and the brook's getting around to the east, too."

"Good and loud," said Connie.

[68] "All together—now!"

Again their voices woke the mountain echoes. A sudden rustling of the underbrush told of some frightened wood creature. The brook rippled softly as before. There was no other sound, and they waited. Then, from somewhere far off came the faint answering of a human voice. It would never have been distinguishable save in that deathlike stillness and even there it sounded as if it might have come from another world. It seemed to be uttering the letter L in a kind of doleful monotony.

They paused a moment in a kind of awe, even after it had ceased.

"It's calling *help*," said Garry.

"I can go there now," said Tom. "The brook probably winds around that way, but we can cut across and get there quicker. We'll chop our way through here. Let him rest his lungs now—I can go right for a ways. I got to admit I was wrong."

[69] In the dim light of the lantern Garry looked at Tom as he stood there, his heavy, stolid face scratched by the brambly thicket, his coarse shirt torn, his thick shock of hair down over his forehead—no more elated by triumph than he would have been discouraged by defeat, and as the brighter, more vivacious and attractive boy

looked at him he was seized with a little twinge of remorse that he had made game of Tom's clumsy speech and sober ways.

"Got to admit you were wrong *how*—for goodness' sake?" he said, almost angrily. "Didn't you bring us here? Didn't you bring us all the way from Temple Camp to where we could hear that voice calling for help? Didn't you?"

"I said I could find the trees that had the stalking marks last summer," said Tom, "and I got to admit I was wrong, 'cause I couldn't."

"Who was it that wouldn't sit down and eat supper while somebody was dying?" demanded Doc. "There's a whole lot of good scouts, believe *me*, but there's only one Tom Slade!"

It was always the way—they made fun of him and lauded him by turns.

"There's a kind of trail here," said Tom, unmoved, "but it hasn't been used for a long time—see those spider webs across it? Lend me your axe, will you, mine is all dulled."

A hand-to-hand combat with more tangled underbrush, which they tore and chopped away, brought them to comparatively open land which must have been very high for they were surprised to see, far below, several twinkling specks of light which they thought to be at Temple Camp. It was the first open view they had had. **[70]**

They called again, and again the voice answered, clearly audible now, crying, "Help help!" and something more which the boys could not understand. They called, telling the speaker not to come in search of them, that they would come to him, and to answer them for guidance when they called.

They plunged into more thicket, tearing it aside with a will, sometimes going astray, then pausing to listen for the guiding voice, and pushing on again through the labyrinth.

After a little they fell into a path and then could hear the brook rushing over stones not far distant, and knew that it must verge to the east as Tom had said and that the path did lead to it. It would have been a long journey following the stream.

Soon a greater intercourse of speech was possible and they called cheerily that they were scouts and for the waiter to cheer up for they would soon be with him. **[71]**

Presently, along the path they could hear the sound of footsteps. Tom, who was leading the way, raised his lantern and just beyond the radius of its flickering light they could see a dark figure hurrying toward them; then a face, greatly distraught in the moonlight, and Tom stopped, bewildered. As the stranger grasped his arm he held the light close to the haggard, wild-eyed face.

"Hello," he said, "I—I guess I know you. Let go—what's the matter? Weren't you at Temple Camp last summer?"

The stranger, a young fellow of perhaps eighteen, shook his head.

“With one of the troops from——?”

“No,” said the young man.

“Hmn,” said Tom, still holding the lantern up; “I thought——Don’t you fellows remember him?”

Connie shook his head; Garry also.

“Never saw him in my life,” said Doc.

“Hmn,” said Tom. “Maybe I——just for a minute I thought——I guess you fellows are right.”

[72] The stranger was dressed in the regulation camping outfit—the kind of costume usually seen on dummies in the windows of sporting goods stores in the spring, with a spick and span tent in the background, a model lunch basket near by and a canoe crowded in. His nobby outfit was very much the worse for wear, however, and he looked about as fresh as the immaculate Phoebe Snow would look after a *real* railroad journey.

“Maybe I can be rescued now,” he said imploringly, clinging to Tom. “I saw the lights way down there. There was only one till tonight and tonight I counted seven—little bits of ones. I tried to get to them, but I got lost. You can’t go to them. It looks as if you can, but you can’t. They’re just as far away, no matter how far you go—they get farther and farther. Nobody can ever get away from here. Are you afraid of dead people?”

“No,” said Doc. “We’re scouts. Is——”

“If a person looks very different, then he’s dead, isn’t he?”

“Come on,” said Doc. “We’ll see.”

“We’ll never get off this hill; I’ve tried every way ——”

[73] “Oh, yes, we will,” spoke up Garry, putting his arm over the boy’s shoulder and urging him along.

They could see that he was hardly rational, and Garry, better than any of the others, knew how to handle him.

“It’s terrible without a light,” he said; “I spilled all the oil—I’m glad you’ve got a light.”

“What’s your name?” Garry asked.

“Jeffrey Waring—come on, I’ll show you the place.” He shuddered as he spoke.

Once more Tom held his lantern up to the white, distracted face.

“*He* was never at camp,” laughed Doc.

“Hmn,” said Tom, apparently but half convinced.

A few steps brought them to a little clearing where stood a rough shack. Outside it, fastened against a tree, was a vegetable crate with bars nailed across it—the silent evidence of departed pets. Several fishing rods lay against a tree. Close by was a makeshift fireplace. On a rough bunk inside the shack lay a man, no longer young, with iron gray hair. His eyes were open and staring and one seemed larger than the

other. Doc felt his pulse and found that he was living.

“He fell on the rocks and hurt his arm—I think it’s broken,” said Jeffrey. “It bled and I bandaged it.” **[74]**

Doc raised the bandaged arm and it fell heavily. Removing the bandage carefully he saw that the cut itself was not dangerous, but from first-aid studies he thought the man was suffering from an apoplectic stroke or something of that nature. He wondered if the injury to the arm had not been incidental to the man’s seizure and sudden fall. People sometimes lingered in an unconscious condition for days, he knew. It was hardly a case for first-aid, but it was certainly a case for skill and resource, for whatever happened the patient, dead or living, would have to be taken away from this mountain camp.

With Garry’s help, he raised the victim into a recumbent posture, piling everything available under the head while Connie hurried back and forth to the brook, bringing wet applications for the head and neck.

There was no sign of returning consciousness and the question was how to get the patient away down to Temple Camp where medical aid might be had, and where any contingency might be best handled.

The four boys, greatly hampered in their discussion by Jeffrey, whose long vigil had brought him to the verge of collapse, decided that it would be quite useless to signal for help, since it would mean another expedition with most of the difficulties of their own, even if attempted after daybreak. **[75]**

So they decided to wait for dawn, which happily would come soon, and with the first sign of it to send a smudge signal that they were coming and to have a doctor at camp. They believed that in the daylight they could carry the patient back over the same path which they had so laboriously opened and though delay was irksome this plan seemed the only feasible one to follow.

Despite their weariness none could sleep, so they kindled a little fire and sat about it chatting while they counted time, impatiently waiting for the first streak of daylight.

It was then that they learned from the overwrought boy something of his history, but they got it piecemeal and had to patch together as best they could his rather disjointed talk.

“Is he your father?” Doc asked.

“No, he’s my uncle,” said Jeffrey. “He isn’t a real governor; I only call him that. He’s eccentric—know what that is? If we hadn’t come trout fishing it would have been all right. I could have sent my pigeons from the boat—I’ve got a regular coop there—it cost thirty dollars.” **[76]**

“But you like the stalking, don’t you?” Connie asked.

“Yes, but I can’t be quiet enough—I can’t sneak up to them. You have to be quiet and stealthy when you stalk.”

They made out that Mr. Waring was something of a sportsman and was wealthy and eccentric.

“We live in a big house in Vale Centre,” Jeffrey told them, “and we have fountains and I have twenty-seven pigeons and two dogs—and I can have anything I want except an automobile. I can’t have an automobile because I’m nervous.”

“You don’t mean you live near Edgevale Village, down the Hudson?” Garry asked in surprise. “I live about two miles from the Centre myself.”

“We live in a house that cost thousands and thousands of dollars, but I like our boat best. If there’s a war we’re going to give it to the government, but if there isn’t any war it’s going to be mine some day.” **[77]**

It appeared that Jeffrey and his uncle lived alone, save for the servants, and had cruised up the Hudson to Catskill Landing in their boat for the trout fishing of which the old gentleman was fond. How the pair had happened to penetrate to this isolated spot was not quite clear, but the boys gathered that it had been a favorite haunt of Mr. Waring’s youthful days.

“He told me he’d bring me and show me,” said Jeffrey, “and that we’d stay here and catch fish and I could send my pigeons back to James—he’s our chauffeur—and I’d get better so’s I could remember things better. Do you think you get better living in the woods?”

“Surest thing you know,” said Garry.

The picture of the kindly old gentleman, bringing his none too robust nephew to this lonely spot, which lingered in his memory perhaps as the scene of woodland sports of his own boyhood, touched the four boys and seemed to bring them in closer sympathy with the figure that lay prone and motionless within the little shack.

“I can have anything I want,” Jeffrey told them again. “Spotty cost fifty dollars, but he died. That’s because I was sick and my brain didn’t work good. My other carrier cost thirty dollars and I sent him to James to tell him the governor was hurt.” **[78]**

The scouts told him the fate of the pigeon and of how they had received the message.

“But we’ll never get away from here,” Jeffrey said hopelessly. “We’ll never find our way back.”

With the first light of dawn Garry increased the dying blaze and sent the smudge signal. Piling damp leaves on the fire he caused a straight thin column of thick smoke to rise high into the air and by inverting the deserted pigeon coop over this, and removing and replacing it as the Morse code required, he imprinted against the vast gray dawn the words

COMING HAVE DOCTOR

They knew well enough that some one in the camp would keep sleepless vigil, watching for just such a message. Three times the words were spelled out in smoke to make sure that they would be caught and understood.

To Jeffrey, whose only resource had been his pet **[79]**

pigeon and who had been unnerved by his inability to find his way from the hill, the sending of this message and the quiet orderly preparations for departure which followed were the cause of gaping amazement. He clung to Garry, as the others got his uncle onto the stretcher, and walked along at his side, plying him with excited questions. Sometimes it was necessary for him to take a corner while one of the scouts went ahead to open a way and then his panic was pitiable.

It did not seem at all peculiar to the others that he should single out Garry and cling to him, for everybody fell for Garry almost at first sight. What they did notice was that he appeared to shun Tom, who, indeed, was entitled to all his gratitude and was the hero of the occasion if anyone was.

But then he was a queer boy anyway, and thoroughly shaken up by his experience.

As for Garry, the sudden hit which he had apparently made quite amused him.

“You should worry,” he said, laughingly to Tom.

And Tom shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

[80]

CHAPTER VII
“UNDER WHICH KING?”

“And, oh it was great the way you sent that signal. Gee, a smudge message is no cinch—I always said so. You can talk about your wireless and your wigwagging and semaphoring and fire signalling and all, but you got to admit smudging is hardest of all—gee, you got to admit that!”

“It’s easy as pie,” said one of the group, making an imposing smudge upon Gordon Lord’s round face by way of proof.

“Because,” continued Gordon, calmly wiping his cheek, “because you can’t shut it off so sudden.”

“Something like you, hey, kiddo?” smiled his tall friend, Arnold, who stood near him.

“It’s hard to read,” Gordon went on, undaunted, “but it’s even harder to send. Of course, even if it had mistakes, *he* could read it,” he added, indicating Harry Arnold, “because he can do pretty nearly anything. But you sure are a peach of a scout—gee, I got to admit that.”

[81]

Having thus delivered his verdict, he gave a tug to his stocking which had a way of slipping down, as one might say, whenever his back was turned.

“A scout’s got to be magmanigous,” he concluded, as he tugged up the other stocking.

“Well, I thank you for the compliment,” laughed Garry Everson, “undeserved though it be. I think the skill is always on the receiving end but we won’t quarrel about it,” he added, turning to Arnold.

Little Raymond Hollister clung to Garry as if he feared the crowd might kidnap him, his face beaming with pride at all this praise showered upon his hero.

“When we were a patrol last year,” he ventured, “he received them as well as sent them. Anybody that was here last summer can tell you how he saved a fellow’s life, too.”

“Yes, but it was one of our troop that bandaged him,” piped up Pee-wee Harris of the Silver Foxes; “it was Doc Carson.”

“You’ll lose your reputation,” someone laughed at Arnold, “if you don’t look out.”

“Sure, watch your rep when the Bridgeboro Sprouts get started,” said Roy Blakeley. “I guess we better put them to bed now, hadn’t we?” he asked, winking at Jeb Rushmore. “The trouble with this blamed camp is, there are too many heroes.” **[82]**

“There isn’t anybody here can beat Harry being a hero!” Gordon bristled, in prompt defense of his friend.

“Sure there is,” said Roy.

“Who?” Gordon demanded.

“Do you know Fat Burns?”

“No.”

“Well, put some on the fire and see,” said Roy.

Gordon ignored the laugh at his expense. “Even girls say so,” he said, “Gee, I hope a girl knows a hero when she sees one.”

Little Raymond, still keeping close to Garry, laughed silently, but he did not venture again into the arena.

“I reckon the real hero o’ this here business ain’t said nuthin’? and ain’t hed nuthin’ said fur him, this far,” drawled Jeb.

“Right you are!” said Doc Carson. “Tomasso Slade.”

“Thou never spakest a truer word,” said Roy. **[83]**

Tom stood among them, his hair still frowzled, his faded gray shirt torn, his belt drawn much tighter than necessary, and a disfiguring scratch across his rather lowering countenance. He did not look at all like the scouts on the cover of *Boy’s Life*.

“I don’t see as anybody’s a hero in particular,” he said, disconcerted at being brought into the limelight. “I don’t see’s you can be a hero just climbing up a hill. That’s all we did. That girl in the munition factory that stayed at her telephone when the shells were flying around—she was what I call a hero.”

“She was a shero, Tomasso,” corrected Roy.

“I think Hobson was a hero, too,” Tom added soberly. “I’m satisfied to be at the head of my patrol and be a first class scout——”

“And to have the gold cross,” someone interrupted, referring to his winning of this

coveted medal the previous summer.

“Well, of course, I’m glad I’ve got that, too,” Tom said. “Maybe if we get into a war with Germany we’ll have a chance to be heroes, for sure—like the English scouts. I ain’t neutral, anyway. I ain’t neutral any more since last Tuesday.” **[84]**

It was exactly like Tom to announce his repudiation of neutrality in this sudden fashion and in face of his scoutmaster’s admonition that all the troop should honor the President’s express wish. It was also exactly like him to begin on one subject and to end with some blunt announcement on another. His mention of “last Tuesday” referred to the torpedoing of a ship by a German submarine.

“All right, Tom,” said Mr. Ellsworth, who understood him perfectly, “but we mustn’t shout about it, you know, because we’re not in the war —”

“Torpedoing’s kind of like hitting below the belt,” said Tom, “but that ain’t what I wanted to say. I didn’t say anything about that fellow till they took his uncle away——”

“You mean Jeffrey here?”

“Yes—because it didn’t seem right—sort of. But now he’s here alone with us, I suppose he’ll join one of the troops and I’d like to have him join my patrol because I need one more member and I think he’ll be good on stalking and I want a stalking badge in my patrol. Maybe he could come back and live in Bridgeboro somewhere if his uncle should——”

“Surely, Tom,” said Mr. Ellsworth, quick to prevent him from finishing his sentence. **[85]**

“I don’t mean I want it just as a reward—’cause I don’t think I did anything special. But I got just one more member to get and——”

There was a slight movement in the group and Jeffrey Waring brushed past the others and grasped Garry’s arm.

“I want to be in *his* club,” said he, looking almost imploringly at Mr. Ellsworth. “I want to join *his* class; he can send a message even better than a pigeon can take it, and it’s *sure* to get there. He can do it just with smoke. I want to join *his* class.”

He was greatly excited, as he always became when he talked and Garry winking significantly at the Bridgeboro Troop’s scoutmaster, strolled away with Jeffrey clinging to him and Raymond following.

Tom Slade stood motionless, stolid, and said not a word. Then, in a moment, Roy Blakeley went over and stood beside him, resting his arm on Tom’s shoulder.

Once, a couple of years before, when Tom was a hoodlum and John Temple was an old grouch, the capitalist had strode down through a field where Tom was trespassing, shouting threats and imprecations at the waif, whose first impulse was to run. Turning to do so, he had found Roy Blakeley, scout, standing by him, and had felt Roy’s arm on his shoulder. And Tom Slade, hoodlum, did not run. Goodness, it seems **[86]**

like ancient history now, with Tom head of a patrol and "Old Man" Temple founder and trustee of the big Temple Camp!

But Mr. Ellsworth and Doc Carson and Westy and others of the Ravens and Silver Foxes, remembered, and they noticed how Roy Blakeley stepped forward now and put his arm over Tom's shoulder, just as he had then.

"*You* should worry, Tomasso," they heard him say in an undertone.

[87]

CHAPTER VIII
JEFFREY WARING

The scene just described was in the Pow-wow Circle, as they called the open space where the camp fire burned by night at Temple Camp. After a difficult descent of the hill the boys had been met at the wood's edge by Jeb with more scouts, a couple of visiting scoutmasters and a physician from the not far distant village. To Jeffrey, whose poor efforts had been so futile and bewildering, this orderly sequel to Garry's smudge signal was nothing less than a miracle, and he gazed at the party from camp as if they had dropped from the clouds.

Despite their burden and the special caution which had been necessary in picking their way down, the descent had been easier than the laborious journey in the dark the night before, but it was long past noontime when they emerged at the edge of the woods.

[88]

Perhaps it was natural that Jeffrey, not knowing of that battle with the thicket and the darkness should have seen the signalling as the most astonishing feat, and since Doc had assumed responsibility for his injured uncle and in a way superintended the descent, perhaps it was natural too that the first-aid boy, who received a flattering comment from the real doctor, should come second to Garry in his estimation. Whatever his peculiarities, he certainly did not stint his hero-worship. But Tom he disregarded altogether.

"Do you know why that is?" said Gordon Lord, of the First Oakwood, N. J., Troop, talking the thing over with Honorable Pee-wee Harris, of Bridgeboro. "Do you know why that is?"

Pee-wee couldn't guess, but he hazarded the observation that Jeffrey was a kind of a *nut*.

"It's because Tom Slade doesn't wear any uniform," said Gordon. "It's the uniform that gets people—specially girls. Gee, they all fall for the uniform—everybody does. You wouldn't catch *me* going without it."

[89]

"I don't know why Tom doesn't wear one," said Pee-wee. "But even if he did I don't think girls would notice him much—he isn't that kind. He's kind of clumsy, like. He worked after school all winter and he must have got a lot of money saved up, but when Roy asked him if he wasn't going to get a suit and things, he said he wasn't

going to bother—he was more comfortable that way. We all got new outfits this year. Mr. Ellsworth says Tom's a kind of a law inside himself—or something like that."

It troubled Gordon that a boy who could do the things Tom had done should eschew the khaki regalia, the hanging jack knife, the belt axe and the scarf, and he spoke to Roy about it.

"Search me, kiddo," said Roy. "He ought to have forty-'leven dollars and some trading stamps saved up. He's a thrifty soul and he sold the *Friday Evening Pest* all winter. It's got me guessing. Maybe he's sending it to Belgium—he's come out strong for the Allies now. He's a sketch."

The doctor had shaken his head when he looked at Mr. Waring, and said that his life was hanging on a thread, and that the thread was pretty sure to break. They took him to the little hospital in the village and from there telegraphed to his home.

On the doctor's suggestion, seconded by Jeb and the scoutmasters, the boy was kept at camp awaiting developments, and it was well toward evening of that first Sunday while they were waiting for supper, that the tension and suspense relaxed somewhat in this general talk which had ended in Jeffrey's impulsive and rather surprising act. **[90]**

To the great delight of Raymond the strange boy was allowed to bunk in the little cabin with himself and Garry, where he spent practically the whole of the next day watching Garry unpack his luggage and reading the Scout Handbook, turning more than once to the chapter about signalling, which he seemed to regard as a sort of sleight-of-hand.

