

**PEE WEE HARRIS
IN LUCK**

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

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PEE-WEE HARRIS IN LUCK



“DIDN’T I TELL YOU THERE WERE THINGS TO DO?”
SAID PEE-WEE.

PEE-WEE HARRIS IN LUCK

BY
PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

Author of
THE TOM SLADE BOOKS
THE ROY BLAKELEY BOOKS
THE PEE-WEE HARRIS BOOKS

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H. S. BARBOUR

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PEE-WEE HARRIS IN LUCK

CHAPTER I

THE ART OF CHOOSING

Whenever Pee-wee Harris was given the choice of two desserts he invariably chose both. This policy, which eliminated all possibility of vain regrets, had worked so well that he applied it on all occasions where a difficult choice was involved, on the wise principle that if he took everything he would not lose much.

Thus, when the Sunday School picnic with its ice cream and cake conflicted with the troops' hike, Pee-wee saved the day and much of the ice cream by proposing that they hike to the scene of the picnic.

His greatest triumph of maneuvering, however, was when he "foiled" Father Time by means of the daylight saving law. On that memorable occasion he set the hands of the kitchen clock back an hour which enabled him to have supper home at six o'clock and also to reach the scout rally at North Bridgeboro at six o'clock, where he partook of a second supper, including a helping of plum pudding—and a helping of apple pie. Thus, he solved the problem of being in two places at the same time at meal-time. A scout is resourceful.

Pee-wee never had to pause and consider which thing he preferred, since he preferred all things. The place that he liked best to go was everywhere. The thing that he liked best to do was everything. Broadly speaking, the thing which he liked best to eat was food. And speaking more particularly the food that he liked best was dessert. But it might be said that he ate everything; adventures, hairbreadth escapes, colossal enterprises, dark mysteries—he ate them alive.

So it befell that when Pee-wee's mother offered him the choice of going to Temple Camp or accompanying her into the mountains where she hoped to rest, he announced that he would go to the mountains first and to Temple Camp afterward. He did not specify how long he would remain in the mountains, but he assured his mother that Temple Camp and the mountains would be a moderate mouthful for one summer.

"I'm afraid it is very quiet up there," said Mrs. Harris warningly.

"Gee whiz, I'll show them how to make a noise," Pee-wee assured her. "I can multiply my voice three times. Do you want to know how?"

"I'd rather hear you subtract it," said Pee-wee's mother.

"Do you want to know how?" he persisted.

"Tell me but don't *show* me," she said.

“You do it with echoes,” Pee-wee said; “it’s a scout stunt. I bet you couldn’t do it. Gee whiz, you say it’s quiet up there; I bet I can make those mountains talk. If I shout at a mountain that’s facing another mountain they’ll both answer; that makes three voices. Only I have to shout good and loud; I have to yell. See? All I need is a lot of lonely mountains. The quieter it is up there the more noise I can make. See? I might even make four of them shout.”

The vision of Pee-wee acting as a sort of orchestral leader to a range of mountains rather appalled his mother, but she said with a gentle smile as was her wont, “I’m afraid the place is very quiet and lonely, and such pleasure as you have you will have to make for yourself. I don’t want you to be restless and disappointed when you get there. It isn’t at all like Temple Camp, you know.”

“Have they got a windmill?” Pee-wee demanded vociferously.

“I don’t know, I’m sure.”

“Because I know how to put a riot-rattle in a windmill so it will make a lot of noise; it’s a scout trick. I can show them how to churn milk with a vacuum cleaner, too.”

“I don’t believe they have any vacuum cleaners up there, dearie,” Mrs. Harris said, reaching for a letter that lay on her dresser. “Let me read you what the letter says.”

The letter was written on cheap lined stationery, dignified by a rubber stamp heading which read,

GOODALE MANOR FARM
ASA GOODALE, PROP.

The writing was shaky and crude and evidently the result of much laborious care. It read as follows:

dear madem your letter of third instant reed and can acomidate you for month of Aug. with sunny room also small room if desired, there is not menny peple here but one young lady aged sixteen but plenty of fresh milk and holesome fair and methedist church at Snailsdale Manor about seven miles the nearest station, if you come let me no so can meat you. take Snailsdale branch of Drerie railroad to Snailsdale Manor nearest station, address to Snailsdale Manor P. O.

respectibly

Asa Goodale.

“I’m afraid they haven’t even a rural mail delivery,” said Mrs. Harris. “Your Uncle Charlie, who went up for the hunting several years ago, said that

the only living things he saw up there were Mr. and Mrs. Goodale, their son, a team of oxen, several cows, and a woodchuck. And he thinks the woodchuck has since moved away. I suppose they have chickens. I don't know how old Mr. Goodale's son is."

"Sure, I'll go," Pee-wee announced conclusively, "because anyway one thing scouts hate and that is civilization. And anyway I bet that woodchuck didn't move away at all, because woodchucks have back entrances under stone walls and scouts know where to look for them; gee whiz, no woodchuck can fool me. I bet there are skunks up there, too, and lots of other peachy things; I can tell by deduction,"

"Well, he doesn't give any skunk as a reference," smiled Mrs. Harris; "I'm afraid you'll find it very quiet and dull."

"If you're a scout you can make your own noise," Pee-wee said; "you don't have to depend on noises, just the same as you can always make the forest yield food. You can eat fungus even."

"Well, I think fresh milk will be better than fungus," said Mrs. Harris.

"Fungus is all right to eat and so is moss," Pee-wee said. "That shows how much you know about scouting. You can even eat ground-worms, if you're a scout."

"Gracious heavens!" said Pee-wee's mother.

CHAPTER II

“THEY’RE OFF”

The Snailsdale branch of the Drierie Railroad went through the loneliest country that Pee-wee had ever seen. Leaving the main line at Woodsend Junction, the train of two musty, dilapidated, old cars lurched and rattled along like an old hay wagon.

The engineer and the conductor were all there was to the train crew and there was a pleasant air of family familiarity between them and the few lounging passengers bound for Snailsdale Manor, all calling each other by their first names.

The engineer, glancing backward, shot remarks about the crops to the occupants of the baggage compartment who were playing checkers on a milk can. He wore old-fashioned spectacles, did this engineer, and he looked over the top of them along the track like a stern schoolmaster. His very look was enough to frighten away any cow that had ever attended school. The conductor’s name was evidently Hink, and from the trend of the talk it appeared that his cow was capable of some speed, if his train was not for she had escaped the day before and had not yet returned. He told every one about this.

There were two stations, or rather sheds along this line, at which the train stopped, but no one got on or off. The ghosts of former passengers or loiterers were to be seen, however, in the form of carved initials which literally covered these makeshift shelters. Across the end of each of these sheds was a large sign, quite disproportionate to the modest edifice, giving the name of the station. The signs looked garish enough on these board shelters for they were of the regulation size and pattern used for such purpose from one end of the Drierie Railroad to the other. Thus HICKSON CROSSING was as great as Jersey City (if that were possible), at least so far as its flaunting sign was concerned. The other station was HAWLEY’S. The sign did not say Hawley’s *what*; it just said HAWLEY’S. There did not seem to be anything about for Hawley to own.

One would say that it would be quite impossible for any village, or neighborhood, or cross-road, to have less of a station than these two. Yet the neighborhood of Goodale Manor Farm beat them in this, for it had just no station at all. It is true that a road crossed the track and that half a mile of travel over this road brought one to the farm, but the train never stopped at this road. It kept going, after a fashion, and did not stop till it reached Snailsdale Manor.

Beyond Snailsdale Manor lay Snailsdale Glen, then North Snailsdale, where there was a tannery, three houses and a turntable. Here the engineer turned around while Hink turned the seat-backs over and the train was ready to return to Woodsend Junction. Posted on the side of this busy terminal was a list of two names called to service by the draft. Those rural heroes had gone and served, and in the interim the single locomotive had ridden upon its drowsy carousal, how many times?

But the two names were still posted there at the station.

CHAPTER III SOME DOINGS

Snailsdale Manor had a real station, as befitted a town of five thousand people. It had all modern improvements, including a tin water cooler and a posting board with a three-year-old time-table tacked on it.

Posted here also was an announcement which attracted Pee-wee's attention. He was sagacious enough to read the date first of all to make sure that the magnificent affair advertised had not already taken place, for the announcement might have pertained to some gala celebration of a prehistoric age.

OLD HOME WEEK
AT
SNAILSDALE MANOR!
COME ONE COME ALL
SATURDAY, JULY 10th, 1921.
GORGEOUS PARADE
FIREWORKS AT NIGHT.
COME EVERYBODY!

Pee-wee read this announcement while he and his mother waited for Mr. Goodale.

Now if there was one thing more than another dear to the heart of Scout Harris it was a parade. Not that such an affair constituted anything in the way of a novelty in his young life, for indeed his whole career was one grand, triumphal procession. When he walked down the street it was a parade. When he went to scout meeting in his full regalia, including his aluminum cooking set, it was a veritable pageant. Some said that Pee-wee was more than a parade, that he was a circus.

Be that as it might, there was nothing, excepting a fire, which Pee-wee so adored as a parade. And he contemplated this announcement with thrilling anticipations.

"I'm going to be there," he said to his mother; "I'm going to be in it. I'm going to be in the fireworks, too."

Exactly how he meant to be "in" the fireworks he did not explain, but perhaps he expected his propensity for going up in the air to help him in that particular. He was presently to give a demonstration of his proficiency in aerial flight, for he heard a voice close behind him say:

“You can’t be in it because you don’t belong here. You’re waiting for Farmer Goodale, and his place is seven miles from here, and there aren’t any people there anyway, and he only has one horse. They’re asleep down there, only they haven’t got sense enough to lie down.”

Pee-wee turned and beheld a boy of about fifteen, wearing a regulation suit and regulation straw hat and a regulation scarf and white collar, and a regulation handkerchief nattily folded in the regulation way and projecting out of his breast pocket. He presented a singular contrast to Pee-wee, who was in scout negligee, his broad-brimmed hat far enough back on his head to expose his curly hair, the Raven patrol scarf tied loosely about his neck, with a compass as big as a watch dangling from the knotted ends of it.

“Do you think I can’t find my way from Mr. Goodale’s?” he demanded, as if that were the only condition of participating officially in the festivities. “Lots of times I’ve been as far as fifty miles from civilization and I can always find my way. I bet you’re not a scout.”

“I wouldn’t be one,” said the youth.

“Maybe you couldn’t,” Pee-wee retorted, “because you’re kind of civilized. Gee whiz, I used to be that way, but you don’t have any fun. I bet you hang around the post office waiting for mail. I can tell by looking at you, but we don’t bother with mail, because we write on birch bark.”

“I wouldn’t spoil my fountain pen writing on birch bark,” said the civilized youth.

“That shows how much you know about scouts!” Pee-wee said with withering scorn. “Fountain pens are no good; you’re supposed to write with charred wood. If you’re mad you can use beet juice for ink, because that’s red and it means anger; only scouts don’t get mad,” he added cautiously.

“What’s your name?” the stranger asked, contemplating Pee-wee curiously.

“Walter Collison Bately Harris, R.P., F.B.T., B.S.A. I bet you don’t know what that means. What’s yours?”

“Everett Braggen.”

“Do you live here?”

“Do you think I’d live in a place like this? No, I board here. But it’s better than where *you’re* going. That’s away, way off in the woods and there’s nobody there and it’s too far to walk—”

“You mean hike,” Pee-wee said.

“Anyway, you won’t have any fun down there,” said Master Braggen consolingly; “but you couldn’t get into our hotel, because it’s full and all the places here are full and we’re going to have a big tennis tournament next week and our hotel is going to win it because two fellows from Hydome University are coming to our hotel and they’re champions. You can come and see the tournament but you can’t be in the parade, because how could you go in it all

alone?

“All the farms and boarding houses around here are getting up floats; ours is going to be the best. It’s going to be all decorated with bunting and paper lanterns and it’s going to be like grass on it and it’s going to represent our lawn. It’s going to have wicker chairs with people sitting in them and a girl is going to be lying in a hammock reading and I’m going to be sitting at a little wire table playing cards with another fellow. It’s going to have SNAILSDALE HOUSE above it. We’re going to win the prize and we’re going to win the tennis tournament too. It’s a good joke, because nobody knows that those two chaps from Hydome University are coming to our house. If I see you watching the parade I’ll wave my hand to you.”

The thought of this conventional youngster waving his hand condescendingly from his throne of glory was too much for Pee-wee. That rolling scene of complacent ease and comfort was terrible enough. But that Everett Braggen should look down from his card playing to wave a polite ta-ta to Pee-wee was more than our hero could bear. And he resolved then and there that he would organize a float bodying forth a scene so wild and blood-curdling as to strike terror to the whole brood of letter-writing, hammock-lounging, card-playing denizens who infested Snailsdale Manor. From his obscure retreat he would deal a mortal blow to civilization, the worst kind of civilization; he would deal this post office loitering and waiting-for-the-dinner bell business one tremendous stroke from which it would never recover.

He did not know how he was going to do this, but he was going to do it....

CHAPTER IV

ACTION

Mr. Goodale soon arrived in a buckboard wagon drawn by an old veteran of a horse which Pee-wee inspected critically. "I'm going to have a float in the parade," he announced; "have you got two horses?"

"G'long," said Mr. Goodale to the horse, after passengers and luggage were all safely aboard. "Well, naow, I ain't much on paradin' I reckon. We got a team of oxen, but trouble is, sonny, there ain't no folks. Ter fuss up and go into a parade yer got ter hev folks. I guess we ain't fixed up fer mixin' with them Snailsdale folks. Most on 'em are rich, I reckon. *G'long*. They ain't nobody ter our place but jest Mrs. Stillmore n' her daughter.

"Hope, she's a mighty nice gal, n' she's frettin' herself 'cause there ain't no young fellers. Says she'd go back home if t'wan't fer her mother. Yer see we ain't on the railroad, that's where the trouble is. We have to depend on Snailsdale Manor fer mails n' station n' sech. I s'pose these young gals they want ter go ter sociables and sech like; I d'no 's I blame 'em. When I wuz a wheezer I used to go ter barn dances every month or two, but there ain't been none since Josh Berry's barn burned daown. Maybe this here youngster will kinder cheer her up a mite," he added pleasantly.

Pee-wee swelled up at this important responsibility.

"Kinder young though, I reckon," mused Mr. Goodale.

"It's adventure that counts," said Pee-wee; "size don't count, because look at mustang ponies, they're stronger than horses."

"Well, you'll get plenty of fresh milk n' that'll make you grow," said Mr. Goodale.

"And that's what we want most of all," said Pee-wee's mother.

A ride of about seven miles brought them to the farm, which seemed completely isolated from the world. The old-fashioned porch commanded a view of mountains extending afar until the rugged profusion was tinged with the sky's gray and seemed to merge in the horizon. Not a house was there to be seen in all that wild expanse. Once a day a train of smoke crept across above the wooded lowland near at hand, and the cheerful whistle of the locomotive could be heard echoing among the hills. Often, as she sat upon the funny, rickety little porch, Hope Stillmore wondered what would happen if she were to start out and go straight across all those wooded mountains. Where would she come out? And what would she see?

Mrs. Harris and Mrs. Stillmore, being both in search of rest, enjoyed this

jointly, and we need not trouble ourselves with their reading and crocheting and other wild amusements.

Pee-wee's acquaintance with Hope began on the porch after he had attended to the more important matter of eating supper. It was then, as he wandered out through the musty sitting room with its dismal melodeon in the corner and its picture of Asa Goodale during his dancing days, that the buoyant spirit of our young hero was momentarily clouded by a sense of newness and strangeness.

Everybody knows those awkward minutes after the first meal before acquaintance has begun. One wanders aimlessly, and usually ends on the front porch. Pee-wee wandered through the sitting room, out of a side door, around the barnyard, and thence to the porch. Hope Stillmore was rocking frantically in a rickety chair as if in a kind of forlorn hope of extracting some excitement out of that piece of furniture. Each time she came forward her dainty little feet gave a vigorous push and back she went again. Probably she relieved her nerves in this way. This expression of impatience and despair is not uncommon on the porches of farm houses during the summer.

Hope Stillmore was of an age not exceeding sixteen (perhaps fifteen would be about right) and it is only fair to her to say that she was very pretty.

"I bet you can't do that two hundred times without touching your feet to the floor," Pee-wee said.

"I'm not counting the times," said Miss Hope.

"Put your feet up on the cross-piece and keep them there," Pee-wee said, "and then start and I'll count for you. You're not supposed to touch the floor. Most always girls go over backwards, but don't you care, because the window sill is there. I won't make fun of you."

"Oh, you *won't*?" said Miss Hope ironically.

"*Sure* I won't because girls can do lots of things that fellers can't do; gee whiz, I have to admit that."

"That's very kind of you."

"If I tilt you over backward I bet you can't get up by yourself with your hands clasped," Pee-wee said. "We all tried that at scout meeting and I was the only one that did it. Are you good at doing things?"

"There aren't any things here to do."

"Sure there are," Pee-wee said; "there are lots of things only you don't do them. You have to invent them."

"Well, I'm not an inventor; I'm not a boy scout."

"No, but you're a girl, aren't you? Gee whiz, you have to admit that. That's one thing I don't like about girls, they take dares from people. I met a city feller at the station—"

"Where?" the girl asked excitedly.

“Oh, gee whiz, you wouldn’t like him. And he as much as dared me to join the parade. He said I couldn’t, so that means I have to, because there’s no such word as can’t in the dictionary. Gee, I hate language, don’t you?”

“You seem to use a good deal of it.”

“I mean studying it,” Pee-wee said. “What’s your favorite study?”

“I’m studying monotony lately.”

“Gee, I tell you something to do and you won’t do it. Do you call that logic?”

“If I broke my neck I wouldn’t call it logic,” the girl laughed in spite of herself.

“If you broke your neck I know all about first aid,” Pee-wee said, “and I dare you to do it, I don’t mean break your neck but anyway a person that takes a dare is scared of a ghost, I can prove it by Roy Blakeley.”

“Is he coming here?” Miss Hope Stillmore asked.

“*Naaah*, he’s up at Temple Camp; he can cook better than girls, he can. Only he’s crazy. All the fellers in his patrol are crazy. He says you can have fun being crazy. Gee whiz, there’s fun wherever he is, that’s sure. If you throw a dare back at a person maybe that’ll change your luck.”

Miss Hope Stillmore smiled as she rocked. “Do you dare me to do it?” she finally asked.

“Sure I do,” said Pee-wee delighted. “Put your feet up on the cross-piece, and if you put them down it’s no fair. That’s right. Now start in rocking.”

There was nothing better to do so the girl, with her pretty little pumps caught on the rung of the chair by their pretty French heels, started rocking vigorously and as the chair tipped perilously backward with her increasing exertions it skidded slowly across the porch, while Pee-wee counted in frantic excitement. She was in for it now and she would not stop. Her face was flushed and she was laughing uncontrollably. Something was happening at Goodale Manor Farm at last. Pretty soon the chair went tumbling down the steps and the girl gathered herself up, holding a bruised knee, but all the while laughing.

“A hundred and fifty-seven not counting when it tumbled over,” Pee-wee announced grimly. “Anyway it’s better than monotony, hey? Didn’t I tell you there were things to do? You leave it to me. Will you help me fix up a float so we can join the parade? I’ll show you how to hammer nails so you won’t get blood blisters and I’ll show you how to saw and we’ll get some bunting and we’ll win the prize. Will you?”

“Gee whiz, there are a lot of things to do, *I* thought up about seventeen already and maybe even I’ll be able to get some fellers here for you, because scouts can do lots of things, miracles kind of, only you and I’ll be pals, hey? Will you?”

“Indeed I will,” said Hope Stillmore, “only you made me hurt my knee.”
“Don’t you care,” said Pee-wee.

CHAPTER V

PALS

So Miss Hope Stillmore was launched upon the sea of adventure in a rocking chair with Scout Harris for pilot. She abandoned the study of monotony for the study of carpentry, interior and exterior decoration, botany, photography, stalking, signalling, tracking, and a variety of other scout arts.

It was Pee-wee's fate in life to be accepted as a substitute for something better because he was amusing. He did not object to this because, as he said, he had plenty of fun just the same. Being small and full of enterprises entirely disproportionate to his size, he was acceptable everywhere and universally liked. Girls thought he was "excruciating" and "adorable." Men were greatly taken with him and liked to hear him talk. At Temple Camp, where he and his scout troop spent the summers, he was called the mascot, sometimes the animal cracker. Pee-wee had not an enemy. More than that, he had none but friends.

But he had never had a pal. He had called many boys, and some girls, his "particular chums," but these chums had lived elsewhere than in Pee-wee's home town; they were the friends of his holiday adventures and enterprises. They, on their part, had fast and steady chums whom they returned to.

Each summer Pee-wee had a particular chum at Temple Camp. But he had no pal in his scout troop or out of it. You see that was because Pee-wee was a mascot and not to be taken seriously. They liked to have him along when there were two or three others in the party. But no one fellow sought him out. He would stand as much jollyng as a Ford will stand abuse. Perhaps, after all, it was just because he was small and rather unique that he stood alone. He was too generous, or perhaps too busy, to resent it when some companion of a month or so deserted him for more important things. Was he not himself always jumping from one scheme to another?

So, perhaps, he did not exactly speak out of the depths of his heart when he proposed that he and Hope Stillmore be pals. Perhaps she did not answer him out of the depths of her heart when she told him that they certainly would.

At all events, they certainly were pals. Hope was not averse to exploring the woods, and Pee-wee was certainly not averse to imparting his knowledge of woods lore.

