

PEE-WEE HARRIS  
MAYOR FOR A DAY

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

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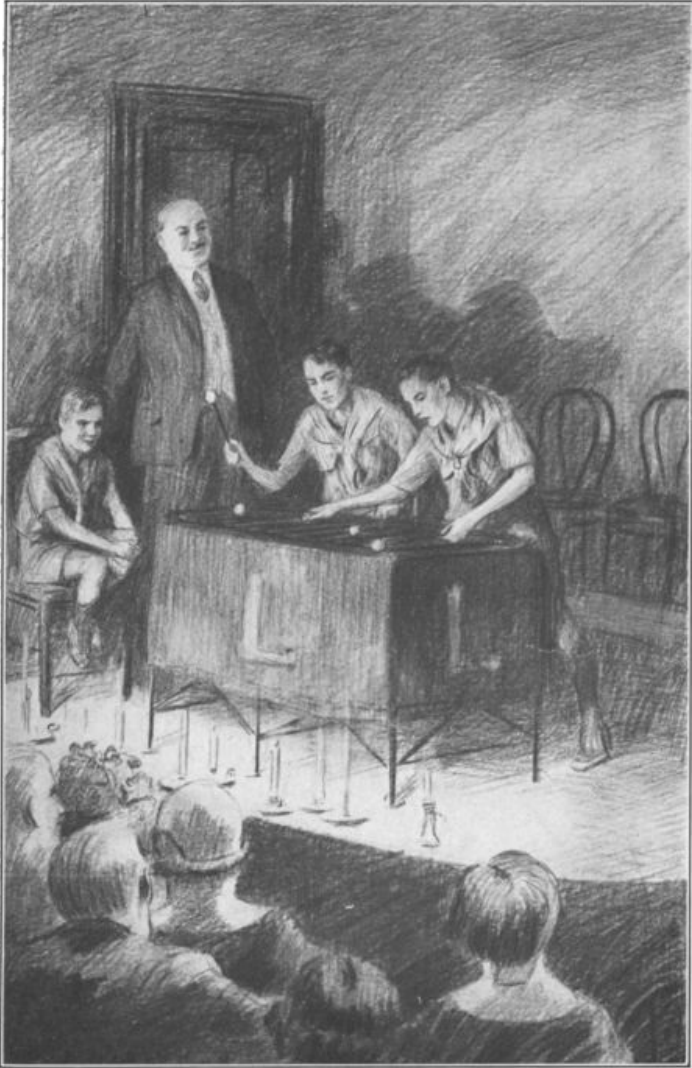
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# PEE-WEE HARRIS, MAYOR FOR A DAY



THE LIVENTI BOYS HELD THE AUDIENCE BREATHLESS.

# PEE-WEE HARRIS MAYOR FOR A DAY

BY  
PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

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

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# PEE-WEE HARRIS, MAYOR FOR A DAY

## CHAPTER I STRANGERS

There were dark rumors about the Liventi brothers. How these rumors started it would be impossible to say, but they have been traced back as far as little Irene McCormack who told Willie Corway that the parents of the Liventi brothers “acted in shows.”

On the strength of this information, Willie Corway took particular note of the Liventi boys when next he saw them on their way to school. Seeing nothing unusual about them, he reported to Irene that she “was lyin’.”

However, the rumor persisted, and the two boys who were newcomers in town were subjected to a kind of awesome surveillance in their immediate neighborhood.

Finally, little Irene precipitated a climax by saying (and crossing her heart to verify it) that her big brother who traveled on the road had himself seen Signor and Signora Liventi in refined vaudeville in Cincinnati. Signora, he said, played a gorgeous concertina, while her husband elicited music from strings of bells which he shook. Irene’s brother said that they “were all dressed up in gold and stuff.” With such authentic reports perhaps Irene may be pardoned for sticking out her tongue at Willie Corway.

At all events this report was enough for Pee-wee Harris. In the darkness of the night he walked past the unpretentious Liventi residence several times, casting fascinated glances at it. Seeing nothing more spectacular than the little, narrow porch with lighted windows opening upon it, he was finally emboldened to ascend the steps with dramatic stealth and take a fearful peep at the interior.