He made an aimless tour about the camp, pausing here and there before tent or cabin and chatting with the scouts who received him kindly enough, listening to his rather rambling talk and affecting an interest in the wealth and especially the boat, of which he was never weary of boasting. He seemed fascinated with this view of real camp life. What the boys really thought of him it would be hard to say, but they were for the most part indulgent and if there were a few who yielded to the temptation to jolly him, they were promptly discouraged by the others.

For Garry, however, there was less patience and Jeffrey more than once felt moved to defend his hero against the plainer sort of abuse. The sarcastic references to his chosen friend he did not quite appreciate. **[91]**

Garry, indeed, was paying dearly (especially at the hands of the Bridgeboro Troop) for his act of walking away with Jeffrey to the humiliation and disappointment of Tom Slade.

"Well," said one scout, who was raising the patrol pennant outside his cabin as Jeffrey came along, "how do you think you like it?"

"Can you signal?" Jeffrey asked, as if that were really the important subject.

"I'm not so worse at it," the scout replied, "but I'm not much good as a kidnapper."

Jeffrey did not catch the sense of this. He looked at the boy for a moment and then strolled on, pausing in front of the Silver Fox's cabin, where Roy Blakeley, Pee-wee Harris, and others of that notoriously flippant patrol were building a couple of balsam beds outside, for the overflow.

"Good-morning glory," said Roy.

"How do you do drop—that's the way you should answer him," said Pee-wee; "come right back at him—don't let him get away with it." **[92]**

Jeffrey stared. "That's a good thick one," he said, referring to a branch Roy was about to use.

"Sure, it was brought up on oatmeal," said Roy. "Stand from under!"

Jeffrey hastened to get out of the way.

"How long is it?" said he.

"'Bout as long as a short circuit," said Roy.

"What?"

"I said it's a beautiful afternoon this morning," said Roy. "Well, you got wished onto the large Edgevale Patrol, hey? Three members. *Some* patrol!"

"Whose cabin is that next one?" Jeffrey asked irrelevantly.

"That? That's Mr. Rushmore's cabin. He has charge of the grounds—all of 'em, even the coffee grounds."

"What?" said Jeffrey.

"And the next cabin," said Roy, "belongs to the Elks—Tom Slade."

"I don't like him so much," said Jeffrey.

"You don't, hey? Well, you might have got into a *regular* patrol," said Roy, busy with his work. "It was up to you." **[93]**

Not having been of the party which rescued Jeffrey, and hence not having had the same opportunity to observe him, Roy was not as patient with him as some of the others.

"What's the matter with you?" he demanded, wheeling about and becoming serious. "Don't you know who you've got to thank for getting you out of your scrape? Don't you know who saved you from starving up there? What's the matter with you, anyway? I know fellows who'd be glad of the chance to get into the Elk Patrol. They've got the gold cross in that patrol, let me tell you—and *sixteen merit badges*! And *you*, like a big chump, pass it up, and run after that pair that isn't any patrol at all! Let me tell you something, my fraptious boy, in case you should ever get to be a scout——"

"I *am* a scout," said Jeffrey, and doubtless he thought he was.

"There's a little old book with a red cover you've got to take a squint into before you're a B. S., let me tell you. And it's got some good dope about making sacrifices and being generous and you can't be a good scout walking away with somebody else's prize—you can't! You tell your **[94]**

patrol leader, or whatever you call him, to look in that little old Handbook and see if he finds anything there that'll give him the right to put one over on the fellow that found you and brought you here; and the fellow that saved his own life, too! Hand me that other branch, Pee-wee."

Jeffrey could only stare.

"Is that cross solid gold?" he finally asked, weakly.

"Sure—14 carrots—a couple of turnips and a few potatoes. Stand out of the way, will you?"

Jeffrey made way for Westy Martin, who was tugging a balsam branch to Roy. Then he moved away together.

Outside the Elks' cabin was Dory Bronson, spearing papers, for the Elks were a tidy lot and took great pride in their surroundings.

"Is that a game?" Jeffrey asked.

"Hello, Sister Anne," said Dory. "What's going to be the name of your patrol?"

"Do we have to have a name?" asked Jeffrey.

"You sure do. I was thinking 'magpie' would be a good one. They usually get everything in sight." **[95]**

Jeffrey was not good at repartee; he did not understand these boys and he could not cope with them. Much less did he understand the wholesome spirit of rivalry and of loyalty which now made Garry an outsider—ostracized for what the whole camp regarded as a piece of selfishness and unfairness. His winking at Mr. Ellsworth as he walked away with his new recruit was taken as a deliberate attempt to flaunt his triumph.

Some said he had changed since the previous summer. There were a few who said it was natural, perhaps, that he should have taken the strange boy under his wing so promptly, seeing that their homes were not far apart. But everyone agreed that by all the rules of the game Jeffrey should have gone with Tom.

"We asked Garry to go up the hill with us that night," said Connie Bennet, "even though he isn't in our troop, just because we liked him."

"And we stopped at Edgevale and brought him along in the *Good Turn*," said Will Bronson, "even though we were crowded already. And now he puts one over on us like that! *He's* a fine scout!" **[96]**

"Only you have to say it quick to keep from choking!" added Roy, who had stopped before the Elks cabin.

"He sure got away with it," added Connie. "He's got this Jeffrey, or whatever his name is, eating out of his hand."

"You should worry," said Roy, as he strolled on.

The next day two men arrived in an automobile, bringing with them the news that Jeffrey's benefactor was dead. It cast a shadow over the camp even among the many who had not seen

the injured man. The boy himself was greatly distressed, wringing his hands like a child, and clinging to Garry.

One of these gentlemen was Mr. Waring's executor, the other a friend, and since both of them lived in Poughkeepsie, which was the nearest city to Edgevale, neither knew much about Mr. Waring's home life. They agreed with Mr. Ellsworth that it would be in all ways best for this unfortunate nephew, who seemed to be Mr. Waring's only survivor, to remain where he was, and accept the hospitality of the camp until his uncle's affairs could be settled.

"Can I stay with Garry and Raymond and be in their club and take them out in my boat?" Jeffrey asked, excitedly; "it's mine now, isn't it?" **[97]**

"I suppose you boys will have to settle that among yourselves," said the executor; "but I don't know about the boat," he added. "Undoubtedly it will be yours, but you mustn't try to run it by yourself. It would be all right to use it if these gentlemen (turning to Mr. Ellsworth and one of the camp trustees) will take charge of it."

"Garry understands marine engines," Raymond ventured timidly to the visitors, whom the boys had just been showing about the camp.

"Gee, is he after the boat, too?" sneered Connie.

"No, he isn't after the boat!" Raymond flared back; "and he's got a uniform and that's more than *your* patrol leader has!" he added irrelevantly.

Garry quieted Raymond and the others laughed. No one had any resentment against *him*, nor much against Jeffrey, for whom they made full allowance, but Garry was ignored, and this was the unhappy sequel of his friendship with the Bridgeboro boys and of the expedition which he had made with three of them up the wooded hill. **[98]**

It was not the policy of Jeb Rushmore nor of the scoutmasters and trustees to seek to adjust differences between the scouts and so the golden days (which were all too fleeting for quarrels and bad-feeling) were clouded by this estrangement.

At last, one day, Harry Arnold took it upon himself to go to Garry's cabin and talk with him. He, at least, had not altogether shunned Garry and he felt free to approach him. He found him teaching Jeffrey to carve designs on a willow stick by artistic removal of the bark. Raymond was making birchbark ornaments.

"Hello," said Garry; "want to join the kindergarten class?"

"Hello, Jeff, old scout!" said Arnold, slapping him on the shoulder. "Hello, Raymond, how's the giant of the Hudson Highlands? I thought I'd drop around and see if you were still alive—you stay by yourselves so much."

"We're not exactly what you'd call popular," said Garry, smiling a little. "How's the birthday celebration coming on?" **[99]**

"Swell. I understand Slade's own patrol is going to give him one of those bugles that's advertised

in *Scouting*—so he can blow himself, Blakeley says—with a fancy cord and tassels and the names of all his patrol engraved on it. Too bad he hasn't got a full patrol. Just one more name and——"

"What's the camp going to give him?" interrupted Garry.

"The camp is going to give him a wireless set."

"Gee!"

"It's a peach, too! Did you hear what Jeb's going to give him? An elk's head—gee, you ought to see the antlers on it. He wrote to some ranch or other away out in Montana to send it. He shot the elk himself. Roosevelt told him it was one of the finest he ever saw."

"He ought to know," said Garry.

"There's where you said something! It'll be appropriate, hey—Elk Patrol. And, let's see, the Bridgeboro Troop's going to give him a high grade searchlight for tracking. Jeb nearly fell off his grocery box when he heard that! He thinks you ought to go blindfold when you're tracking. Then there's a lot of crazy stuff—that fellow Blakeley hasn't had any sleep the last week thinking up fool things. He's going to give Tom a cat's collar to use for a belt." **[100]**

"That's a good one," laughed Raymond.

"And—oh, I don't know what all. Pee-wee Harris is going to give him *Boy's Life* for a year——"

"Next Saturday, isn't it?" asked Garry, indifferently.

"Yes—Elks will be two years old. Blakeley was telling me their whole history. You don't mind if I sit down on these bricks, do you. It's kind of damp on the ground. Do all your own cooking here?"

"Yes, most of it. Make yourself at home."

"Make yourself homely, as Blakeley would say," laughed Arnold, changing his seat.

"Suppose you fellows go and get some more willow," said Garry. "Go ahead with what you were saying," he added, as Raymond and Jeffrey obediently started off toward the lake. "I was afraid you might say something that I wouldn't want Jeff to hear. I have to be awful careful with him."

"Queer duck, isn't he!" **[101]**

"Not when you know how to handle him. My father was a doctor and I've often heard him tell about people like that. I think he's got what they call amnesia or something like that. I've a kind of a hunch that his—er, this Mr. Waring took him up there in that woods so's he could just live quiet and natural like and maybe get better. I've often heard my father talk about the woods being a medicine for the mind. Don't you remember there was some old duffer of a king who was cured that way—in some forest or other? I guess Jeff's a whole lot better than he was when he first came up here in the woods. From little things he says sometimes, I guess he was pretty bad at first. Ever take a flyer at

carving birchbark? Look here, what Jeff and the kid have done. They're fiends at it."

Arnold looked at Garry curiously.

"I want to talk to you about this Tom Slade—this patrol business."

"I thought you did."

"Of course, I'm kind of an outsider—it's none of my business—except that I happened to be the one to get your smudge signal. But, of course, I've heard all about you and the Bridgeboro fellows last year—what good friends you were and all, and how Tom Slade went up through that fire to your shack up there, and it seems a blamed shame that you're not good friends now. We're all here such a short time anyway——" **[102]**

"Next Monday for us," said Garry, ruefully.

"That's just what I was thinking. The birthday dinner, then Sunday and then——"

"There'll be others here to take our places though," finished Garry.

"And I was wondering," continued Arnold, "if we couldn't kind of straighten things up before that. You know, ever since that first night I've sort of hung out with the Bridgeboro fellows. Gordon and I are here on our own hook and he sort of stands in with Pee-wee—and, oh, I don't know, Tom and Blakeley sort of got me. That first night when you fellows were up the hill Blakeley spieled off a lot of stuff at campfire. He told us all about their trip up in the motor-boat last year and about the fellow that used to own it—how he lost his life. Funny though, how that part of the rowboat got back to the launch, wasn't it? I guess Tom's notion doesn't amount to much, though. Anyway, that's what 'our beloved scoutmaster' as Roy calls him, seems to think."

"Mr. Ellsworth?" **[103]**

"Yes. He says Tom's got a little vein of the dime novel in him—'Back From Death' or the 'Mystery of the Busted Dory' as Roy says. He calls Tom Sherlock Nobody Holmes."

"I guess nobody understands Tom Slade very well," said Garry.

"I suppose maybe that's just the reason the troop makes such a lot of him. If you played—if somebody played a mean trick on—on—Doc Carson, for instance, the fellows wouldn't be so sore about it. But when you put one over on Tom you hit them all."

"Do you think I play mean tricks?" queried Garry, beginning to carve a willow stick.

"I didn't say that. But you can see Tom is a favorite and anybody with two squinters in his head, surely any scout, can see why. He came out of the slums and he's poor and in some ways he's different from these fellows. They're all rich fellows and pretty well educated—you know what I mean. They made him a scout, and they're always on the watch for fear he'll see some difference. They're proud of him because he's made good and they're going to see to it that the scouts make good. They want him to have all that's coming to him just because he **[104]**

hasn't got some things that they've got—you understand, don't you?"

"I think I come pretty near knowing what it is to be poor," said Garry, whittling.

"Well, these fellows here have been pretty decent to you, too, first and last, haven't they?"

"Do you think I don't know that?"

"Do you know what I think?" said Arnold, after a pause.

"What?"

"Every fellow has some kind of a bug. Pee-wee's bug is good turns. Doc Carson's bug is first-aid—honest, I believe that fellow'd give you a black eye just for the fun of putting a bandage on it ——"

Garry laughed.

"*I'm* Gordon's bug. Tom's bug is that poor fellow that's been dead two years—and they kid the life out of him about it."

"Do they?"

"Sure; and your bug is——"

"Break it to me gently."

"Your bug is Raymond Hollister."

"He's getting to be a strong, healthy bug, don't you think?" **[105]**

"I think that's just the reason you copped this new fellow, Jeffrey. You wanted to please Raymond. And you let them both think that you're a patrol——"

Garry smiled.

"I think maybe the fact that Jeffrey lives near you——"

"It isn't so near."

"Well, anyway, I think maybe that has something to do with it. But I'm going to pass you some straight talk, Everson, and I don't want you to get mad. You know, Slade is crazy about his patrol and by all the rules of the game this fellow belongs with him. He's nutty about his patrol, whereas you haven't really any patrol at all."

"Do you think I don't know that?"

"Well, then, why not let Tom have him?"

"Jeffrey isn't a slave."

"I know, but he'll do anything you tell him is best for him."

"Well, I think it's best for him to stay right here where he is."

Arnold rose angrily. Garry went on whittling.

"These fellows are beginning to see you in your true light, I'm afraid," said Arnold. "I thought maybe they were mistaken but I guess they're not. They're saying now that you did Tom Slade out of the Silver Cross last year." **[106]**

“Does Tom say that?”

“The rest of them do. Well, I don’t see as I can do much good staying here and talking. What I came to ask you was if you didn’t think it would be a bully idea to turn Jeffrey over to the Elks on Saturday—as a birthday present to the patrol.” Arnold waited a moment hoping Garry would make some reply. “Tom found him—he plowed up through that mess—Jeb calls it nature tied in a knot—it was his idea and it was his job—and it’s about all he could be expected to do.”

“He may have more to do.”

“What do you mean?”

“Oh, nothing in particular.”

“Well,” concluded Arnold, “it’s just a case of rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s. What do you say?”

“What do you mean?”

“Will you fix it up with Jeffrey Waring to join the Elks?”

“No, I won’t,” said Garry.

Arnold looked steadily at him for a moment, then turned on his heel and strode away.

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CHAPTER IX
A NEW KIND OF FIRST AID

Garry sat outside the little makeshift shack which he and Jeffrey and Raymond occupied, and whittled as Arnold strode along the beaten path toward the main body of camp. He was still whittling when Raymond and Jeff returned from the shore, their arms laden with willow branches.

“Kiddo,” he said to Raymond, “suppose you get me that other shirt of yours and I’ll sew up that tear. I’ve got to fix my own, too. We’re not very strong on clothes, are we?”

“I’ll buy us all clothes,” put in Jeffrey. “When I get my own scout suit I’ll get new ones for you and Raymond—I’ll have thousands of dollars.”

“All right,” laughed Garry. “You put some water boiling now, while Raymond peels the potatoes, so we can have grub. Then come over here and talk to me while I do the family mending.”

Raymond busied himself with preparations for supper and Jeffrey sat down on the ground close to Garry. **[108]**

“I’m glad we’re here by ourselves, aren’t you?” he said, “and I’m going to give you two thousand dollars for letting me be in your class.”

“Class?”

“I mean, patrol.”

“Now you see if you can’t remember that word

patrol so I don't have to remind you. And what was the other thing—just think."

"About money?" asked Jeffrey, doubtfully.

"Right. Try to remember never to promise people money—especially scouts—because they don't like it. Now hand me that other spool of thread."

"But it's fine to be rich, isn't it?"

"It's better to be a scout. Any headache today, Jeff?"

"No."

"Well, now see if you can remember how many willow canes you've carved altogether."

"Eleven."

"Right. You're going to get the memory badge pretty soon."

"Do they have a memory badge?"

"Now, tell me what you and I and Raymond did the day before yesterday—just before grub." **[109]**

"Played mumbly-peg."

"And who won?"

"You did—but I'm not going to give you a hundred dollars like I said."

"Wasn't it a thousand?"

"No, it was a hundred—you can't fool me."

"Which was it, kiddo?" Garry called to Raymond.

"A hundred," said Raymond.

"All right. Now see if you can remember the first time you ever saw Tom Slade."

"That night on the hill."

"Sure?"

"Yes."

"And what's going to be the name of our—class?"

"Patrol," corrected Jeff.

"Oh yes, patrol."

"The Tigers."

"I tell you what—you're getting to have a crackerjack memory.

"Now turn your face around there so I can see it by the light of the fire. Put some more twigs on, kidlet, it's beginning to get dark. I want to be able to see if you're just joshing me. This is an important matter. When I was up at commissary shack for salt and things I was noticing the things on the bulletin board." **[110]**

"I saw that about the Elks birthday party," interrupted Jeffrey.

"Well, did you see that one about the new rowboat being in the lake and asking everybody

to vote on a name for it?”

“No.”

“Well, now——”

“Will we go to that dinner party?” Jeffrey interrupted.

“I’m not so sure about that,” said Garry, “but anyway, we’ll each of us vote a name for the new boat and I’ll drop them in the ballot box up at camp in the morning. What do you say?”

“I vote ‘Buster’!” called Raymond, who was poking up the fire.

“I vote ‘Queen’!” said Jeffrey, excitedly.

“Well, those are two punk names! ‘Queen’ isn’t so bad, but ‘Buster’ suggests busting, and a boat that would bust—go-o-dnight!”

Jeffrey stared at Garry. His face was right in the glare of the fire and though his look was of that vacant character which all the boys had noticed, it seemed less pronounced than it had been when he came to Temple Camp. Perhaps the quiet, even life in the solitude under these sheltering trees, with the tranquil lake hard by, was really showing its effect, as Mr. Waring had evidently hoped that it would do; perhaps the wholesome companionship of these other boys was already beginning to tell; it was a new kind of First-Aid at all events, and one quite outside of Doc Carson’s sphere. Or it may have been that Jeffrey was just startled into a livelier interest, as he had often been lately, at something that was said. **[111]**

“Now,” said Garry, “I’m going to tell you my vote. And if there’s a prize, I think I’ll win it. I vote to name the new dory—*Nymph*.”

Jeffrey’s eyes were fixed on Garry with an intense wondering stare and Garry, looking quizzically at him, said, “Isn’t that a peach of a name?”

“It’s—it’s—somebody else thought of it—it——” Jeffrey’s utterance fizzled out in another stare.

“And speaking of boats, how about it, Jeff, do you think you could walk as far as Catskill Landing—seven full grown miles?” **[112]**

“Sure I can! Didn’t I——”

“Well, then, by jingoes, if tomorrow’s clear, we’ll take that long promised hike—just you and me ——”

“Not Raymond?”

“Nope—just you and me; and we’ll have a squint at that wonderful boat of yours, hey? And then I’ll show you the Bridgeboro Troop’s boat, even if we have to trespass, and I’ll tell you all about it.”

Jeffrey grew excited at once.

“Are you—are you sure you won’t change your mind?” he demanded.

“Surest thing you know.”

“Those fellows don’t take any interest in my

boat," Jeffrey said.