"I thought you told me girls couldn't keep secrets," she said as she picked her way through the thicket to see a thrush which he had promised to find for her observation. "Now you're telling me all the secrets of the woods. That

shows you're a telltale. So there!"

"That's different," Pee-wee said; "you can tell everything you want to about the woods. Do you know how I can tell we're walking north? On account of the moss growing on the north sides of the trees. Squirrels build on the north sides of trees, too. So, gee whiz, you needn't worry, we can't get lost."

"Here's a squirrel's nest on one side with some moss on the other," said Hope innocently.

"That shows how crazy some squirrels are," Pee-wee said. "They don't even know the north when they see it."

"They should carry compasses like you," Hope laughed.

"Safety first," Pee-wee answered, "but if that compass should get lost—"

"I shouldn't think a compass could get lost; it always points to the north," Hope said.

"I mean if I lost it," Pee-wee said, as he trudged along ahead of her. "But you needn't worry because it can't get lost; see?" Indeed, such a calamity seemed unlikely for the compass dangled from a rope necklace not much slenderer than a clothesline.

"I shan't worry as long as I'm with you," she said.

"Gee whiz, I've rescued maidens before," he said.

"Maidens?"

"Sure, they're the same as girls."

"And when are we going to see a thrush?"

"Pretty soon I'll find you one. The male ones are always handsomer than the female ones, that's always the way it is. But that doesn't mean I'm better looking than you. Gee whiz, you're awful pretty, everybody says so."

"Now you're going to make me conceited. Is that boy in Snailsdale Manor good looking? The one with the suit of clothes?"

"Gee, I guess maybe you'd say so; he's all dressed up; he has his handkerchief all sticking out of his pocket and everything. Scouts have no use for those things because they're kind of wild."

"Did you ask him to come down here and see you?"

"*Naah*, because he's busy with the parade and the tennis match and a lot of things. Anyway, we'll get up a float to beat the Snailsdale House, hey? I've got an inspiration. Do you know what that is?"

"I'm afraid we can't decorate a float because we haven't got any to decorate—"

"That's nothing. You didn't have anything to do till I showed you how to ___"

"Fall off the chair and hurt my knee?"

"That's nothing, I know a girl that broke her arm."

“Oh, how *dreadful!*”

“So, will you help me with the float? Because I want to show that feller, he’s so fresh.”

“Is he tall?”

“Tallness doesn’t count,” said Pee-wee.

“Is he light or dark?”

“Do you mean is he a colored feller?”

“Oh, gracious no! I mean what color is his hair? You say scouts are so observant.”

“They’re observant about—kind of—about—you know—about natural things.”

“Oh, has he got false hair?”

Suddenly Pee-wee had an inspiration. “I couldn’t see his hair on account of his having a straw hat over it,” he said.

“Everybody that stays at the Snailsdale House is rich,” said Hope wistfully. “They have dances there every night. Do you know how to dance?”

“*Sure,*” said Pee-wee, “I’ll teach you. I know an Indian war dance. I know the dance that the cannibals dance, too. Do you want to learn it?”

“Oh, horrors, no!”

“So will you help me with the float?” he asked after his erratic fashion of rebounding to the main subject. “Do you know where the hay wagon stands? Under that crazy old kind of a building? The one on stilts?”

“With corn-husks in it?” Hope asked.

“I don’t know what’s in it,” Pee-wee continued excitedly, “but, anyway, it’s all old and rotten and it’s no good except to keep the hay wagon under. So I’m going to ask Mr. Goodale to let it down onto the hay wagon, all he’ll have to do is kind of to saw off the legs. See? Even he can put it back if he wants to. And then we’ll decorate it all up and put a great big sign on that says *Goodale Manor Farm* and we’ll get the oxen and you can drive them if you want to and we’ll drive up to Snailsdale Manor and join the parade. So will you? Because all the houses are going to have floats in that parade. And, gee whiz, that’ll be something to do, won’t it? You bet I’m not going to stand in the street and have that feller waving his hand to me from a float—I’m not, you can bet. Not that feller.”

“You just dislike him because he dressed like a young gentleman,” said Hope.

Pee-wee scented her unfavorable decision in this matter and groping in his fertile mind, dragged up a blighting argument.

“You want him to be dressed like a gentleman, don’t you? Sure, you as much as said so. You like the way he has his handkerchief all tucked nice and pretty in his pocket. Suppose he should pull that out and wave it at me! That

would spoil it all, wouldn't it? So will you say you'll do it—and cross your heart?”

“I don't know how to drive oxen,” she said, hedging.

“All you have to do is keep saying ‘*gee*,’” said Pee-wee. “So will you do it?”

“No, I won't,” said Hope, “because it's silly. We haven't got any money and we haven't got lots of people and everybody would just laugh at our float. That boy would just laugh at us.”

“That shows how much you know about scouts,” Pee-wee said; “they're supposed to spread laughter.”

“Well, I'm not going to have people laughing at *me*,” said Hope. “I'd rather come hiking in the woods like this—if I can't do the things I want to do,” she added.

“You don't need any money to have fun,” Pee-wee said, loud enough so the very woods echoed this magnificent truth. “As long as we have fun, what do we care what people say?”

“Well, *I* care,” Hope said, “and I'm not going to be a silly. Everybody up in town would laugh at this poky old place if we went in the parade. So let's forget about it and look for the thrush. Nobody'll laugh at us here, anyway, even if we don't have any excitement.”

But Miss Hope Stillmore was presently to have excitement enough to last her for several days. And that without the presence of dancing and grown-up boys. She was to learn that the woods were not quite as “poky” as she had thought. And incidentally she was to learn something about scouts, too....

CHAPTER VI THE WOODS TRAIL

Pee-wee swallowed his disappointment, trudging sturdily along in silence. The realization that something was going to happen and that he was not going to be in it was hard for him to bear. With one willing collaborator he could do anything. There was no one else about the place but Simon Hasbrook, the farm boy, who was always busy with his chores. Besides, Pee-wee liked Hope Stillmore; she was his pal....

Hope, on her part, seemed not to take his disappointment to heart. Perhaps she thought that with so many ideas bubbling up in his mind, he would soon think of something else.

“Let me go ahead,” she said gayly, “and see if I can follow the trail.”

So he let her pass him and she led the way along the narrow, all but indistinguishable path which wound through the woods. She seemed very graceful and pretty tripping along in her little pumps, the absurdest things for hiking, pausing now and then to make sure of the elusive trail and then tripping gayly on again in triumph.

“You see I’m just as good on frontiers as I am on front porches,” she said. “You thought I was going to turn to the left, didn’t you? Little Smarty!”

The almost obliterated path had probably once been used as a short cut through the woods. But a long period of disuse had reduced it to a mere line of least resistance through the dense foliage. In places its course was distinguishable only by the piles of dried brush, which had once been cut along the way, to make travel easier.

These odds and ends of bushes and low-hanging branches had been gathered into little mounds at intervals. They looked like piles ready for burning. In places they were the only guide-posts. They must have been cut long since, for the surrounding growth showed no sign of pruning. Pee-wee, always curious, examined one of these brittle, interwoven mounds and found it dank and sappy underneath, with a multitude of repulsive little slugs darting about. He could lift the whole mass a little, like a mattress and see the bare, damp ground with its one or two blades of light green grass poking out of the over-rich earth. The slugs seemed aroused out of a lifetime of darkness and inertia.

As Pee-wee dropped the mass, the brittle twigs cracked, and he heard a sort of continuation of this sound after the tangled mound had settled. The noise was not unlike the crackling of twigs but it seemed more continuous and

aggressive than the passive sound of the subsiding debris.

Something, he did not at the time know what, caused Pee-wee to start, then shudder. It was not that he knew the sound, for he did not; he thought it must be the natural sequel of the disturbance he had caused. Nor for a moment did he see aught. But that strange telegraphy which heralds things ghastly and mortal, touched the chords of his nature and he quaked and his blood ran cold.

Then, suddenly he heard a piercing, agonizing scream....

CHAPTER VII

THE HERO

Then he saw. A dozen feet or so ahead of him stood Hope Stillmore, her form in an attitude of recoiling, her face depicting an unspeakable terror, as she tried to drag her foot out of one of those piles of tangled brush. Her dainty silk stocking was torn and her ankle was bleeding. Her recoiling posture, as she tugged and wrenched was appalling to witness. Such panic fright Pee-wee had never seen on human countenance before.

Sticking right up out of the middle of the pile and swaying menacingly was a hissing snake with tongue darting like forked lightning. Its motion was backward and forward and the noise it made was like escaping steam. Each forward movement of that supple, loathsome body seemed to shorten the distance between the flat, scaly head with its little, beady eyes, and the frantic, terror-stricken, struggling girl. And all the while the rattling sound continued, muffled somewhat by the pile in which it was embedded. There was no doubt that the reptile was about to spring; each movement seemed to leave the attack for the next movement. The girl's struggles and suspense were heart-rending.

"Look away and don't move," Pee-wee said excitedly, at the same time pulling his khaki shirt up over his head.

"I can't! *I can't!*" Hope cried frantically; "I'm caught! Oh, help, *help!*"

"Don't look at him and stop calling; look away," Pee-wee said.

She averted her head but kept tugging. She was conscious of Pee-wee moving. Her heart beat like a hammer. Suddenly she heard the hissing louder, then it ended in a kind of smothered spasm. She thought that her little comrade had been bitten till she heard him say, cheerily:

"Now I've got him; *oh, boy*, I've got him good! That shows you that I'm a scout all right," he added with frank vanity.

The girl, half dead with fright, looked around and beheld a strange sight. With his left hand Pee-wee was holding a long stick on the end of which was wound his shirt. It looked like a mop. In this were buried the fangs of the deadly reptile. But its death-dealing power was over. Its venom was spent for the time being, on the khaki negligee of Pee-wee Harris, scout of the first class.

It might have bitten the girl and left no more than a smarting cut after that. But even that balm was denied it, for while the sturdy little scout let it spend its poison on the proffered bait, he struck blow after blow with an end of a branch which he wielded with his right arm. The whole thing happened all in an instant and left Hope Stillmore gasping.

“You—you—did you—you—kill it?” she panted, looking in fearful horror at the results of Pee-wee’s merciless attack. Her chest was heaving, and she could hardly speak. “Are you—you—sure—you—he’s dead?”

“*Sure*, he’s dead. Gee whiz, he couldn’t be deader. Don’t you know you must never look straight at a rattlesnake? He would have gone away only he probably has a nest there. He didn’t bite you, did he?” he added anxiously, looking at her cut ankle.

“No, oh no,” she said, exhausted and almost reeling from fear. “Help me out, I’m going to fall.”

He parted the tangled brush into which her foot had sunken and been held as in a trap. And she leaned on him, small though he was and thus walked a few paces and sat down all but hysterical upon a log. Perhaps she *would* have given way to hysterics, but seeing her sturdy little rescuer standing before her, still armed with his implements of war, which he evidently cherished, she was moved to laughter. And so she laughed and cried at the same time, which was a stunt that neither Pee-wee nor any other boy could do.

“Oh, you look so *funny!*” she said, smiling while her eyes streamed.

Perhaps he did look funny, standing there like some doughty knight of old, minus his shirt, but with the look of a hero on his countenance, and his mop and his deadly cudgel over his shoulder. But anyway, Hope Stillmore laughed while she still gulped and cried.

For just as I told you, it was the fate of Pee-wee to be laughed at. People never thought of what he did, but how he looked. He was amusing, above all. Perhaps if Straw-hat Braggen had killed the snake (if you can imagine such a thing) pretty Miss Hope Stillmore would have been soberly grateful and called him “just simply wonderful” and a hero. But she laughed at Pee-wee.

And there you are.

CHAPTER VIII

PEE-WEE GOES TO IT

It was not until afterward that Hope realized the full significance of Pee-wee's act. When she saw her mother embrace and kiss him (much to Pee-wee's discomfort) and heard the comments of the household generally, it struck her that she had been rescued from a horrible death, like a girl in a story. The one false note in the whole business was that her hero was not tall and commanding, like some of the college boys she knew at home. Then she could have regarded him with romantic tenderness.

Farmer Goodale, somewhat doubtful about the affair, made a trip to the scene of Pee-wee's triumph and his inspection only increased the little scout's glory. He said that the reptile was a rattlesnake, sure enough, and a very formidable one. Simon Hasbrook, the farm boy, also made a pilgrimage to the historic field of glory, and reported that the dead snake was the largest he had ever seen.

As for Pee-wee, his exploit was soon relegated to the back of his seething mind in the interest of more important conquests. For he intended to triumph over Straw-hat Braggen as he had triumphed over the snake. He intended to vanquish him, not with a mop and a cudgel, but with a float which would be a vision of splendor.

His first move was against Mr. Goodale. "If we have a float in the parade," he said excitedly, "it'll make lots and lots of people come and board here, because it pays to advertise, and all we have to do is kind of to drop that building down onto the hay wagon and then decorate it; see? All we have to do is to saw off the four stilts and let it down—kerflop. It'll come down all right."

Mr. Goodale agreed that if the four stilts were sawed off the structure would undoubtedly descend upon the hay wagon.

"On account of the attraction of gravity," Pee-wee said. "Then when we're all through with it we can sort of raise it up again, because then we'll have plenty of money on account of the farm getting to be so popular, so it's a kind of an investment. So will you do it? If you'll help me saw it off I'll do all the rest, and I can even print a great big sign, because I know all about printing, because my uncle is in the printing business. So will you do it?"

"I don't see how as it's goin' ter bring folks here," drawled Mr. Goodale, good-humoredly, and somewhat captivated in spite of himself, by Pee-wee's enthusiasm; "because all the folks up ter Snailsdale hev got boardin' places—"

"Yes, but when they see our float they'll want to come here; you leave it to

me because I took a snapshot of all the fellers eating up at Temple Camp and I made them all smile as if they were getting two or three helpings, and the trustees put that picture in a circular, so that proves it, because the next summer scouts came all the way from Arizona. Gee whiz, that's why nobody comes here, because we don't advertise. Lots of rich people go to the Snailsdale House."

"Waal," smiled Farmer Goodale, by no means convinced, but quite unable to withstand the fire of Pee-wee's enthusiasm, "we'll see what can be done—"

"And can Simon go, and drive the oxen?" Pee-wee interrupted, excitedly, anxious to bring Mr. Goodale to the point of unconditional surrender. "And can I use the red paint that's out in the barn?"

"Haow'd you find out 'baout that?"

"I saw it there, and can I use a couple of those boards out in the pigpen?" Evidently Pee-wee had made a preliminary inventory of the entire farm.

In plain truth neither Mr. Goodale nor any one else had any faith in the practical character of Pee-wee's enterprise. But if our hero paused to consider this lack of spirit and cooperation he probably consoled himself with the reflection that all great inventors and promoters are scorned by the world until their triumphs have been won. In Pee-wee's mammoth enterprises he was not unaccustomed to working alone. The well-known case of Christopher Columbus was always in his mind.

Farmer Goodale and his wife had too long prayed and hoped for summer boarders at their sequestered homestead to believe that a boy scout could perform the miracle of bringing any trunk and suitcase pilgrims to their door. Three years previously they had advertised in the New York Sunday papers and in the vacation book published by the railroad. They had even taken down the partition between the two sitting rooms to make a spacious floor for dancing. But no one had ever come, save an occasional old lady, or a weary school teacher. Mrs. Goodale said it was because her husband had an old-fashioned habit of telling the truth about his lonely place.

At all events the kind-hearted old man wished those who did come to be contented and happy. So after contemplating the old corn-husk house shrewdly from various angles, he piled timbers between it and the hay wagon until the space of a foot or more was filled. Then he sawed through the four supporting stilts and by pulling the timbers out one after another, let the ramshackle old structure down upon the wide, clumsy hay wagon.

"There yer be," he said, as he proceeded to nail it here and there and to bind it with rope to the frame of the wagon; "naow I reckon she'll do. More like a float fer a insane asylum, I'd say. Naow you can set ter work and kill time puttin' on yer gewgaws n' Simon'll go 'long with yer when th' day comes. Anything else?" He stood, saw in hand, looking over the top of his old

steel-rimmed specks, a shrewd, amused smile on his furrowed, bronzed face. "Naow yer kin go to it, as the feller says."

So Pee-wee went to it. The architectural conception, which was now an accomplished fact, was ludicrous in the last degree. The old, slatted corn-husk receptacle standing upon the hay wagon looked like nothing either Gothic or Moorish. Mrs. Stillmore said it was roorish, a name derived from rural. The structure, which was of a familiar sort seen on farms, slanted out from its base till it reached the point of juncture with a roof disproportionately massive and heavy. The sides of the structure had slats instead of siding so that the whole business had not a little the appearance of a rolling circus cage.

It was this fact that put it into Pee-wee's fertile brain to use a pig or a calf as a tenant of this traveling cell by way of suggesting the bounteous fare at Goodale Manor Farm. He deferred this matter till later, pending the completion of his exterior decorations.

After the first curiosity of the household had been satisfied no one visited him in his corner of the barnyard and the work of gala preparation went forward without audience, save for a rooster that made a practice of sitting on the fence and watching the artistic labor. Perhaps he had an artistic bent. At all events, he sat on the fence hour in and hour out contemplating the work with profoundest interest.

He was Pee-wee's only companion.

CHAPTER IX

A VISION OF SPLENDOR

The next morning Pee-wee made a great discovery in the loft of the carriage house. This was a large sign at least six feet long and more than a foot wide, containing in glaring paint the words:

GOODALE MANOR FARM.

It was evidently a souvenir of the hopeful days when the partition between the sitting rooms had been taken down. Pee-wee dragged it to the kitchen door and consulted Mr. Goodale, who was drying his hands there.

“Waal, now, that’ll jes’ suit you, won’t it?” said Mr. Goodale. “I never know’d abaout it bein’ poked away till you pulled it out. That was goin’ ter be nailed up between the gate-posts out yonder, ony it never was,” he said wistfully. “Member that sign, mother?” Mrs. Goodale paused in her cake making to look reminiscently at the dust-covered memorial of shattered hopes. “Carl Jellif painted that sign; I give ’m ten dollars. He was a city painter he was, slick ez a school marm on spellin’ and fancy stuff. He wuz out here ter paint the station up ter Snailsdale n’ he boarded daown here while he done th’ County Fair work. He died uv th’ flu, he did.” Mr. Goodale paused, his face half dry, to indulge in these memories. “You take it and use it, sonny,” he concluded.

It nevers rains but it pours and that same morning Hope Stillmore came gingerly across the mud of the barnyard with an armful of old, faded bunting and a couple of good-sized American flags, the spoils of an extended exploration of the attic.

“We found a *gold mine* in the attic,” she chirped. “Just look at all this lovely stuff; it was used in the County Fair when Mr. Goodale was on the committee, and Mrs. Goodale says we can use it, and I’m going to help you decorate if you’ll let me. I’m going to do it because of what you did for me—because you saved my life.”

“Are you going to be partners with me?” Pee-wee asked delightedly.

“Yes, I’m going to be partners with you and we’re going to decorate it together, so there.” She did not tell him that her mother had shamed her into this. Her interest, once aroused, seemed genuine, at all events.

“And are you going to ride on the float with me?”

“Yes, I am, I don’t care what. So now.”

“After the parade’s over I’m going to treat you to ice cream in Snailsdale,”

Pee-wee said.

“Won’t that be lovely!”

“Fifteen-cent plates.”

“Oh, *scrumptious!*”

“And when lots of people come here it will be your good turn as well as mine, hey? Because, gee whiz, Mr. Goodale, he’s a peach of a man. And, besides, maybe there’ll be a lot of big fellers come, too, and then I bet you’ll be glad, hey? Gee whiz, that’ll be doing more for you than saving you from a rattlesnake, hey?” Indeed, it would have been somewhat in the nature of saving her life.

“We’re not going to think about *anything* except just the float,” Hope said. “So let’s start right in.”

“And we’re sure going to be partners for keeps?”

“Honest and true, just like in a story.”

“Gee, I’ve met a lot of girls, but I like you better than any of them, that’s one sure thing.”

“Well, I know a lot of boys—”

“I bet you know as many as a hundred.”

“And you’re *braver* than *any* of them. *That’s* one sure thing. And you know all about the woods.”

“I know all about getting lost in them,” Pee-wee said. “Anyway you’re prettier than Roy Blakeley’s sister. Just because I didn’t keep asking you that doesn’t mean I don’t like you better than anybody else. Lots of people would be partners with me only they’re too busy. But I’d rather have you for a partner than anybody. I’m going to get you some candy on the day of the parade. I bet fellers take you to the movies, don’t they?”

“I said we weren’t going to think of *anything* but the float,” Hope reproved him.

“But I can say I like you, can’t I?”

“Yes, but let’s get to work.”

The work began auspiciously enough, Hope dealing her finger a blow with the hammer. Everything went along swimmingly and the wheels of the hay wagon began to look quite gay and festive with the spokes wrapped in bunting and with bunting rosettes surmounting the old hubs. It was surprising how the girl knew just where to begin and how her nimble fingers made graceful loops and knots here and there.

Pee-wee was delighted as the morning passed in this pleasant comradeship and cooperation. They went in when the dinner bell rang, full of artistic and striking conceptions for the afternoon’s work, and at the table talked of their plans. It seemed likely that the afternoon would see the work well on its way toward completion. Hope seemed quite under the spell of Pee-wee’s

enthusiasm (which was potent), and so for Pee-wee, he could not do justice to his dinner by reason of talking, and he could not do justice to his enthusiastic talk by reason of his dinner. He wrestled with both valiantly.