There was nothing to be seen in the little, ill-furnished parlor but a few shabby pieces of furniture and a discordantly ornate drop light on the center table. Sitting there was the only suggestion which the room contained of anything romantic or unusual. This was an old woman in a shawl of such a variety of vivid colors that in itself it suggested to the beholder something out of the ordinary in its wearer’s vocation and nationality. It was fringed and tinsel, and altogether bizarre.

For the lack of anything else to bespeak the enticing glamor and mystery of “acting in shows,” Pee-wee accepted this gaudy article of apparel as proof positive that the parents of the Liventi boys were actually theatrical celebrities.

And they were living on his own block, in one of the poor, little, old-fashioned houses up near the corner! The old woman in the multi-colored

shawl was sewing, and it detracted somewhat from the vision which Pee-wee had conjured up that she was darning a stocking, presumably the property of a real son of a real actor in real shows.

Pee-wee assumed (and here he was right) that the old woman in the tinsel shawl was the grandmother of Tasca and Bruno, and that she took care of them during the prolonged absences of Signor and Signora on the road. To see the grandmother of two boys whose parents acted in real shows was not much, but it was something. To see upon the shoulders of such a very old woman a shawl which would make a rainbow look like widows' mourning by contrast, would seem to clinch the fugitive rumors about the neighborhood that Bruno and Tasca Liventi were connected with the stage. That shawl removed them from everything ordinary and cast a sort of glamor over them.

Pee-wee walked reverently where the stage was concerned, for he was himself a manager on an exceedingly humble scale. If he was not the greatest producer in town, he was certainly the greatest producer of the block on which he lived, a block containing nine houses and four boys. It was he who first thought of using the sprinkler of a shower-bath connected with an elevated wash-boiler full of water to give a realistic demonstration at a church affair of how boy scouts can kindle a fire in a pelting rain. This difficult operation was performed with twigs in a refrigerator pan while the sprinkler kept up a torrential downpour accompanied by thunder elicited from a sheet of tin roofing off stage.

## CHAPTER II

### A PROPOSITION

But Pee-wee was not only a bold originator of stage effects (reproducing the marvelous resourcefulness of scouts); he was brave as well. And the very next time that he saw Tasca and Bruno he accosted them with charges of their theatrical connection.

They were dark-skinned, brown-eyed boys, these brothers, with a handsome foreign look. Tasca threw his head back and stared at Pee-wee with his lustrous eyes as if receiving a challenge.

Pee-wee went straight to the point. "Do your mother and father act in shows?" he asked. "In real shows that you have to pay to get in?"

"They're as good as your father and mother," Tasca answered.

Pee-wee received this as a compliment, for indeed he thought that people who acted in shows and were all dressed in gold and stuff, were infinitely above the prosaic folk among whom he lived.

"Do they act in big shows where you have to buy tickets and where they have private boxes and everything?" he asked.

"They're artists," said Tasca.

"Do they paint pictures?"

"No, they're music artists."

"I got up lots of shows," Pee-wee said. "I got up shows where you had to pay ten cents, I did; scout shows. I bet you're not scouts."

"Nobody asked us," said Bruno.

"I ask you," Pee-wee promptly announced. "I got a right to ask anybody I want to. Will you show me your mother and father some time—if I get you into the scouts?"

Here was a proposition. Bruno and Tasca looked with favor on joining the scouts. They knew so little about scouting that they were ready to believe that influence was necessary to get them into the scout ranks. And Pee-wee spoke as if he had unlimited influence. But Tasca, knowing his parents to be ordinary human beings, was a little perplexed.

"What do you want to see them for?" he asked.

"Do they wear all gold and stuff?" Pee-wee inquired. "What do they take off when they act?"

"They don't take off anything," Bruno said.

"You got to take off something," Pee-wee persisted. "I took off a lion once—how he roars."

“You mean imitate?” Bruno said.

“They play bells and the concertina,” said Tasca, cutting the matter short, “and they’re on Keith’s circuit.”

“You mean circus?” Pee-wee demanded.