"Well, I do," said Garry, "what was the name of that game? I can't seem to remember it."

"Mumbly-peg," said Jeffrey, contemptuously.

"Well, there's no use getting excited about it," laughed Garry.

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CHAPTER X

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE ELK PATROL

"Maybe I'm not much of a cook, but I'll make things hot for *you* if you don't get away from here!"

Roy Blakeley, from the cooking lean-to, despatched an eggplant (which had not stood the physical test, as he said) straight at the scampering form of Pee-wee Harris, who had raided the sacred precincts of the larder for raisins and was now departing with scurrilous comments on his patrol leader. And the eggplant, faithful to its trust, landed plunk upon Pee-wee's round, curly head.

"Plant that and raise some scrambled eggs," Roy called after him.

Roy was assisting the camp cooks, for it was the second anniversary of the forming of the Elk Patrol, and there were to be "doings."

"If that kid had got a hair-cut when he ought to have, he'd have *felt* that eggplant. That head of his is a regular shock absorber."

"How long is a hair-cut, anyway?" queried Roy, sitting on the table and stirring a bowl of batter.

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"Never you mind them riddles," said the chief cook. "You git that batter ready—pour some more milk in from that pitcher."

"Then I'll have a batter and a pitcher both, hey?" said Roy. "Pretty soon I'll have a whole baseball team. But honest, this is what I mean. A boy gets a hair-cut. Is it a hair-cut the next day? It is a hair-cut the day after? When does it stop being a hair-cut? And here's another thing——"

"Never you mind," laughed the cook. "You git that stirred and then I'll let you make some raisin cakes—seein' as you say you can."

While Roy was busying himself in the cooking lean-to other scouts were forming the three mess-boards into one long table.

At five o'clock, an hour earlier than usual, the camp bugle sounded and patrols and troops, in formation, marched from their tents and cabins to the long board which was heaped with such a varied and bountiful repast as Temple Camp had never before seen. It was a pleasant scene as the boys came with their patrol pennants waving, and took their allotted places at the long rustic table under the trees.

Jeb Rushmore sat at the head of the table, one of

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the two visiting trustees on either hand. The scoutmasters sat each with his troop, and behind each patrol leader his staff bearing the patrol pennant was stuck in the ground so that one could easily distinguish the different patrols. Scouts who were visiting camp singly or in teams or small parties, like Harry Arnold and his friend, were seated toward the foot of the board. The three patrols of the well-organized Bridgeboro Troop, the Ravens, Silver Foxes and Elks, sat toward the head of the table on either side, close to the trustees. On the plate of each member of the Elk Patrol was a strip of ribbon bearing the words neatly printed by hand "Many Happy Returns."

"I've got two here stuck together," said Connie Bennet.

"That's because you think you're twice as good a scout as anyone else," piped up Roy. "You should worry."

The Elks were pinning these on amid much merriment when Garry Everson and his two companions came up the hill and took their seats near Harry Arnold, toward the foot of the table. Whatever show of coldness and resentment this odd trio (and particularly its leader) had borne lately, there was none visible now, save in a certain restraint on both sides and a lack of easy converse between Garry and those near him. Jeffrey seemed sober and half frightened, but little Raymond's face was wreathed in smiles. Jeb Rushmore waved pleasantly to them from the distant end of the long board and they acknowledged his salute. **[116]**

Then the camp master drew himself together and lifted his long, lanky form to his feet.

"I dunno's I'm much on speechifyin'," he said, "'n' baout all I'm cal'latin' ter do is jes' ter set ye on the trail 'n' let ye folly it. Onct thar come out west a gent from that thar Smithson Institution in Wash'n'ton, 'n' hearin't I wuz used ter killin' grizzlies he sez, 'Pard, you're the man I want ter talk to 'baout grizzlies.' He wuz one o' them zoologist fellers. 'All I know 'baout grizzlies,' sez I, 'I can tell ye in two words—*Don't miss!* I leave it t'the other feller ter write 'baout 'em.' 'An' it's the same here likewise—ez the feller sez. I leave it to the others t'do th'talkin'—'cause if I try t'do it myself I'll sure miss. 'An' I reckon as Mr. Ellsworth is the proper one. I never stood behind nobuddy when anythin' wuz goin' on—Gen'l Custer cud tell ye that—but I reckon I'll have ter make fer shelter naow 'n' leave him on the firin' line." **[117]**

He sprawled into his seat amid a very tempest of applause and cheering.

"Good old Jeb!" they called.

"Hurrah for Jeb Rushmore!"

"Bully for you, Jeb!"

He was forced to stand up three times in acknowledgement. Then Mr. Ellsworth, scoutmaster of the First Bridgeboro Troop, arose.

"It seems," said he, "that Mr. Rushmore has, as usual, hit the mark——"

“There’s where you said something!”

“He uses no rifle nowadays, but scouts by the dozen fall for him. (Cheers) He may run for shelter, but he will never find any shelter from the love and the applause and the homage which every visitor at Temple Camp, young and old, has for him! (Great shouting.) He is a whole scout handbook in himself. I ask every scout at this board to stand and give three cheers for Jeb Rushmore!”

The boys were on their feet before the words were out of his mouth, and the lusty echo swept back from the hills across the lake as if nature herself would pay her homage to the man who knew and loved her so well. **[118]**

“And while we are standing let us give three cheers for the man who discovered Jeb Rushmore and brought him from Arizona—by the ears. (Laughter.) You all know whom I mean —John Temple, the founder of Temple Camp!”

When the shouting had subsided, Mr. Ellsworth continued, “Scouts, we are not joining in this celebration to make a hero of any of our number. There is but one hero at Temple Camp. He sits at the head of the table. (Applause.) And if it were not for one fact I think I should have vetoed this merrymaking and the Bridgeboro Troop would have had its celebration by itself and not have obtruded its family joys upon others.

“We are here, scouts, to celebrate the second anniversary of the Elk Patrol of which Tom Slade is the leader—and organizer. It is not because Tom is a scout, but because he is a *scout-maker*, that we wish to honor him, and his all but completed patrol. And that is what I want every scout here to know and to take back with you to the several parts of the country from which you come. It is not enough to be a scout—one must be a *scout-maker*. He must reach out to the right and to the left—into the highways and byways—and muster his recruits. That is the only way that our great army—or rather, our great brotherhood—can grow. Do you get me?” **[119]**

“We get you,” they answered, laughing at his use of the slang which he was so ready to learn from them.

“Tom Slade holds the gold cross for an act of great bravery here last summer. He holds seven merit badges and is about to win two more. On the first night of his arrival here this summer, he had the spunk and the courage and persistence to choose a little party and lead them——”

Cheer upon cheer drowned his words. Tom himself sat, stolid as usual, but smiling in embarrassment as scout after scout, clustering about him, slapped him on the shoulder. A few noticed that Garry smiled and applauded, but kept to his seat.

“Hurrah for Tom Slade!” they called again and again. **[120]**

Mr. Ellsworth with difficulty continued, “And to lead them up into that wilderness over yonder, because he could not sit down, tired and travel worn as he was, while some one lay dying.

“Just a minute, scouts—listen and I will be through. These things are all to his credit—to the credit of his patrol, of his troop, of the whole scout family, here in this beloved land of ours. But when I think of Tom Slade—as I often do,” he added, smiling, oh, so pleasantly, at Tom; “I think not only of how he raised himself out of dirt and mischief to this noble level where you see him, but of how he went back into the byways and found these boys who now form his splendid patrol. *I* tried to get Connie Bennet and failed. (Laughter.) *I* made a stab for the celebrated Bronson twins—nothing doing. They were too busy ringing other people’s doorbells. (Laughter.) I made a grandstand play for others, but was turned down hard. Why? Because it takes a boy to recruit a boy. So all of you scouts pack that little fact down in the corner of your duffel bags and take it home with you. If every scout secured a scout, where there are ten thousand now there would be twenty thousand, and where there are five hundred thousand, there would be a million! I ask every scout here to stand up and as he gives three cheers for Tom Slade, scout-maker, to resolve that he will make at least one scout before he comes here another summer. And now three cheers for the Elk Patrol on its second birthday, and three cheers for Tom Slade, and three cheers for the eighth scout—whoever and wherever he may be—who before another summer shall make the Elk Patrol complete as well as honored!”

Back across the still bosom of Black Lake, again and again, the cheers reverberated, drowning the closing words of Mr. Ellsworth’s speech. Pee-wee Harris, standing on the seat, waved his scarf and shouted himself hoarse. Roy, with the announcement megaphone, called, “Oh, you Tomasso!” Raymond Hollister clapped his hands. **[121]**

“Spooch, spooch—speak a spooch!” called Roy.

Tom, with his face scarlet, shook his head as Mr. Ellsworth looked at him and the scoutmaster held up a staying hand in sympathy with his embarrassment. “He says he’d rather eat,” he said. **[122]**

“Three cheers for the eats!” shouted Roy, irrepressibly.

“The eats” after being uproariously cheered, were forthwith assailed until there was nothing left of them, and all agreed that the meal beat the regulation Temple Camp Sunday dinner twenty ways. And that was saying a good deal.

“And now,” said Mr. Ellsworth, “since this celebration originated in the fertile brain of the renowned leader of the Silver Foxes——”

“Wait, give them a chance to cheer me,” interrupted Roy.

“I think it is my duty to put the balance of our program into his able hands.”

“Excuse me while I blush,” said Roy.

“There are, I believe, a few remembrances and these it shall be his pleasure to bring forward. I present to you,” he added, smiling, “the most silvery fox of them all, Roy Blakeley.”

“Why pick on me?” said Roy. “I thought I was **[123]**

going to be the buttered toast master, but it seems I'm to be the souvenir slinger. I should worry. I go where duty calls, and I wouldn't run after any job—especially if it's a good runner.

"Scouts and sprouts," he continued, with a sly glance at Pee-wee; "now you're supposed to say, 'Hear, hear!'"

"Hear, hear!" they called, laughingly.

"I thank you. There are several things for the Honorable Tomasso Slade, otherwise known as Thomas the Silent, or Sherlock Nobody Holmes of Bridgeboro, N. G. Tomasso Slade is a home-made scout—I mean a *self*-made scout—and he's made so as he can't smile." (He was beginning to smile however.) "The first present is from his boyhood's friend, Roy Blakeley (that's me) and it is intended to make him laugh."

He handed across the table a turkey feather with a bow of ribbon tied about it. "And this," he added, lifting the huge elk's head to the board and smiling at Tom's surprise, "is from Mr. Rushmore; its history, by Mr. Rushmore himself, is writ, wrot, wrote—on that piece of paper tied to the horns."

Tom lifted the panel with the noble head and magnificent antlers and as the boys crowded about him he could only look toward Jeb with his eyes swimming. **[124]**

"That's all right, Tommy," smiled Jeb, as pleased as Tom himself.

The cat's collar belt was handed over amid much laughter, and various other small tokens, some humorous and all of a kind easily made or procurable in the woodland community. The wireless set almost knocked Tom off his feet, and when it was followed by the bugle with the Elk patrol names engraved upon it, he was overwhelmed.

Thomas Slade
William Bronson
Theodore Bronson
Connover Bennet
George O'Connor
Charles O'Connor
Wade Van Ester

He blinked as he gazed at the highly polished metal, at the names which had meant labor and long effort for him, and which bespoke his success. His hand almost shook as he fumbled the silken tassel of the beautiful instrument, and the familiar names upon it seemed like fifty names wrought into an intricate design.

"That's all right, Tom," said Mr. Ellsworth, smiling and placing a reassuring hand on his shoulder. "They understand." **[125]**

But it was Roy who came to his rescue, as he had done more than once before, and saved him further embarrassment.

"Blow it, Tomasso," said he. "Maybe you can blow up your other recruit if you blow loud enough."

"Sure, maybe it'll be like the shot heard round the world," said Pee-wee.

“Or like the music of old Ichabod Crane, which they say is still heard in Sleepy Hollow,” said Mr. Ellsworth. “Perhaps it will be heard months hence.”

“Blow for him, anyway,” said Roy. “He’ll come some day, you can bet, and we’ll all wish it at the same time, while you’re blowing, Tom. Go ahead!”

Tom raised the bugle to his lips laughing, and as he blew lustily the echo of its attenuated final note was borne back with the freshening night breeze, like a faint answer from the encompassing hills.

“He is here,” said an impassive voice.

They all stood staring, the scouts still at their places and those clustered about Tom, and saw Garry Everson standing in his place in the characteristic attitude which was familiar to them all, one hand on his hip, the other in his pocket. **[126]**

As they stared at him, Jeffrey Waring, gulping nervously, rose from his seat and stood beside him for a second. Then, at Garry’s nod, he moved around to Tom’s side.

“Tell him your name,” said Garry, smiling, “They’ll want it for the bugle, you know.”

“My name is Harry Stanton,” he said, hesitatingly, but seriously.

“And you fellows,” said Garry quietly, “had better take him home to his mother and father before you make any other plans. I’m not going to do *your* work for you. I’ve done my part. It’s for you to take him back. May I look at that bugle?”

But Tom did not hand him the bugle. He stood rooted to where he stood, staring like an idiot.

Some one stooped and picked up the bugle which had fallen to the ground.

[127]

CHAPTER XI

GARRY’S STORY AND HARRY STANTON’S

It was around the glowing camp fire on that memorable night that the wondering boys heard Garry Everson’s simple, unboastful tale of the new kind of first-aid which had helped him to solve the mystery of Jeffrey Waring and put Tom Slade in the way of realizing his fondest dream—that of returning Harry Stanton to his young sister and his home.

“If we looked like beans, I’d say you were trying to string us,” observed Roy, as he sat in his familiar posture near the fire, his knees drawn up and his hands clasped about them. “It beats anything *I* ever heard. Our beloved scoutmaster will have to go away, way back and sit down.”

Mr. Ellsworth, still half incredulous, shook his head. “The pity of it is,” said he, “that there’s no

merit badge for this kind of first-aid. There can be no doubt of the truth of this thing, I suppose?" he added.

Garry laughed good-naturedly. "I wish I could be as sure of his having the boat for his own—now that he's somebody else. It's one peacherino." **[128]**

"And you suspected that first night, you say?"

"Well, no—not exactly. You fellows have got to remember that my father was an alienist, if you know what that is, and I've heard him tell about just such troubles as Harry's. So I don't deserve much credit. Only I had to be very careful. You can see yourselves it wasn't a case for bandages and splints and things."

"It would be pretty hard to give you too much credit," Doc Carson said.

"The first thing I noticed," Garry went on, "was the way Tom stared when he first saw him that night up in the woods. He was sure he'd seen him before. I didn't think much about that though till afterwards when other little things set me thinking and then I remembered about it and I began to put two and two together. When Jeffrey told me where he belonged I remembered about the old gentleman in Vale Centre who came home one time with a young fellow he called his nephew and how all the people in the village wondered who the nephew was. They didn't live near enough for me to know much about them and I don't know as I ever saw Jeffrey until that night up on the mountain.

"Well, it was while we were bringing Mr. Waring down through the woods on the stretcher that Tom said something about the Stantons—he just mentioned the name sort of off-hand, and I noticed that Jeffrey stared at him and looked sort of worried or puzzled, kind of, and then started in again chattering in that way of his. **[129]**

"Then it came jumping into my head all of a sudden that he was trying to think of something and couldn't. And I was wondering if Tom really ever had seen him before, when I just happened to think—the idea came to me, sort of—that maybe it was his sister that Tom had seen. Of course, I didn't think so but the idea wouldn't go away and I decided that anyway I'd keep Jeffrey near me if I could and not let him get mixed up with the crowd where he'd be all the time getting excited, and see if I couldn't find out something about him. And even as it was, that was some tall job, believe me."

"You certainly kept by yourselves," some one said. **[130]**

"I knew the time was short and I wanted to see if maybe he wouldn't get better by just being quiet. I knew a person could get to be—sort of—flighty, like, from an accident or something like that, and lose his memory, and be like a kid, and that sometimes, if he lives quiet and don't get excited or see many people, he'll begin to remember things——"

"Garry, we've got to hand it to you," said Roy, earnestly. "You've spent your whole vacation buried alive."

“Even still I didn’t exactly think he was Harry Stanton,” Garry went on, “but after, a while, just for experiment, kind of, I began springing words on him that I thought he might remember. I sprung *Stanton* and *Nyack* but there wasn’t any come-back until one day—it was the day Arnold dropped in to see me—I sprung the word *Nymph* as a good name for a boat and that seemed to kind of hit him. He just stared and stared and stared. After that I decided to take him down to Catskill Landing to look at that sumptuous yacht of his and then to show him the *Good Turn*. I knew that sometimes when a person sees the thing that caused his trouble or goes back to the same place, maybe, or something of that sort, his memory comes back to him all of a sudden and he wakes up as if he’d been dreaming, as you might say. There’s a long name they have for it, but I can’t seem to remember it. Anyway, it’s a blamed funny thing, but it’s true. If you want to know what happened when we trespassed on the *Good Turn*, you’d better let *him* tell you, hey, Jeff?”

[131] The boy who had been the subject of Garry’s simple narrative was smiling, as every one turned toward him, and though the familiar trace of childishness was not entirely gone from his smile, there was a suggestion of mental poise or self-possession, even in the face of this public stare, which had not been there before. And though one or two noticed (for they were scouts and noticed things) that he twirled one finger nervously with his other hand, he at least did not begin to chatter with that distressing agitation and irrational boastfulness which the camp had known so well.

[132] He had not changed his habit and demeanor as a lightning change performer will doff his costume, but there was a difference and everyone could see it. The woods and the quiet water and the sympathetic surroundings were to do much for him yet and it would be a long journey back to mental keenness and physical vigor. But he was different, and it seemed all very wonderful. It was a knockout blow to Doc Carson, proficient though he was in his chosen specialty, for not a word about this kind of business had he ever seen in his study of First-Aid.

“Hey, Stanton, you old Jekyll and Hyde,” Garry repeated, cheerily; “you came near getting me in Dutch with this bunch. Tell them about the *Nymph*.”

Harry Stanton smiled naturally and now Tom Slade, who was watching his every movement, realized how much like his young sister he looked. His nose wrinkled a little, just like hers, when he smiled. There was no doubt as to who he was.

“I knew it was my boat,” he said. “I thought it was the next morning. It seemed as if I was just waking up. I don’t mean it’s my boat, now, of course——”

“It sure is yours, all right,” said Roy.

[133] “I’ve got my other one and I don’t want it. But it seemed as if I had fallen asleep on it and——”

“He thought I was Benty Willis for a minute,” said Garry.

“And then—then, sort of, I knew all about what happened. When I saw my—the—boat, I knew. I knew for sure.”

There were a few seconds of silence, broken by Mr. Ellsworth’s saying, “It’s wonderful, almost unbelievable.” And still no one else spoke, the company only gazing at Harry Stanton, as one might look at an apparition.

Then Doc Carson, Raven and First-Aid Scout, said, “Garry, you’re a wonder.”

“And all the thanks he got——” began Connie Bennet.

“Oh, I didn’t mind that,” laughed Garry; “I had my little trail to follow, and I followed it, that’s all. I just kept my eyes on the trail and not on you fellows—just as Jeb is all the time telling us. If he had seen that boat too soon, or been jollied or got too much excited or tired he might have gone nutty, for sure. Tell us a camp-fire yarn, Roy, I want Harry to see that we’ve got a real ‘nut’ in the camp.”

But Roy told no yarn, and still they were all silent. After a while, Tom spoke. **[134]**

“I don’t want to make you talk about it, if you don’t feel like it,” he said, “or if you don’t remember, but I always thought that maybe you were alive because a board belonging to your launch’s skiff was in the launch when we got her.”

Garry laughed. “Tell him how it happened, Stanton,” said he.

“I remember all about it,” said Harry. “I was in the launch and Benty was in the tender, bailing it out. There was a long rope from the tender to the *Nymph*. He was singing and I was sitting in the cabin talking to him. We had a light on the launch. That’s the same way as I told it to you—isn’t it?” he questioned, turning to Garry.

“Sure—go on.”