But the joyous progress was too good to last. By mid-afternoon the ramshackle old combination of house and wagon was resplendent in its particolored holiday array. The old hay wagon, which creaked as if it had rheumatism in its aged joints, appeared to have renewed its youth, its dried and shrunken boards concealed like wrinkles under the all-pervading makeup of gaudy bunting.

Pee-wee was straddling the roof, ready to throw the end of a rainbow streamer down to his partner when suddenly he beheld a Ford car standing in the road, its single occupant craning his neck in the direction of the barnyard. Even at the distance of some thirty yards or so, Pee-wee recognized the aggressive, cock-sure pose and demeanor of the staring driver.

It was Straw-hat Braggen.

CHAPTER X

ANOTHER VISION OF SPLENDOR

Everett Braggen ran his Ford to the side of the road, and came toward the partners smiling all over. He was in the transition period when sometimes he wore short trousers and sometimes long ones, and on this day, unfortunately he wore long ones. This made him look considerably older than on the day when Pee-wee had encountered him in the Snailsdale station. His suit must have been a different one than he had worn on that occasion, but his handkerchief was folded in precisely the same stiff fashion of affected carelessness exhibiting its border.

“Well—I’ll—be—*jiggered!*” he said, affecting not to see Hope, but at the same time adjusting his scarf by a little pull, in honor of her. He also made sure that his handkerchief was properly disposed for exhibition. “What—do—you—know—about—*that?* I was just out taking a little spin to get away from the traffic cops when who should I see but you? How are you, Kiddo? So this is Goodale Farm, huh?” he added, looking around and giving his scarf another artistic little jerk so that it stuck out.

“And what the dickens are you up to?” he asked, planting himself in front of the float as if he might possibly be induced to buy it. “Great kids, these boy scouts, hey?” He did not address this last remark to any one in particular. By way of showing how far removed he was from a boy scout he sat down on a box and carefully gave each trouser leg a little hoist, then contemplated his ankles.

“It’s just sort of killing time,” Hope said, rather apologetically. “Anything’s better than nothing.”

Pee-wee was a little disappointed at that. “We’re going in the parade,” he said, “and we’re going to try for the prize; this is my partner, ain’t you, Hope?”

This was all the introduction that he received, but it was all he required.

“Some artist, hey?” he commented, alluding to Pee-wee.

“It’s all we could find to do in this poky old place,” said Hope, as if a little ashamed of her participation in the decorative enterprise. She stood, as if rather abashed by Braggen’s derisive inspection of their handiwork, a hammer dangling from one hand and a strip of bunting hanging over her shoulder.

Pee-wee felt disappointed, almost betrayed. He had always the courage of his convictions, and as for acknowledging defeat before the end of battle, his sturdy little heart rebelled at such a thing.

“It isn’t finished yet,” he said; “it’s going to be a good deal better than this.

There's a—a kind of a secret about it—something that's going to be inside of it—you wait till you see it in the parade. There's an inspiration that goes with it," he added, darkly.

Everett Braggen winked significantly at Hope and she smiled. Both the work and the smile were at Pee-wee's expense.

"You ought to see the float *we're* going to shoot into the parade," said the visitor; "it's a traveling landscape. Yours, sincerely, is going to be sitting on the lawn playing cards while we roll merrily, merrily on. The girls up at the Snailsdale House—that's my little old hang-out—they can't eat their meals on account of getting that float ready. They've got us trotting over to the village store forty-eleven times a day. Every person in the house put up two bucks. Our float's going to be a whole parade in itself."

"I bet your float hasn't got a sign on it as big as this one," Pee-wee said, seizing upon the most conspicuous feature of the float and hurling it, as it were, as a sort of bomb.

Hope looked ruefully at the enormous sign as Braggen read the words aloud. She caught the note of ridicule in his voice and seemed to join him in his implied derision.

"*Goodale Manor Farm*" he read. "Wherever you go around this neighborhood you find manners—Snailsdale Manor, Goodale Manor—"

"It's a wonder you don't have some yourself," Pee-wee vociferated.

"Oh, aren't you perfectly horrible!" Hope said. But Braggen only laughed.

"Are there many boys at the Snailsdale House?" Hope asked. "And girls," she added, to make her query seem less brazen.

"Oh, a couple of guys beside myself," said Braggen, pinching the treasured crease in one trouser leg and giving it a little hitch. "One of 'em's got a kid sister about fourteen. We're a pretty lively bunch. There are a couple of chaps from Hydome University coming up pretty soon—"

"College boys?" Hope asked excitedly.

"Tennis sharks," Braggen said; "do you go in for tennis much?"

"Oh, I just love it."

"I'm not so stuck on it; I'm out in my car most of the time."

"Is that your car out there?"

"That's him; small but lively; can't hold him in."

"I bet you can't tell what kind of tires a car has by the tracks," Pee-wee said, wedging his observation into the talk. "Scout's can."

"I should bother my young life about tracks," laughed Braggen. "I'll tell you about that pair," he continued, speaking to Hope, to Pee-wee's utter exclusion. "We're not saying much about it up at the house, but I don't suppose it makes any difference what I tell down in this graveyard."

Hope laughed.

“They’re Hydome boys and they’re cracker-jack tennis players. So you see we’re booked to walk away with the tennis match, too. Say, if the town hall wasn’t nailed down, Snailsdale House would walk away with that, too. We’ve got a Russian pianist coming up, too, long hair and all that sort of thing; you’ve got to pronounce his name in sections—”

“I know a feller that’s got a name with five syllables,” Pee-wee interrupted, in a kind of defiance.

“There’s a rich old guy coming, too,” said Braggen. “We’ll be whooping things up in a couple of weeks or so. Kind of quiet down here, huh? Something like being dead.”

“How do you know, because you were never dead?” Pee-wee shouted, at which Hope and Braggen both laughed.

“Some kid, huh?” the visitor said.

“He’s a *scream*,” Hope whispered.

“Why don’t you come up and stay at the Snailsdale House?” Everett Braggen asked. “There are a couple of rooms vacant now. You here with your folks?”

“Just my mother,” Hope said; “she’s run down.”

“Well, Snailsdale House is the place to get wound up, take it from me. We keep going all right up there—keep the old victrola going overtime. Do you dance?”

“You *bet* I do.”

“Well, I’d like to know what you’re doing down here then—”

“She knows more about—about woodlore than you do,” Pee-wee shouted, loyal to his pal. But Hope was not aware of his loyalty; she was thinking of the Snailsdale House with its whirl of gayety—and its victrola.

“Are they coming soon, those bo—those people?”

“Sure, next Saturday; same day as the parade; they’ll just miss it. I *think* they’re all coming on the same day.”

“If we win the prize we’re going to buy a victrola,” Pee-wee announced, in a sudden inspiration, “and then we can have dances here, hey?” He looked almost imploringly at Hope. She was sitting on a milk stool which she had been using to stand on; her gaze was on the ground, and she was tracing lines in the dirt with her little foot.

“So you think you’ll win the prize, do you?” Everett Braggen asked, patronizingly.

“Sure, because I’m lucky,” said Pee-wee.

Neither Everett Braggen nor Hope Stillmore caught these momentous words. Hope was too preoccupied with visions of Russian pianists and college boys and dances. Everett Braggen was too much preoccupied with himself. So neither took to heart those words of defiant confidence uttered by this little

outsider....

Girls might come and go, but Pee-wee's luck would not forsake him. And it would have been well for Miss Hope Stillmore if she could have but known that.

CHAPTER XI HOPE TRIUMPHANT

"I tell you what I'll do," said Everett Braggen, quick to interpret Hope's thoughts. "I'll take you and your mother up to town in my car and you can see how you like the place, and I'll bring you back again."

"Don't you do it, Hope," said Pee-wee, "because don't you know, you and I are partners?"

"Oh, it's so *silly*," she said, "trying to compete with those houses up in Snailsdale."

"That shows how much you know," Pee-wee continued excitedly, for he saw the case was desperate. "Just because I'm a boy scout that doesn't say I wasn't in the same movie film that showed President Harding, you can ask anybody. And the President of the United States sent the Boy Scouts a letter, too, and I saw a lot of famous people and I know a feller at Temple Camp that shook hands with Buffalo Bill, gee whiz, the Snailsdale House isn't so much; anyway you crossed your heart."

"No, I didn't."

"Well, you were going to, and don't you know how I said I was going to treat you to ice cream after the parade?"

It shows if you quit
You haven't got grit.

That's what all the scouts say up at Temple Camp, and anyway you can ask any feller up there if I don't always win, because I'm lucky—you can ask anybody. So let's start work, hey? And he can watch us if he wants to."

It was characteristic of Pee-wee that with all his flaunting boasts about his triumphs in everything he undertook, he did not mention his real heroic act of killing the rattlesnake and saving his pal's precious life.

Nor, alas, did she think of that, either. Without saying a word she arose and started toward the house. As she crossed the barnyard she threw the hammer down in the mud. But the strip of bunting was still over her shoulder and wound around her waist and it made her look very winsome.

She ran up the stairs and into her mother's room flushed with hurry and excitement and fresh hopes.

"Oh, mother, just listen," she panted. "There are two rooms at the Snailsdale House and we can have them if we want them, only we'll have to act *right straight away*! Remember, you *promised* we'd go up there after you

rested—if we could get rooms. There’s a boy outside that knows little Walter Harris and he has a car and he says he’ll take us up there. Oh, it would be just a wicked shame to miss the chance. There are going to be *lots and lots* of people there for August. Two *perfectly lovely* fellows are coming up Saturday—”

“How do you know they are perfectly lovely fellows?” her mother inquired.

“Because they are, and there’s a *perfectly wonderful* musician coming and there’ll be dancing and everything. You don’t need any hat, come just the way you are, and we’ll engage the rooms before any one else gets them. He’s the *niciest* boy—only we have to hurry!”

“If he’s such a nice boy I guess he can wait a few minutes,” said Mrs. Stillmore.

“But I’m afraid some one will get the rooms— oh, I’d *just die* from disappointment. You know how it is up at the Snailsdale House, people just *begging* for rooms.”

“Well, we’re not beggars,” said Mrs. Stillmore.

“Oh, you’re just provoking!” Hope said, stamping her foot impatiently. “You know Mr. and Mrs. Goodale won’t care a bit—they’re too slow to care. Oh, I’m just sick and disgusted with this poky old place—even that boy makes fun of it and I felt so *ashamed!* He’d take us out in his car *lots* and here we can’t even go *driving* with the horse.”

“Have you thought about Walter?” her mother asked. “Weren’t you going to help him?”

“Oh, it’s just too silly,” Hope said, impatiently. “You know perfectly well that before the day of the parade comes he will have forgotten all about the float and he’ll be doing something else. Even his mother says he’s *fickle.*” Hope shot out the word *fickle* as if she understood it to mean something very dreadful. “I’ll speak to Mr. Goodale if you’re afraid to,” she added, as an inducement. And as a clincher she said, “Remember, you promised you would when you first came here. You know how fond you are of music. You said yourself that this *horrid* farm boy here drove you to *desperation* with his accordion.”

“I didn’t call him horrid.”

“Well you *looked* it.”

“Well, I’ll go and see the rooms if you want me to,” Mrs. Stillmore said, resignedly; “I did tell you that I was thinking of your happiness more than of my own. As you know I would be willing to stay here—”

“That’s just because you like Mrs. Harris and Walter. If they weren’t here you’d *never* be willing to stay on here. I know you *thoroughly.*” It was wonderful how much Miss Hope Stillmore understood.

“If Walter Harris had not been with you in the woods, Hope, you would

probably not be alive to want to go up to Snailsdale,” her mother said as a sort of final shot. “I’m perfectly willing to go and see the rooms but this young man will have to wait till I have talked with Mr. Goodale.”

Indeed the young man was already waiting.

Not desirous of wasting any more time with Pee-wee, he had brought his Ford up to the porch and was sitting at the wheel with a very ostentatious air. When Hope and her mother came out on the porch after talking with Mr. and Mrs. Goodale, he nonchalantly threw open both front and rear doors of his car by way of encouraging Hope to sit beside him. But he was doomed to disappointment in this for she sat with her mother. Perhaps it was because she felt that her mother might weaken and require to be stimulated with fresh arguments.

As for Pee-wee, he sat upon the float and watched the Ford go down the road. His friend, the rooster, was there upon the fence, and seemed to be watching, too, as if he also could not comprehend this astonishing turn of affairs....

CHAPTER XII

DESERTED

Pee-wee worked alone all that afternoon. Hope's ready talent had transformed the outlandish rolling combination into a thing of gala beauty and he had only to clear out the interior and wrap bunting around the shaft and other parts which she had mentioned. He always prided himself on knowing all about girls, but her sudden desertion was something he had never seen the like of before. He was utterly staggered. But he was no quitter and he worked sturdily all afternoon.

After an hour or more he saw the Ford returning with Hope and her mother and soon afterward saw it go away with no one but Everett Braggen in it. Everett did not bother to visit Pee-wee's domain in these important comings and goings. But a little while before supper-time, Hope came tripping across the barnyard calling gayly, "Now I'll help you some more."

"Are you going to go away?" Pee-wee asked grimly.

"Yes, we're going to stay at the Snailsdale House to-morrow, and you mustn't forget to come up there and see us, and we'll play croquet. They have a perfectly lovely croquet field."

"You needn't help me," said Pee-wee, as she took up a strip of bunting, "because I don't want you to. Anyway, I bet they don't have any better desserts at that house than they have here. I'm coming here every summer, I am."

"You needn't think I'm mad because you don't want to be partners with me, because, gee whiz, you're a girl and you've got a right to change your mind, that's sure. But, anyway, you're a quitter, that's what you are. You let that feller scare you and make you think you can't do a thing, and he can't do things, that's sure. If a feller wants to be a scout he doesn't go to some other town and join but he starts a patrol in his own town and makes it a go. Do you think I can't make this place a go? That shows how much you know about advertising. I wouldn't run after fellers, but I'd make them run after me, because look at—at—at—look at John Burroughs—people used to go and see him way off in the woods and you bet your life *he* didn't go running after people. You're a quitter, that's what you are! *You're a double quitter!* And I'm going in the parade anyway and I'm going to have a lot of fun."

"You're *horrid!*" she said. "And you're just—you're impudent and I don't *want* to help you."

"Quitter, quitter!" taunted Pee-wee.

His attitude of bravado seemed to relieve Hope of any stings of conscience which she might have felt, and at supper she talked blithely of the whirl of gayety at the Snailsdale House.

She said that Everett Braggen was a *perfect* gentleman and that she was *sure* he would never call names. She spoke of the Russian pianist and of the “two perfectly lovely fellows” who were coming, and who were going to win the tennis match for the Snailsdale House. “And we’re going to have music and dancing and if we get the prize money for our float (as of course we will, for it’s going to be simply *gorgeous*) we’re going to send to New York for a *perfect heap* of dance records—they have hardly any two-steps at all now. And after it’s all over I told Mrs. Goodale that we’re coming down here again to this dear old place to *rest up* before going back to New York. We’re just going to lie around for a *whole week*.”

Mr. and Mrs. Goodale said pleasantly that they hoped to see them again and that they supposed it *was* rather quiet at the farm. Sweet, motherly Mrs. Goodale said she reckoned young folks had to have their fling. She said that she trusted Hope’s ankle was all healed and that it would not interfere with dancing.

“I’ve forgotten all about it,” said Hope. Which was undoubtedly true.

“I tell this youngster he’ll hev ter make twice as much noise now so’s ter make up,” smiled Mr. Goodale, alluding to Pee-wee.

Pee-wee had been so engrossed with his supper that he had paid no attention to the talk. He had said all he had to say on this subject. He now hastened the consumption of a piece of cake to acknowledge kind Mr. Goodale’s remark.

“You leave it to me,” he said.

CHAPTER XIII

HOPE ADVANCES AGAINST SNAILSDALE

Everett Braggen had not exaggerated the prospective gayety of the Snailsdale House, for the very next day the semi-weekly county paper contained among the “Snailsdale Local Items” the following:

August will be gay at the Snailsdale House, every room and both cottages being engaged for the balance of the season. Mr. Skimper, the genial proprietor, expects a bevy of youth and several notables at the week-end.

Among these is the talented pianist, Clamordinevich Vociferinski, whose recitals at Harmonica Hall created such a stir in the metropolis. Several students of Hydome University are also expected to impart the usual college pep into our summer colony. Chester (better known as Chesty) Marshall, son of General Botchly Marshall, is also expected. Chesty is known as the best dancer at West Point. Mr. A. Pylor Koyn, of the banking house of Koyn & Minter, is another expected guest at the popular hotel, and will soon be followed by his family, which is returning from Europe.

Hope Stillmore read this with joy and expectancy bubbling in her heart. She felt as Pee-wee felt when he was confronted with several desserts; she did not know which to choose among all these subjects for conquest. Already her heart was a little fickle to the “two perfectly lovely fellows” in favor of the lion of Harmonica Hall.

But then again she fancied the arrowlike form of Chesty Marshall, looking like a soldier in a toy Noah’s Ark, and the joy of conquering a conqueror was strong within her. Mr. A. Pylor Koyn would be out of the game, of course, but his family, coming from Europe might contain good material for conquest. Hope fell back on Pee-wee’s expedient in a difficult choice and chose them all....

On Friday Everett Braggen, apparently committed to long trousers for good and all, arrived in his Ford and Hope and her mother bade farewell to Goodale Manor Farm. Poor Mrs. Stillmore seemed quite overcome, as she kissed kind old Mrs. Goodale again and again. “Hope is simply going to dance off the nine pounds that she gained here, that’s what I tell her,” the good lady whispered. “But there’s no holding her down; she always has her own way. Her father has spoiled her.”

“Don’t you blame the men now,” said Mr. Goodale cheerily; “girls will be girls and so will boys, as the fellers says.” And he patted Hope on her shoulder in his friendly, fatherly way. “When you get all done cavortin’ you jes’ make that army feller get an army stretcher n’ you have him n’ that Bolsheviki feller carry you down here and we’ll put them nine pound back onter you again, now there,” he said. It may be said to Hope’s credit that she cried a little at leaving.

As for Scout Harris he had washed his hands of the fair traitor altogether. But he had not washed his face, for he came around at his mother’s call, a great smutch like a comet across his round countenance, and submitted himself to the parting handshakes. He had been putting the finishing touches on his float of which he was now the sole commander and engineer.

“I hope you have just a *fine* time at the parade, Walter,” Hope said.

“You leave it to me,” said Pee-wee coldly.

“And when I see you I’m going to wave. If you hear someone shouting to you, you’ll know who it is.”

“Girls don’t know how to shout,” said Pee-wee. He certainly ought to have known for he was a specialist in that art.

CHAPTER XIV

FORWARD, MARCH!

Hope's departure was a good thing for one person at least, and that was Simon Hasbrook, the farm boy, for Mr. Goodale gave him a holiday on Saturday. The farmer hesitated, however, to loan a pig or a calf, and so the members of the new partnership sawed a doorway in the back of their gala caravan and put some boxes and milking stools inside for seats.

Since there was no one at the farm but Mr. and Mrs. Goodale and Mrs. Harris, the plan was to organize a party en route, which should loll in and about the float, to give an impression of youth and merriment at Goodale Manor Farm.

"You have to have action," Pee-wee informed Simon, who seemed greatly edified. "It doesn't make any difference how many decorations you have, you have to have a lot of people. So we'll ask everybody we see to get in and we'll start them singing and all like that. We'll take a lot of apples and cookies and things and have them eating, too."

Nothing could dampen Pee-wee's ardor and confidence, not even the weather which was misty and cheerless. The float looked gay and even beautiful, thanks to Hope's tastefulness, and carrying out her decorative scheme, the boys had wound bunting around the horns of the stolid, patient oxen surmounting each horn with a crude rosette which it is to be feared, lacked her deft and magic touch. The swishing tails were also provided with streamers so that each ox seemed to wield a kind of patriotic cat-and-nine-tails.

The long whip with which Simon was to insinuate his authority to the meek beasts was a thing of gaudy beauty, with a wealth of tails which made it look like some festive devil-fish. Simon and Pee-wee wore girdles of bunting, and somewhere in the folds of Pee-wee's colorful array nestled modestly his dangling compass, for though there was a road to Snailsdale Manor he wished to be prepared for emergency if by any chance the road should suddenly disappear.

His scout hat, that invariable reminder of his wild and heroic character, was laid aside for this glorious occasion, and his curly head was swathed with fold upon fold of endless streamers, so that (except for the bread and jam that he was eating) he looked like an East Indian rajah.

The caravan paused for a few moments before the porch for the admiration of Mrs. Harris, while Pee-wee procured another dripping slice of bread, and then, our hero having pulled up his unruly stocking and taken a mammoth bite

to fortify himself, gave the order to advance. A quarter of a mile or so down the road they passed Mr. Goodale's ice house and then entered the unpeopled wilderness through which no bunting-draped caravan had ever passed before.

The journey to Snailsdale Manor was uneventful. A drizzling rain fell most of the time and the road was filled with those cunning little red lizards which always herald and accompany damp weather. The distant mountains could not be seen for the mist; a kind of gauze curtain seemed to hang in the countryside subduing everything to its own dull shade. It was not a penetrating rain, it was hardly a rain at all, but a kind of gossamer wrap which covered everything. The clammy dampness stood out in little beads all over the boy's clothing. One could draw one's finger through it and leave a mark, as in an area of dust. The decorations wilted under this all-pervading moisture and the gay rosettes dropped in despair. But the colors did not run.

Neither did the oxen. All efforts to hurry them were in vain. The snapping of the motley whip aroused neither their fears nor their patriotic ardor. They plodded leisurely along, dutiful, reliable, slow.