“No, I don’t, I mean *circuit*,” said Tasca. “It means the different places they travel around to—all different theaters.”

Pee-wee gazed at the brothers almost with awe. “Can you do acting?” he asked.

“We can play the marimba,” Bruno said; “our father showed us; he’s giving us lessons.”

Pee-wee’s look of awe intensified. Here he was actually face to face with two future actors, who would in the fullness of time be all dressed in gold and stuff and go on a circuit—whatever that was.

“What’s a marimba?” he asked.

“It’s all wooden bars and you hit them with hammers,” said Bruno. “We got one belongs all alone to us; my father doesn’t use it any more.”

“Can I see it?” Pee-wee asked. “And can I see your mother and father?”

“You can see them Sunday when they get home,” said Tasca.

“And I’ll get you in the scouts,” Pee-wee said; “I’ll get you in the new patrol I’m going to start, and you can be the band of it.”

“A marimba isn’t a band,” Bruno said.

“Sure it is,” said Pee-wee; “ain’t music a band? I know all about bands because I’m a scout. Did you ever act in real shows—in big shows?”

“We did, only the Society wouldn’t let us because we have to go to school,” Bruno said.

“Anyway you did act in real shows?” Pee-wee persisted, gazing at them with extraordinary interest.

“And we’re going to when we grow up,” Bruno said.

“Well anyway,” Pee-wee said, “the Society can’t stop you from being scouts, that’s one sure thing. Societies have got nothing to say about scouts; I got more to say about it than they have, I’m a first-class scout, so will you join? If you’ll show me your mother and father you can be in the new patrol I’m starting, and we’ll get up a show and you can act in it, because anyway I’m going to get up a show up in Little Valley, in a church up there. And if any society tries to stop you,” Pee-wee added darkly, “I’ll show them, I will. So do you want to join? Because I’m starting a new patrol that’s going to be called the Chipmunks? So what do you say?”

## CHAPTER III ON THE JOB

Tasca and Bruno Liventi had never joined the scouts because they had never lived long enough in one place to make that worth while. They had traveled with their gorgeous parents until some organized busy-bodies had intervened and required them to go to school.

Youngsters though they were, these temperamental little Italians were familiar with all the great operas and had a natural love and aptitude for good music. It seemed a pity that they had to go to school and sing, *Oh, joy, oh, joy, the spring is here*. First and last they had more real culture than ever they would acquire in public school.

But the powers ordained that these dark-eyed strangers must study reading, writing and arithmetic. So Signor and his wife had taken the little house on Terrace Avenue in Bridgeboro and placed the two boys in the care of their picturesque old grandmother. The house was one of three in a row and these looked strange enough on the block of handsome residences where Pee-wee lived. They seemed huddling together in very shame like a group of shabby little triplets awestruck by the pretentious company in which they found themselves. The tenants in these little houses were not on cordial terms with Terrace Avenue. They did not go back and forth on the trains and discuss golf.

As for Signor and his tinsel lady, they did not intrude in Bridgeboro society. Few people ever saw them. If Pee-wee could have seen them coming down on the last train on Saturday nights (as they sometimes did) they would not have inspired him with awe. A dumpy, shabby little Italian man with two huge traveling cases and a weary-looking woman also laboring with baggage, they did not look much like the magnificent pair who smiled and bowed graciously on the Keith circuit.

Weird sounds of practicing emanated from the little house on Sundays when Signor and his wife were there. But their engagements often kept them away on Sundays too, and sometimes they would not visit Bridgeboro for weeks. They went early and came late and no one had a chance to snub them. Not that any one wished to, but the tenants who lived in the three little misplaced houses were not taken too seriously on Terrace Avenue.

Bruno and Tasca wanted to join the scouts and soon they availed themselves of the only means they knew of to achieve this end. They stood in their dooryard one Saturday morning gazing wistfully at Pee-wee as he strode by on his way to scout headquarters ready for the usual Saturday hike. To say

that he was in his full scout regalia would be doing him an injustice. His scout regalia was more than full, it was flowing over. As a scout it was his policy to show his colors, also his belt ax, his scout-knife, his aluminum frying-pan, his compass and his watertight match container. For though he was a faithful devotee of the much-flaunted art of making a fire without a match, he never failed to wear this watertight container on a shoe-string around his neck.