“Then I heard a speed-boat coming—down?”

“That’s what you said,” Garry encouraged.

“Maybe it was up. Anyway I called, but I suppose they couldn’t hear me on account of their exhaust.”

“You see,” said Garry. “He wanted to warn them about the small boat which was about thirty feet away and had no light.” **[135]**

“They crashed into it and Benty yelled that he was hurt and said he had hold of the rope. And then—and then—” Stanton broke off, looking frightened and perplexed, and rubbed his hands together distressingly.

“You let me finish it for you and see if I don’t get it right,” said Garry, soothingly. “Jeff pulled the rope so as to save Benty, who couldn’t swim very well. But Benty must have let go. That right, Jeff?”

“Yes, and—”

“Now wait a minute.” Garry looked across the fire at Tom. “And all there was at the end of the

rope was a board from the skiff. The skiff must have been all smashed to pieces. It was the board that had the ring in it that the boat was tied to——”

“Yes?” said Tom.

“Well, that’s all there is to it. Stanton pulled it aboard thinking his friend was clinging to it. And when he saw how it was he dived for him——”

“I dived right away,” interrupted Harry Stanton, shuddering, “and I swam all around and I called —I swam way out and then there was a big light that dazzled me——”

“And that’s all,” concluded Garry. “He can’t tell you any more because he doesn’t remember any more till he was in Mr. Waring’s house. We’re going to try to find out about it, aren’t we. Stan?” [136]

He moved closer to the boy and put his arm about his shoulder with a significant look at the others as if to ask them not to question him further.

“And he wants us all to go down to Nyack with him in his own boat which has the other one beat forty-’leven ways. He says he wouldn’t ride in that old tub now, hey, Stan? And you can keep it or sink it just as you please. And when we get to Nyack he wants a committee of three scouts to go home with him while the rest of us stay on the boat. And after that, if we can fix it up, we’re all going to take a cruise up the river and through the lakes for a little call on Uncle Sam at Plattsburg. Hey, Stan?”

“And the three scouts that he wants to go up home with him (he’s very particular about it) are Tom Slade and Roy and Pee-wee Harris, because they’re the ones who were there last year and they know his sister, so it’s up to them to take him back.”

“How about you?” Roy promptly demanded. [137]

“Oh, I’m out of it,” said Garry.

Then, suddenly, such a shout as might have raised the dead resounded. It was Pee-wee Harris, flying off the handle, as he realized the meaning of Garry’s proposal.

“Oh, crinkums, won’t it be great!” he shouted. “And—and—I’ll think up a little kind of a speech to make to her—gee, it’s just like a story, with—with—yachts and long lost brothers and things ——”

“Especially things,” said Roy.

[138]

CHAPTER XII

PEE-WEE TRIUMPHANT

It was toward the close of a beautiful summer afternoon that a trim Racine cruiser poked her nose around the boat club’s anchorage near Nyack on the Hudson, and brought up alongside one of the commercial wharves, which made an

inharmonious background to the spotless white hull and shining mahogany cabin. She made no more noise than a canoe. The first rays of the declining sun fell upon her knife-like brass bow and reflected from her shining metal parts. As she touched the dock several scouts scrambled from her and made her fast.

"Jimin-*ety*! But she gets over the water!" remarked Connie Bennet. "We'd have been a couple of days or more coming down in the *Good Turn*."

"And doesn't she take the hills fine!" said Roy Blakeley.

"She's a *regular* boat," observed Garry.

"The *Good Turn* is all right only her bow's too near the stern," said Roy. **[139]**

"Gee, everything looks the same, doesn't it," said Pee-wee, gazing about him. "This is just where we stood when it began to rain last year. Then we went up that road and that's where we found the *Good Turn*."

"The sun was going down just as it is now," said Tom, climbing out over the combing. "I remember those hills over there looked just like they do now."

"Sure, even the water's wet, just the same as it was then. Don't you remember how I spoke about the water being so wet?"

"This is just like a book," said Pee-wee. "Gee, I never thought it would happen this way; I saw a movie play once where a feller—a long lost brother—came home, and oh, cracky, they fell all over him. They thought he was dead and his mother she was looking at his picture and crying —I mean weeping—when all of a sudden——"

"All of a sudden Pee-wee Harris will be left behind if he doesn't get a hustle," said Roy. "Come on, wash up and get your hair fixed if you expect to make that speech."

"Do you know how I'm going to begin?"

"I know how you're going to end, if you don't get a hustle." **[140]**

The whole Bridgeboro troop with Garry and Raymond and Harry Stanton, had come down from Catskill Landing. Their stay at Temple Camp was ended and they had said good-bye to Harry Arnold and his young friend, whom they hoped to meet again next summer. Little they dreamed of the strange circumstances under which that meeting was to occur. They had left the *Good Turn* up the river for they hoped to cruise northward again in the larger boat.

In the cool of the evening the three scouts who had trod this same road a year before, accompanied by the boy who had trod it many times himself in days gone by, made their way through the beautiful hilly country for West Nyack. And, indeed, their errand seemed, as Pee-wee had suggested, like a chapter out of a book.

Garry had positively refused to go with them.

"It was you fellows that she gave the boat to and

it's for you to pay her back," he had said.

"Do you remember how old—how Mr. Stanton laughed when I talked to him?" said Pee-wee as they tramped along the familiar road. "You can't deny that I put it into his head to give us the boat. And I bet if I ask him to let Harry go on a cruise now, he'll do it. You leave it to me—I know how to handle him." [141]

"All right, kiddo, we'll leave it to you," laughed Roy, "but I've got a sneaking idea that when they once get their fists on our long lost son and brother it'll take a crow-bar to pry him loose again."

"You leave it to me."

It would be hard to say what Harry Stanton's feelings were as he walked homeward with his three companions. He seemed nervous and anxious and said but little, but every object which met his gaze now was familiar to him and as he looked about upon the very fields where he had played and the houses which he knew he seemed to acquire poise and self-possession. An odd habit which he had shown to Garry and somewhat to the others of confusing his life at Mr. Waring's with his old life at home, was fast disappearing and now each familiar sight seemed to act like a potent medicine to bring him to himself.

A man who passed them on the road turned and stared at him, then went on, turning again and again. He spoke to a man who was raking a lawn and who also stared after him. The boys paid no heed. [142]

At last they reached the house. No one was about, and they took a short cut across the lawn, right under the big tree where Pee-wee had captured the fugitive bird. Here was a garden bench and leaving Harry Stanton seated upon it, they went up on the porch and rang the bell. Pee-wee was visibly nervous and even Roy showed repressed excitement, but Tom was stolid as he always was.

There was the calling of a voice within, the faint sound of footsteps on the stair, and young Ruth Stanton stood on the inner side of the screen door looking at them. For a moment she stared in amazement and in that momentary look Tom caught a glint of the same expression that had puzzled him in Jeffrey Waring in their first encounter on the lonely hill. Then suddenly her face lighted up with a merry smile of recognition.

"Oh, hello," she said, opening the door and speaking in great surprise. "I didn't know you ——"

"You remember us?" laughed Roy. [143]

"I should think I did, but you're the last persons I ever expected to see. Isn't it lovely, your coming again—just as if you had dropped from the clouds!"

"We'd have been some shower, wouldn't we?" laughed Roy.

"Oh, I think it's fine," she repeated; "and you've got to stay to supper. We're going to have

popovers—do you like popovers? I adore them!”

“We don’t know what they are,” said Roy, “but we like them.”

They sat down in the wicker chairs which formed a little circle on the deep, shaded porch, the girl swinging her feet back and forth and gazing from one to the other.

“We’ve been up to camp,” Tom began. “We’re on our way down the river.”

“Oh, isn’t that lovely—I wish I was a boy! How’s the boat?”

“Gee, it *is* great being a boy,” said Pee-wee. “I —”

“The boat is in the best of health, thank you,” **[144]**
interrupted Roy, fearing that Pee-wee would say too much; “and one of the reasons we hiked up here is because we want to pay you back for it. As Pee-wee says, a scout has to be cautious and he didn’t want us to pay you back till we were sure the boat was all right.”

“I never said that!” cried Pee-wee, indignantly. “Don’t you believe him, I never said that!”

“So we’ve been a long time getting around to it,” continued Roy.

“That’s ridiculous,” said the girl. “I thought you just came to *see* me.”

“So we did,” said Roy.

“And we’re going to tell you our adventures since we saw you,” added Pee-wee. “We’ve had some dandy ones. One in particular that you’ll like to hear about,” he added, with an air of mystery.

“When anybody does anything for a scout,” Tom began again in his sober way, “he has to remember it and do them a good turn. We couldn’t do you one because we couldn’t think of anything big enough——”

“You see, I’ll tell you how it is,” interrupted Pee-wee, “each good turn’s got to be better than the other one—they get bigger—kind of, and——”

“That’s nonsense,” said Ruth. “Then I’d have to **[145]**
do you a bigger one to pay back and you’d have to—”

“We think we’ve hit on a pretty good one,” said Roy. “Anyway, how’s the bird?”

“Oh, he’s fine! He can say ‘Good-night’ and ‘Welcome, home’!”

“That’s a good thing to say just now,” Roy said.

“And I’m teaching him to say ‘Down with the Kaiser’! Isn’t that perfectly terrible! Anyway, I’m not neutral. Are you?”

“Not so you’d notice it,” Roy confessed.

“Would you go to war if we had a war?” she asked impulsively.

“Oh, I guess we’d give old Uncle Samuel a hand.”

“Isn’t that glorious! But suppose you should get killed.”

“We’re not supposing things now,” said Roy. “We’ve got something to tell you. We came back to bring you a present. When people come across with boats and things like that we don’t let them get away with it—hey, Tom? So we’re here with our little come-back. What d’ye say we stroll down on the lawn? We left our package on that bench out there; and just for the fun of it we’d like to poke around where Pee-wee pulled his stunt last summer. Then well go in and hear the parrot say ‘Welcome home’—what d’ye say?”

“Yes, but you’ve got to stay to supper, so that you can see papa,” Ruth said. “He laughs whenever he thinks of how you called him Old Man Stanton. But he isn’t grouchy—only he’ll never be the same since my brother—died. And besides, you have to tell me your adventures, you know.” **[146]**

They went down the steps and crossed the lawn. The girl, running ahead, seemed not to notice the lone figure on the bench with its back toward her till she was within a few feet of it. Then she paused in surprise and as she did so, Harry Stanton rose and turned to face her, the while grasping the back of the bench nervously....

The several accounts of the three scouts as to what happened then, differed materially. There was no doubt that Ruth stepped quickly back in momentary fright, grasping the arm of Pee-wee who happened to be nearest her. Pee-wee said that her hand was trembling and that she “clutched him in terror.” Roy maintained that the “clutching in terror business” came out of a heroic scene from one of Alger’s books. Tom said that for a moment she seemed about to run, which Pee-wee admitted, claiming that she thought better of it when she found that he was near. All agreed that she was first panic-stricken and then greatly agitated as Roy took her hand and drew her to the bench.

At all events, it was only for a moment or two and then she and her brother were in each other’s arms. There is no authentic account of what happened then, for the three visitors, being good scouts, strolled to the hedge which bordered the lawn and looked at the scenery beyond. It must have been beautiful scenery and very affecting, for Pee-wee’s eyes were brimming, and Tom’s and Roy’s were not exactly what you would call dry.... **[147]**

RUTH AND HARRY WERE IN EACH OTHERS' ARMS.

[148]

CHAPTER XIII

AT THE STANTONS'

The return of Harry Stanton to his home was a nine days' wonder in the village. Poor Mrs. Stanton seemed almost unable to comprehend the wonderful reality of his actual presence and she kept him by her constantly, even to the point of accompanying him back and forth from the river. The boys noted these affectionate attentions with dismay, for they wished to make a cruise in the beautiful boat, with its proud owner as their companion.

"You leave it to me," said Pee-wee. "I know how to handle mothers; we've got to wait for the something or otherological moment."

[149]

The days which followed were days of stress but of happiness to all concerned. Mr. Stanton lost no time in going to Poughkeepsie where he got all the information that could be obtained from Mr. Waring's executor and friends as to how the eccentric but kindly old gentleman came into

possession of the so-called nephew on whom he had showered wealth and sympathetic attention.

Because he *had* been eccentric, his intimates knew but little of his affairs, but the facts, as Mr. Stanton was able to piece them together, were that Mr. Waring had lost his wife and only son and that he had never been the same afterward. He lived the life of a recluse in his lonely, luxurious home. Two years before he had started up the Hudson in his beautiful boat, accompanied by a valet and a man to run the craft, intending to visit some remote spot where he had enjoyed the trout fishing in his early years.

All that his business friends knew in addition to this was that he had returned almost immediately, bringing with him an apparently weak-minded boy whom he called his nephew and whose self-appointed guardian and benefactor he became.

Mr. Stanton tried to find the two men who had accompanied their employer on that mysterious cruise. The valet had died, but he located the other man working in a munitions plant not far from Poughkeepsie. From this man, who spoke only broken English, he learned something of his son's rescue.

[150] While cruising upstream at night, he said, they had heard a cry from the water and throwing the searchlight about had located a drowning person, whom they pulled aboard. It was a boy, the man said, whose head had been frightfully injured, the skull being cracked, as was discernible through his plastered, soaking hair. He was bruised in several other places and lost consciousness as soon as they got him aboard the launch.

They had turned the boat at once and returned home, where the victim, still unconscious, was attended by "great doctors." The man had not lived at Mr. Waring's house and he knew very little more except what he had heard indirectly. The boy jabbered, he said, and did not know who he was and talked nonsense. Then he had heard that an operation was performed, that the edges of the broken skull were lifted up into place, and that the boy was better but "nutty." He had later heard a rumor that the boy was dead. That was all he knew.

[151] Mr. Stanton had had no difficulty in locating James, the chauffeur, whom Jeffrey Waring had mentioned in connection with his pigeons, and from him he had received a more coherent account of Mr. Waring's second cruise, which was destined to have a fatal sequel for himself and momentous consequences for his ward.

James had, he said, entered Mr. Waring's employ the year before and found the old gentleman's nephew to be a "queer lad" who, he understood, had once had a dreadful accident of some sort. He got excited easily, the man said, and at such times said the most extravagant things. He had pigeons and dogs and lived an odd sort of life by himself.

In the early part of the summer Mr. Waring had again planned a trip to his favorite fishing retreat, believing that the quiet and remoteness of the place would help the boy, who was

already greatly improved. The doctors, so the man said, had recommended the camping trip.

They had made an uneventful but pleasant trip up the river in the *Rambler* and after they had moored her near Catskill Landing Mr. Waring had sent James back to Vale Centre to attend to his regular duties there.

That was all that Mr. Stanton could learn and he returned home somewhat puzzled as to whether Mr. Waring had ever tried to locate Harry's people, or whether he intended to do so when the boy should have regained his health and mental poise. He had lavished wealth and kindness on the stricken lad, that was certain; the last days of his life had been spent in a sojourn to a remote spot dear to his own memory in the hope that it might hasten the boy's recovery; and the Stantons could not think otherwise of him than as one, peculiar indeed, but of the purest motive and overflowing with kindness. Nor did they ever learn exactly what had happened to Harry while in the water, though they held to the belief that he had been injured by the paddlewheel of some steamer. **[152]**

That Garry Everson, scout, had completed the work which the old gentleman had begun was now realized by all and with it the boys realized the quiet patience with which he had borne their coldness and even their taunts.

"He's a real hero," said Pee-wee.

"All others are imitations," agreed Roy.

During Mr. Stanton's absence, Mr. Ellsworth had made a flying trip to Bridgeboro to arrange for the troop's absence for another week or two, and meanwhile the scouts camped on the boat, spending much of their time at the Stanton place, where they played tennis and basket-ball and taught the parrot to say "I'm a scout," and "Poor Pee-wee." **[153]**

Those were days of great delight to Ruth Stanton. In contemptuous defiance of Pee-wee's proud assertion that "boys could do things that girls couldn't do" she beat him again and again at tennis, and beat the rest of them, too, for she was an old hand at the game.

For the first time, too, her brother showed his interest and skill in outdoor games; his fondness for tennis seemed to come back on him in a rush, and though he sometimes got rattled and did not think quickly enough, his playing was rapid and accurate in the main and he and Ruth came out first in the tournament in which they all joined.

"And wait till you see Harry swim!" she said proudly, as, racket in hand, she sank onto a garden bench; "he can swim across the river and back; do you know how far that is?"

"I know how far it is over; I don't know how far it is back," said Roy.

"You think you're smart, don't you!" **[154]**

"I'll give you a correct imitation of a boy scout raising a racket," Roy said, holding his racket high in the air. "Next imitation, that of a boy scout following a trail," he added, going on his

hands and knees and with an absurd air of scrutiny and stealth following the chalk mark around the tennis court.

“Isn’t he too silly!” laughed Ruth.

Roy resumed his seat beside her. “Did you hear about the Germans bombarding a man’s garden and shelling all his peas?”

“Really—” began Ruth. “Oh, nonsense, it’s a joke!”

“Why is a boy scout?” he persisted.

“What’s the answer?”

“There isn’t any. Here’s another. What’s the aim of a scout?”

“Well?”

“A correct aim. Did you hear about the scout that went camping without any duffel bag or baggage, yet he carried fifteen good-sized articles in his back pocket?”

“He couldn’t! How could he?”

“He had a copy of *Boys’ Life* with fifteen articles in it. Which has the most stories, *Boy’s Life* or the Mutual Life? Here’s another. If *Every Boys’ Library* caught fire, how would the smoke come out?”

“Silly!” **[155]**

“In volumes, of course. Say, if it’s cowardly to strike a person who is on the ground, is it all right to hit the trail? Here’s another——”

“You seem to know so much about them,” Ruth interrupted. “Tell me what an Honor Scout is?”

“Is it a riddle?”

“No, it isn’t a riddle; I really want to know.”

“An Honor Scout is a scout that has a sense of honor. There’s only one scout in our troop that has any sense of honor—that’s Honorable Tomasso Slade alias Sherlock Nobody Holmes. He has the gold cross. Honorable Garry Everson has the silver cross. That means he has some sense of honor, but not so much.”

“I don’t believe a word you’re telling me,” she said.

Roy looked at her through the strings of his racket. “Boy Scout behind prison bars,” said he, teasingly.

“*You* tell me,” she said, turning to Doc Carson. **[156]**

“*I’ll* tell you,” said Pee-wee; “you’ve got to look out for him, he’s a jollier. An Honor Scout is one that has saved somebody’s life—and gets an honor medal—see? If he takes a big chance and —and—kind of plunges into the jaws of death—kind of—”

“How?” said Roy.

“Then he gets the gold cross. If he—”

“Lands just outside the jaws,” interrupted Roy.

“Shut up!” said Pee-wee. “If he doesn’t take quite such a big chance but a *pretty* big one, then he gets the silver cross. And if he takes a small chance—”

“About the size of Pee-wee,” Roy put in.

“Then he gets the bronze cross,” Pee-wee finished. “See?”

They were lolling on and about the bench near the tennis court, laughing at each other’s nonsense, when Harry Stanton jumped up suddenly. Garry and Ruth watched him keenly, as they always did when he became excited.

“Oh, I’ve got an idea, a fine idea!” he cried. “I got it from what Pee-wee said——”

“All right, take your time, Stan,” said Garry. **[157]**

“I tried to think of a name—a new name—for the *Rambler* but I couldn’t think of any. I told my mother I’d name it for Tom Slade only that wouldn’t be fair to Garry, and it would be the same if I named it for Garry—see? Anyway—anyway—she said a boy’s name wouldn’t be good, anyway. But if I name it *Honor Scout*, it will be naming it for both of them—won’t it?” he asked anxiously.

“Oh, crinkums, you hit it!” shouted Pee-wee, enthusiastically. “It’s an insulation—”

“Inspiration, you mean,” corrected Connie.

“What’s the difference?” demanded Pee-wee.

“Nothing—only insulation is the covering around a wire and inspiration is a good idea.”

“Otherwise they’re the same,” said Roy.