Pee-wee wet his trusty right forefinger and held it up to determine which way the wind was blowing, and found from the sudden chill against one side of it that the wind was in the south.

"You mean the east," said Simon.

"Your finger can't lie," Pee-wee said; "that's a scout stunt. It's blowing from *there*."

"Yes and that's the east," said Simon amiably.

"How can the south be the east?" Pee-wee demanded with withering scorn.

"It can't," said Simon, "and 'tain't neither."

The wind's east but it's comin' roun'. Moren' like it'll be clear this afternoon n' rain again at night. See the spider-web across that woodchuck hole over in the field? It's noon and he ain't out yet. That means likely he won't come out till to-morrow. It'll rain to-night moren' like."

"As long as it's clear this afternoon I don't care," said Pee-wee, somewhat squelched by this bit of knowledge. "I bet you can't tell time by the sun. I can tell what time it is by holding a nail slanting-ways on the back of my watch and letting the sun shine on it."

"Why don't you look at the front of your watch?" Simon asked innocently.

"That shows how much you know about scouting," Pee-wee fairly shouted. "Suppose—suppose my watch should be slow?"

"I wouldn't think them scouts would have their watches slow," said Simon.

"Even the clock on the City Hall is slow sometimes," Pee-wee thundered, in despair for an argument. "Do you mean to say I'm smarter than a city hall is? Gee whiz! A scout has to be resourceful and he doesn't depend on watches. That's why he carries a nail."

“The nail is no good if he has a watch and it’s no good if he hasn’t got a watch,” Simon said soberly. “He can’t have the back of a watch unless he has the front of a watch.”

“You’re crazy!” Pee-wee yelled. “Suppose—suppose—suppose it’s night and he can’t see the hands of his watch, he might see a nail shining. So there! Do you know what preparedness is?” he added blightingly.

“Is it being able to tell time by the sun at night?” Simon asked.

“That shows how much you know!” Pee-wee shouted, almost beside himself. “Suppose the sun should break—I mean your watch. You’d have the back of it, wouldn’t you? And besides, I can tell when it’s twelve o’clock when there isn’t any sun at all. Do you know how?”

“No, how?”

“By my stomach.”

“Do you mean laying a nail against it slanting-ways?”

“By my appetite,” Pee-wee yelled; “and it’s twelve o’clock now, *so there!*”

“Your appetite is a little fast,” Simon said; “it’s half past eleven.”

“Well, anyway I have my appetite kind of set ahead,” Pee-wee explained. So they went inside their cosy caravan and ate lunch.

CHAPTER XV

HANDLING THE CROWD

The sun was just poking through the mist and conjuring the beady particles of moisture into tiny jewels when our heroes with their rather bedraggled outfit moved triumphantly up the main street of Snailsdale Manor to the village square. It seemed as if the great orb had deliberately waited to make an effective entrance into the festivities.

Since Pee-wee's float was the only one which had come from a distance, the others had escaped the blighting effects of long exposure and they formed a carnival of originality and color as they stood clustered on the green, waiting to be drawn into line.

Some were motor driven, as the express vehicles and the buses, but most of them were drawn by horses.

Every auto in the village (and nine tenths of them were Fords) was decorated and filled with city folk in holiday spirit and attire. Wheelbarrows and bicycles, too, were pressed into service. Youths on draped stilts strutted about, waiting. A thriving business was going on in candy and lemonade. Flags and hotel pennants were everywhere. One bicycle with a bathtub conveyance beside it was occupied by a child in the briefest of bathing customs, waving soap and towel.

It must be confessed that the irrepressible Pee-wee felt a little chagrin amid this motley assemblage. Poor Simon was visibly flustered and ill at ease. Our hero beheld all about him designs and color schemes and rolling architectural conceptions which put his modest caravan to shame. Even Hope's tasteful draping, now wilted and heavy with moisture, did not redeem the grotesque van from a certain amateur crudeness that stuck out all over it. It had looked very fine in the Goodale barnyard, but now, alas, among that galaxy of art and ingenuity supported by free expenditure poor Pee-wee's much flaunted float seemed cheap and rough and commonplace. His boasted luck seemed at last to have deserted him; he was even subdued by the consciousness of failure, as he gazed wide-eyed at the festive scene all about him.

Almost ashamed, his eyes sought out the float of the Snailsdale House, and there it was, a veritable rolling lawn, with his faithless partner lying in a hammock strung between two imitation trees. There were several children on the float, too, and ladies playing cards and Straw-hat Braggen (apparently faithless to his flivver) was there in all his glory.

Hope jumped down and came tripping over to greet the boys from the

farm. "I think your float looks *perfectly lovely*" she said, which she did not think at all, "and it just makes me *homesick* to see that sign. And just to think of you two coming *all the way* from Goodale Farm! It's like—a—caravan from—you know—from Arizona!"

"Anyway, we're going to have two quarts of ice cream," said Pee-wee, too honest to let himself be deceived about his outlandish contribution to the pageant.

"There's just a perfect *army* of city people coming up to-night," Hope said; "and we're just going to be *packed* like sardines. Everett wanted me to ride in his car with him—"

"It isn't a car, it's a Ford," said Pee-wee.

"You're horrid! But I was afraid I'd be just *jounced* to death and would be all tired out for to-night. You know we're going to have a dance at the house to-night. And I'll let you into a little secret too. You know those two perfectly lovely fellows that are coming up—from Hydome University? Mr. Skimper is going to have them represent us in the tennis match and they're *experts*, they've both won prizes. Just imagine! And the Hotel Packem thinks their team is going to *win*! Isn't it excruciating? Oh, you must *surely* come and *see* us win!"

If the sign on Pee-wee's lumbering vehicle made Hope homesick, it had quite a different effect upon the joyous, flippant rabble. It was the one, conspicuous, outstanding feature of Pee-wee's outfit and it aroused unholy mirth on every hand. This was especially so as the other floats and marching units passed it to form in line.

"Hey, sign, where are you going with the wagon?" called one of the summer wits.

"Hey float, where are you going with the fool?" Pee-wee promptly retorted. He was the equal of any at this kind of thing. He sat on the peak of his roof, ready to meet all comers.

"Is that sign meant to cover the wagon or is it meant to cover the farm?" another joker shouted, and several girls carolled forth their appreciation of his wit.

"It's meant to cover your mouth only it isn't big enough," Pee-wee roared.

"Where the dickens is Goodale Manor Farm?" someone queried.

"You go nineteen thousand miles through the woods and take the second turn to your left," some one answered.

"Then you jump in the well," Pee-wee shouted. Simon was greatly edified at the ease with which his small companion handled the passing show.

"What ails Goodale's Farm?" a couple of young fellows began singing.

"What's the good of Goodale's," another wit chimed in.

"What's the good of all the snails in Snailsdale?" Pee-wee shouted at the

top of his voice, which caused much laughter. "All the snails came out of their shells to-day. They come out when it rains!"

Indeed he looked funny enough straddling the old roof, with his gaudy turban falling about his head and his mouth besmeared with jam.

"They grow big signs daown that thar farm," shouted a young mimic. "Haow's the geese daown thar?"

"All right, I'll tell them their brother was asking after them," Pee-wee answered.

"Haow's the pigs?" piped up another voice.

"Fine. How are all *your* family?" Pee-wee shot back.

He was too engrossed with the zest of battle to be disappointed now; he was in his element.

"Haow's tomatoes?" the young mimic shouted.

For answer he received a demonstration which effectually convinced him that tomatoes were both ripe and soft. A hard boiled egg was next seized for light artillery use, but Pee-wee couldn't bring himself to part with that and he decided just in the nick of time to eat it.

He laughs best who laughs last, and Pee-wee laughed last in one sense at least, for he was the last in the procession. The officials of the pageant did not give Simon a chance to drive into line until there wasn't any more line, and the oxen had to be urged to speed ahead in a frantic search for it. They proceeded at the breakneck pace of about two miles an hour and caught up with it around the corner.

Every circus must have its clown and every pack its joker, and on such terms Pee-wee was not unwelcome at the tail of the parade. Perhaps it was appropriate that Goodale Farm, the last place in creation, should have the last float in the parade. It caused unstinted laughter along the way, chiefly because of its great sign which was bigger than that on the Commercial Hotel and its small scout who was almost as small as the weather-vane on the same hotel and fully able, like the weather-vane, to handle the situation from any direction.

The trouble was with the oxen which kept falling behind, going first in second, then in first gear, until they finally stalled altogether in front of the Snailsdale Ice Cream Parlor. Whether they had been bribed to do this it is impossible to say.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MILKY WAY FALLS DOWN

As a revenge against Hope Stillmore, Pee-wee ate three plates of ice cream. And his partner, ever loyal, did the same. Not only that, but being in the holiday spirit of recklessness, he dropped nickel after nickel in the automatic piano and it played, "We don't know where we're going, but we're on our way," a prophetic piece as they were soon to learn. It played also, "It's a long way home," and "Ain't we got fun?"

When they emerged from their orgy they endeavored to crank and then to spank their motor without success. The familiar expedient of turning the oxens' tails failing to give a spark they proceeded to the judicious use of bits of hay held temptingly before the beasts, which were evidently not hungry. At last an auto on its way home from the parade effected a successful surprise attack from the rear, and the oxen being thus started were too lazy to stop again.



PEE-WEE ATE THREE PLATES OF ICE CREAM.

The weather was now lowering as Simon, wise in such things, had predicted it would be. The sky was overcast again and there was a returning thickness and dulness to the atmosphere. There was no rain, nor even drizzle, but so thick was the mist that many autoists had their lights on and the lights seemed actually to pierce the muggy air. The atmosphere had an odor to it as of stale, cold smoke. The smoke which arose from the chimney of the Commercial Hotel was not clear and well defined but seemed to merge in the heavy, early dusk.

“It’s goin’ ter be thick as butter,” said Simon. “The old man seed this comin’ from yesterday ony he didn’t say nuthin’ along on account uv the parade. The Milky Way’s goin’ ter fall down, that’s what he calls it. We’d better get a start.”

“Gee whiz, we can find the road, can’t we?” said Pee-wee, not in the least concerned. “Do you think I’m scared of a fog?”

“It’s autos we might meet that I’m thinkin’ of,” said Simon. “They ain’t goin’ ter jump over us; leastways I never see one do that. They can’t see ten feet ahead of ’em in the fog. I’m scared of them autos n’ I admit it. We haven’t got any light.” Autos were still strange and fearful things to poor Simon.

“We can make a noise,” Pee-wee said; “noises are as good as lights; look at fog-horns. Do you know how to make a noise without anything to make a noise with, if you’re starving in the woods?”

“Is it a riddle?” Simon asked.

“No, it isn’t a riddle; you can’t make noises with a riddle,” Pee-wee said disdainfully. “You have to use a tin can and a piece of cord.”

“Where do you get the tin can if you haven’t got anything?” Simon asked, with his crude, rural, logic.

“That shows how much you know!” Pee-wee said with blighting scorn. “Every scout that goes camping in the woods has a can of beans or something.”

“If he has a can of beans he isn’t starving,” Simon observed.

“Maybe he had it but he hasn’t got it any more,” Pee-wee fairly screamed, loud enough to pierce the densest fog. “He couldn’t eat the can, could he? Anyway, I’ve got an inspiration. Do you know what that is?”

“Is it something to make a noise with?”

“It’s something that tells you about something to make a noise with. It’s something that comes into your brain all of a sudden. I can hold a stick against one of the wheels and it’ll make a noise on account of the spokes knocking against it; just like when you pull a stick along a fence. The faster we go the louder it will be. It’s kind of what you call self-adjusting.”

Simon tried this and was so impressed with the riotous din that he abandoned his sensible intention of buying a holiday horn which he might have procured at any store on that gala day. “It makes a racket sure enough,” he admitted.

“I know all the different kinds of noises,” Pee-wee announced. “I can make every kind of a noise. I’ve got a list of all the different kinds of rackets in my scout book. I can use my shirt for a megaphone. Do you know how?”

“What’s a megaphone?” Simon asked.

“Do you know what a magnifying glass is?”

“To make things bigger?”

“Sure, and a megaphone is like a magnifying glass only different; it makes your voice bigger. I can make a hoop out of willow and that’s for the big end of the megaphone and then I can fix my shirt to it, all around it like a net that you catch fish with and I can do that with a shoestring and I can pull the shirt

to a small opening so it's just like a funnel and that's a megaphone. You know my voice, don't you?"

Simon acknowledged his acquaintance with Pee-wee's noise.

"You know how loud it is?"

Simon knew.

"Well, I can make it fifteen times as loud and without anything I can shout so they can hear me across Black Lake and that's a mile wide, and fifteen times a mile is fifteen miles."

Simon was speechless at the miraculous power of the scouts. A shirt megaphone loomed up in his simple mind as more wonderful than a phonograph or a telephone. He was for going home along the familiar lower road, as it was called, thereby avoiding the precipice near which the upper road ran, but he was so deeply impressed with Pee-wee's scoutlore that he consented to follow the hill road.

"A fog is always thicker down in a valley," Pee-wee informed his companion; "that's because there's water in valleys. That's why we'd better go by the hill road."

"It goes right sheer down from the road in places," Simon said doubtfully, "and we could never pass a rig on that road. I wouldn't drive a horse there tonight, not the old man's horse, leastways. But oxen are different."

"Sure they're different," Pee-wee agreed as if he had had a long experience with them. "And we won't get in the mud, either, up on the hill road."

"After the first couple of miles or so it isn't so bad," Simon conceded. So they decided in favor of the upper road.

These two roads ran parallel, speaking generally. The route by the hill road was a little shorter and had that advantage. For a part of the way it ran close to the brow of a cliff, and had that very decided disadvantage. In places the descent was almost precipitous.

The first couple of miles out of Snailsdale Manor the road ran along a narrow shelf about fifty feet above the lowland. Here the wall was sheer both below and above. On the right arose the rugged side of a mountain, on the left nothing but a ramshackle fence separated the road from the ledge. Then a point was reached where this precipitous wall eased off into a descent of about forty-five degrees, and then farther along, the natural embankment petered out altogether and from that point the road was safe and fairly wide.

The lower road, over which the boys had travelled earlier in the day, ran through an area as flat as a pancake. It was a tract of lowland between the hills. Here the fog must have been very thick that afternoon. In places the mud was always thick enough to make travel difficult. As stated, these two roads ran a parallel course, roughly speaking, and were from a mile to two miles apart. The area below was sparsely populated by a colony of small Italian farmers

who lived in shanties. The neighborhood was called Venice, or Venus, as pronounced by Mr. Goodale.

Our travelers had to choose between these two routes on that dull, murky, late afternoon, when the whole world seemed fading away in thickening fog. Of course, if Pee-wee could have applied his customary policy he would have returned from the scene of his Waterloo by both roads. But that being impossible, the pair weighed the dangers and advantages one against another, and started home along the upper road. But as it happened Pee-wee used a number of roads in his operations and would have used still more if there had been any.

CHAPTER XVII THE LAST SALLY

We are now to accompany our hero in his masterly retreat after the evacuation of Snailsdale Manor. We need not pause to describe the cowardly attack of the Snailsdalions, how they pulled the bunting from the departing float and how our hero, crouching on the edge of the roof behind the enormous sign, hurled volleys of deadly doughnuts at the pursuing legion.

Lemon jaw breakers (four for a cent) did duty as dum dum bullets, but the clamoring host, disregarding all the usages of civilized warfare, ate the ammunition and cried for more. Among the laughing multitude which enlivened the departure of our heroes, Pee-wee saw Hope Stillmore sitting with several girls in Everett Braggen's flivver and laughing with them. Probably she intended no disrespect to her little rescuer and former pal; doubtless she could not help laughing.

"Come up again some time, Kiddo," a young fellow in white flannels called; "you're good for the blues."

"Here's one that's good for the black and blues!" Pee-wee thundered as he dispatched half a muskmelon at the summer youth.

"Can't you stay for the dance?" another called.

"Oh, *do* stay for the dance," several girls chimed in unison.

"Oh isn't he just too cute!" another sang.

"Can't you stay?" another young fellow called, good-humoredly. "We're going to have some other celebrities here to-night."

Hope, from her throne in the flivver, waved her hand to him, trying as hard as she could to hide her laughter with her handkerchief. Just then Everett Braggen grabbed an end of bunting from the dismantled float, and with a miracle of dexterity Pee-wee grabbed the other end, pulling it from him. Using it as a kind of patriotic lasso he hurled it down upon the young despoiler of his hopes. It chanced that a pin which had been used by Hope in the work of draping, still lurked in the end of this gay streamer, and this caught in the straw-hat of the young adventurer who had ventured too near the fortress. With a nicety which aroused uncontrollable laughter Pee-wee lifted that precious hat to his strategic post and drove his fist through it with heroic defiance.

"Last laugh is the best laugh!" he shouted.

Ah, those were prophetic words. Hope Stillmore heard them, and only laughed the more.

These were the last recorded words of Pee-wee Harris in his brave defeat

before the Snailsdalions.

“Didn’t I tell you I was lucky?” Pee-wee vociferated as they drove away from the village. “I can handle more people than that. I can handle all the fellers at Temple Camp and there are as many as three hundred sometimes. I can handle scoutmasters, too.”

He seemed prouder than if he had won the prize. Poor Simon was awed by the freedom with which his small companion “handled” these sophisticated, dressed up city folks. He felt that Pee-wee was equal to any occasion.

“You can be successful even when you fail,” Pee-wee explained to him. “Now you can see how it’s better that we didn’t win the prize.”

Poor Simon did not exactly see that but in his rustic shyness, he greatly admired Pee-wee’s ready prowess, a prowess that could not be cowed by laughing girls and white flannel suits. He had immensely enjoyed the affray.

“I’ve been in worse battles than that,” Pee-wee said, darkly.

If our hero was indeed lucky, his luck had a strange way of showing itself during the next hour. They traversed the dangerous section of the road, however, without mishap, except that once or twice Pee-wee almost stepped over the precipice. Carrying out his plan of walking beside one of the wheels and holding a stick against the spokes, he was sometimes very near the edge.

Simon wisely drove in as near to the mountainside as he could and there was no room for Pee-wee to walk there. The fence was at the very edge of the cliff and was not a sure support. Once Pee-wee’s foot went over the edge and he caught this rickety fence just in time. He was lucky, then at all events. As an auxiliary safety device he sang uproariously and treated the admiring Simon to a series of imitations of the voices and calls of all the creatures of the animal kingdom. He explained that these were patrol calls. Simon thought that Temple Camp, that mysterious Mecca of scouts, must sound like a hungry menagerie.

Perhaps they were lucky, too, in encountering no vehicles along that narrow, dizzy way.

The fog was so dense that they could not see ten feet ahead, and though Pee-wee’s warning voice was as reliable as the faithful oxen, still the boys both experienced a feeling of relief when they came to the end of the fence and saw the sheer descent easing off into a grassy slope. Somehow the sight of grass was welcome. It seemed to rise up out of nothing, all steaming like a volcano. It was only close beside them that they could see it at all; ahead it faded away in the dense fog bank. Thus the slope beside them seemed to move along with them. The area of it that they could see was covered with spider-webs spread out on the smoking grass like clothes to dry.

“Anyway the worst that can happen now is for us to roll down and that isn’t so bad,” said Pee-wee. “As long as I know I’m on terra cotta I don’t care.” He doubtless meant terra firma.

“That’s Latin for the earth,” he explained.

“We can’t fall off the earth,” said Simon.

“We can fall off it and land on it again,” said Pee-wee.

Simon did not raise a question here. Probably he believed that Pee-wee could “handle” such a situation.

“I mean off a cliff,” Pee-wee explained.

“Oh,” said Simon.

Their progress, now less perilous, was without episode and would doubtless have ended at Goodale Manor Farm despite the enshrouding fog, had not an altogether unforeseen occurrence confounded all their plans. They were travelling leisurely along, the mountain still rising to the right and the land sloping away at their left, when suddenly they heard the barking of a dog a little way ahead of them. Pee-wee knew perfectly well that it was a dog barking but he held his hand to his ear and listened with critical attention to determine if by chance it might be a member of the St. Bernard Patrol which was at Temple Camp some five hundred miles distant.

“It’s a mut,” said Simon innocently. “Do you have mut patrols?”

“You’re crazy,” Pee-wee said.

The dog, a lone traveller as it proved, soon hove in view. He had probably paused in the road to bark at the unearthly din that Pee-wee had been making with his stick and then trotted on again. He emerged out of the fog two or three yards ahead of the oxen, and the oxen, out of politeness perhaps, stopped also. The dog was small and certainly not of the snobbish class of dogs. His tail was wagging steadily and he seemed to be pausing to consider the best and shortest route past this unexpected obstacle. He seemed to be in a kind of nervous hurry, as if intent on some particular business. Perhaps he was on his way to the dance at Snailsdale Manor....

CHAPTER XVIII

CHAOS AND CONFUSION

Whatever the dog's business he evidently had no time to lose and he chose the quickest and shortest route, which was straight under the oxen's legs. He was scarcely beneath the patient beasts when he encountered an altogether surprising set back.

Something, he knew not what, hit him upon his democratic little nose. He snapped quickly for this and immediately found himself enmeshed in a hopeless entanglement. He knew nothing of the recent festivities at Snailsdale and was quite unaware of the bunting streamers which waved so flauntingly from the swishing tails of the oxen. It was one of these that had assailed him, and as he snapped at it and then backed away pulling it after him, it seemed to him as if he had suddenly aroused an enraged surrounding army.