The Liventi boys gazed at this passing spectacle with admiring consternation. That such a heroic creature could actually make a stipulation to see their poor mother and father, that he could make this the condition of a bargain, seemed preposterous. They did not believe that they could be accepted into the wonderful circle of scouting on any such easy terms. It was too good to be true. For, alas, poor Bruno and Tasca knew that what they had to show was very trifling and commonplace. They dwelt behind the scenes, these boys. It was Tasca, who ventured upon a reference to the bargain.

“Hey, if you want to—did you mean what you said?” he inquired bashfully.

The hero paused.

“If you want to see our mother and father you can come in to-morrow because they’re coming home late to-night,” Tasca said. He did not have quite the courage to refer specifically to the bargain, but he hoped that Pee-wee would recall it.

Our hero was, indeed, too much of a promoter to have forgotten it. He had started many patrols, in fact that was his specialty, but the new Chipmunk aggregation was going to be something very unusual. Since learning the dark truth about the Liventis he had decided to make it a sort of musical and theatrical patrol, and to have a *circuit*, though he was not quite clear as to what was meant by that word. As for the Liventis he intended to kill two birds with one stone; he was going to gaze upon that gorgeous twain who “acted in real shows” and he was going to scoop in two new members. He did not (as the brothers thought) regard his act as one of gracious condescension, a magnificent and epoch making good turn.

“Did you—did you honest and true mean what you said—about letting us come in?” Tasca ventured. “Because they’ll be here all day to-morrow.”

“Will they be mad if I come and look at them?” Pee-wee asked. Now that the great moment seemed almost at hand he was seized with fear and misgiving.

“Why would they get mad?” Bruno asked.

“I tell you what I’ll do,” Pee-wee said. “I’ll call three times outside first, hey? I’ll give three squeaks like a chipmunk when he gets caught, hey? Because anyway you have to know the chipmunk squeak; it’s like this.” He gave an exceedingly shrill imitation of the voice of a chipmunk, “when he is

caught,” which seemed to impress the brothers. Pee-wee might have taken a lesson from the humble little creature whom he had chosen as the godfather of his new patrol. For it is a quiet little animal having not much to say except (as Pee-wee had observed) when it is caught.

“See if you can do it,” Pee-wee said.

Thus the Liventi boys took their first lesson in scouting from the great master.

“When I squeak like that three times to-morrow, you come to the door,” Pee-wee said.



## CHAPTER IV THE BARGAIN

Pee-wee had always been an aggressive hero; among his comrades, Roy Blakeley and the others, he had always been able to hold his own against concerted attacks of jollyng. But when he walked into the poor little musty front room of the Liventi home, he stepped with reverence and awe. He felt that in a way he was on the stage.

This feeling was increased by the presence of a sumptuous marimba<sup>[1]</sup>, a thing so magnificent in shining nickel and superfluous metal ornamentation that it seemed quite out of place in its humble environment. Signor had discarded the ornate instrument (in deference to a capricious public) in favor of strings of bells also gorgeously mounted, by shaking which he extracted operatic and popular gems; he preferred the operatic.

The Liventi boys kept their end of the bargain to the letter. Pee-wee experienced a slight shock as the parents of the boys entered the room, Signor in his shirt sleeves and collarless but with mustache twisted to deadly points and with arms gesticulating a welcome.

“You are da scouta boy, huh?” he said. “Scouta boy, dat’s a all righta.”

Signora was evidently weary from travel, for she did no more than show herself, then withdrew; but Signor was a glorious host, bowing and smiling as if he were receiving the whole personnel of the Boy Scouts of America. Pee-wee was overwhelmed. If he had expected Signor to appear in tinsel knickerbockers, he at least was not disappointed at his welcome. He could hardly reconcile the unbuttoned, collarless shirt with the motley splendor of vaudeville as he knew it, but Signor was very friendly and ingratiating and that was better than all. He did not seem to stand aloof in awful majesty from the residents of Terrace Avenue. Tasca and Bruno seemed to say, “Now we have kept our word; what next?”