“Oh, it’s one peach of a name!” repeated Pee-wee, undaunted, and pounding the back of the bench. “It’s a piperino!”

Harry Stanton was delighted.

“It *is* a bully name,” said Westy Martin.

“And—and *I* thought of it—didn’t I,” said Harry, with the touch of childishness that still showed itself at times.

“You sure did,” said Garry. **[158]**

“It’s sort of two names in one,” said Will Bronson.

“I—I thought of it just this minute,” repeated Harry, nervously.

“You’re all right, Stan,” said Garry. “Sit down and watch the game now—watch your sister trim Roy.”

“I wouldn’t play with him, he’s too silly,” said Ruth.

“You’re afraid of being beaten,” challenged Roy.

“By *you*? You don’t even know how to volley.”

“I know how to jolly,” Roy came back.

They played much to Harry’s amusement, which was just what Garry wanted, and Roy was

ignominiously vanquished.

“Now you’re supposed to say ‘Deuce’!” Ruth called to him.

“I don’t use such language,” answered Roy.

“Bat it over there, silly, and then say ‘My advantage!’”

“I wouldn’t take advantage of a girl,” he answered.

It was no wonder he was beaten.

Roy and one or two of the others stayed for supper and Ruth took him into the kitchen (to the consternation of her mother and the colored cook) and taught him to make popovers. Being the troop’s chef, he was greatly interested and wore a huge kitchen apron on which he was continually tripping. **[159]**

Upon Mr. Stanton’s return a slight cloud was cast upon the rosy plans for a cruise, partly from his hesitancy to let Harry go with them and partly because of his doubts as to whether his son ought to keep the boat at all. Of these latter misgivings he was cured by an elaborate argument of Pee-wee’s. Or, in any event, he surrendered—and Pee-wee took the credit.

“I’ve got a peach of an argument I’m going to give him,” said Pee-wee, as he and Roy and Garry were hiking it to Shady Lawn for a set of tennis. “It’s what the lawyers call a teckinality. Don’t you remember he used one last year when he gave us the boat?”

He found Mr. Stanton on the porch, and perched himself upon the railing near him, swinging his legs.

“I don’t know,” said Mr. Stanton, when Pee-wee broached the subject, “whether I shall let Harry keep the boat or not. Mr. Waring was rather a queer man, and I don’t know whether we ought to take his will too seriously. I shouldn’t wish you boys to be disappointed,” he added, thoughtfully. **[160]**

“Well, I’ll tell you how it is,” said Pee-wee. “You’re a lawyer, kind of, aren’t you?”

“Kind of,” Mr. Stanton conceded.

“I thought it all out last night. Now you gave us a boat, didn’t you? And I’m not saying that wasn’t a dandy thing to do.”

“I’m glad you have found pleasure in it.”

“Only the trouble was the fellow that owned the boat was alive all the time and so you really didn’t have any right to give it to us. That’s a teckinality, isn’t it?”

Mr. Stanton laughed.

“So if Harry didn’t have a boat of his own, why, then, of course, we’d have to give the *Good Turn* back to him—’cause it’s his, see? But, of course, as long as he *has* a boat of his own, it’s all right. Anyway, you couldn’t stop us from leaving the *Good Turn* at Nyack Landing if we wanted to. Even if you were a—a—judge, you couldn’t do that, could you?”

“I seem to be at your mercy,” said Mr. Stanton.

“And there’s another dandy argument, too—a peach!” [161]

“If it’s one of your own, I should like to hear it.”

“Well, you want Harry to get well, don’t you? Maybe you don’t know all that Garry Everson did to make him—to help him get better. And then he gave him up so’s Tom could have a full patrol. Gee, even *we* didn’t know what kind of a fellow Garry was—we didn’t. But we know now, you can bet. Maybe Harry would get worse again if you took that boat away from him. He’s just thought of a dandy name for it—the *Honor Scout*.”

“Hmmm,” mused Mr. Stanton.

“Isn’t that one pippin of a name?”

“I think we may let him have the boat,” said Mr. Stanton, thoughtfully. “The whole circumstance is so very strange——”

“And can he make the cruise with us to Plattsburg?”

“We will see what Mr. Ellsworth thinks—and the doctor. I don’t quite see,” Mr. Stanton added, after a thoughtful pause, “how Harry can become a member of Tom Slade’s patrol, much as I should like to see him the companion of you boys. We live so far from Bridgeboro——”

“It seems that way to you because you’re not a scout,” interrupted Pee-wee, patronizingly. “But we’ve thought it all out and we’ve decided that twenty-three miles isn’t so far. You see, when you’re a scout distance doesn’t amount to anything, because we hike. And if you go scout-pace, you don’t get tired at all. Did you ever try scout-pace?” [162]

“No, I never did.”

“Well, you’ve missed something. You ought to try it. Would you like me to show you?”

“I think I’ll stick to the automobile,” said Mr. Stanton, dubiously.

“Well, you know, when Harry gets all well he could paddle down and he could run the machine, and besides they have two autos at Roy’s and he runs them, and they’ve got one at Westy’s—of course, it isn’t exactly an automobile, it’s a Ford—and in the summer it would be easy going back and forth and in the winter we only have one meeting a week, and he could come down Fridays and stay at my house till Sunday. Oh, gee, I hope nothing will happen now to stop him from joining Tom’s patrol. Tom would be awful disappointed.”

Nothing did happen, and Pee-wee took his full measure of glory. The doctor proved his staunch supporter, and even Mrs. Stanton said reluctantly that she supposed Harry might go, but that they must be very careful to bring him safely home to her again. [163]

“Didn’t we bring him home once?” Pee-wee demanded. “You leave it to me.”

[164]

CHAPTER XIV
FIRST BRIDGEBORO B.S.A BECOMES A FULL TROOP

"We'll have the initiation on the boat, hey?" exclaimed Pee-wee. "Just like in *Pinafore*, kind of. Ever see that play? It's a dandy! I saw it—the whole of it is supposed to be on a ship."

"Can I come and see the initiation?" Ruth Stanton asked.

"I'm sorry," began Roy, "but——"

"I don't believe a word you say."

"You leave it to me," said Pee-wee. "I'll fix it."

So the installation of Harry Stanton as a scout and a member of the Elk Patrol took place on the deck of his own beautiful cruising launch as it lay at Nyack Landing. The troop's own ceremony, by which Tom himself had become a scout, was used, but it had been performed so many times since then that it went off with a routine smoothness, free from any of the little hitches that are apt to mar the impressiveness of scout ceremonials. The three patrols were grouped separately and Mr. Ellsworth stood apart from them.

Garry, who, though an outsider, was asked to participate, presented the applicant to Tom. **[165]**

The three simple requirements of the tenderfoot —familiarity with the twelve laws and the history of the American flag, and the ability to tie four kinds of knots—had been proved informally at Shady Lawn and it remained only for Tom to read the laws one by one, pausing after each and asking the applicant if he agreed to accept it and abide by it. Then Tom presented him to Mr. Ellsworth and Harry, nervous but trying to be self-possessed, made him the scout salute, then offered him the hand-clasp, and then made the scout sign, holding up his hand with the three fingers upright.

Then he took the familiar scout oath, and Tom stepped forward and pinned the tenderfoot badge on him. Then the whole troop filed past, each giving him the scout hand-clasp, after which he stepped back with Tom as the members of the Elk Patrol raised their voices in unison, simulating the cry of the elk.

And so the Elks, for whom the former hoodlum of Barrel Alley had striven and worked and planned, became a complete patrol at last. **[166]**

"All over but the shouting," said Roy, not letting a minute elapse. "Better to be a pro-ally Elk than a German Silver Fox, hey? Listen to the Ravens rave," he added, as that patrol set up its familiar cry in honor of the occasion. "Some flock! Let's give the voice of the package—I mean the pack. Come on, Foxes!"

The Silver Foxes prided themselves on the accuracy of their fox call, and the attenuated "Haa-haa" resounded musically from the hills around.

“It’s beautiful, isn’t it,” said Ruth Stanton, standing close to Garry and Raymond, who were watching half enviously. “I don’t see how they can do it. Did you have a call when you had your patrol last summer?”

“It wasn’t much of a call, it was kind of a squeak,” said Garry in his quiet way. “We called ourselves the ‘Church Mice’ because we were so poor. It wasn’t very much of a patrol and it all fizzled out.” **[167]**

“Wasn’t that too bad! Why did it?”

“Oh, one fellow had to go away to school; another moved out west, and—oh, I don’t know, it evaporated, sort of. You see, Edgevale isn’t much of a place.”

“They used to have a lake there,” interrupted Roy, “but a bird stopped for a drink one day and after that they couldn’t find the lake. Shows you what a big place it is—hey, Garry?”

Garry laughed good-naturedly.

“Not very far from where we live is Vale Centre; Warrentown is near, too. That’s the county seat and they’ve got a bully troop there.”

“Why don’t you join that?” asked Ruth.

“Well, it’s a full troop, and when a troop’s full it can’t be any fuller. You just have to start another and I guess I wasn’t smart enough—hey, Raymond? We’re just free lance scouts now,” he added. “I don’t know as they’ll call us scouts at all at National Headquarters.”

“You should worry,” called Roy, overhearing scraps of their talk.

“You’ve done something more than form a patrol,” Ruth said, soberly. “You should have heard what Dr. Brown said about you—and my father and mother. That headquarters wouldn’t dare to say you aren’t a scout.” **[168]**

“Oh yes, they would—they’re very brave. They’ve got heroes in there who’d think no more of cancelling an index card——”

“You’re almost as silly as Roy. But I know you don’t think it’s a joke. I can see by the way you look at them how you feel.”

“They’re a fine troop,” Garry said, as he watched the boys. “Next to that troop in Warrentown they’re the best all-around troop I ever saw—and you see some pretty good ones up there at camp.”

Ruth told her mother that afternoon that she liked Garry better than any of them—he was so quiet and had such a funny way of saying things.

“Better than Roy?” Mrs. Stanton asked.

“Yes, Roy’s so foolish.”

But just the same, after the *Honor Scout* had gone away, she missed Roy immensely. Indeed, she missed them all; their brief stay (entirely apart from the miraculous return of her brother) had been a delightful event in her life, and now with only the parrot to relieve her loneliness, it seemed as if the bottom had fallen out of things. **[169]**

Even the parrot reminded her of Roy, for when she told the bird that it was lonesome and slow at Shady Lawn, he replied, “You should worry!”—a phrase which he had never been known to use before.

[170]

CHAPTER XV
CRUISING IN THE “HONOR SCOUT”

“I don’t say I’ll get it this summer,” said Tom in his sober and rather awkward way. “’Cause you can never tell what you’ll get. I care more about all the members getting them, anyway, and when we get twenty-one we’re an Eagle Patrol.”

“There’s no such thing as an Eagle Patrol, Tom,” said Mr. Ellsworth.

“If a scout is an Eagle Scout when he gets twenty-one merit badges,” said Tom, doggedly, “then a patrol is an Eagle Patrol when it has twenty-one merit badges. I don’t care what National Headquarters says.”

Mr. Ellsworth laughed. The patrol idea was so firmly rooted in Tom’s mind that he could never think of the individual scout. Rule or no rule, you couldn’t pry that notion out of his head with a crowbar. Everything was for the glory and honor of the patrol.

“You’ve only one more to get yourself to be a star scout, haven’t you?” asked Garry. **[171]**

“I got nine,” said Tom. “We got sixteen in the patrol. If I get one more I’ll be a star scout as you call it. I’d like the Gardening Badge or the Automobile Badge——”

“Smallest flivvers thankfully received, hey?” said Roy.

A half dozen or more of them were sprawled upon the cabin roof as the *Honor Scout* glided silently up the river.

“Merit badges are a cinch,” said Roy.

“No, they’re not either,” said Connie Bennet.

“Sure, all you have to do for the Architecture Badge is to build a castle in the air. Know how to win the Astronomy Badge?” he asked, turning to little Raymond who was always hugely amused at Roy’s nonsense. “Jump out of a third-story window, land on your head and see stars. The Aviation Badge is easy, too. Fly up in the air when anybody kids you—like Pee-wee. Know how to win the Plumbers’ Badge? Just have a pipe dream. Know how to win the Photography Badge? Cultivate *taking* ways.”

“Tell some more,” said Raymond.

“Well, if you want the Blacksmith’s Badge, you just forge a check, and for the Business Badge, mind your own business.” **[172]**

“I think we’d *better* mind our business,” said Mr. Ellsworth, “and slow down if we expect to stop at West Point.”

“Man the tiller, Pee,” called Roy. “I don’t mean *man* it, I mean *small boy* it.”

They paused for a visit at West Point, where they were cordially received and shown about. They saw the immaculate barracks, watched the drill which was carried through with the precision of clock-work, noted with envy the erect posture and almost mechanical salutes of the young officers, and Pee-wee, at least, felt assured that the talk which he had heard about unpreparedness was without foundation.

“It makes me feel like a tramp,” said Will Bronson, as they resumed their cruise, “to see all those swell uniforms and the way those fellows stand and walk.”

“Some class,” agreed Roy, perched in his usual place upon the combing.

Mr. Ellsworth, who was steering, laughed. “I guess they don’t always look like that,” said he.

“If Germany sinks many more of our ships, they won’t look like that,” said Connie. “They’ll put on khaki and roll up their sleeves.” **[173]**

“You said something,” observed Roy.

“What would *we* do if the country went to war?” asked Pee-wee.

“Move to the city,” said Roy.

“I like uniforms,” said a timid voice, “because that shows what you are; a policeman makes you feel safe and so does a soldier, because they have their uniforms. It says in a book I read, ‘Show your colors’ and that means, show what you are.”

Everybody turned and stared at little Raymond Hollister who was sitting on the cabin with his feet dangling in the cockpit. It was not often that he spoke up. Indeed, he had never seemed to be thoroughly at home with anyone except Garry and Jeb Rushmore. They all liked him for the quiet, odd little fellow that he was. They seldom jollied him as they did Pee-wee and they humored his prejudices and notions when those became known. He would sit, hour in and hour out, quietly listening to their talk, laughing at Roy’s nonsense, and occasionally emboldened to defend Garry against some bantering charge.

“Right you are, Ray, old pal,” said Roy. “It’s the suit that makes the scout. That’s a good slap at Tomasso; sling it into him, Ray!” **[174]**

“I don’t know,” said Mr. Ellsworth. (He always hesitated to direct their arguments, preferring to let them dope things out themselves.) “The uniform is only good for what it means—as it seems to me. To be a scout means certain things and to wear the uniform says to the world that you are for those things. So I’m for the uniform. The uniform is the scout’s chief badge. It’s just a great, big merit badge and it ought to be worn like the other merit badges.”

“There might be an invisible badge,” said Tom.

Everybody laughed except Tom himself.

“I’m afraid not,” said Mr. Ellsworth. “An invisible badge wouldn’t be a badge at all.”

"It would be like a silent noise," said Roy, "You've got the right idea, Raymond, *Show your colors*. Rub it into him? He sold the *Friday Evening Pest* all winter and he got fifty cents twice a week for leading Miss Wade's kindergarten class in physical torture; gee, I think he's saving up to pay the national debt, or something! And look at him with that old book strap for a belt. Can you beat it!" [175]

Roy's propensity for jollying, together with his known fondness for Tom, made it possible for him to say almost anything he chose, and he never lost a chance to set people good-naturedly by the ears. But you never know where a spark is going to fall. If these sparks of wit had fallen only upon Tom they would have had no more effect than water, for he knew Roy, and their friendship was as a rock.

But they fell upon little Raymond Hollister, where they ignited other sparks which were already smouldering. Like many boys who have been invalids and have been much by themselves, Raymond had notions; away back home he had first been attracted to the scouts by the trim khaki regalia; it was the first bait Garry had used with him, and to Raymond at first a scout was simply a boy who wore a khaki suit. With Garry's help, the pale-faced little fellow had managed to wriggle through the tenderfoot tests, and then he wanted his suit. It was all he had thought of. I dare say there are a few other scouts like him. He had not delved very deeply into the Handbook.

The members of the little struggling patrol had slipped away until there was no patrol, but Raymond still wore his precious suit and felt that he was a Boy Scout. Perhaps he had the right idea, too, if you will just subtract his prejudice. *Show your colors* is a good slogan, but little Raymond went farther than that. He assumed that if you didn't show your colors it was because you didn't have any; and like most scouts of the tenderfoot class, he was a great stickler for the khaki, for its own sweet sake. [176]

He had (as he had confided to Pee-wee that first night in camp) never "fallen for" Tom Slade. There was not much of the scout glamor about Tom and Raymond liked the scout glamor. He worshipped Roy and he idolized Garry. He was so jealous for Garry that he looked on Tom as an unfair rival. Who had sent that smudge signal from the hill? Who had made Harry Stanton get better? And who had been treated like a dog during his whole vacation? Who but his friend, Garry.

And who had taken Harry Stanton when he *got* better, and broken up the little patrol which was just starting up all over again? Why, that was the fellow in the gray shirt and the book-strap belt, who was no scout at all—Tom Slade. Raymond knew what a scout was—he had seen pictures enough of them. [177]

Probably, his diffident nature would have kept him from saying more now except for Roy's laughing encouragement and the belief that Mr. Ellsworth stood with him. In any event, he launched forth in a way which astonished them all.

"That's why you don't wear the uniform—

because you're not a scout!" he shouted at Tom. "You're too stingy, you are, and everybody knows it! You've no right to go with fellers that are scouts! You—you get them to name their boats after you—fellers—fellers that you stole—yes, *stole*, you did!"

[178] It was unfortunate that both Mr. Ellsworth and Garry, either of whom could have smoothed this thing out in half a jiffy, were on the forward deck getting the anchor ready to cast, and the other scouts were too surprised, and perhaps a little too amused, to put a stop to his tirade. Probably they did not think it would affect Tom.

But Raymond, losing all control of himself, his eyes brimming and his voice trembling, went on:

"That's because—you—you lived down in an alley where people kill each other—and burglars live—and men get drunk and you don't know how other kinds of people act—you don't.... And maybe, you stole other things before—maybe you did—before you ever *stole* Jeff—I mean Harry Stanton! *I* wouldn't call you a scout with your old rags on—I wouldn't. Scouts wear the uniform and they don't steal——"

Then they stopped him.

"It's my fault," said Roy, as Connie vaulted to the cabin edge and put his arm about Raymond, trying to quiet him.

"I know about scouts—I do—and I know what a scout is—I do——" he shouted, almost crying.

"All right, all right, Ray," said Connie, soothingly.

[179] Tom Slade looked up, straight at Raymond. He was gulping and it was pitiful to look at him. "I know I did," he almost sobbed. "I——"

"Never mind, Tom," said Roy, softly. "Don't mind him. He doesn't mean it."

"I know I did," Tom said again. "But you *can* have an invisible badge, just the same—I don't care for Mr. Ellsworth or anybody."

With a supreme effort to control himself, swallowing sob after sob in great painful gulps, he pushed aside the cabin locker, went down into the cabin and banged the door shut.

Roy followed after him, but Tom's stolid nature had been pierced at last and he turned away even from Roy.

"Of course, you can, Tom," said Roy, almost frightened at his emotion. "You *can* have an invisible badge, Tom—I know you can, Tom."

He did not know exactly what Tom had meant; like many of his expressions, it had been a puzzle to them all, but he would have said almost anything now to soothe him and help to efface those black memories.

"Sure you can, Tom," he repeated. "That's easy—old man. It's a cinch!"

[180]

CHAPTER XVI

“What the dickens does he mean by an invisible badge, do you suppose?” Westy Martin asked.

“You can go through *my* pockets,” said Roy. “Tomasso is the Boy Scout puzzle. They ought to give him away with a years subscription to *Boys’ Life*. I wish that hadn’t happened, though. Jiminy, who’d have thought that kid would go up in the air like that!”

Tom had not been long in regaining his stolid composure; he appeared to entertain no grudge against Raymond, and even offered to bait his hook for him, for the little fellow angled continually, notwithstanding that he never caught anything. But his offer was indignantly refused, and Raymond would have nothing to do with him.