Eight sturdy legs, reinforced by two violently swishing tails equipped with a hundred million entangling lashes enclosed him and assailed him from every direction. He was presently enshrouded with wet streamers, lying on his back, biting, kicking, while the oxen stamped and lashed their patriotic appendages to his utter confusion. It must have seemed to the humble little traveller that the whole world had risen against him and were holding him in a kind of diabolical maze assaulting from every angle and pouring their blighting strokes from above.

But he held his own bravely as the oxen, aroused to life at last, backed and reared and pulled against each other in their yoke. As in the World War all nations were eventually drawn into the maelstrom, so now the neutral masters of the caravan were drawn into the chaotic affray, striving to hold the rearing, frightened beasts, and at the same time conducting a flank attack against the bewildered and enmeshed dog.

At last the little warrior who had brought this allied host of eight legs, two tails, two boys and ten billion streamers as it seemed, against him, emerged from the gory field of battle with his colors flying and went scooting off with a red, white and blue streamer held between his teeth and waving like a pennant in the fog. Where he went to no mortal ever knew. But he was never seen upon that road again. Probably he thought it was haunted by all the fiends of perdition.

He started the conflagration but he did not finish it. The oxen, once aroused to action, could not be subdued. Even Scout Harris could not "handle" them. They stood at right angles to their shaft, pulling, jerking, wrenching, and

though Simon by the dextrous use of his whip and a series of uproarious “*geeee’s*” succeeded in restoring them to companionable position, they straightway adapted a new and altogether unexpected maneuver, in which the magic word of *geee* seemed to have lost its potent spell. They backed up.

“*Geee—up!*” shouted Simon, standing beside him and exhibiting the whip like a magnet for them to follow, “*geeeee—up!*”

But instead they continued to gee back. Pee-wee was in the superstructure (or whatever you choose to call it) when the climax occurred. He was getting his scout staff with which to handle the situation. The two rear wheels of the float were now off the road and on the grassy slope. Simon tried with might and main to drive the beasts forward but to no avail. Something was pulling from the rear and why should they set themselves against that? By a continued and thunderous use of the magic word, Simon at last persuaded the stolid beasts to stand still. But this was the utmost concession they would make.

And then the climax occurred. Near the end of the shaft a long iron bolt was driven through it up and down. The shaft rested in a groove on the yoke which kept it from moving too much from side to side. At this point the pin went through both shaft and yoke. The nut which should have screwed on this bolt below had long since gone the way of nuts which belong on Fords, yes and on Packards too.

The position of the wagon was slanting, it was nearly half on the slope. This had a tendency to raise the end of the shaft. Thus the bolt was lifted out. And with medley of squeaks and groans as the ramshackle caravan adjusted itself to the hubbly hillside, Pee-wee’s architectural masterpiece, with our hero inside it, went rolling down the slope and into the dense fog below.

Thus the returning legion was divided, Pee-wee and the float constituting one division, and Simon and the oxen the other.

CHAPTER XIX GOING DOWN

Down, down, down, rolled the float, with its shaft bobbing after it. It plunged into hollows, it surmounted hubbies, it swayed and lurched, and groaned and creaked. It halted, it swerved, it almost stopped, then thought better of it, and plunged forward again. Scout Harris could see nothing but a milky whiteness all about him. The fog lay so heavy in this lower land that the runaway float seemed actually to cut a path through it.

Suddenly it struck something and there was a medley of startled but familiar voices, the cackling of hens. The advancing caravan must have run down a lowly coop and trampled it under its gorgeous, imperial wheels. The released prisoners seemed to be scattering in panic all about. Then a board walk loomed up just ahead, the speed of the truant vehicle slackened, and it bumped into this obstacle, projecting the astonished Pee-wee forward upon the straw-covered floor inside.

On that memorable late afternoon, Tony Sigliatto was sitting within his humble domestic establishment eating spaghetti, when suddenly the plate went sliding off the table, accompanied by a resounding crash, and the spaghetti was spread upon the floor. His first thought was that he was the victim of a concerted attack by the Black Hand and he looked about him for the remains of a bomb.

Then he stole cautiously outside and beheld a sight which puzzled him but confirmed his worst suspicions. There stood Pee-wee, his bunting turban utterly demolished and streaming off his head, which gave him a rakish and abandoned look. But worst of all he was still gripping the patrol staff which he had reached for at the moment of his descent and from the end of this hung the pennant of the Raven Patrol, with its ominous black namesake printed with spreading wings upon it. And more darkly suggestive than that was the brown canteen with its ominous looking nozzle which Pee-wee always carried full of stale water.

Tony gave one look at this infernal engine of destruction and poured forth the torrents of his wrath.

"Hey, whata you do here? You getta de bomb! Hey, where de rest of you?" he inquired in great agitation, glancing fearfully into the wagon and then cautiously around the corner.

"The rest of me is up there," said Pee-wee. *"I don't know where it is—"*

"Hey, whata you gotta de bomb, hey! You blowa de house for de mon,

spilla de spagett. What you do hey? Who maka you come? How you coma here, maka de big noise, whata you get huh, maka de trespass, you getta de jail, longa time—”

To Pee-wee the word which stood out most conspicuously in all this was the word trespass. “Do you mean to tell me I stopped here on purpose?” he shouted. “Your house was in the way and it stopped me. Is this house on a road?”

“Plenty de roada—”

“If it hadn’t been for your house I’d have gone right through to the road,” Pee-wee said excitedly. “Do you think I wanted to roll down the hill? Do you think I’m to blame if this wagon got separated from the oxen? That shows how much you know about breaking the law, because I know all about it and a wagon can’t trespass all by itself and I was inside of it and I didn’t make it go so I’m not to blame either. Your house is just as much to blame as I am because anyway I don’t know where I’m at and I can prove it!”

Either his finely conceived argument or his vehemence, seemed to impress the astonished Italian for he subsided to a less warlike attitude and seemed the more curious the more he inspected the gaudy meteor which had been precipitated into his premises. Perhaps the predominance (albeit disordered and bedraggled) of red, white and blue upon the float and its small passenger suggested to him that Uncle Sam was in supervision of this singular affair and he could not afford to trifle with that august friendship.

“Hey, whata you do?” he asked. “You maka de big bunk, spilla de spagett, spilla de chickens, whata you maka, hey?”

This seemed reasonable enough and Pee-wee shouted, “I’m here because I’m here and I don’t know what happened but if you see any oxen around here they belong to me and there’s another boy too. I was coming home from the parade and we kind of all of a sudden got cut in half. Maybe we got cut in three, because I don’t even know if he’s with the oxen, but anyway I’d like to know where I am.”

“You maka de biga fall, hey? Quicka lika dat?”

That was the idea exactly. They were getting together now. Tony must have had an inspiration. “Alla white lika de milk, can’t see, huh, you goa de whata you call, tumble, huh? Shoo. Disa der alla right, boss. You hava de good luck no banga de head. Shoo.”

“I always have good luck,” Pee-wee said, “and anyway I’d rather be with this half, so that shows I’m lucky.”

It was fortunate that this talk was pitched in deafening tones for these guided the faithful Simon to this scene of Pee-wee’s latest triumph. For a moment after their enforced parting he had been perplexed as to what he should do. And he acted, as usual, with plain common sense. He knew that if

he left the oxen to their own devices they would probably reach the farm and that their arrival there would arouse the gravest apprehensions about his fate and Pee-wee's.



TONY Poured forth the torrents of his wrath.

On the other hand he must find Pee-wee lest his companion be injured. He therefore, drove the oxen as fast as he could make them go along the road till the slope had sufficiently eased to permit of driving them down. He had then driven in the direction of the voices and was greeted vociferously by Tony who knew him well, and who insisted that the travelers partake of spaghetti in his little makeshift home. The warm food tasted good to the adventurers, and after reuniting the essential units of their outfit and accepting the proffer of a nut

from Tony's miscellaneous junk heap, they set off upon their way.

Returning up the hill at that point was quite out of the question and the safest thing to do seemed to be to find some way of getting to the lower road. You are to understand that Pee-wee's float had collided with the rear of Tony's abode. The front of the house faced a road but it was not the main road which ran through the valley. However, since Tony's directions were not altogether clear, our travelers decided to follow this road and see where it would bring them out.

To make sure that the road lay north and south and that they were heading south, Pee-wee made a critical inspection at the base of a tree in search of the guiding moss on its north side. He was rather surprised to find moss all around it, which seemed to prove that the magnetic pole had suddenly gone mad and started on a world tour.

"Maybe it proves that the road goes every which way," said Pee-wee with a sudden inspiration. "Maybe it proves that it goes around and around and around kind of."

In the light of their subsequent adventures this seemed likely enough....

CHAPTER XX IN THE FOG

The fog lay so heavy in this low country that the float was literally enveloped in it. Layers of it seemed to move and crowd and push, one against another, as if there were not room enough for all. One might have fancied that there were several fogs of different shades and density, elbowing each other like people in a throng, and trying vainly to merge.

All this imparted a sense of oppression and restraint to the travellers, as if they were confined in a cell. They seemed to be submerged in something almost solid. Scout signals were of no use here; a smoke message would have been like a cup of water thrown in a lake. No lantern could have pierced this opaque mass in which they seemed to be embedded.

The boys could see perhaps ten feet ahead of them; the plodding oxen seemed shadowy like spectral things, and the rattling and clanking of the shaft and the yoke pins sounded strange in the white silence. Their environment had none of the companionable quality of darkness; it was clammy, cheerless, unfamiliar. It was no more like darkness than a trackless desert is like a trackless forest. Their feeling was more like that of being lost on the ocean than of being lost in the woods.

Directly beneath them the road was clear but right ahead it seemed to hover ever on the verge of invisibility; it seemed as if they shovelled the fog away as they advanced, like a snowbank.

"It's kind of like going through a tunnel," Pee-wee said.

"If we're where I think we are," said Simon, "we'll come to a cross-road after about a mile. Then if we turn to the right we'll get up on the hill road again. If we turn to the left we'll get to the other road. Anyway we're going in the right direction; if we weren't the oxen wouldn't be so willing to go. Home Sweet Home is the song they like best, that's what the old man says."

Pee-wee was rather squelched by Simon's unobtrusive show of homely knowledge. Our scout was somewhat out of his depth here in this stifling, milky wilderness where even the friendly trees looked weird and unsubstantial.

"Will they go home?" he asked.

"A horse would," said Simon. "Oxen won't go away from home, I mean the other way, after they've been travelling all day. But they haven't got as much sense as horses. They might go home if it was just dark or if it was a straight road there. They're better than one of them devil wagons on a night like this." That was what Simon called automobiles.

They were soon to witness a demonstration of the truth of this remark, for a little farther along the road they came suddenly upon a dark mass. It proved to be the wreck of an auto, which had run into a tree by the roadside. It was utterly demolished, a jumbled heap of metal crunched up like paper. It had a ghastly look, outlined as it was, in the thick fog. It looked grotesque, like a picture without a background. It seemed the more grim and tragic because there was no human figure near it, dead or living.

To Pee-wee, subdued for once by the strangeness and perils of this impenetrable waste, the lonely ruined car seemed like some pathetic wreck on the desolate ocean.

Now and again the lumbering oxen, heedless of the width of their grotesque load, swaggered far enough to left or right to cause it to graze a tree, and more than once the gala caravan was in danger of being cut in two another way, the hay wagon and the superstructure going their separate ways thenceforth.

One other interesting and rather startling thing they saw on this part of their journey. Suddenly out of the fog before them loomed a figure with a cane. He was walking quite briskly and tapping the while with this companionable stick. From the pack on his back he seemed to be a peddler, and he was evidently stone-blind. He stepped nimbly out of the way of the oxen and spoke cheerily as he passed.

“Good evening, gentlemen,” he said; “a little misty, eh?” Then he was gone, enveloped in the fog again. But they could hear his cane tapping as it occasionally struck a stone. It seemed spooky, how he hiked along not the least embarrassed by the fog and apparently with no knowledge of its density. It impressed Pee-wee the same as if he had seen someone walking on water.

CHAPTER XXI

EVERY WHICH WAY

At last they came to a cross-road and turned to the right. Simon believed that this would bring them into the hill road again. And so it would have if it had gone straight. It was odd how this familiar road, where he had gone black-berrying many a time, had not one familiar thing about it now. He did not know it for a road that he had traveled over every time that he had gone to the creamery. Nor could either he or Pee-wee see how it curved gradually.

Thus it brought them to another road which they thought was the hill road. After they had gone a mile or so on this they realized that it was not. The first cross-road had curved around till it was parallel with the hill road; it was no longer a cross-road. Thus when it crossed another road the boys thought this was the main road and would take them straight home.

In point of fact it was just another cross-road. Soon an unfamiliar house informed Simon that they were not on the main road. They were not as badly off as he thought they were, but he did not know this. A fog is a very funny thing and plays strange pranks with one in one's own neighborhood.

"We're lost," Simon said, stopping the oxen and looking perplexed.

"Wait till I look at my compass," Pee-wee said.

Extracting this from where it had been dangling in the folds of limp, wet bunting, Pee-wee found to his consternation that already the cheap tin case had little specks of fresh rust on it. And worse than that the paper dial within curled up like a dried leaf. The all-pervading, insinuating fog seemed to have penetrated even this trusty little guide. With the aid of his trusty flashlight, Pee-wee saw the havoc wrought upon the delicately balanced needle. The glue behind the dial had melted and oozed up and gummed the pivot. Even the magnetic pole (which Pee-wee had always regarded as his friend, and which showed him the way home from school) was helpless now, or thoroughly embarrassed by glue.

"Wait till I hold up my finger," Pee-wee said.

He held up his finger, but even his potent imagination could not fancy the wind blowing from any particular quarter. There was no wind, only a clammy, stifling calm. And if there had been any wind it is hard to say how that would have helped him.

Simon was disinclined to try to turn their lumbering caravan in that narrow road, particularly since one direction seemed as good as another now.

"We'll just keep going," he said, "and maybe we'll come to some house or

something that I know. It must be late because I'm getting hungry."

"It's about—it's—it's twenty minutes to nine," Pee-wee said. "That's what it is by my appetite." He could tell time at least and that was fortunate.

"If there wasn't a fog I could tell the way home by the stars," Pee-wee announced.

"If there wasn't a fog I could get home without looking at the stars," said simple Simon.

"You're supposed to go by the stars if you're a scout," Pee-wee said disdainfully.

"What are you supposed to go by in a fog?" Simon asked innocently.

Pee-wee thought for a moment, then "handled" the situation. "They're *supposed* to get lost," he said; "you have to get lost sometimes. Gee whiz, what's the good of being a scout if you don't?"

This seemed to convince Simon for he said no more. If getting lost was indeed part of the game, Pee-wee was running true to the scout program, for he was lost with a vengeance. Not a scout sign was there to help him, nor were any of the tried and true wrinkles of the least avail in that damp, enshrouding waste.

Neither one of our doughty adventurers had the slightest idea where they were. They paused at another cross-road and Pee-wee made a vain search for moss, but it had all gone to bed. He ventured a few yards from the road in quest of a woodchuck hole for he knew that woodchucks always burrowed in a southerly direction. But the woodchucks seemed all to have taken their burrows in on account of the dampness.

He did find one hole near the roadside which went straight down, and this seemed to reflect on the well-known sagacity of the woodchuck, until Simon lifted the reproach from that lowly creature by proving that the hole had been made for the accommodation of a fence post. The well known characteristic of fence posts of standing upright, settled the matter once and for all.

"If there were beavers here I could tell," said Pee-wee.

They turned into this side road and continued going; there seemed nothing else to do. They were in a strange world and there was nothing to give them the least clue as to where they were. The oxen seemed willing enough to take any road; they had no theories or prejudices.

"We're somewhere," Pee-wee said, "that's sure." This seemed probable enough but the knowledge was not hopeful or reassuring....

CHAPTER XXII AT THE CROSS-ROAD

Suddenly there was the railroad track crossing the road almost under their feet.

"Now I know where we are," Pee-wee shouted in an inspired burst of wisdom. "*We're at the railroad!*"

There was no denying this and Simon was silent. He was doubtless struck speechless by Pee-wee's power of deduction.

"*It's the railroad, it's the railroad!*" he shouted, "and this is the cross-road that goes up to the house. Gee whiz, we had a lot of fun, didn't we?" So far as he was concerned they were home already. It was all over but the shouting. And the shouting had already begun. "Safety first," he vociferated; "wait a minute, I can tell if there's a train coming; I know a way."

"The train must have gone by two hours ago," Simon said.

"I don't care, I can tell if there's one coming," Pee-wee said. "Don't cross the tracks yet!"

He climbed down and went and held his ear to one of the rails. "*There is, there is!*" he shouted. "It's about five miles away!"

Simon went and listened and sure enough, there was a faint, metallic rumble.

"That's a scout trick," Pee-wee shouted.

"It must be two hours past train time," Simon said.

"The train's late," Pee-wee said. "Do you mean to tell me scout signs aren't better than the Drierie Railroad?"

If, indeed, this telegraphic voice heralded the approach of the train, why then the train was almost late enough to meet itself coming back the next morning. Anything was possible on the Drierie Railroad.

For a few moments Simon was perplexed. He was not even sure that the road was the one which passed the farm. The fog was so thick that he could not see ten feet about him. It seemed almost as if he could scoop a handful of the thick stuff and leave a hole where he had taken it from. By a careful exploration of the locality, however, he made certain that the road was indeed the one which crossed the main road as well as the farm. But such was his confusion that he did not know whether they were headed for the farm or away from it. It was odd how he could be so completely bewildered with the tracks right there before him. But that is an invariable feature of being lost in a fog.

"Which way is the train coming?" he asked Pee-wee.

“From that way,” Pee-wee said. But since they did not know whether, “that way” was north or south, they were no wiser than before. Yet it was not quite so bad as that either, for in a moment Simon realized that if the train came from the direction Pee-wee said it was coming from, then they were headed in the right direction. They had only to proceed away from the tracks on the left-hand side of the train and their troubles would soon be over.

Pee-wee wished to do this at once. But it was very good that they did not. He afterwards said that he was lucky—in not having his own way. Simon insisted on waiting for the train and seeing with his eyes which direction it came from. On the supposition that Pee-wee was right, however, he did consent to drive the oxen across the tracks so as to be ready to set forth as soon as the train had passed. The oxen beguiled the time of waiting by eating grass along the roadside and thus pulled the festive caravan to a diagonal position on the road.

CHAPTER XXIII

EN ROUTE

Along the lonely Snailsdale branch of the Drierie Railroad crawled the five forty-two, three hours and fifty-seven minutes late. It rumbled and jerked along, unashamed. The smoke which poured out of the funny old bulging smoke-stack was instantly swallowed in the thicker fog; it could be seen only as a kind of restless mass at its point of issuance from the stack.

The old kerosene headlight, standing out before the boiler on its primitive bracket, broke the compact whiteness for only a yard or two and even to that distance the engineer's concentrated, searching gaze was embarrassed by the mist which seemed waiting, eager to condense again. It must have seemed odd to the cautious engineer that his locomotive could be forever moving into this solid mass without any noise of the collision. He was a substitute that night, and he hoped never, never again to be given a run in that region which wore a snowy death shroud.

The little, stubby train rattled slowly past Hickson Crossing, never, stopping. The engineer did not see the shed. It passed Hawley's, too, then backed up to it. Here it was necessary to set a freight case down on the platform and the engineer improved the time of waiting by wiping off the glass and the reflector of his headlight. The murky atmosphere prevented the little chimney from drawing and the interior of the headlight was as black as the fog was white. When the train left Hawley's it was four hours and two minutes late and still gaining—in lateness.

Within the single passenger car was a scene like unto the harrowing scenes in starving Russia. All oblivious to this, Hink the conductor sat at the end of the car, his feet sprawled upon the reversed seat in front of him, unconscious of the groans of anguish, sweetly ignorant of threats and sighs, and imprecations, wrapped in the innocent slumber which shielded his senses from the mumbled profanity which filled the air and could not get out because the windows stuck and would not open. He had not awakened at Hickson Crossing because the train forgot to stop there, but at Hawley's he had awakened, attended to his brief duties and gone to sleep again. He had a way of awakening automatically whenever the train stopped. It seemed as if there might have been a wire connected with him.

Striding back and forth in the uncarpeted aisle, like a restless lion in its cage, was a distinguished looking elderly man wearing gold spectacles. He was the very picture of physical impatience and pent up wrath. This was Mr. A.

Pylor Koyn, head of the firm of Koyn & Minter and he was not accustomed to being delayed, much less starved.

“This is without exception positively the most outrageous thing I have ever known,” he said, addressing everybody, apparently. “I’ve been in this crawling dungeon for over five hours. First it was a hot box, then it was a broken coupling, now it’s a fog. Next it will be a flood, I suppose.”

“The more the merrier, boss,” said a young fellow who was playing cards with another young fellow. “It’s all in the game. Anything for adventure; here’s where I trump your ace of diamonds. Right.”

“I’d give fifty bucks for a cheese sandwich,” said his companion, throwing a card on the board.

“I’ve given up all hope of eating,” said Mr. A. Pylor Koyn.

“It’s most exasperating,” said a lady who was seated with a young girl, evidently her daughter.

“Oh, I think it’s fun,” said the girl.

“Dis you call vun?” vociferated a young man with long hair. He was just reaching for a violin case in the rack above him in the persistent hope that the next station would be his. Seventeen times, when the train had stopped with apparently not the slightest reason, had he reached for that coffin-like case, only to leave it where it was, his hopes dashed. But still he hoped.

“Dis, you call dis fest drrevels in America,” he said. “Dere is going to be do-night ah dance I should miss it?”