Pee-wee hardly knew what to say in this negligee but still romantic presence, so he said, “I get up shows sometimes; I’m going to get up a dandy one to act up in Little Valley. Maybe Tasca and Bruno could be in it, hey?”

For answer Signor pressed his heart feelingly with one hand and grasped Pee-wee’s with the other. Pee-wee had never dreamed that “refined vaudeville” would take him to its bosom quite so readily.

“You are da fina scouta boy, huh!” said Signor Liventi, brimming with cordial enthusiasm. “Tasca, Bruno, dey joiner da scout—you make ’em da scout. *Aaah*, dey play er da fine musick! Dey go er da hike—woods—all—

fina. Shu, young mister! Dey be a da good scout. Hey, Tasca, Bruno; what you say?”

Roving player and foreigner though he was, Signor knew what was in the air about scouting and he wanted those two boys of his to be scouts. It seemed as if he had waited for this opportunity. He was certainly appealing to the right authority. Pee-wee was not only the smallest, he was also the greatest of boy scouts. He was the greatest scout-maker known to the organization. He sat with befitting respect and listened to the dark-skinned brothers play selections with dextrous variations from Carmen while the gorgeous silvered frame of the resounding marimba vibrated under their vigorous and lightning blows. Never again would Scout Harris permit the rabble outside the school to ridicule the Liventi boys and call them “wops.”

The masterly performance of Bruno and Tasca inspired Pee-wee with the spirit of big enterprise and abandoning the role of enraptured beholder he launched forth upon an outline of his latest cherished dream.

“*Suuure*, I’ll get ’em into the scouts,” he ejaculated with comforting assurance, “and they’ll even go up to Temple Camp with us and everything—gee whiz, don’t you worry.”

Signor Liventi was so far from worrying that he clapped his left hand over his heart and gracefully extended the other; he certainly had the grand manner, and it even obliterated his collarless shirt. “Winna da badge—shu!” he said glancing proudly at his sons. “Maka da fine trail, hey? Shu.”

“Sure they’ll go trailing and everything,” Pee-wee said. “But that’ll be in the summer after school closes and anyway before that I have a dandy idea. Scouts, they’ve got lots of resources and I thought of a dandy way for Tasca and Bruno to win a badge even before they win it kind of, as you might say.”

The father and sons were all attention, anxious to know how a badge could be won before it was won.

“You see you can’t get a merit badge till you’re a first-class scout,” our hero explained. “I’m one of those,” he added. “You got to go through two stages first—tenderfoot and second class.” Tasca and Bruno seemed enraptured at these details of scouting.

“But anyway,” Pee-wee said, “do you know what a teckinality is?”

Signor raised his eyes dubiously as if to make the humiliating confession that he did not know.

“It’s when you think of a way to do a thing that’s against the regular way and that’s kind of just the same not against the rule,” Pee-wee said.

“Ah!” said Signor, apparently satisfied.

“So I’m going to have Bruno and Tasca win the music badge,” said Pee-wee. “They got a right not to have it till they’re first-class scouts, but anyway, they can kind of win it and save it up, can’t they? Then when they get to be

first-class scouts up at camp this summer all they'll have to do is ask for the badges and they'll get them, see? Do you want to know how I'm going to do it? I'm going to do it by having them be in a big show."

Signor stood speechless at Pee-wee's resource and enterprise. The poor, little, dumpy man whom our hero had wished to gaze upon seemed ready to throw himself at the very feet of this diminutive embodiment of scouting. As for the brothers they felt that they were already drawn into the magic circle by a master hand. They could trust to Pee-wee, and all the joys of boy scouting would be theirs.

"Dey maka da musick for da scouta boy," said Signor with enthusiastic concurrence in Pee-wee's plans.

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<sup>[1]</sup> A marimba is an instrument consisting of a graduated row of wooden bars laid side by side from which music is made by strokes of a hammer.