The *Honor Scout* cruised leisurely up the river, held at anchor for the scouts to swim now and then, and making shore at safe places when the tide was full, for luncheon or supper on the wooded banks with the precipitous mountains rising sheer above them. **[181]**

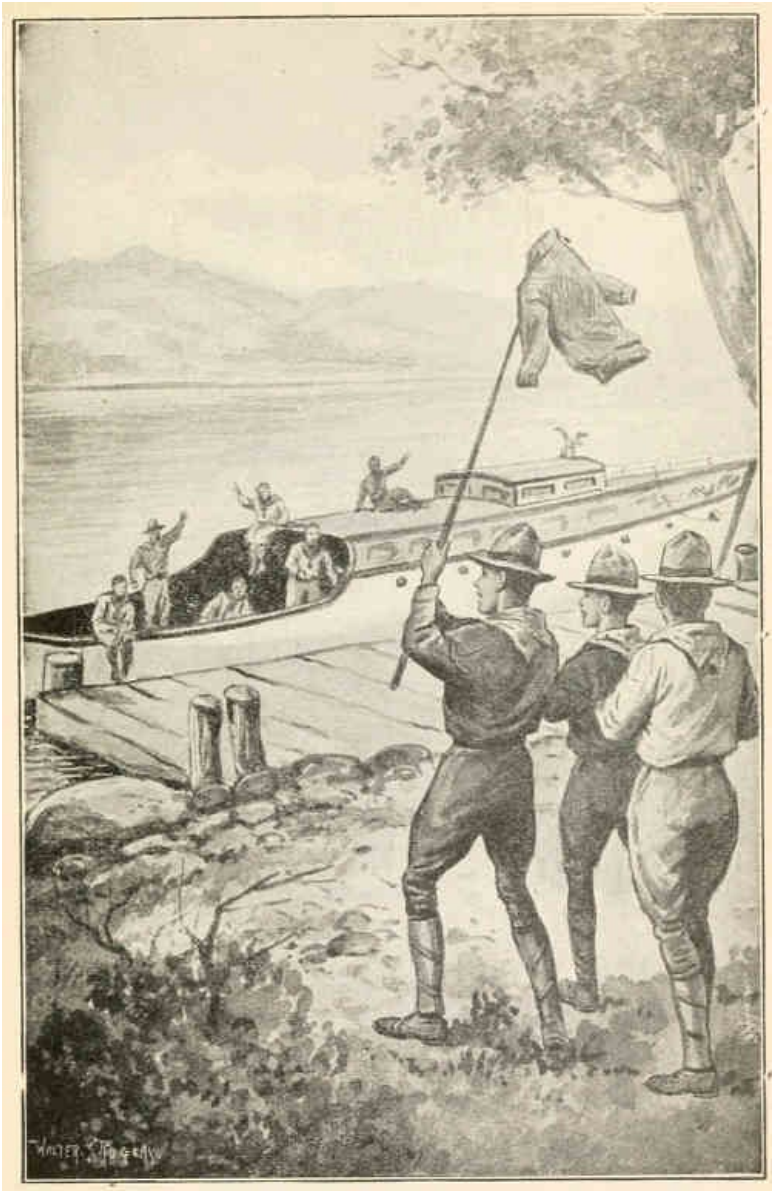
Harry Stanton was hardly recognizable now as the panic-stricken, scatter-brained youth whom they had found on the mountain. Under Mr. Ellsworth’s eagle eye he had a chance to show his skill at swimming, but his wish to be ever in the water was discouraged and for the most part he contented himself with reading the Handbook and studying the second-class tests. Already he had “backfired” which was the word they used for the act of qualifying for a merit badge before one reached the stage where the scout rules would permit him to receive such a badge.

This was in music. He had played a mandolin in former days and now he had one of those Hawaiian instruments—a Ukulele—and he would sit on the cabin locker by the hour picking out the soft South Sea airs, to the delight of the whole troop.

The dream of his life at present was to attain to second-class, and he would talk eagerly about tracking and signalling and first-aid. His impulsiveness sometimes ran to the point of agitation and he seemed to have little balance wheel when he got excited, but he was getting better fast and as the boys came to know him for what he was they grew to like him immensely. **[182]**

In the course of their meanderings northward, they came again to Catskill Landing and Roy, Doc Carson and Pee-wee hiked up to the camp to see how things were and to get a sweater which Doc had left there, while the others transferred some of the luggage from the *Honor Scout* to the *Good Turn*, for the Elks meant to continue in the smaller boat so as to relieve the rather congested condition of the other.

Late in the afternoon the three scouts returned, Doc carrying the sweater on the end of his staff like a pennant. Roy carried a large jar of marmalade (or “motherlade” as he called it) which the chief cook had presented to the voyagers; and Pee-wee carried an extensive scout smile. He was Law Eight, personified.



DOC CARRIED THE SWEATER ON THE END OF HIS STAFF LIKE A PENNANT.

“What’s the news?” called one of the group that was lolling on the *Honor Scout’s* cabin.

“The plot grows thinner,” said Roy. “Here, take this and put it in the galley, compliments of Beefsteak Ben.... Don’t say a word, a dark and bloody mystery has been solved. Believe *me*, they’ve got a sleuth up there that has Tom beaten forty-’leven ways.” **[183]**

“How’s everybody?” Will Bronson asked.

“Fine,” said Doc. “There’s two troops there from Boston——”

“You ought to see the beans that crowd eats,” Roy interrupted; “and mince pie—go-o-odnight!”

“There’s a bunch came from Brooklyn——”

“Can you blame them?” interrupted Roy again.

“And a troop from Canada——”

“Daon’tcher knaow,” interrupted Roy, with an exaggerated imitation of the English accent.

“Gee, that’s some troop,” said Doc. “They came from Montreal and they wear trousers that don’t tuck in and show part of their legs and they wear little silver swastika badges that they get

for special service. They look awfully different from the other fellows——”

“They showed us how to raise the English flag,” [184]
said Pee-wee, excitedly. “Maybe you think the English flag hasn’t got any top and bottom to it. Anybody can tell when the American flag is upside down——”

“Well, I should hope so,” said Mr. Ellsworth.

“And maybe you think because the English flag has a center design that you can’t fly it upside down—— There’s where you’re wrong!”

“I don’t see that any of us is wrong since none of us has committed that crime,” laughed Mr. Ellsworth. “We’re not in the habit of flying the British flag at all.”

“I did,” boasted Pee-wee.

“Well, then, don’t blame us for your sins,” chuckled the scoutmaster.

Pee-wee subsided for the moment, but the time was to come, and that not so far distant, when this redoubtable “good turner” should enter stores and even public buildings, in Uncle Sam’s domain, and do the British Empire a good turn by explaining how her proud emblem was being flown without, upside down.

“They’ve been doing war work,” said Doc. “They [185]
built recruiting stands in Montreal, and they sand-papered three thousand muskets that had to be varnished, and distributed enlistment posters, and—— Oh, I don’t know what all. They showed us a poster like the ones they distributed. It said ‘Meet me at the battle-line.’”

“Meet me at the clothes-line, that’s where I hang out!” put in Roy.

“Oh, they’re one peach of a troop!” enthused Pee-wee.

This troop of Canadian scouts had produced a great impression on the three boys, and, from their account, had done the same on all the others at Temple Camp. The three were full of enthusiasm for their wide-awakeness and efficiency, to say nothing of their patriotic activities. It started the Bridgeboro boys thinking of what part they might be permitted to play if Uncle Sam were drawn into the great war.

These Canadian youngsters, according to Doc, had shown the greatest friendliness toward their American brothers, standing with hats removed when the *Star Spangled Banner* was sung, and had become very popular in camp, and shown an almost uncanny proficiency in tracking and the faculty for deduction. One of their patrol leaders, indeed, was a veritable hand-writing expert, and knew besides dozens of scout signs used in the Canadian Rockies. But it fell out that he did Tom Slade a very bad turn.

The enthusiastic report of the boys had two very [186]
marked effects upon the party, one of which they would be destined to recall in strenuous days to come. These were their admiration for the fine organization and superb proficiency of the English scouts, and for the manner in which they were “doing their bit” for their country in these

days of trial. It seemed to bring the Bridgeboro boys very near to the war.

Garry, who sat quietly upon the combing listening to Doc's account, with occasional spasmodic punctuations by Pee-wee, thought regretfully of his own efforts to form a little troop, and of how meagre and discouraging the results had been beside these splendidly organized scout units with which it seemed his fate to mingle.

"Well, how about the mystery?" Connie Bennet prompted.

"I thank you," said Roy. "The mystery is all right, all right, and it proves the good old rule that your sins are sure to find you out. I hold here an envelope to be delivered to Tomasso Slade—main geezer of the Elks. Stand, Tomasso, so I can get a good shot at you! *Who sent the money for Raymond Hollister to stay at camp till September?*" he shouted, suddenly. "And you thought you'd get away with it, didn't you—you big sneak! Deny it at your peril! *Now* I know where the profits from the *Friday Evening Pest* went! There's a fellow—Rolly Culver, from Montreal, Canada—who has *your* number, all right! Deny the allegation and denounce the alligator, if you dare!" **[187]**

Everybody stared at Tom, who was blushing right up to the roots of his towsled shock of rebellious hair.

"What do you mean?" said he, sullenly.

"Ah, well may you ask what I mean, Sherlock Nobody Holmes!" triumphed Roy, shaking the envelope exasperatingly in Tom's face. "I mean that you tried to beat Mr. John Temple to it—that's what I mean! And Rolly Culver from Canada FOILED you! See?"

"No, I don't," said Tom, glancing shamefacedly across the deck at little Raymond and looking as if he had committed a crime.

"I mean it's good we hiked up there," said Roy, more seriously. "A check got there yesterday from Mr. Temple—a check for fifty bucks—mailed in the West Indies. It was for Raymond to stay at camp till fall." **[188]**

"Go-o-odni-ght!" exclaimed Will Bronson.

Garry stared, intensely interested.

"You ought to have heard Jeb tell about it," said Roy. "'When I see es haow they follyed one anuther up,'" he went on, accurately mimicking Jeb. "'I sez thar' must be sump'n wrong somewhar.' And just by chance," Roy continued, "he hauled out of his old buckskin wallet the old crumpled piece of paper that had come with the other money—the fifty buckarinos in cash—and it's lucky he happened to show it to that Culver kid, believe *me*! That fellow said it was the same writing as the writing on the bulletin board at camp. Other fellows said, no; but he stuck to it and showed them how to compare curves and letters, and strokes and dots and things—even straight lines—and there you are," concluded Roy, delightedly. "We all know who had charge of the bulletin board—— And you thought you'd make Mr. Temple the goat, didn't you, with your

two twenties and a ten! You thought he'd forgotten Raymond, didn't you. And you thought you'd get away with it! We've got your number, Tomasso, my boy, and we know why you've been wearing old gray flannel shirts and book straps, and things. Here you are—there's your fifty!" he concluded, throwing the envelope triumphantly in Tom's face. "It would have gone back to Mr. Temple if it hadn't been for Rolly Culver and me!"

There was no mistaking Roy's overwhelming delight, despite his denunciatory tone and he watched joyously as Tom, distressed and uncomfortable, in face of the whole troop's stare, tore open the envelope and took out two twenties and a ten. For Roy had asked the camp trustees who cashed the check to return Tom's money in just the form in which he had sent it, when, having seen the Temples start for South America, he had gone to the post-office at home in Bridgeboro, and with characteristic disregard of the risk, had sent his whole savings in cash to Temple Camp, that nature might complete the good work she had begun for little Raymond Hollister. **[189]**

"I didn't think anybody'd find out," said Tom doggedly.

"No, I don't suppose you did," laughed Mr. Ellsworth.

"John Temple spoiled it for you," said Doc. **[190]**

"You can't get the best of that man!" shouted Pee-wee. "There's no use trying!"

"Tom," said Garry, simply, "I was always glad I turned Stanton over to you, but now I'm gladder than ever. You can see yourself what you've done for Raymond."

"Yes, and we can all see what kind of a pal Raymond has, too," Roy shot back. "You'll be leader of a swell patrol some day, Garry, or I miss my guess."

Garry only smiled. "All things come round to him who waits," said he.

"Come here, Tom," said Mr. Ellsworth. "If there was a merit badge for this sort of thing you'd be a star scout tomorrow. Come over here, my boy."

There was the faintest reminder of the old hoodlum shuffle in Tom's clumsy gait as he went sheepishly across the deck and leaned against the boat's rail near his scoutmaster, speechless, almost expressionless. The book-strap was drawn absurdly tight around his waist. The old, worn, faded gray flannel shirt that he wore was a sight. But upon the back of it, such as it was, Mr. Ellsworth administered a resounding slap.

"That's what you meant by an invisible badge, hey?" said Westy, suddenly; "a good turn kept secret." **[191]**

"I'm afraid none of us have quite understood Tom," said Mr. Ellsworth, simply. Then he turned and looked with the winningest smile at little Raymond. "None of us have understood him, have we, Ray?"

"No, sir," said Raymond, timidly.

“And it shows us that being a scout means more than just wearing the scout suit, eh?”

“Y-yes, sir.”

“You see, one can be a very good scout in a very ragged shirt, and he can, if he wishes to, be a very punk scout in full khaki. You get me, Ray?”

“Ye-yes, sir.”

“Well, then, what are we going to do about it?” Mr. Ellsworth asked pleasantly.

Garry understood, if Raymond did not, for he started the little fellow over toward Tom, and Tom took the timid hand and held it.

Then suddenly, in one of those freaks of impulse that Raymond sometimes showed, he reached with his other hand and grasped Tom’s arm. With the arm that was free Tom encircled the small, agitated form.

Raymond was crying like a baby.

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CHAPTER XVII
LOST!

“Do you know what I’ve decided, do you know what I’ve decided?” demanded Pee-wee, uproariously.

“Break it to us gently and let us hear the worst,” said Roy.

“I decided that we ought to stop in Albany and have Tom buy a suit. I didn’t say anything before, but crinkums, he ought not to go to Plattsburg without a suit. You can see that yourself. And he can get one now, all right.”

“Hear that, Tom?” said Mr. Ellsworth, quizzically.

They were running up the stretch of river above Castleton and would reach the capital that day, if their plans held good.

“I got no objections to getting a suit,” said Tom. “I believe in suits. I never said I didn’t.”

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The *Good Turn* had run up alongside the *Honor Scout* which had come to anchor for swimming and luncheon, and Tom and his patrol had gone aboard the larger boat for “eats,” where an uproarious session of jollying usually awaited him.

“Hurrah for Sigmund Eisner!” shouted Roy. “He’s the fellow that makes scouts, hey, Raymond?”

“No, he isn’t,” said Raymond, quite boldly. “He’s the fellow that makes *suits*.”

“Same thing, only different,” said Roy.

“I guess we all believe in the khaki,” said Mr. Ellsworth, “only we know it’s not the khaki that makes the scout.”

“Any more than it’s the pants that make the panther, or the badge that makes the badger,” said Roy. “I vote for Tom to buy a suit and we’ll all go with him to help him choose it.”

“No, you don’t,” said Tom, with an actual approach to animation. “I won’t buy it if the whole troop goes along.”

“We wouldn’t kid you,” said Connie. “Honest, we won’t.”

“Hear what Bennover Connet says? We’ll promise to be good and——”

“I’ll take no chances,” said Tom. “I don’t mind if two or three go, so’s to help me get fitted right, but——” **[194]**

“One representative from each patrol,” suggested Roy.

“All right,” said Tom, resignedly.

About the middle of the afternoon they reached Albany and tied up at a lumber wharf right under the shadow of the big night boat, the majestic bulk of which made the *Good Turn* and even the more imposing *Honor Scout* look very insignificant.

“Now for a fling on shore,” shouted Roy. “Hand me something till I fling it on shore,” he added, hitching his trousers in true mariner’s fashion.

“Oh, the sailor’s life is bold and free,
Yo hum, yo ho, yo ha, yo hee!
The briny foam he doesn’t fear—
When the foam is on an ice cream soda.

Tom’s going to treat.”

Roy, being the leader of the Silver Foxes, represented that patrol in the suit-buying expedition; Tom represented his own patrol, and Artie Van Arlen, leader of the Ravens (of whom you shall know more in another volume) completed the trio.

“Correct imitation of a boy scout hunting for an ice cream soda,” said Roy, climbing stealthily over the lumber pile and picking his way up to the street. “Gee, it seems funny to be in a city, doesn’t it? What are all the flags for?” **[195]**

“What flags?” said Tom.

“Flag*stones*—you’re walking on ’em. No sooner said than stung!”

“Tom’s easy,” said Artie.

“He bites like a sunfish,” said Roy.

It did not take them long to reach a thoroughfare where their tanned faces and jaunty, out-of-town air attracted no little attention.

“Maybe they know we’re just fresh from a life on the ocean wave,” suggested Artie.

“They can see we’re fresh, all right,” said Roy. “We should worry.”

In the first confectionery store which they came to they lined up at the soda counter from behind which a white-jacketed man smiled at them.

“Give me a raspberry sundae,” said Artie.

“V—vanilla,” said Tom, hesitatingly.

“I’ll take heliotripe—trope,” said Roy.

The man waited, laughing good-naturedly.

“I can’t seem to make up my mind,” Roy went on, studying the tempting printed list. “Aren’t mad, are you?” **[196]**

“Me?” said the man. “No, indeed, I’m glad you’re so happy.”

“We’re not happy,” said Roy. “We laugh, ha-ha, and dance ha-ha, but we’re not happy. I think I’ll take—let’s see—I’ll take—I think I’ll take —*chocolate*. Happy thought, that’s my patrol color!”

Tom paid for the sodas and Roy bought some peanut brittle. The man smiled after them as they went out.

“The natives on the island seem to be friendly,” said Roy.

“That’s a good idea,” said Artie, “picking out your patrol color.”

“Sure,” said Roy. “I’m going to write to National Headquarters and tell them to print a rule in the Handbook—next edition.”

“What?”

“Don’t you know what an edition is? You know what a dish is? Well——”

“*Rule*,” said Artie. “‘Scouts buying sodas should always select their own patrol colors’?”

“Sure,” said Roy. “Good idea. Tom would always take raspberry, I’d take chocolate, and you’d take—let’s see——”

“Oh, there’s a big dry goods store,” said Artie. **[197]**

They cut across the street and entering a large store, asked where scout supplies were sold.

“Two aisles to your right, then one to your left,” was the answer.

“We get you,” said Roy.

Reaching the point indicated, and seeing no scout supplies, they asked again.

“Two aisles down and take the elevator to the third floor; then two aisles forward,” said a young lady.

“We thank you,” said Roy, bowing elaborately.

Having followed these directions and seeing no scout supplies, they inquired of another clerk.

“In the basement,” said the clerk.

The three tramped back and down the stairway.

“Keep your scout smile on,” said Artie.

“Scouts, I think we’re lost,” said Roy, “and darkness is coming on.”

In the basement they saw tents and canoes in

the distance.

“Maybe it’s a scout camp in the wilds of a department store,” said Roy. “Are you getting tired, Tom?” [198]

“I bet Jeb Rushmore could find it all right,” said Artie.

“You said something; but I think we’re hot on the trail now.”

Arrived at the spot which looked like a camp, they asked for scout suits.

“You want supplies,” said the young lady.

“Right the first time,” said Roy.

“Those are on the fourth floor.”

The three sank down in one of those swinging porch benches and breathed heavily, much to the girl’s amusement.

“What do you say we blaze the trail,” said Roy, “so other scouts will be able to follow it?”

“It seems there’s a difference between camping goods and sporting articles,” said Artie.

“I say, let’s not give up,” contributed Tom.

They rose and sallied laughingly forth, through aisles and around corners to the elevator. On the fourth floor they found themselves in a wilderness of carpets and rugs and bureaus, tables, chairs and curtains.

“This beats the hill where we found Stan,” said Tom. [199]

“Keep a good heart, scouts,” said Roy. “We’ll come out all right yet. This has got the Canadian Rockies beat twenty ways.”