“Give us a tune, Trotsky,” called a young West Pointer who was sitting on a seat arm watching the card game.

“It’s just like camping,” said the young girl, merrily.

“I almost feel I would prefer camping to this,” said her mother, with good-humored resignation.

“*Anything* would be better than this,” ejaculated Mr. A. Pylor Koyn. “The grave would be better than this. I come into the country for a few days’ rest and quiet, and simple, wholesome food, and here I am starving! Not a bite to eat since we left Skinner City. Fresh air! Why it’s worse than the subway in here. I’ll suffocate if this keeps on. Not a drop of water in the cooler! This is awful—simply awful. Ten minutes more and I’ll get out and walk.”

“I’d have gotten out half an hour ago if it wasn’t for the fog,” said the young officer. “Stepping out of this train here would be like stepping out of a submarine.”

“No submarine was ever like this,” said one of the young card players, cheerily.

“I could go to Philadelphia and back—” began Mr. Koyn.

“They can’t stop the fog,” reasoned the other card player.

“They can stop broken couplings and hot boxes and they can have lights on

their locomotives instead of kitchen lamps,” Mr. Koyn blustered.

“They might at least have the windows so they would open,” said the lady.

“Absolutely,” said one of the young card players, intent on his game; “then some of the fog could get in and there’d be less of it outside and we could get along faster. Good idea.”

“I intend to get out at the next station,” said Mr. A. Pylor Koyn, in the manner of delivering an ultimatum. “There is a limit to human patience. Where there’s a station there must be a house of some sort and I’ll get in if it has a door. *I am going to get out of this at the next station!*” “So am I,” said the young officer; “the next is Snailsdale Manor.”

“We’re all with you, Cap,” said one of the card players to the irate Mr. Koyn.

“Oh, I just hope we don’t get there,” said the girl. “It’s just like travelling across the desert fifty years ago. I think it’s romantic.”

“I’m glad there are tracks under us,” said the young officer.

“Don’t say anything, they might break or disappear,” said one of the young fellows.

The conversation lagged. The card game went on. The young Russian seemed ready to reach for his miniature coffin at the least jerk. Mr. A. Pylor Koyn continued striding back and forth in the aisle. Conductor Hink slept.

Suddenly the rumbling was more clamorous, the front car bunched against the engine, the second car bunched against the first car, the stubby little train seemed trying to hold itself back and A. Pylor Koyn lost his balance and nearly fell over the lap of the young Russian who was reaching for his violin case.

“At last! Thank Heaven!” said the lady.

“Too good to be true,” said the young officer.

“Your deal,” said one of the card players unperturbed.

Just then, Hink, the conductor, arose with a start. He had never been known to fail to rouse himself at the right moment.

“*Snailsdale Manor!*” he called. “*A-a-a-l-l out for Snailsdale Manor!*”

CHAPTER XXIV SIDE-TRACKED

Out of the window of the locomotive projected the head of the substitute engineer. There was the frown of concentration on his countenance; his eyes were half closed in a studious but vain effort to penetrate the solid whiteness. He could not even see the smoke-stack. He craned his neck and kept his hand on the throttle. Just ahead of the locomotive travelled a small illusive area of illuminated mist. This was the best that the primitive old headlight could do.

Suddenly, within that small moving area, like printing in the weakly brightened circle of a toy magic lantern, appeared the end of a word and the whole of another word. The first part of the first word was evidently outside the little area of dusky light. The printing within the compass of brightness read:

DALE MANOR

The letters G-O-O-D preceding the dale, and the word FARM, following the word MANOR were not visible to mortal eye. Nothing was visible to mortal eye but a dim, unsubstantial mass, and those hovering, dusky, uncertain words DALE MANOR.

But they were enough. The beginning and the end, nestling coyly in the fog, were not necessary to inform the substitute engineer that Snailsdale Manor was proclaiming itself. It was at that moment that the throttle was pulled with desperate suddenness and Mr. Pylor Koyn went reeling into the arms of Clamordinevich Vociferinski just as he was reaching for his little black coffin. And it was in that same moment that Hink, the conductor, sprang out of his slumber and yawned sleepily.

“Snailsdale Manor! A-a-a-l-l out for Snailsdale Manor!”

And there you are. Out of the train strode A. Pylor Koyn carrying two suitcases. He was followed by C. Vociferinski, who was followed by Mrs. Gamer, who was followed by her adventurous daughter, Pocahontas Gamer.

Behind these, striding with arrowlike military carriage, followed Chester (alias Chesty) Marshall; and ambling leisurely behind him as if they really did not care where they were going or whether they got out or not, came the “two perfectly lovely fellows” of Hydome University, with whom it is the author’s pleasure to make you acquainted—Fuller Bullson and Raysor Rackette. Their manner suggested a willingness to follow, whether it be to the wilds of Africa or the North Pole; a kind of whimsical half interest in anything which might

involve piquant adventures.

“I have a hunch that things are not what they seem,” said Raysor Rackette; “I heard there was a house here. The plot grows thicker.”

“Silence,” said Fuller Bullson, “’tis the fog that is thick, also, methinks, thine own head. Have you got the fishing tackle?”

“This is a different manner of Snailsdale Manor than I expected,” said Raysor; “I see no church. This is not my beloved Snailsdale; ’tis a plot.”

“All the better,” said Fuller Bullson.

“Diss iss not so motch villatch,” said Vociferinski.

“Right the first time, Trotsky,” said Fuller. “Feel around and you’ll find it; it’s just mislaid.”

“Are you sure you are not leading us astray, Cap?” Raysor asked of A. Pylor Koyn who had just stepped out into the mud.

“I will not turn back!” thundered A. Pylor Koyn. “I presume this is Snailsdale Manor, but in any case I will not turn back. If anybody can show me a house with a roof on it and something to eat inside it I will thank him. I’ve had enough of this! Where is the bus that was supposed to be here?”

“Look under the train,” said Chesty Marshall.

“It is not there,” said Fuller Bullson.

“Then we’ll walk!” said A. Pylor Koyn.

“We’re with you,” said Raysor Rackette.

By that time our suffering victims were assembled in a little group in the mud. The train was rumbling slowly away. Hink, the conductor, was continuing the dream that was appearing serially in his mind, punctuated by the stations.

“I understood that a bus from the Snailsdale House would be here,” said A. Pylor Koyn.

“Misfortunes seem to pile on us,” said Mrs. Gamer, almost at the point of despair. “We can never walk through this mud, and besides we don’t know *where* to walk.”

“All the better,” said Fuller Bullson; “we can’t go wrong if we don’t care where we go; my mother taught me that.”

“I wish *my* mother had,” said Pocahontas. “Mistakes are only in the imagination,” said Raysor; “there is really no such thing as a mistake. It’s a mistake to suppose that there is.”

“Right you are, Ray,” said his friend. “The trouble with most people is they’re always wanting to go to some particular place. And see the trouble they get in. One place is as good as another if not better.”

“Diss it is what you call *no blase*,” said Vociferinski.

“Better still,” said Fuller.

“If anybody can show me a house with a roof on it and something to eat

inside it—” said A. Pylor Koyn, in a grim tone of wrath and despair.

He never finished uttering this altogether liberal offer to the world. For out of the depths of the fog arose a voice like a siren calling out of the tempestuous ocean.

“I know a house with a roof on it and it’s got lots of food inside of it and you can have a dipper of milk whenever you want it and they’re going to kill a pig next week and they always have ice cream on Sundays, because I turn the freezer and they always have two helpings of dessert!”

“Hark,” said Fuller Bullson, “methinks I hear you calling me.”

“*It’s a wagon!*” said Miss Pocahontas Gamer. “Look!”

“It’s got a roof because I can prove it, because here’s a shingle, and we’ll take you right there!” thundered the voice. “This isn’t Snailsdale Manor, it isn’t any station at all, but anyway this wagon goes to Goodale Manor Farm and it’s a kind of a station and a bus all kind of rolled into one and maybe even a station that isn’t a station is better than one that is. *All aboard for Goodale Manor Farm!* You get fresh eggs and milk and two desserts and a roof too! All aboard for Goodale Manor Farm!”

CHAPTER XXV PEE-WEE'S LUCK

"Oh, just look, there's a team of oxen!" said Miss Pocahontas Gamer; "isn't it nice and primitive? And look at the *boy*! He's got streamers all over his head! Oh, he looks like a circus clown."

"I'm a boy scout," said Pee-wee with withering scorn.

A closer approach to the dismantled and hapless float revealed the awful truth to the bewildered little party. There, upon the primitive fender above one of the wheels, sat Scout Harris dangling his legs, the picture of rakish abandonment. His festal array looked like some tattered emblem of warfare. His gala turban had utterly collapsed like some unsubstantial house, and his small shoulders supported the patriotic and romantic ruin. All about him hung limp and faded bunting. Poor Simon seemed to confess his utter inability to cope with the occasion and sat contemplating the party with a kind of bashful, amused and slightly frightened smile.

"Leave them to me, I'll handle them," Pee-wee whispered.

"Good evening, Scout," said Fuller; "or perhaps I should say *to-morrow morning*. Whence comest thou? You look like the end of a perfect day."

"I comest whither," shouted Pee-wee, "or something kind of like that; anyway I bet I don't care about where I go as much as you do, because scouts are supposed to be—kind of wild and reckless. We're on our way home from the parade."

"Are we to understand that this is not Snailsdale Manor?" asked Mr. Pylor Koyn.

"It's better than Snailsdale Manor," said Pee-wee; "and we'll take you to a better place than any of the houses up there. This sign up on top tells you about the place; it's named Goodale Manor Farm and there are rattlesnakes there and everything."

"Oh mercy!" said Mrs. Gamer.

"But I killed him," Pee-wee reassured her.

"This is beginning to look good," said Fuller Bullson; "this is more than I expected. How slow do those oxen go? We're accustomed to three miles an hour."

"They can go even slower than that," Pee-wee boasted.

"Say no more, we're with you," said Raysor Rackette, jumping onto the fender beside Pee-wee. "How about you, Cap?" he added, rather ruffling the dignity of A. Pylor Koyn. "Will you take a chance with Good-for-nothing

Manor Farm? Come ahead, be a sport. How about you ladies? How about you, Trotsky?"

"I go to diss blase anyvares to lay my head," said Vociferinski.

"That's the way to shout," said Fuller; "hop up; you can't go wrong. Help the ladies up, Ray. We can eat the shingles if there isn't anything else there. And if you forget to stop at the house when you come to it, Scout, it won't make any difference. We'll just go on till we come to the next one. Step inside, Cap, yours is the seat of honor. That empty grocery box was just made for you."

"I want to sit outside on the fender," said Miss Pocahontas Gamer.

"You'll fall off," Pee-wee warned her.

"I won't do anything of the kind," she said; "how about yourself?"

"I'm a boy," Pee-wee said.

"Well, you're not a very big one," said she.

With much amusement (amid which even Mr. A. Pylor Koyn's dignity weakened) the party climbed aboard Pee-wee's vanquished chariot. Mr. Koyn, Mrs. Gamer and the young Russian sat on the camp stools and grocery boxes inside, and the three young fellows with Miss Pocahontas dangled their legs from two of the old curved wooden fenders of the hay-rig.

Thus it befell that while Miss Hope Stillmore was getting ready for her surprise attack on West Point, and preparing an overwhelming assault upon the "two perfectly lovely fellows," these weary but undaunted vacationists were on their way to the peaceful scenes she had deserted.

While she buckled on her little pumps in anticipation of Russian music and dances, Clamordinevich Vociferinski was seated on an empty soap box (as if soap were a kind of emblem of his native land) with his little black coffin across his knees, en route for Goodale Manor Farm. While she was still dreaming of a proud acquaintance with the wealthy and fashionable Koyns, A. Pylor himself was being shaken up in the very float to which she had proven faithless! While the bus waited patiently at Snailsdale Manor, Scout Harris had emptied the train at Mr. Goodale's lonely cross-roads.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE TWO PERFECTLY LOVELY FELLOWS

Before they had gone far it developed that young Fuller Bullson and his friend, Raysor Rackette, were born for the sake of Pee-wee, notwithstanding that they had been born some years before our hero's advent on earth. They were exponents of the very type of adventure which Pee-wee had invented.

According to their account they gloried in not knowing where they were at. Indeed they were somewhat in advance of Pee-wee, for while he used moss and the gentle breeze to guide him, they used just nothing at all. A compass they regarded as superfluous, since they did not care in which direction they went.

"Trails we don't care about," said Ray Rackette, "because most of them go somewhere. The ideal trail is one that goes around in a circle and doesn't go anywhere."

"Like the equator," said Fuller.

"The equator is good," said Ray; "so's the tropic of Cancer."

"How can you follow the equator when you can't see it?" Pee-wee demanded.

"All the more fun," said Fuller; "if you don't see it, it doesn't worry you."

It was very amusing to see these two sitting side by side on the fender, dangling their legs, with apparently not the slightest curiosity about where they were going.

"That's one thing I don't like about the Earth," said Ray; "it travels in an orbit; you know just where you're going. Otherwise I like it."

"Oh, the Earth isn't so bad," said Fuller. "You're crazy!" Pee-wee shouted. "Railroads go to places; everything goes to places. You have to know where you're going."

"No you don't, Scout," said Fuller in a way of thoughtful consideration. "The way we go on a vacation is the best way. How about that, Ray?"

"Absolutely," said Ray.

"Now at Hydome this is the way we do when vacation comes around," said Fuller. "The first thing we do is to throw ourselves off the track. Let me explain to you. We decide that we want to go somewhere—"

"*There*, now you see!" Pee-wee said. "You admit—"

"Just a minute, Scout. We decide that we want to go *away*. That is the only place we have in mind. We next go down to the railroad station in Hydome. In the ticket office is a ticket agent. Behind the ticket agent are a lot of pigeon-

holes all full of tickets. I was born on the sixth of the month and Ray here was born on the seventh. That makes thirteen, an unlucky number—”

“I was born the day before the Fourth of July,” Pee-wee vociferated.

“So we count six pigeon-holes to the right and then seven pigeon-holes down,” Fuller continued. “Then we say to the ticket agent, ‘Sir, we would like two tickets out of that pigeon-hole.’ The idea is not original, it was derived from the grab-bag. Then follows an altercation with the ticket agent, but in the end we triumph.”

“Like me, I always triumph,” said Pee-wee.

“We then look at our tickets to see where we are going. Sometimes we count three across and ten down so as to change our destination. Only the numbers must make thirteen or else we won’t have any bad luck. Last summer we went to a little village in— Where was it, Ray?”

“Don’t ask me,” said Ray.

“Well, it was somewhere,” said Fuller; “we found that out later. When we got out at the station we started up the road and stopped at the *third* house we came to—we always do that. But this summer we took the Drierie’s summer resort book after we had discovered that we were going to Snailback Impoliteness or whatever you call it and we turned to Snailback and went over the ads. counting *eenie, meenie, minee, mo*, and *mo* landed us at the Snailback House.

“So here we are, on our way to Good-for-nothing farm. Everything happens as it should, only different. Summer before last we got off at—oh, what was the name of that place in Wisconsin where we tried to follow the shore of a lake because somebody said that when you’re lost it’s always best to follow water? We came out just where we started. There was good fishing there. I don’t know whether the lake had any name or not.”

“You’re supposed to follow the *streams*,” Pee-wee said contemptuously.

“Yes, but you see, Scout, we’re fond of going around together so we followed the shore of the lake. We got the idea from a barrel-hoop.”

“You’re crazy,” Pee-wee informed them, “but just the same I like you.”

“Thanks awfully Scout, we’re crazy about *you*.”

Pee-wee had up to this time cautiously refrained from mentioning Hope Stillmore for fear that on hearing of her, the party (and especially the two perfectly lovely fellows) would still wish to go to the Snailsdale House. But now that they were almost at the farm he spoke rather freely, and rather untactfully.

“Anyway, will you stay at the farm?” he asked. “Because, gee whiz, it’s a dandy place and there was a girl there named Hope Stillmore and she was partners with me making this float and we were going in the parade up at Snailsdale and then all of a sudden a feller by the name of Braggen came and

got her away, but anyway I punched a hole in his straw-hat for him—”

“Great!” said Ray.

“Bully for you!” said Fuller.

“You don’t even know him,” said Pee-wee.

“We hate him without knowing him,” said Ray.

“And when he told her that you were coming up to the Snailsdale House, and all these people but especially you, do you know what she did? She made her mother go up to the Snailsdale House, because she’s so crazy about fellers and dancing and all that, and West Point uniforms but, gee whiz, I’ve got a scout uniform and that’s just as much of a uniform as a West Point uniform, isn’t it?”

“Positively,” laughed Chesty Marshall; “more so.”

“So I say we all stick together,” Pee-wee continued enthusiastically, “and stay at the farm and that’ll serve her right and then she’ll wish she was back again because, gee whiz, I can see she’d like you a lot. Anyway I have to admit she’s pretty. But, gee, she didn’t have a right to go back on me when she was my pal, did she?”

“She was horrid,” said Pocahontas Gamer.

“Scout,” said Fuller Bullson, “they’re all alike.”

“They’re not!” said Pocahontas Gamer; “I don’t care anything about you and your dancing, *so there.*”

“We get you,” said Ray; “I mean they’re all alike only different.”

“So you will stay?” Pee-wee asked excitedly. “And we’ll kind of have a conspiracy and—”

“Scout, we’re with you to the death,” said Fuller Bullson.

“*Hssh,*” Ray whispered to Pee-wee; “the old fellow inside is worth a barrel of money; his name is Koyn and he wears a check suit—and all the checks are certified. He’s very high and mighty. *Shh,* he’s going to buy the Drierie Railroad and close it up. If the farm strikes him right, we’ll hold him up and make him come across with a brass band. His whole family is coming up.

“We’ll pull off a couple of pink teas and have a barn dance and make Trotsky in there play his fiddle and we’ll have Stillwater Hopeless asking for an armistice inside of a week. It’s all over but the shouting, Scout. Goodmere Farm is the best place I’ve never seen. Goodyear tires may be the *best in the long run* but Good-bye Farm, or whatever you call it, is the best in the long walk. *Shh.* I’m glad you confided in us, Scout. And you can see the advantage of not knowing where you’re going to.”

“And—and if you start out again like that,” Pee-wee asked excitedly, “and get tickets that way, can I go with you? No matter how far it is?”

“Absolutely,” said Fuller Bullson.

CHAPTER XXVII THE LAST LAUGH

Goodale Manor Farm was discovered at last. "I discovered it," Pee-wee said. Whether this was true or not, he certainly led the first band of pilgrims thither. And this was the beginning of wonderful things. "Now you can see how good it was that I built a float and joined the parade and didn't get the prize and got lost in the fog," he said.

Mrs. Gamer said that the farm was the most delightfully picturesque spot she had ever seen. Her daughter, who was a camp-fire girl, found endless pleasure in its surrounding woods. As for Trotsky, who had lately come from abroad, he thought there was more food at the farm than in the whole length and breadth of Russia.

Fuller Bullson and Ray Rackette said it was a fine place to start from in going somewhere else, but as there was no station with pigeon-holes in the neighborhood, they seemed content to remain awhile. Pee-wee and they became fast friends.

As for Mr. A. Pylor Koyn he found the spot to be so restful to his tired nerves that he straightway undertook to arrange matters so that all hands might remain. To this end he strolled up to the next farm where there was a 'phone and talked with Mr. Skimper of the Snailsdale House.

Mr. Skimper said that he could very easily fill the rooms which had been held, by a party of old ladies who were willing to pay the highest prices for accommodations at a house where they could have absolute rest and quiet. Mr. Skimper had assured them that rest and quiet were the middle names of his establishment.

The old ladies, it seemed, were already in possession and a new rule established that all lights must be extinguished at nine o'clock. Marooned upon this desert island, where stillness reigned as in the tomb, were Hope Stillmore and her mother. No one was there to beguile the dreary, silent hours but Everett Braggen, who had not even his straw hat to cheer and comfort him. At evening, in the parlor, the old ladies knitted, while Hope waited patiently for the welcome bedtime.

On the following Tuesday the semi-weekly *News* had an article which read:

GAY TIMES AT GOODALE FARM.

The farm of Asa Goodale has become a favorite resort with New

Yorkers. The picturesque spot is winning converts daily.

New arrivals there are Mr. Allbright Koyn, brother of the well known A. Pylor Koyn, and his son and daughter, Haverly Koyn, and Lotta Koyn, who motored up in their Dolls-Joyce car.

Plans are being made to win the tennis tournament. A dance is to be given on Saturday night. Mr. A. Pylor Koyn has engaged the Snailsdale Manor band for the occasion. Young folks enliven the place. Not a room is to be had at Goodale Farm; even the barn and several tents are being used to accommodate the guests.

This was a knockout blow to poor Hope. Before the evening of the dance arrived a hilarious party from Goodale Farm, which filled the big Dolls-Joyce car, rolled onto Snailsdale Green and cheered themselves hoarse, while Fuller Bullson and Raysor Rackette waltzed easily into the tennis finals, and drove the opposing team to cover. Pee-wee was so hoarse that he could not talk. "It serves her right," he said relentlessly.

Of course, Hope was invited to the dance but she was ashamed to go with Braggen in his little Ford. So she stayed at home and cried. She began to be very disagreeable to poor Braggen, as if he were in some way to blame. She also seemed to hold her poor mother responsible. She was not a good loser.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE OUTSIDER

Pee-wee was not magnanimous in victory. He regarded Hope Stillmore as a quitter and he had no use for quitters. He did not see much of her during the balance of the season. She and her mother did not return to the farm because there was no room there. Probably her pride would have kept her from going back in any case.

Once, when Pee-wee hiked up to Snailsdale Manor with Ray and Fuller for a raid upon the ice cream parlor, he saw her sitting alone on the lawn of the Snailsdale House, and she beckoned to him to come up. Perhaps she hoped that he would bring his companions. But the two soldiers of misfortune, as they called themselves, did not pause and Pee-wee went up alone.

"I'm sure it's very kind of you to come up and speak to poor me," she said.

"We're on our way to get sodas," said Pee-wee. "I suppose you told those two boys *terrible* things about me."

"I told them how you said they were lovely fellers," said Pee-wee.

"Oh, you *didn't* tell them *that!*"

"Sure I did."

"I just bet they think I'm horrid."

"They're great for having adventures," Pee-wee said, "and they have no use for quitters. Anyway they're having too much fun to bother with girls."

"I think it was very *rude* for you to just leave them that way. What will they *ever* think? I thought scouts were supposed to be so *very* polite."

"Didn't you call me?" Pee-wee said.

"Yes, but you just ran away and left them."

"I'll go and tell them that you want to see them," said Pee-wee, starting to go.

"Don't you do anything of the kind. But it would have been proper for you to have *asked* them to come up with you."

"If you want to meet them I'll tell them so," Pee-wee said relentlessly; "only I don't think they'll come up, because they stick up for me and they haven't got any use for you on account of you being a deserter. Gee whiz, those fellers have no use for deserters, that's one thing.

"But anyway I'm not mad at you. I bet you have to admit those fellers can play tennis. Everybody likes them, that's sure. Pocahontas Gamer, she's a camp-fire girl, down at our house, she says she likes them because they're reckless. They're pals with me, those fellers are, and do you know what we're

going to do next week? I bet you'll say we're crazy. We're going to hike to Westover, that's down beyond the Snailsdale branch, and we're going into the ticket office and we're going to point to one of the pigeon-holes where there are tickets and we're going to buy three tickets out of that pigeon-hole and then we're going to wherever those tickets say—even if it's to—to—to—the North Pole—we don't care, because we're happy-go-lucky, see?

“And when we get out at the station, do you know what we're going to do? I bet you don't know. We're going to go to the third house and stay there for a week. Because the way you have the most fun is not knowing where you're at—that's what they said. See? That's why you're not having any fun, because you know where you're at.

“You know how it is with scouts? When they go camping they're supposed not to take any stuff that they don't need, because it's a nuisance. And you're not supposed to carry a lot of plans in your brains either, because they weigh a lot and they're only in the way. That's what those fellows said. And, gee whiz, you can see they're right because if you're top heavy with a lot of ideas and plans and things in your head, that means you're more likely to tumble off cliffs and precipices and things, aren't you?

“That's what they said, those fellers. And my mother said I could go with them no matter how far it is. And we're going to stay a week when we get there only we don't know where, because destinations are a nuisance. Gee whiz, I'm never going to bother with those again. That's one thing I have no use for—destinations.”

Pee-wee seemed to have been completely converted to this new and novel theory of travel. He was resolved that never again would he know where he was going, if he could prevent it. He had even thrown away his compass (which was of no use anyway) and he studiously averted his gaze whenever he saw any moss near a tree.

“Do you hate destinations as much as you hate quitters?” Hope asked, rather wistfully.

“Destinations and quitters, those are the two things we have no use for,” he acknowledged with great alacrity. “And anyway you couldn't meet those fellers, because they haven't got any time. The only way anybody can ever meet them is to bunk into them; they're kind of sort of like comets. You can't meet them on purpose. Do you know what they're going to do now? They're going to count four stores from the green and then they're going in to ask for sodas. Even if it's a hay and feed store or the post office, they're going in to ask for sodas.”

“I think it's perfectly ridiculous,” said Hope; but all the while she seemed very curious about that pair of adventurers who had so captivated Pee-wee.

“Did you ever hear that time was made for slaves?” Pee-wee asked her.

“Well, places are made for slaves too, that’s what Ray and Fuller said. They have no use for places.”

“They must be very odd,” Hope said, with ill disguised interest.

“Anyway that’s best,” Pee-wee argued like the new disciple of a cause, “because if you hadn’t cared where you were you wouldn’t be here; you’d be down at the farm having a lot of fun, that’s one sure thing.”

This argument seemed rather to impress Hope. It made her homesick for the farm to talk with Pee-wee. She did not care so much now about the gay times there. She was thinking of Pee-wee and his unfailing joy in everything. She had planned to capture the “two perfectly lovely fellows” and instead Pee-wee had captured them. Apparently the “two perfectly lovely fellows” had not the least thought of her. And now she liked them all the more for that. She liked them because they were reckless and care free and happy-go-lucky. She began to realize that real fun consisted in doing the kind of things that they did.

She had had her chance to be an adventurer on a caravan and she had chosen another destination and lost out while the people down at Goodale Farm were having the time of their lives. Perhaps she began to see that if one cannot find fun in one place it is useless to search for it in another; that it is better to carry your fun with you, like Fuller Bullson and Raysor Rackette, and then it will be always handy when you want it. Don’t bother with ready-made fun, gotten up to sell, but make your own like Scout Harris.

Hope wished now that Pee-wee would remain a little longer and talk with her; it seemed so natural to hear him rattle on. She felt that she would just like to go exploring in the woods with him again. Most of all she felt that she would like to meet those two boon companions of his. She would like to tell them that their ideas were *just perfectly wonderful*. But that, of course, was out of the question, since these two never went anywhere on purpose. They could not be bothered doing that. She wondered if she would ever meet them....

Pee-wee caught up with his two friends near the green. They were on the point of counting four stores from the corner. It turned out to be a grocery store and they all filed in and seated themselves on three stools along the counter.

“We’re after soda,” said Fuller Bullson seriously.

“Soda?” said the proprietor. “Certainly.” He placed upon the counter three enormous boxes of washing soda.

“Stung,” said Fuller. “Carry these home, Scout, the joke is on us. Let’s try the third store beyond the second tree.”

They all filed soberly out, Pee-wee carrying the washing soda.

CHAPTER XXIX

THREE OF A KIND

The pigeon-holes in the station at Westover were not sufficiently numerous, nor varied in their contents, to send an aimless pilgrim to any great distance. Tickets for points along the main line and along the several branches were to be had there. By the grab-bag device one might find himself at the seashore or at some remote mountain hamlet. He could not go through to South Africa or to the island of Yap without change.

But this made no difference to Pee-wee. He included the heaven above and the earth beneath and the waters under the earth in his preparations. He was not going to take any chances of finding himself in the Klondike without snow shoes, so he devised a pair out of two old tennis rackets.

He built a camp-fire and got a huge tin can and stewed up an odorous concoction, following a recipe for mosquito dope which he had seen printed in a camping booklet. This was for use in the tropics. A scout must be prepared. It would probably have driven all the tropical pests to cover for it certainly drove all the Goodale guests in from the porch. They barricaded themselves in the sitting room and closed the windows.

Pee-wee seemed to go on the principle that the less junk he carried in his brain the more he should carry in his duffel bag and dangling from his person. This stuff was all thoroughly edited by his two friends on the momentous day of their departure, and when they started, Pee-wee carried with him nothing but thirty-five dollars and a safety-pin. With this latter his mother pinned the bills within his shirt for safe-keeping. By pulling his shirt out from his neck he could look down and see that his fortune was all right.

"It's too bad we know we're going to Westover, hey?" he said. "But, gee whiz, you've got to know *something* to get started, or we'd just kind of keep going round and round the house maybe, like you did at that lake."

"That's the idea," said Ray; "we leave all our plans and knowledge at the nearest station; from that point we go where the wind blows us."

"I can tell which way the wind is blowing," Pee-wee said.

"Don't, it would be fatal," said Fuller. "One little scrap of knowledge might spoil all."

"I've got a lot of little scraps," Pee-wee said; "but I won't bother with them, hey? I won't even look up at the stars because I can tell which way I'm going by the stars. I wouldn't look at the dipper—I wouldn't even look at it if I was lost and famished—that's the same as starving. Maybe we'll get into, way

into the woods, hey? Because up around Temple Camp if you count three houses, gee whiz, that might take you miles and miles and miles where the foot of white man never trod, it might. That's how far apart they are. Maybe when we get out at somewhere or other the third house will be a hermit's cave, hey? Gee whiz, you never can tell."

"That's the beauty of it," said Fuller Bullson. "I went on a bee-line hike," Pee-wee vociferated, keeping up a running fire of talk as he trudged along, straining a cautious look down his neck occasionally, "and we had to make a resolution to go straight, and gee whiz, that resolution was a nuisance, because we were all the time thinking about it."

"You should have left it home," said Ray.

"Gee, I'll never take one with me again," said Pee-wee.

"You see," said Fuller, "if you *are* lost you can't *get* lost. Can you?"

"*Sure* you can't," Pee-wee agreed enthusiastically.

"If you don't care where you go you can't go to the wrong place," said Ray. "Places aren't wrong or right. How can places be wrong or right?"

"Gee whiz, they can't," Pee-wee agreed. "Anybody can see that."

"A place can't be incorrect," said Fuller Bullson as if laying down a fundamental proposition. "What's another place? Why, it's the place you don't go to, that's all. Am I right?"

"*Sure* you are," vociferated Pee-wee.

"And if you go to it," said Ray, "why then the other place is the other place. So no place can be wrong. The mistake is in your head in wanting to go to a particular place when really there is no particular place. It's like the fountain of perpetual youth. You've heard of that, haven't you?"

"Maybe we'll find it, hey?" said Pee-wee, excitedly. "Gee, I hope we get to a station that's on the edge of a—a—a trackless wilderness. Don't you? Did you ever discover anything wonderful—by not knowing where you were going?"

"Positively, we discovered you," said Fuller.

"And you didn't know where you were going that night you discovered us," said Ray.

"That's a dandy argument," Pee-wee said. "Suppose—suppose we get to the edge, kind of, of a forest and there are no houses for—for fifty miles—"

"That's us," said Ray.

"Just keep going," said Fuller.

"One thing sure, I like you," said Pee-wee.

"Three of a kind," said Ray.

"Maybe it'll be a desert, hey?" Pee-wee suggested. "Gee, I kind of hope we land at a fishing village, only I like deserts, too. Suppose—suppose," he added in sudden terror. "Suppose we land at a school! But anyway I don't care,

because right near a school is usually a candy store and maybe it'll be the third house, hey? Because I'm always lucky, that's sure."

CHAPTER XXX

AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT

"Anyway," said Pee-wee, "I hope there are post cards where we go because I told Pocahontas Gamer I'd send her one. Gee whiz, I felt sorry for her because I knew she was just crazy to go on account of us having wild adventures. She said she envied me but I told her we might have to climb up mountains and things and, gee whiz, a girl couldn't do that.

"Anyway, I promised to send her a post card, and if the country is so wild that there aren't any post cards I'm going to take a picture with my pocket kodak and send it to her. One thing, I'd like to get a snapshot of a wildcat and send it to her—if we go where there are wildcats. Do you think we will?"

"I can't say," said Fuller, "but we may be able to trap a post card; the young ones are easy to catch. We'll be on the watch for them. They shall not escape us."

"That girl wishes she was a boy," Pee-wee said; "gee, I don't blame her. Because I told her maybe we'd get on a desert island or something like that, like Robinson Crusoe. That's one sure thing, *he* didn't know where he was at, did he? Neither did Columbus. That shows you're right. Trotsky said he wouldn't want to go because he had enough of starving. But, anyway, Mr. Koyn wanted to go only he's got rheumatism. If it wasn't for Lotta Koyn I bet Chesty Marshall would have wanted to go, because he likes adventures, only he likes her better. Girls aren't as good as adventures, are they?"

"Positively not," said Fuller.

"They're worse," said Ray.

"Anyway, one thing, you never know where you're at with them," said Pee-wee, thinking, perhaps, of his own bitter experience. "Anyway, one thing, I'd never be a quitter no matter what. I wouldn't care if—if—if—I was—was being chased by cannibals, I wouldn't."

The idea of hungry cannibals chasing Pee-wee, in the expectation of a square meal, seemed to amuse his friends.

"Are you going to send Miss Stillmore a post card?" Fuller asked him.

"I *am not!* I wouldn't bother with her. I'm not mad at her but I wouldn't bother with her and it serves her right being—being—*marooned*—with a lot of old ladies."

"I thought you liked being marooned," said Ray.

"On desert islands, I do," Pee-wee said; "but, gee whiz, not with old ladies. You bet it serves her right for—for saying you were lovely fellers—gee, I

don't say you're not dandy fellers, but anyway all she wanted was to meet fellers, and now she can't meet you and I'm glad of it. Do you hope we go where there's water or where there's mountains?"

"There you go," said Ray, "thinking about destinations. The place I want to go to is where there's the most fun and that's the little town of Anywhere."

"That's us," agreed Fuller. And then he hummed a little song which Pee-wee always afterward remembered:

I love, I love, the summer-time,
I love the winter drear;
But the time I love the best of all,
Is every day in the year.

I love, I love, a rainy day,
I love the sunshine, too;
But the things I love the best of all,
Are the things I happen to do.

"Let's hear you deny that," said Fuller.

"That's a peachy argument," Pee-wee said.

"If you don't like that time and that place you must be hard to please," said Ray.

"Gee whiz, I like it better than any other place, that's sure," said Pee-wee.

"We're the inventors of that time and place," said Fuller.

"I invented lots of things," Pee-wee said. "I invented that float."

Westover was some distance by the road, but not so far through the woods and across fields. It was on the main line and was quite a little town. It was not exactly a world centre but, as I said, its station facilities afforded good possibilities in the particular kind of lottery in which Ray and Fuller were interested.

"Who's going to ask?" Pee-wee inquired, his excitement and expectation mounting.

"I haven't the slightest idea," said Ray.

"Shall we say eenie, meenie, minee, mo?" suggested Fuller.

These magic words seemed to be their means of determining everything. "Those four words are better than the four points of the compass," Fuller explained; "because on a compass one way is right so the other three must be wrong. A compass is always three-quarters wrong. See?"

"Sure it is," said Pee-wee.

"But those four words are *all* right; one is as right as another."

"More so," said Ray. "The compass is not scientific."

“And they get all stuck up with glue, too,” Pee-wee said.

“Absolutely,” said Fuller. “If Columbus had said eenie, meenie, minee, mo, he might have discovered Columbus, Ohio, before he got through.”

So they chose their spokesman by those reliable words and the responsibility fell to Fuller Bullson.

In the ticket office of the Westover station sat a very sober looking young man, listening to the telegraph instrument.

“Maybe he’s getting a wire that his grandmother’s dead,” said Ray.

“He looks as if he had just been drafted,” said Fuller.

“Shh, I think he’s posing as a model for a tombstone,” said Ray.

“He looks like an accident on its way to happen,” said Fuller.

“Maybe he has to go to the dentist’s,” said Ray; “he looks like the middle of the night.”

For once Pee-wee was satisfied not to “handle” the situation. Fuller strolled aimlessly up to the ticket office and laid one elbow on the window in an offhand, companionable fashion.

“Good morning, it’s a beautiful afternoon, this evening,” said he.

“How’s that?” said the ticket agent.

“I said we’re having a lot of weather,” said Fuller. “Got any new tickets in?”

“What?” said the ticket agent.

“Your summer styles in tickets,” said Fuller.

“What do you want?” the ticket agent asked.

“We’re looking for some nice tickets,” said Fuller. “Have you any blue ones? A mixture of blue and pink would do.”

“Where do you want to go?” the ticket agent demanded, in the soberest manner.

“How do we know till we’ve seen the tickets?” said Fuller. “I’m not going to buy anything till I see what it is. I’ve been cheated before.”

“Quite right, Fuller,” said Ray; “safety last.”

“Do you want something or don’t you?” asked the ticket agent.

“You are right,” said Fuller.

“What?” demanded the ticket agent.

“What have you in tickets?” queried Fuller.

“What do you mean? Are you crazy?” asked the ticket agent, much nettled and with a face as sober as the grave.

Fuller studied the rack with great earnestness and then varied his usual formula of selection by saying eenie, meenie, minee, mo. “I’d like three nice tickets,” said he, “from the third pigeon-hole from the left side and one down from the top. Be careful not to soil them.”

“Where do you want to go?” thundered the young man, thoroughly

aroused.

“Do I have to tell you where I want to go?” said Fuller. “Did you ever hear of such a thing, Ray? Talk about personal questions!”

“Well, you’d better get out of here,” said the ticket agent.

“That is one place I’m *not* going,” said Fuller.

“You’re entirely right,” said Ray.

“I’ll call the constable,” said the agent.

“What for?” said Fuller. “I’m a cash customer and I ask for three tickets out of that rack. Will you sell them to me or not? I won’t tell you where I’m going.”

“You ought to go to the insane asylum,” said the ticket agent, subsiding somewhat.

“Don’t tell me where I ought to go,” said Fuller; “I won’t allow even myself to tell me that. Will you sell me the tickets or not? Three holes from the left and one down; that’s my order. I always have trouble with you ticket agents. Don’t you suppose I know what I want?”

“Quite right, Fuller,” said Ray.

“We’ve got a right to go to—to the Rocky Mountains if we want to,” Pee-wee piped up.

With an air of grim finality, as if washing his hands of all responsibility in the matter, the ticket agent reached around, took three tickets out of the pigeon-hole indicated and slapped them down in the worn hollow of the little window counter. At that moment Pee-wee wrenched open his shirt and frantically unpinned his sumptuous fortune. He hoped it would be enough.

“Ninety-three cents,” said the ticket agent, looking straight ahead of him, as if he scorned all connection with this thing.

“Ninety-three what?” demanded Pee-wee.

“Cents,” said the ticket agent, distantly.

“Thank you very much,” said Fuller, taking the tickets and paying the money.

“Is it—is it ninety-three cents *each*?” Pee-wee gasped, still hoping desperately.

“Thirty-one cents each,” said the ticket agent, still looking straight ahead of him and speaking like a mechanical doll.

“Where are we going to go? Where are we going to go?” Pee-wee whispered excitedly as they strolled away.

“We are going to have the time of our lives,” said Fuller.

“Yes, where?” Pee-wee demanded in a fever of suspense.

“We are going to Snailsdale Manor,” said Fuller Bullson.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE THIRD HOUSE

Pee-wee collapsed like a balloon. “*Snailsdale Manor?*” he gasped. “Are you sure he counted right?”

“Absolutely,” said Fuller, cheerily. “We’re in luck; we’re going to have our fun at rock bottom rates. That’s better than last summer, Ray. Fifteen dollars each was it? So far all is well, if not better. Cut rate adventure is my middle name.”

“It’s better than I expected,” said Ray, apparently not the least surprised or disappointed.

“We should not be carried away by our good fortune,” said Fuller; “things may go wrong yet.”

“What do you mean, *go wrong yet?*” Pee-wee thundered. “They did already, didn’t they? Gee whiz, I’ve been to Snailsdale Manor. What are we going to do when we get there? It’s a town! I’d like to know what we’re going to do there.”

“Shoot wildcats and send post cards down to the farm,” said Ray. “You might take a snapshot of the post office.”

“We can never get lost,” Pee-wee enunciated despairingly.

“We can have a lot of fun not getting lost,” said Ray.

“Absolutely,” said Fuller.

“That place is no good!” Pee-wee shouted. “I’d rather go back to the farm.”

“Scout,” said Fuller, “that is a historic spot; I’m glad we’re going there. Next to the Fiji Islands there’s no place I’d rather go to except Bronx Park. It’s the scene of Scout Harris’ famous battle with the Snailsdaliens. It’s where Braggen’s straw-hat was utterly destroyed—reduced to straws—like Reims Cathedral. We can visit the battle-ground. Do you know, Ray, the more I think of it the gladder I am that we’re going up to Snailsdale. I know I always said that one place is as good as another if not better, but Snailsdale is better still. Not getting lost, for instance; there’s an adventure for you, already.”

“Positively,” said Ray.

“Maybe in the very next pigeon-hole were tickets to Seiminole Glen,” said Pee-wee gloomily. “I heard Mr. Goodale say there is a cave there that nobody has ever penetrated.”

“We had a narrow escape,” said Fuller.

“Do you mean to tell me you’re *glad* we’re going to Snailsdale Manor?” Pee-wee demanded, in utter exasperation. “You said you were so crazy about

adventures! Gee *whiz!*”

“Scout,” said Fuller, “I said we didn’t care where we went. You know our motto. The fun is in your head—or else it isn’t. That ticket agent wouldn’t have any fun at a circus. Look at that girl pal of yours; she went after *something* and see what she got. We take what comes; we’re true to our colors. We’ve got that word disappointment bound hand and foot. We chased it back to the dictionary where it belongs. What do you know about adventures? Do you think they grow in the woods—on trees? Where I live a man was murdered in the back yard of a kindergarten.”

“It was a good murder, too,” said Ray.

“One of the best,” said Fuller. “Don’t talk to me about desert islands. You’ve got the wrong idea, Scout. Wherever you go is the best place. Now are you with us or not?”

Pee-wee was no quitter, but he was keenly disappointed and he showed it. He felt that he was deceived. The thing had not worked out at all. He would get a compass. He would not be caught in a trap like this again. He would know where he was going, always.

He could not understand how these two friends of his could be such good losers. But indeed they did not consider themselves losers. He did not see how they could be as cheerful and hopeful as if they were going into the Canadian Woods. They did not seem the least disappointed; they just did not care two cents. Pee-wee could never make out how much of their talk was serious, but their theory about travel and adventure was certainly standing the test.