“Sporting supplies?” pleaded Roy of the first clerk they saw.

“Two aisles over.”

“Scout suits?” he asked, reaching that point.

“One floor down, in the boy’s clothing.”

Near the stairway they encountered a friendly looking man in black, standing with his hands clasped behind him.

“Hey, mister,” said Roy, “we are boy scouts and we’re lost. It’s getting late and we have to get back to our boat before dark. We can’t seem to hit the right trail and we’re afraid we’ll starve if night comes on. We want to find the place where they sell scout suits.”

The man laughed pleasantly and resting his arm over Roy’s shoulder, went part way down the stairs with them and pointed to a scout suit on a wooden form at the other side of the store.

“There you are,” he said, smiling.

“We thank you,” said Roy. [200]

“Don’t lose sight of it,” suggested Artie.

“We’re all right now,” said Tom.

Reaching the elusive spot, they found themselves at last at the haven of their desire, for there was the wooden boy scout facing them, his stiff arm raised and his painted fingers sticking upright in the scout salute, as if to greet the tired wayfarers, who sank down, panting ostentatiously, upon a bench close by.

“What do you say we agree not to tell the fellows that we were lost and—and—asked our way?” said Artie.

“All right,” said Tom, “we’re the three leaders and no one knows it but us. We’ll keep quiet.”

“If Pee-wee should ever hear of this,” said Roy, “and find out that we *asked our way*—G-o-o-dni-ight!”

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE TRAGIC ADVENTURE OF THE FRECKLED SCOUT

The salesman was busy waiting on two boys, both scouts, one of whom was evidently buying a new outfit. Tom expressed surprise at this, since the uniform which he was wearing seemed almost new.

“I suppose the new one is for Sundays,” said Artie.

“We should worry,” said Roy.

The boy who was doing the purchasing was of a trim physique, with very red hair and he had as many freckles upon his cheerful countenance as there are stars in the quiet sky. There was much joking, which the Bridgeboro boys could not hear, between these boys and the salesman, and while waiting for the purchase to be wrapped the three formed a little laughing group.

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The freckled boy, in particular, interested the waiting scouts who were attracted by his trim figure, his jaunty manner and the shiny redness of his rather curly hair.

“Well, I wish you luck,” said the salesman as they left him; “it’s some stunt!”

As the two passed the bench where the Bridgeboro boys were sitting, the red-headed boy turned and gave them the scout salute with a merry smile.

“They live around here?” Artie asked.

“No,” said the salesman, inspecting Tom’s scout certificate to be sure that he was entitled to buy the official suit. “They’re down from their camp up Lake Champlain. Quite a pair, aren’t they?”

Artie felt that he would like to ask more about them, for he was sure they had been telling “their adventures,” as Pee-wee would have said, to the salesman. But scouts are not officious, and these particular scouts believed somewhat in Roy’s advice for winning the business badge; *viz.*, Mind your own business.

The salesman, however, did vouchsafe them one little morsel of information while he was fitting Tom.

“They’ve got a great scheme on foot, those kids,” said he.

“I think I know what it is,” said Tom. “They’re going to give a scout suit to a new fellow for a surprise.” **[203]**

“Sherlock Nobody Holmes again,” jeered Roy.

The man only laughed. “You scout fellows don’t seem to know what fear is, do you?” he added, pleasantly.

“We wouldn’t know it if we met it in the street,” said Roy, not, however, understanding the significance of the remark. “Tomasso’s the courageousest—look out he don’t bite you! We’ve been feeding him meat today.”

Tom loosened up and decided he would get a sweater, too, and the joint deliberation over a suitable color put an end to their immediate thought of the stranger scouts.

“A kind of a blackish white would be good,” said Roy.

Artie suggested a pale lavender. The salesman was greatly amused at their talk, but Tom was somewhat nettled and embarrassed, and he was glad when the completion of the business put an end to their nonsense.

On the way back to the boats and afterwards they speculated somewhat about the two scouts. There was no particular reason for their doing so except that the red-headed boy lingered in their minds with his trim appearance and his vivacious manner. Later, they recalled his jaunty, careless air, his friendly salute and his winning smile, almost with a shudder. **[204]**

“We saw the kind of scout that Raymond believes in,” taunted Roy, upon their return to the boats. “He had on the full uniform, belt-axe, whistle, bugle, gaiters, hat——”

“That’s right,” said Mr. Ellsworth, winking at Raymond. “That’s what they’re for—to be worn.”

“There was only one thing wrong with him,” Roy concluded.

“What?” demanded Raymond, quite boldly for him.

“He was made of wood,” said Roy.

“Well, then, let him serve as a terrible example,” laughed the scoutmaster. “I dare say there are a few others like him.”

“Did he have any invisible badges on?” Doc asked slyly.

“Doesn’t Tomasso look too sweet for anything?” teased Roy.

“Cut it out,” grumbled Tom. “It’s time to get supper.” **[205]**

They stayed at their mooring that night and lolled about on the cabin roof of the *Honor Scout*

while Harry Stanton strummed his ukulele and those who knew the soft music of the far-off Pacific isles hummed the airs which seem nowhere so melodious as on the water. A group of small boys from the unkempt waterside section caught the strains and shuffled down, grimy and ragged, to sprawl upon the piles of lumber on the wharf, staring with wide open eyes, and listening. To them it was like a circus come to town. To the scouts it was a new kind of camp fire.

In the morning they were gone, doubtless leaving a refreshing memory with the youthful denizens of that squalid neighborhood.

The Hudson above Troy is no longer of majestic beauty and the voyagers were not sorry for the novelty which presented when they entered the canal. At least, they did not have to “squint” for hidden perils, though the locks played sorry havoc with the beautiful enameled freeboard of the *Honor Scout*.

“Cruising in a canal is about as exciting as a hike on Broadway,” commented Roy.

“You said something,” agreed Connie. **[206]**

It was not long, indeed, before the novelty began to wear off, and they were one and all glad when the boats emerged into the broad expanse of Lake Champlain.

“Lake Champlain,” said Roy, contemplating it in his favorite attitude, sitting on the cabin roof with his hands clasped about his updrawn knees; “Lake Champlain rises early in the morning, takes a northerly course, and flows into the sink. Correct, be seated, Master Blakeley.”

They could accelerate their speed now and the *Good Turn* had her work cut out for her keeping up, even with the *Honor Scout’s* motor throttled down to half-speed.

“This is historic territory,” said Mr. Ellsworth. “Almost every rock has its tale to tell of the bloody French and Indian War——”

“I hope they won’t tell them,” said Roy. “School’s closed.”

But for all that he was interested as “our beloved scoutmaster” recalled some of the stirring events which occurred along the rugged, historic shores between which they were passing. They paused to see the ruins of the old Revolutionary fort at Crown Point, and the restored fort at Ticonderoga, with its underground passage to the shore.

The first night of their cruise through the lake they tied up at Port Henry and early in the morning sallied forth into the town for oil, gasoline and supplies, replenishing their depleted stock sufficiently for the fifty mile run up to Plattsburg. **[207]**

“Believe *me*, this is some hike,” said Roy.

“I dare say it looks about the same,” mused Mr. Ellsworth, glancing about at the wild shore, “as it did when Champlain sailed through it with his Indian guides——”

“That was sumpty-sump years ago,” said Artie

Van Arlen, “you have him in the third grade.”

“Maybe he stopped at Port Henry for gasoline,” suggested Roy.

“I hope he didn’t have to pay twenty-three cents for it,” said Connie.

For about fifteen miles above Port Henry the lake is comparatively narrow, then it opens up to a breadth of ten miles or more, becoming a veritable inland-sea, with the rolling hills of Vermont reaching far eastward and merging in the distance with the lofty Green Mountains.

About ten miles above Port Henry, and at the narrowest part of the lake’s narrow stretch, there rises upon the New York side an extent of precipitous and rugged height known as the Split Rock Mountain. On the landward side the slope from the mountain is easy enough, but toward the lake this irregular eminence presents a steep surface interspersed with woody patches and gray rock. Nestling under this forbidding height is a narrow area of marshy woodland between it and the shore. **[208]**

It is related that in the olden days a Mohawk warrior, being pursued and finding himself upon this dizzy summit without an arrow to his bow, tried to scramble down and losing his foothold was precipitated against trees and over rocks and his mangled body became a prey to vultures in the wooded swamp below. There are guides about that historic water who can point you where his skeleton and tomahawk were found—if you are disposed to venture within that tangled morass.

As the little flotilla approached this spot, Tom who was steering the smaller boat noticed a green canoe drawn up at the wood’s edge, and he called to Roy, sprawling on the cabin of the *Honor Scout*, to look.

“It’s a canoe all right, ain’t it?” he called. **[209]**

“Sure it is,” answered Roy.

“It’s the same color as the woods, that’s why you can’t see it plainer,” said Will Bronson, looking through the field glass.

Scarcely had he spoken when two scouts emerged at the shore and busied themselves at the canoe for a moment or two.

“Why, that’s the red-headed fellow we saw in Albany!” said Artie, who had taken the glass. “I can see him plain.”

“Sure it is,” added Roy. “You can recognize him without the glass.”

The scouts on the larger boat passed the glass from one to another, though most of them could distinguish the boy without it.

“His hair is as red as a brick, isn’t it?” said Mr. Ellsworth.

“That’s him, all right,” said Tom, ungrammatically, from the other boat.

They were almost abreast of the spot when the two boys disappeared in the woods. Roy had meant to hail them and perhaps would still have

done so but for the fact that the freckled scout presently reappeared alone climbing up the precipitous slope.

“You don’t suppose he’s going to try to climb that, do you?” Mr. Ellsworth queried as he watched. **[210]**

“Looks that way,” said Connie.

“Wonder where the other fellow is.”

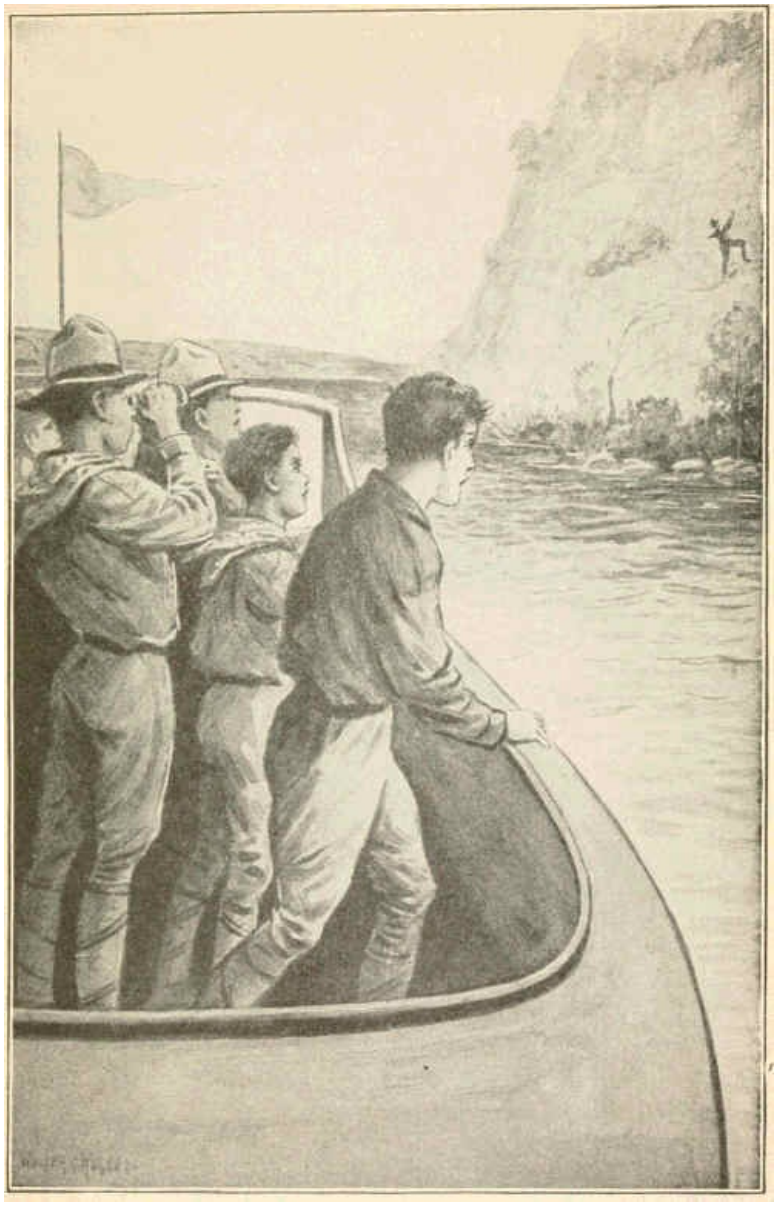
The other scout did not appear, and they watched the agile form as it scrambled up the almost sheer face of the mountain. The sunlight was falling upon the dull face of rock and touching the sparse vegetation with its bright glow, and they recognized the boy clearly now, even to his red hair which shone when it caught the rays of the sun.

“Well—that’s—some stunt!” exclaimed Garry, in amazement. “Do you suppose their camp is up there?”

“They ought to call themselves the Eagles, if it is,” said Roy.

“Watch him,” called Tom from the other boat.

The eyes of the whole troop were upon the nimble figure as it worked its way upward, now scrambling, now climbing among trees, now going zigzag over a precipitous area.



THE EYES OF THE WHOLE TROOP WERE UPON THE NIMBLE FIGURE AS IT WORKED ITS WAY UPWARD.

“Some monkey, hey?” called Garry, to the boys in the smaller boat, where Harry Stanton watched, fascinated. [211]

“Some scout, all right,” one of the O’Connor boys called back.

“That’s a most amazing feat,” said the scoutmaster, watching with the glass.

Soon the agile form, verging to right or left to follow a path of less resistance and sometimes pausing to use his brains as a scout should, had reached a little clump of freakish trees, growing out of rock, and for a few moments he was hidden from the distant watchers.

They had shut off the power of both boats and lay drifting. A scout is brother to every other scout, and I dare say the whole party took a pride in the scout who dared attempt so hazardous an undertaking.

“I could see it in his face,” Tom said.

“Sherlock Nobody Holmes again,” called Roy from the other boat.

Presently, the scrambling figure emerged upon the bare surface above, wriggling and bracing

itself on what seemed to be mere points of rock. A few yards more and he would be safe upon the wooded summit.

“Don’t shout!” said Mr. Ellsworth, anticipating an impulse on Roy’s part. “You might rattle him. Wait till he’s out of danger.” [212]

Now he had reached the edge of the woods which covered the summit and extended somewhat down the precipitous side, and as he disappeared among the trees the scouts on the lake sent up a lusty cheer.

Scarcely had the echo of their shout died away when Roy jumped to his feet.

“Look!” he cried.

Following his pointing finger, the whole troop stood aghast in utter horror as they saw the limp and sprawling figure of the freckled scout go tumbling headlong over tree and rock down the rugged precipice. Harry Stanton gasped and almost fainted away. Pee-wee grasped the rail, white as a sheet.

The figure fell against a crooked tree, the limp arms of the apparently dead or unconscious boy making no effort to grasp it, then tumbled headlong from the ledge and fell with a sickening impact upon the jagged rocks below. There it paused for a second, then fell again like a dead weight, over sheer walls of rock. Once again it paused against some obstacle and Mr. Ellsworth, watching with the glass, could see the neck hanging limp, the head far back in a ghastly, unnatural attitude. The boy was evidently quite dead. Again the body fell, the loose arms and limbs sprawling this way and that until it was precipitated over the edge of the lowest rocky wall and the dreadful sight was ended by its disappearance into the swampy woods below.

“He must have lost his foothold,” whispered Connie. [213]

“It’s—it’s terrible,” breathed little Raymond, almost in a panic.

“Get the oars,” said Mr. Ellsworth, quietly. “We’ll row ashore. Cast the anchor,” he called. “We may be able to get the body. That’s about all we can do, I’m afraid. He probably lost his life with the first impact. He was dead long before he reached the bottom.”

There was not a scout among them but was sobered by the dreadful thing; Harry Stanton had lost his nerve entirely; and it was a solemn little group that scrambled into the *Honor Scout’s* skiff and rowed for shore. Garry Everson, who was a better swimmer than any member of the Bridgeboro troop, had already thrown off his outer clothing and was well toward shore. Others, for whom there was not room in the skiff, followed swimming, until only Harry Stanton, Raymond, and Westy Martin whom Mr. Ellsworth had asked to remain with them, were left on the smaller boat.

“It’s worse than that hill near camp,” Garry called to the boys in the approaching boat. “It’s a regular everglades.” [214]

They found the place a veritable maze of tangled swamp, with a spongy, uncertain foothold. In toward the hill the land was firmer but at close range and without an open view it was impossible to determine where the body had fallen.

“Can you point out about where it was?” called Roy, from the shore.

Westy pointed as best he could and the shore party, spreading, began a systematic search of the spot.

“Is this the place?” said Doc who, as a matter of general precaution, had his first-aid case slung over his shoulder. He was standing on the brink of a black pool, which they thought to be right under the spot where the body had fallen.

“Wait till I see how deep it is,” said Garry, wading in. He was soon beyond his depth and swimming. “If he fell in *there* we’ll never get him,” he said, emerging with black slime dripping from him. **[215]**

“Maybe he caught in the branches of some of those trees,” suggested Connie.

It was the signal for several scouts to scramble up among the knotty branches of the trees in toward the precipice, but without result.

They scoured the whole treacherous ground for fifty yards or more in every direction, but no sign of the unfortunate boy’s body could they discover. They lashed together the two oars from the boat, making a length of perhaps twenty feet, and probed the pool but found nothing.

“I’m going to dive into that,” said Garry.

“I don’t think you’d better, my boy,” said Mr. Ellsworth.

But Garry had already dived and came up dripping with mud and slime.

“I couldn’t get to the bottom,” said he; “there *isn’t* any bottom.”

Tom Slade who, as usual, had pursued his own way, called to the others, “There’s a kind of a trail here—a pearl necklace,[2] I should think. It runs through this swamp and up around the side there. See?” **[216]**

Roy and Mr. Ellsworth, who had come close to him, saw what he meant, though it is doubtful if even those good scouts would have recognized it as a trail.

“See?” said Tom, “you can get to the top without that climb. This runs up around where it isn’t so steep.”

Sure enough, there was a sort of zigzag trail, becoming plainer as it wound its way up, by which one might ascend by a longer though safer route. It followed a deep cleft in the rocks and led, as they surmised, to the easier slope on the landward side of the mountain.

“Why didn’t he take that path, do you suppose?” said the scoutmaster.

“Because he was a dare-devil,” said Roy.

Mr. Ellsworth stood silently as Tom and Roy started up the trail. It led them, as they had supposed it would, to a broader path by which the hill could be surmounted. Here were indistinct footprints at intervals. Why they were not regular Tom could not imagine.

“Why *didn’t* the fellow go this way, I wonder?” Roy said. **[217]**

“You answered that yourself,” Tom answered.

They were now upon the summit and could look down and see the two boats side by side in the lake. It was a dizzy height. Behind them was a broad, flat plateau which became a gentle slope and fell away into the lower country beyond. The path crossed this and here the footprints were plainer and more regular. Then they verged from the path and were difficult to follow amid the sparse vegetation of the plateau.

A few yards and they ended abruptly at a point where there was a little disturbance of the earth and what Tom and Roy thought to be the imprints, very faint, of rubber tires.

“There must have been an auto here,” said Roy.

“It must have been one of those motor-cycle affairs with a kind of a baby carriage alongside it,” said Tom. “Those prints are too close together for a regular auto.”

“How could an auto or a motor-cycle get up here, anyway?” queried Roy.

From the spot where they happened to be, they could just manage to trace a second line of footprints coming from another direction. **[218]**

Roy was very much sobered by this whole affair, but he could not refrain from his usual comment, “The plot grows thinner.”

“Come on, let’s follow those,” said Tom.

They did so until the prints ended abruptly upon the flat, rocky surface near the edge of the precipice.

“I don’t know what to make of the whole business,” said Roy. “Blamed if I do! It’s a puzzle.”