“We are more important than adventures are, so we don’t go after them,” said Ray; “we make them come after us.”

They always agreed with each other, these two, and seemed to be perfectly at peace with chance and fate.

“Exactly so, Ray,” said Fuller; “and luck is always with us.”

“Never fails,” said Ray.

Pee-wee did not see how it could be otherwise since whatever happened was the thing they wanted. That was how they found out what they wanted. It was a game that could not be beaten. But poor Pee-wee felt beaten because he had hoped where they had not. He would not desert them, not he, but his spirits fell and he was glum and unresponsive.

“Scout,” said Fuller, “nobody knows where he is at or what he’s up against in this world. A friend of mine was wounded seven times in the World War, he escaped capture nine times, a bullet hit his suspender buckle instead of his heart, and he came home and got a splinter in his foot and died from blood-poisoning.”

“Do you call that an argument?” Pee-wee said contemptuously.

They sat on a baggage truck on the platform waiting for the train, Pee-wee

frowning and silent, the others talking gayly as if they were going hunting for big game in Africa.

“What can I tell Pocahontas Gamer I did at Snailsdale?” he demanded sullenly. “She’ll only laugh at me.”

“You haven’t come away from there yet,” said Ray; “we may be all killed in a railroad accident yet.”

“But we can’t count on it,” said Fuller; “the Snailsdale branch is so uncertain. Let’s see, we go back north, don’t we? All around the mulberry bush, hey?”

After a tiresome ride of about five minutes the main line train switched their car over to a siding at Woodsend Junction where the Snailsdale branch train picked it up some time later. In the fulness of time they made Hickson Crossing, then Hawley’s, then passed the road where the phantom station had hidden coyly in the fog, and were then on the home stretch for Snailsdale Manor. They were, in point of fact, nearer to the farm than they had been at Westover, but Ray and Fuller arose, stretched themselves, brushed off their clothing and glanced out of the car window as if they were beholding a strange and foreign scene. This greatly exasperated Pee-wee.

“This is a pleasant looking place,” said Fuller; “I hope the natives will prove friendly.”

“They’re nothing but a lot of porch lizards,” Pee-wee said.

“Good,” said Ray, “I was afraid there wouldn’t be any animals here at all.”

“I dare say we can find a seal if we go to the notary public’s office,” said Fuller.

“How about that, Scout?” queried Ray.

But Scout did not answer. He seemed to be thinking. Suddenly his voice arose like tropical thunder, “*Now you see!*” he said. “*It serves you right! It serves you right! The third house up the road is the Snailsdale House! So there!* You see those two houses? There isn’t another one till you get to the Snailsdale House and we’ve got to stay a whole week where there are a lot of old ladies! Now you see what you get for not knowing where we’re at. And that girl is there, too, and now she’ll meet you. *Now you see!* Now you see what you get for not having respect for destinations!”

CHAPTER XXXII

MAROONED

Scarcely had they stepped out of the train when they were approached by a shabby, unshaven man, who had evidently also just alighted. They had not seen him on the train. He took off an old felt hat when he addressed them, which gave an unpleasant impression of fear and surveillance. Perhaps Pee-wee did not notice this but it seemed to jar his friends. Pee-wee did, however, notice that the man's hair was very short; it seemed all bristly, as if it had been cropped and was just starting to grow out. Besides this, his nose was broken across the middle, which did not exactly improve his looks.

"Do yez know where Skimper's place is?" he asked in a hoarse voice.

"That's the Snailsdale House," Pee-wee said; "it's the third house up the road."

The man seemed to hesitate as if he did not know whether to ask more or not; he seemed rather bewildered. Then he backed away, with that same air of uncertainty and subservience. Perhaps Ray and Fuller would not have noticed this if he had not been attired so shabbily.

"Probably a tramp," said Ray.

Pee-wee was too disgruntled to say anything.

The three adventurers strode up the lawn, Pee-wee looking very sheepish. As for Fuller Bullson, he looked as if he were about to demand the surrender of a fortress. It was evening and the old ladies had retreated before the legion host of dew and dampness. But one solitary figure sat in a rocking chair on the porch. It reminded Pee-wee of his first meeting with Hope and of the adventurous episode of the rocking chair. Her little feet looked very dainty as she pushed the porch with her toes, and she seemed very lonesome.

"Oh, it's Walter," she ejaculated, appearing not to notice his two friends.

"These are my two new pals, Fuller Bullson and Raysor Rackette," Pee-wee said, "and we've come to stay here a week, because we got to because we kind of drew lots to come here."

Hope looked incredulously and inquiringly at Ray and Fuller.

"He is right, Miss Stillmore," said Fuller. "Strange as it may seem we're here because we're here. We bought three railroad tickets in Westover without looking at them first. We picked them at random. Then we counted the third house up the road and here we are. We're on a week's jaunt. Can you accommodate us?" Hope continued to stare from one to the other, incredulously.

“You have a nice place here,” said Ray, “trees, grass, sky and everything. We ought to be able to bat out some fun here. What do you say, Scout? Any people?”

“Nothing but a lot of poky old ladies,” said Hope; “and all they do is knit; it’s perfectly *dreadful*. The only boy that was here has gone—went yesterday. There’s absolutely *nothing* to do here. The old ladies are going Saturday and Mrs. Skimper is going to close the season. If you really want rooms there are *oceans* of them. Everybody has been going away. Mother and I are the last of our race. I suppose you’re having just *wonderful* times at the farm. I can’t see what you *ever* came away from there for.”

“You came away yourself, you know, Miss Stillmore,” said Ray.

It was not difficult to get board at the Snailsdale House then and the three adventurers engaged two rooms. Pee-wee had hoped that his companions would regret this ghastly enterprise and return to the farm with him. At heart he was quite as much a quitter as poor Hope had ever been. He felt that this horrible sequel of all his fine hopes and plans was no joke. Ray and Fuller on the contrary seemed to regard it as a fine joke.

Instead of talking about going home after supper they went into the sitting room and chatted with several ancient ladies who seemed immensely pleased with them. Hope seemed immensely pleased too.

The three rounded up a sweet old lady in a lace cap and pressed her into a card game, much to Pee-wee’s disgust. Fuller had the old lady for a partner and called her pard. She seemed greatly amused at the college adventures which he and Ray casually recited. Hope was confirmed in her originally unfounded conviction that the two were *perfectly lovely*.

Pee-wee looked at the pictures in a six months’ old magazine till he could not keep his eyes open, then went to bed. His friends still seemed to be having the time of their lives, and he could not understand this. He was resolved that he would go down to the farm in the morning. This crazy business had ceased to be a joke. That he himself had side-tracked the gayety from Skimper and should then go upon a great adventure and wind up at Skimper’s, seemed to him no joke at all.

“They’re crazy,” he said as he settled his head on his pillow. “If they think I’m going to stick around here for a week they’ve got another think. Gee whiz, I don’t call this having adventures. This place is dead and it doesn’t know it. I don’t care, I’m going home in the morning. If they think they can make a fool out of me, they can’t. That’s what I get for listening to them and not believing in destinations. They’re crazy, those fellers are. They needn’t think *I’m* going to stay here.”

Soon he fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXIII IN THE DEAD OF THE NIGHT

About two o'clock in the morning Pee-wee awoke and was conscious of the sound outside the house; a low, steady sound, as if someone might be tossing earth over. For a few moments he was puzzled as to what it was, then he decided that it sounded like digging.

He arose, crept to the window and looked out. In the grove at the edge of the lawn was a dark figure. It was moving up and down. As Pee-wee stared he could see a bright gleam now and then—the gleam of a shovel. While he looked the figure ceased, and Pee-wee trembled. Then the figure crept toward the house, paused as if listening, then returned to its work in the grove.

This was a strange business to be prosecuted with such apparent stealth in the dead of night. It was not so bad for a slow, dull, poky place like Skimper's. It seemed very much like Captain Kidd down there. Perhaps someone was burying a murdered victim. Pee-wee was much agitated and very curious. Again the figure crept toward the house as if to make certain that all was still there. Something of a very sinister nature was evidently going on.

Pee-wee tiptoed across the hall to the room of his friends and tapped on the door. They did not hear and he crept in.

"Get up," he whispered, shaking the slumbering Fuller; "get up, there's a dark figure digging in the grove and he's doing it in secret. Come and see for yourself. Gee whiz, something serious is happening. Come and look for yourselves."

"You're seeing things," Ray said drowsily.

"All right, you come and see," Pee-wee said.

They followed him to his window and looked out.

"He's digging for bait," whispered Ray.

"What makes him so afraid then?" Pee-wee whispered.

"Guess you're right, Scout," whispered Fuller.

"Let's sneak down; what do you say? Looks as if there might be something doing on the old plantation, huh?"

Pee-wee felt a little ashamed. Here, sure enough, was something in the nature of an adventure, and he suffered a little touch of remorse that he had thought and hinted about returning to the farm. He could not help admiring these two young fellows for their cheery habit of taking everything as it came. It made him feel just a little silly that he had dreamed of going miles away to some outlandish, unpeopled spot, in quest of adventure. Perhaps these two

young fellows were not so crazy after all....

“Just the thing, huh?” whispered Fuller.

“Looks pretty good to me,” whispered Ray.

One would have thought they were inspecting something with a view to buying it.

“May turn out to be a sort of job lot adventure after all, Ray,” said Fuller. “I haven’t had much experience in pirate stuff. Maybe he’s burying the fortune that he squeezed out of summer boarders.”

“What do you mean, job lot adventure?” Pee-wee demanded. “It’s a *real* adventure. Don’t you know a mystery when you see one? Adventures—they can happen *anywhere*.”

“Too bad you have to go home in the morning,” whispered Ray.

“Are we going to solve it?” Pee-wee demanded darkly. “Are we going to foil him?”

“Shall we foil him, Ray?” queried Fuller.

“It’s up to you, Fuller,” said Ray.

“Well then, I tell you what we’ll do,” Fuller said, as they left the window. “We’ll get dressed—”

“Good idea,” said Ray.

“And I’ll stroll down and ask him what he’s doing, and you come along while I’m talking to him. Scout, you’d better go back to bed so you can make an early start in the morning.”

“A—eh—a—what d’you mean—a scout is supposed to be helpful,” stammered Pee-wee.

“I know,” said Ray, “but this is only a thirty-one cent adventure. It’s really too cheap for you, Scout.”

“A scout—a scout—he’s supposed to be thrifty,” Pee-wee breathed excitedly; “he’s supposed to be economical. Thirty-one cent adventures are all right. What—what’s the use of wasting money?”

“He may be right at that,” said Ray reasonably.

“Oh, absolutely,” said Fuller.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE CLUE

If Hope Stillmore could have seen the old lady's partner at cards as he appeared creeping stealthily down the stairs in that still, dark hour, she would have laughed. For the girl was not without a sense of humor.

The three adventurers had dressed in a great hurry and in a sudden inspiration (as Pee-wee would have called it) Fuller had thrown a fancy table cover over his shoulder and drawn it in at the waist by a broken trunk strap (souvenir of the departed Braggens) which he had found in the room. He looked not unlike a Spanish bull fighter.

A scout is supposed to be not only economical, but cautious, and Pee-wee did not follow his two friends quite to the scene of excavation. He did not take his thirty-one cents' worth all at once, but prudently fell behind, taking about fifteen cents' worth. Fuller stepped up first, Ray presently joined him, and Pee-wee advanced as he gathered courage. One look at the stranger informed the three that he was the man they had seen at the station.



LIKE A FLASH OF LIGHTNING, FULLER REACHED FOR THE COAT.

“Digging for bait?” Fuller asked pleasantly.

The stranger seemed greatly disconcerted. “Yere, but I don’t find any,” he said.

“Maybe you’re digging too deep?” said Ray. “Anybody tell you that this is the only place to find bait?”

“I ain’t hurtin’ nobody, am I?” asked the man.

“No, but you’re trespassing,” said Fuller quietly. He glanced about, casually inspecting the immediate vicinity. He squinted his eyes at the tree under which they stood. Then he leaned against the tree in an offhand manner.

“I was wondering whether this nail in the tree meant anything to you,” he asked in a friendly way. Ray fancied that he could catch a certain unexpressed

meaning in his friend's tone. "Sometimes they mark spots where there is good bait," Fuller said. "You're a stranger in town, aren't you?"

"Am I doin' any harm?" the stranger asked, reaching for his coat that hung on a limb of the tree. Like a flash of lightning, Fuller reached for the coat, quickly went through the pockets in which he found nothing, then flung the coat in the man's face.

"The best thing for you to do is to get out of here double quick," he said briskly. "You're either an escaped convict or an ex-convict. Oh, you needn't be afraid, we haven't got anything on you. Only if you're caught here it might be bad for you. If there's any good fishing bait here we'll find it. Now get out of here, *quick*. There's a freight train leaving about now, and we're very much obliged to you for calling."

The stranger hesitated for just a moment. It seemed as if he could not bring himself to go. Then he departed.

He had dug all around the tree; he must have been at work long before Pee-wee saw him. Fuller sat down on the edge of the irregular excavation; the others followed.

"I have a hunch! there's something planted around here," Fuller said. "There's no mysterious paper with figures and crazy directions on it and death's head designs and four paces in the light of the moon stuff, and that's too bad. But that chap had a reason for coming here. The only mark of identification anywhere around that I can see is that old rusty nail in the tree. Anyway, the rusty nail seems to have the laugh on him. Come on, let's go in and get some sleep."

Fuller and Ray slept peacefully enough for the balance of the night, but Pee-wee did not sleep. Skimper's was transformed into a desert island where he had come to search for buried treasure. He would stay six months if necessary. So far as he was concerned he had voyaged a thousand miles to the desolate haunt of pirates, all for thirty-one cents. Once again his spirit rallied to the standard of Ray and Fuller. "Gee whiz, they're right," he said. "One place is as good as another if not better."

Great was the excitement at the Snailsdale House in the morning. "It's *thrilling*," Hope said, as she examined the excavation with several curious old ladies. "Why didn't you wake me up?"

"Those fellers—they always have adventures," Pee-wee told her. "You can even find treasure on—you can even find it on fire escapes—sometimes. Gee whiz, you should never go hunting for something like you did, because you never find it, that's sure."

CHAPTER XXXV PEE-WEE, SCOUT

Before the morning was very old the family secret of the Skimpers was out. Mrs. Skimper told one of the boarders, and presently it was all about like wild-fire. Many years before, Mr. Skimper's brother had stolen money from him (the affair was connected with their joint ownership of a store) and had disappeared.

At the time there had been some suspicion that in desperation caused by the fear of quick capture, he had secreted the money somewhere on the farm. But that suspicion had died away as the whole unhappy episode had passed into history and become a distant memory. It was known that the brother had lately died in a western prison with many a subsequent crime upon his head. Who, then, was this stranger digging in the dead of night?

"It's very simple," said Fuller; "he was told where the money was buried, that's all. He was a fellow convict. He has done us a good turn. All we have to do is to dig."

"But where?" asked Ray.

"All we know is that he was digging under a tree that had an old rusty nail in the trunk," said Fuller, "and that it isn't the right tree. There is nothing else around there that makes that tree any different from any other tree. Our best guess is to go through the grove and look for another tree with a big nail hammered into it. Somebody may have hammered a nail in this tree for some other reason, or for no reason."

It cannot be said that Mr. and Mrs. Skimper were greatly excited over this enterprise. They seemed sorry that the facts had come to light at all. They were interested, of course, but did not seem inclined to talk more than to answer questions. They said, in answer to a question, that seven or eight years had elapsed since the episode.

And then Pee-wee Harris, scout, had an inspiration. "If that brother hammered a nail in a tree seven or eight years ago to mark the spot, the nail wouldn't show now. The tree would be all grown out around it. There would just be a kind of a dent in the bark; it would be all kind of bent in, like, around a little hole. Because up at Temple Camp a feller hammered a nail in a tree three or four years ago for a stalking sign and now there's nothing but a kind of a little puckered spot there where it just sort of swallowed the nail up. Gee whiz, I know one of those little puckered spots when I see it."

"Scout," said Ray, "you're the only original Daniel Boone. You've got the

woods eating out of your hands. If a nail is the clue, we'll go to it and hunt for a little puckered spot; we'll inspect every tree in the grove."

That seemed an endless task but Fuller was a true treasure hunter and equal to any occasion. His procedure, in the work of treasure hunting, was novel, and came rather as a shock to Pee-wee. He announced his plan at breakfast.

"Pard," said he, addressing Mrs. Alison, his aged partner of the night before, "did you ever go hunting for buried treasure?"

"No, I never did," said the sweet old lady.

"Then you've lived in vain; but it isn't too late to start in. Miss Hope Stillmore is with us and where there's hope there's something doing."

How about that, Miss Hope? You and your mother going to hunt for a little puckered spot in the grove? We want every person in this room to hunt for the Scout Harris puckered spot on all the trees in the grove. How about you, Mrs. Marston? Good! The puckered spot as described by Scout Harris is caused by the insertion of a nail which has been consumed as the tree grew in dimensions. That right, Scout Harris?

"It looks something like the dent in a cruller, according to Scout Harris. There is a jar of crullers in the kitchen and anyone may inspect them. All hands are requested to lay down books and knitting and post card shooting to-day and search for the location of buried treasure in the grove. Anyone finding a small ingrowing spot on the trunk of a tree will report to the treasure hunting committee. Any suspicious nails should also be reported."

"Crullers should not be taken from the jar," Pee-wee spoke up, "because they're going to be used for dinner."

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE LAST DESTINATION

That morning the grove was over-run with treasure hunters. Fuller and Ray had every lady in the house searching. They were a queer looking group of adventurers, but they seemed to enjoy it immensely. It was well on toward dinnertime when dear old Mrs. Alison called for Pee-wee to come over and inspect a discovery she had made on a large poplar. She was beaming delightedly through her gold specks at a steel knitting needle which she had stuck into a little point where the bark curved in. "Oh, I'm afraid it's too good to be true," she said sweetly.

As Fuller moved the needle in and out there was a slight metallic sound. "It's hitting something," he said. "Yop, sure enough, there's a nail or something in there. Get a crowbar, Scout, and we'll jab around here a little. I think we're on the track of something. Bring a chair for Mrs. Alison to sit on, too."

The old lady seemed as proud and delighted as a child, while she waited. The others were all expectancy. As for Hope, she danced up and down impatiently. It was the only kind of dancing she thought of now. Pee-wee returned, laboring under a big armchair and wrestling with a crowbar. Following him came Mrs. Skimper, drying her arms on a towel and calling to Mr. Skimper who was in the woodshed. An excited little group stood about while Fuller jabbed with the crowbar, and thrills went through poor old Mrs. Alison when he struck a rock.

"Guess we'll have to dig," he said.

"Oh, I can't wait," she said.

"Oh, please do hurry," said Hope; "here, let *me* dig. You're just as slow as you can be!"

"It would be really quite thrilling," said old Mrs. Wade.

"It is really something that I never dreamed of," said Mrs. Stillmore.

"I've read of such things," said Miss Gaunt, an elderly spinster; "I believe Stevenson wrote of them, but I have never attended a treasure hunt. Really my nerves are on edge."

She did not have to suffer long from this racking suspense. In a very few minutes, if you will believe it, a tin box stood upon the edge of the excavation the boys had made.

"There you are, Mr. Skimper," said Fuller; "all things come round to him that waits—and digs. Mrs. Alison, you and I will have to fit up a schooner and

take a flyer down to the Spanish Main. They used to plant gold down there like Farmer Goodale plants crops. What do you say, Mrs. Stillmore? Are you willing for Hope to be kidnapped by pirates? Then Scout Harris will come and save her life.”

“He saved my life already,” said Hope soberly.

“I tell you what we’ll do!” Pee-wee shouted. “It’s an inspiration, because buried treasure and kidnapping go together, you can ask anybody—”

“Positively,” said Fuller.

“We’ll—we’ll—kidnap you and take you back to the farm just like a real adventure as long as they’re going to close up here anyway, and I tell you how we’ll do. (He paused for breath.) Your mother will be playing cards in the parlor and you’ll be on the lawn or maybe you’ll be in the window, hey? And we’ll sneak up and get you and make you go back to the farm with us and you’ll make believe you don’t want to go—”

“I do want to go,” she said; “and mother and I are going, *so there*. And I don’t care anything about the people there at all. I just want to have adventures with you and go tramping in the woods.”

“Would it—would it be all right if we kidnapped you to-morrow morning?” Pee-wee asked, greatly enthused.

“Don’t you think the afternoon would be better?” Hope said excitedly.

“Oh, I just long to be kidnapped,” said poor old Mrs. Alison.

“Don’t you care,” Pee-wee said consolingly. “And we’ll hike to the farm,” Hope said, “and then Mr. Goodale can come afterward and get mother and our trunk. Will that be all right? Oh, *please* say it will.”

“I don’t think we have any other kidnappings on hand for to-morrow,” said Ray. “Do you think it would be all right, Fuller? It means having a destination.”

“That’s the trouble,” said Fuller.

“You’re crazy!” Pee-wee shouted. “Because anyway, Hope is my pal and I liked her a lot before I ever knew you, and I say let’s kidnap her to-morrow. Don’t you know that treasure hunting and kidnapping go together?”

“Oh absolutely,” said Fuller.

“Let’s settle it by saying eenie, meenie, minee, mo,” said Ray.

“Don’t you mind them, they’re crazy,” Pee-wee said to Hope.

“Oh, *are* you?” Hope asked.

“Absolutely,” said Fuller.

THE END

[The end of *Pee-wee Harris in Luck* by Percy Keese Fitzhugh]