“My idea,” said Tom, as they started down again, “is this; the other fellow was down there below somewhere and was going to follow that fellow, when all of a sudden he fell. They must have chosen that way just for a stunt, I suppose. Didn’t you ever hear that red-headed fellows are reckless? It might possibly be,” he added, hesitatingly, “that the other fellow managed to get his—his body and drag it around up this way. That might account for the way that path looked back there; if someone had been dragged along it might sort of wipe out the footprints. I don’t see how he could have got so far ahead of us, though,” he added.

“But where could he have taken the—body?” **[219]**

“I don’t know—unless he managed to carry it to that automobile or whatever it was back there. Maybe they’d left some kind of a car there to go

out on the lake."

"But all that wouldn't account for those other footprints we saw out toward the edge," said Roy, skeptically.

"No," said Tom, "unless the other fellow went out there and tried to find out, maybe, how the dead fellow had happened to fall. Maybe a tree that he had hold of broke—or something."

"Then there ought to be footprints back," said Roy.

"Sure—there were."

"I didn't see any."

"That isn't saying they weren't there," said Tom.

"Tomasso, you're a wonder."

"Only how did they ever get an automobile, or a motor baby carriage or whatever you call it, up to that place?"

"That's what's got me," said Roy. **[220]**

They found their companions still searching, but almost discouraged, and Mr. Ellsworth listened with keen interest to Roy's report.

"Hmmm," said he, soberly; "you say you saw wheel imprints? Were there no wheel tracks?"

"No," said Tom, "but the land was grassy in places and it was pretty hard."

"Hmmm?" was all that Mr. Ellsworth could say. "I think the most likely view is that the body is at the bottom of that bottomless pool," he added. "I don't see that we can do anything else, boys. It goes against me to go on without finding the poor fellow's body, but—"

Scouts do not give up easily and they did not leave the spot until it was too dark to see. Then they went back to the boats, a muddy, dishevelled, scratched and discouraged band. They did not take kindly to defeat.

"The nearest town," said Mr. Ellsworth, looking at their map, "is Boquet. Farther up, on the Vermont side, is Burlington. I suggest that we stop at both those places and notify the scouts and the authorities. With a grappling iron they could probably get the body."

Tom listened with stolid indifference to this apparent repudiation of his own theory. Probably he did not think the matter worth discussing for in either case the freckled scout was dead. **[221]**

There was no music on the cabin roof of the *Good Turn* that night and the Silver Foxes and Ravens who lolled about on the *Honor Scout* did not call for it, as they usually did. Mr. Ellsworth stood quietly at the wheel; the others sat or lay about, sober and silent.

"Why so quiet, Roy?" Garry asked.

"I don't know," said Roy, who squatted in his characteristic position. "I can't seem to get that fellow out of my head—and—and the way he saluted us back there in Albany. Gee, I can

almost hear him laughing now."

"Guess that's Burlington where the lights are," said Mr. Ellsworth. "Throttle her down to half, Roy, and throw your lead to see how much water we've got."

[222]

CHAPTER XIX

"SO LONG—SEE YOU LATER!"

It was the afternoon of the following day when the little flotilla, running past the island of Valcour, sighted a promontory straight ahead and a little later discovered it to be the embracing arm which forms the outer boundary of Cumberland Bay.

As they sailed into this spacious haven they could see, a little to the northwest, a large field dotted with innumerable tents, which on closer view they saw to be arranged with the utmost squareness and precision, in avenues.[3] Their first sight of the famous training camp made Temple Camp seem very insignificant indeed. Out in the lake was a bobbing buoy with a bulls-eye target upon it, and a group of khaki-clad rookies were pelting this with rifle shot. In an open part of the field several companies were drilling and the crisp orders of their officer could be plainly heard across the water.

"Hurrah for Preparedness!" shouted Roy, throwing his hat in the air. **[223]**

They had been a rather sober party of voyagers during this last part of their trip and Roy's accustomed spirit seemed to have gone from him, but it came back now with a rush and as usual it had a contagious effect on the others.

"Hurrah for Uncle Sam!" shouted Pee-wee, grabbing the naval flag from the stern and waving it frantically.

"They look like scouts, don't they?" said Mr. Ellsworth.

"Oh, cracky," enthused Pee-wee. "I'm glad we came!"

"Altogether!" called Mr. Ellsworth, looking over to the smaller boat. "Hoop it up, Tom! Hurrah for Preparedness!"

"We thought of it first," called Connie. "Uncle Sam swiped it from us. Come on, let's give 'em our own call!"

"*Be prepared! Be prepared! Be prepared!*"

And so, shouting lustily the motto of the scouts the boats came alongside the landing and were met by several smiling rookies, off duty. **[224]**

"Are we pinched?" asked Mr. Ellsworth, laughing as he stepped ashore.

"No, indeed; you're welcome," said a bronzed rookie.

Pee-wee was not to be repressed by any formal

greeting, however hospitable. He stood upon the *Honor Scout's* cabin, waving the naval flag in one hand and his scout hat in the other, like some frantic, idiotic form of semaphoring.

"Hurrah for Uncle Sam!" he shrieked, hilariously. "Hurrah for Preparedness! Hurrah for Platts——"

He stopped short, gaping like an idiot. The flag fell from his hand unheeded.

"*Look—look!*," he gasped.

"What is it, the Germans?" asked a rookie, looking around.

"*Look—look!*" he gasped.

They looked, and there, sitting astride a piece of artillery not far from shore, his legs dangling and a merry smile upon his face, was the freckled scout!

No sign of scratch or bruise was there about him, and if he had been shot out of the mouth of the cannon he was straddling he could hardly have caused greater consternation. Plattsburg, preparedness, Uncle Sam, must be content with back seats, as this freckled youngster descended nimbly from the cannon and came smiling toward his brother scouts. **[225]**

"*Aren't—you—dead?*" ejaculated Pee-wee.

"Not so you'd notice it," said the freckled boy with a surprised laugh.

"You don't find many dead ones among the scouts, I guess," said an officer, who had come down to confirm the rookies' welcome.

"You said something," said Roy.

"I remember you three fellows," said the freckled scout. "Don't you remember? I was in that store in Albany——"

"Sure, we got lost," began Roy.

"Shhh," interrupted Artie.

"We—we thought you were dead," said Tom, startled somewhat out of his usual composure.

"Dead? No," laughed the boy. "I haven't been dead for quite a while. What's the idea?"

"Have—have you got anything the matter with you?" stammered Pee-wee, staring blankly at him. **[226]**

"I've got a wart on my left thumb," said the freckled scout, "but that won't stop me helping Uncle Sam if we have to scrap it out with Germany."

"Haven't you got anything else the matter with you?" Pee-wee asked imploringly. "Even if you're alive, you ought to have *something* the matter with you—— Gee!"

The freckled scout began to laugh and then came *his* surprise, for he broke off as Garry came ashore, and grasped him by the hand.

"Hello, Everson," said he. "Don't you know me?"

“For the love of tripe!” said Garry. “You don’t live in Warrentown, do you? Down near Edgevale?”

“Sure, when I’m alive,” laughed the freckled scout. “But these fellows seem to think I ought to be dead. What’s the idea, anyway?”

“Well, what *are* you doing alive, I’d like to know,” said Garry. “Fellows, this is—Everett, I think your name is, isn’t it?”

“Warren Everett,” said the boy.

“I thought I recognized you,” said Garry. “I didn’t get a good enough squint at you down the lake yesterday—if that *was* you.” **[227]**

“Sure it was me—I saw you fellows out there in the boats. I see I’ve got you all guessing.”

“Where’s the other fellow?”

“Oh, he’s knocking around somewhere in camp here. We just canoed up for a squint at the place. I’ve often seen you in Warrentown,” he added, turning again to Garry. “I heard you fellows over in Edgevale started a troop.”

“It fizzled out,” said Garry, resting his arm on Raymond’s shoulder. “We’re the last of our race. But, for goodness’ sakes, tell us how you come to be alive, anyway? We saw you fall down that cliff——”

Warren Everett laughed again. “You see it was this way,” said he. “On our way up the Hudson we ran into a moving picture bunch. They had a big launch and a hydro-aeroplane——”

“A what?” said Tom.

“They said we were just the fellows they wanted because there was a scene they were going to make where a scout climbs up a steep mountain and then slips and falls down. They wanted to take pictures of him climbing and then more of him falling. They had the hill all picked out and they wanted to know if I’d climb it. **[228]**

“‘Believe me, that’s my middle name,’ I told them. ‘Let’s see the hill.’

“‘We haven’t got it with us,’ the man said, ‘but it’s a peach, all right—it looks harder than it is.’

“I asked him about the falling down part, and he said, ‘Don’t you worry about that. We’ve got a rag dummy to do the falling. All you’ve got to do is to climb till you get to the grove near the top and when you get inside of that you’ll find the rag dummy on a log. Just push it over and let it fall down the hill.’”

“Well—I’ll—be—jiggered!” said Roy.

“Good idea?” laughed Everett. “Of course, the rag dummy went all the way down to the bottom ——”

“You bet it did,” said Connie.

“But in the picture it won’t be that way. You’ll see me climb up the hill and you’ll see the dummy start down, and then—zip, goes the fillum—and the next you see is a first-aid scout bandaging up another scout’s head.”

By this time Everett's companions had joined the party and having properly presented him to the newcomers, the freckled boy resumed his original seat astride the cannon. [229]

"You see," said he, "we were down near Glens Falls when we picked up the movie men. They had a hydro and a big cabin boat. They gave us the money for a uniform for the rag dummy and we went back to Albany and bought it. When we got back they were waiting for us, and believe me, we had some fun dressing up that dummy. I took the new suit and gave him the old one. *He* didn't care."

"He should worry," put in Roy.

The freckled scout continued his story, swinging his legs and greatly delighted at the astonishment of his listeners.

"This is a most remarkable thing," said Mr. Ellsworth.

"Can you beat it! Well, we all started north with our canoe tagging behind. It was all right, wasn't it, Frank, because we were going that way anyway. When we got into the lake the man in the hydro left the water and said he'd meet us on the top of the cliff. He told me just where he'd leave the dummy. Oh, gee, but he looked nice as he went sailing up in the air! We got out of the boat at Westport[4] and Frank and I helped them lug the camera and things to the mountain. We had it all fixed just what we'd do and when the man found a good place up the hill a ways, where they could get enough sunlight on the only original Boy Scout movie star—that's me!—Frank and I went back to Westport, and paddled up in our canoe, just as if we were coming to the mountain for the first time. We got out under the cliff and I started up. Frank stayed down below so he could get the dummy! Believe me, that dummy has some busy life! They use it for a policeman and a soldier and a poor orphan child—gee, you ought to see the clothes that poor dummy's got! [230]

"Well, I guess you fellows know the rest. I got to the top all right, and take it from me, when I got my fists on that rag dummy, I gave it one—good—chuck—*ker-bang!* G-o-o-d-night!

"Then I trotted over to the big field on top of the cliff where the fellow with the aeroplane was waiting. Pretty soon along came Frank dragging the poor dummy after him by the leg. He came up the easy way. And goodnight, Mary Ann! I'm glad I wasn't that poor dummy——" [231]

"I'm glad you weren't," said Mr. Ellsworth, dryly, thinking of the harrowing hours they had spent searching for his dead body.

"Well, they said they had the picture all right and it would be a beaut'. So then the man told us to jump in the aero and he'd bring us up to Plattsburg. You see that red boat over there with *Back to Nature Film Corporation* on it? That's ours—I mean, theirs. They're going to take some pictures here if they can get permission. But we're out of the movie business for good—aren't we, Frank? And we're going to ship our little old canoe down home and get the train tonight—— Hey, Everson," he said, breaking off suddenly and turning to Garry; "why in the deuce don't

you be a good scout and come over to Warrentown and give us poor fellows a hand? Mr. Wentworth, our scoutmaster, is on the Mexican border and three of our fellows have gone out west to live—the Harris boys—maybe you know of them. Gee, a fellow like you could help us an awful lot. You could be a sort of scoutmaster till the Local Council scares one up. And you don't live so far—going scout pace. What do you say? Will you?"

Would he!

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"He will on one condition," said Mr. Ellsworth. "You and your friend must join us on our homeward cruise. I've heard of the Warrentown Troop and Garry ought to be glad to get into it ——"

"They ought to be glad to get him!" shouted Pee-wee.

"Sure, he's a bargain," put in Roy. "Now's their chance."

"Yes, I think myself it will be an honor both ways," said Mr. Ellsworth, who had grown very fond of Garry. "He will bring you the Silver Cross——"

"And he's no rag dummy," interrupted Roy.

"Our plan," said Mr. Ellsworth, "is to look about the camp here and set off again in the morning, for time is beginning to be precious. We shall leave Raymond at Temple Camp, in the Catskills, where he's to stay for the balance of the summer. Then, if you like, we'll drop you boys and Garry at Edgevale. Our larger boat and one of our members, to whom it belongs, we shall leave at Nyack. The rest of us live in Bridgeboro, New Jersey—we're the First Bridgeboro B. S. A. Probably some of our boys will hike it home from Nyack while the rest of us cruise down into New York Bay and up our own small river."

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"It's just a one-patrol river," said Roy.

"Are you with us?" Connie asked.

"Sure, he's with us!" cried Roy. "Who's deciding this, Warrentown or Bridgeboro? We'll drag both of them along by the legs the way they dragged the rag scout, hey?"

The party made a pleasant stay at the big training camp, walking through the straight, neat avenues of tents, visiting the commissary, watching the drill, and lingering, fascinated, about the rookies who were busy at rifle practice. They were made very welcome and it was not without a feeling of regret that they went aboard the two boats after the colors had been lowered. But Plattsburg, of which they were to hear so much later, had been merely the chosen point of destination for their rambling inland cruise, and as Mr. Ellsworth had remarked, time was beginning to be precious.

The hospitable Bridgeboro Troop, with its strangely acquired new member and its several guests, lolled upon the deck and cabin roof of the *Honor Scout* that night, as the two boats waited at their moorings for the dawn which would mean their departure on the speedier journey homeward.

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As the moon rose over the wide bosom of the great lake and flickered the waters with its silvery brightness, Harry Stanton sat upon the cabin locker, strumming his ukulele, and those who were in the mood hummed the soft airs while the others listened. Often whole days would elapse in which Harry Stanton would be scarcely heard from, but in the quiet of those summer nights upon the water he contributed his full share to the pleasure of the party.

If you, to whom I am about to bid a short farewell, are a scout of the scouts, see to it that some one of your troop's number learns to play a mandolin, a banjo, or guitar—even if you have to drag him by the leg, as young Frank dragged the unfortunate dummy.

After a little while some one discovered that Roy was not among them, and there was set up at once a hue and cry for him, for such an evening could be no more complete without Roy than a Buffalo Bill Show would be without Buffalo Bill or a circus without peanuts. **[235]**

"Maybe he's in the other boat," said one.

"Maybe he's on shore," said another.

It was Pee-wee who dragged him forth from the forward end of the cabin, where he had been ensconced, knees up, "far from the madding crowd."

"What's the matter?" asked Artie Van Arlen.

Roy squatted in his customary attitude, holding a paper in his hand.

"I was thinking about all the crazy things that have happened," said he, "and the fellows we've met on this trip, and believe *me*, it's some hodge-podge. I was coming down from that big commissary tent, scout pace, when some poetry jumped into my noddle. Did you ever notice how poetry comes to you when you go scout pace?" he asked, turning to Mr. Ellsworth.

"No, I never did," said the scoutmaster.

"Want to hear it? It's a sort of—sort of a national anthem of the troop——" **[236]**

"Troop anthem?"

"It isn't fixed up yet because the kid interrupted me. Do you want to hear it?"

"I dare say I can stand it if the others can," said the scoutmaster.

"Go ahead, shoot!" said Doc.

"Get the agony over with," said Connie.

"All right, since you insist," said Roy, taking Tom's flashlight so he could read the immortal lines. "Here goes—one—two—*three*!

"Rag scouts, wooden scouts,
  Thin heads and thick,
Honor scouts, young sprouts—
  Just take your pick.

"Scouts without scout suits,
  Shirts full of holes,
Silver Foxes—*they're the beauts*!

Scouts without patrols.

"Youth scouts, sleuth scouts,
Scouts with motor-boats,
Scouts that come to life again,
Music scouts and potes.

"Scoutmaster on the job, **[237]**
Something-or-other—welk,
Hip, hip, hurrah, scouts—
Raven, Fox and Elk!

"What do you think of it?"

"Of, it's great!" yelled Pee-wee.

"I think it's superb," said Mr. Ellsworth, "especially the complimentary reference to the scoutmaster."

"The pleasure is mine," said Roy, with an elaborate bow.

"But may I ask what a *pote* is?"

"Sure, a pote's a scout that writes pomes."

"I see. And a welk?"

"Well, you see it's this way," said Roy, undaunted. "The welkin is the sky, and welk's short for welkin. Get me? I was just trying to dope out how to fit that in when Pee-wee grabbed me."

"We shall have to make you poet laureate of the troop," said Mr. Ellsworth.

"The Bridgeboro Bard," laughed Garry.

"Do you think if I sent it to *Boys' Life* they'd print it?" Roy asked.

"Sure, they would!" yelled Pee-wee.

"I don't know," said Mr. Ellsworth, cautiously. "I **[238]**
doubt it. You might try. They have printed worse things," he added.

Roy glanced again at his masterpiece, folded it up, put it in his pocket, drew his knees up, clasped his hands about them, and grinned at the assemblage.

"*I* should worry," he said.

THE END

Footnotes

[1] Meaning to send a message by a smudge signal.

[2] A pearl necklace is the phrase used by the English in Africa to define a trail which is visible and invisible at short, regular intervals.

[3] This is the Plattsburg of 1915-1916.

[4] Westport is just below Split Rock Mountain.

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ROY BLAKELEY, LOST, STRAYED OR STOLEN
ROY BLAKELEY'S BEE-LINE HIKE
ROY BLAKELEY AT THE HAUNTED CAMP
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An absorbing tale that all boys and girls will enjoy reading. How the members of the club fixed up a clubroom in the Larue barn, and how they, later on, helped solve a most mysterious happening, and how one of the members won a valuable prize, is told in a manner to please every young reader.

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The club members went into camp on the edge of a beautiful lake. Here they had rousing good times swimming, boating and around the campfire. They fell in with a mysterious old man known as The Hermit of Triangle Island. Nobody knew his real name or where he came from until the propounding of a riddle solved these perplexing questions.

THE RIDDLE CLUB THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

This volume takes in a great number of winter sports, including skating and sledding and the building of a huge snowman. It also gives the particulars of how the club treasurer lost the dues entrusted to his care and what the melting of the great snowman revealed.

THE RIDDLE CLUB AT SUNRISE BEACH

This volume tells how the club journeyed to the seashore and how they not only kept up their riddles but likewise had good times on the sand and on the water. Once they got lost in a fog and are marooned on an island. Here they made a discovery that greatly pleased the folks at home.

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Happy days at home, helping mamma and the washerlady. And Honey Bunch helped the house painters too—or thought she did.

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What wonderful sights Honey Bunch saw when she went to visit her cousins in New York! And she got lost in a big hotel and wandered into a men’s convention!

HONEY BUNCH: HER FIRST DAYS ON THE FARM

Can you remember how the farm looked the first time you visited it? How big the cows and horses were, and what a roomy place to play in the barn proved to be?

HONEY BUNCH: HER FIRST VISIT TO THE SEASHORE

Honey Bunch soon got used to the big waves and thought playing in the sand great fun. And she visited a merry-go-round, and took part in a sea-side pageant.

HONEY BUNCH: HER FIRST LITTLE GARDEN

It was great sport to dig and to plant with one's own little garden tools. But best of all was when Honey Bunch won a prize at the flower show.

HONEY BUNCH: HER FIRST DAYS IN CAMP

It was a great adventure for Honey Bunch when she journeyed to Camp Snapdragon. It was wonderful to watch the men erect the tent, and more wonderful to live in it and have good times on the shore and in the water.

GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

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