## CHAPTER V IN THE PROFESSION

Pee-wee held the floor more securely than ever Signor Liventi and his good lady held an audience. "Do you know where Little Valley is?" said he.

"It's about three stations up on the railroad," Tasca said. He was proud that he knew *something*; he wondered if that knowledge were in the nature of scout knowledge.

"Yes, but scouts don't go by railroads," Pee-wee said scornfully. "Do you think Daniel Boone and Kit Carson went by railroads? Scouts hike, that's the way they go. If it's dark they go by the stars and things like that. They can tell if they're going north or south by looking at the moss on the trees. Maybe even they look for squirrels' nests in trees—do you know why?"

The brothers gaped in wonderment; their father gazed reverently.

"Because on account of squirrels having their nests on the south side of trees. Gee whiz, scouts don't get lost, they don't make mistakes."

Bruno and Tasca seemed to think this was nothing short of miraculous. They were a little ashamed of their commonplace performance on the marimba.

"No compass—*toy!*" Signor exploded. "*Shu*, you tella da way—look—eyes—huh? Smarta boy!"

"Now I'll tell you what I'm going to do," said Pee-wee. "Up in Little Valley the church is going to have a festival on account of being there twenty years; it's an anniversary festival. That's a kind of a show, a festival is. Part of it is a show. And the minister asked a lady to ask my mother if I'd go up there with my new patrol and give a scout demonstration. Do you know what that is? It's all the different things that scouts can do, see? So now I decided I'm going to have Bruno and Tasca play some music too—if you'll let them take that thing up there; so will you?"

Signor could only bow in a way of glad compliance. Pee-wee could have anything if only Tasca and Bruno were admitted into the mysteries of scouting. Here was Terrace Avenue conquered in one masterly move! Tasca and Bruno Liventi would be not only scouts (under the particular guidance of the greatest of scouts), but they would no longer gaze wistfully at the boys who lived in those fine, big houses along Terrace Avenue and thereabouts and wish that they could be a part of that fraternal, noisy life. And this thought brought joy to the simple heart of Signor Liventi.

"It's going to be next Thursday and Friday and Saturday," Pee-wee said,

“and I’m the boss of the scout part of it and already I’ve got two scouts that were in a troop that started and broke up and they’re going to give a demonstration right on the stage how they can put up a tent in twenty seconds and then they’re going to do scout stunts. And I’m going to give a demonstration of signaling, wig-wag and like that and then a feller that’s disguised as not a scout is going to almost eat a toadstool and all of a sudden I come rushing on the stage madly, kind of, and stop him just in time and then I give a kind of a lecture on how to tell the difference between mushrooms and toadstools and about poison-ivy and everything and then I’m going to have a scout—maybe it’ll be Tasca or Bruno—I’m going to have him stand with his back to me and I’m going to sneak up on him and then he’s going to cross his heart to the audience that he never heard me, because anyway a scout’s honor is to be trusted and that shows how stealthy and quiet a scout can be—see?”

The admiring audience could only stare. Perhaps the diffident, unassuming brothers wondered if Pee-wee could ever convince anybody that he was *quiet*. But if so they were too spellbound and admiring to say so.

## CHAPTER VI

### PLANS

Pee-wee was too engrossed in his own plans to follow up the preparations which went forward in the Liventi home.

Late that very Sunday night residents on Terrace Avenue might have seen (if they had been interested enough to look) a funny, stout, little Italian man and his wife, both laboring under an avalanche of baggage, trudging hurriedly through the fashionable neighborhood to catch the midnight train to the metropolis. They did not look very gorgeous and theatrical.

But they had left at home fifty dollars to outfit their proud sons with scout uniforms and such accessories as Pee-wee had represented as being indispensable to scouting. "You got to have belt axes and scout jack-knives and compasses," Pee-wee had told the brothers; "and you ought to have cooking sets too, but anyway, you can eat out of mine." He represented these appurtenances as being necessary in undertaking the perilous journey of five miles through familiar woodland to Little Valley.

For Pee-wee intended that the scout number on the church anniversary program should be in all ways realistic. He intended to show Little Valley what scouting was, not only by stage performance but by a more picturesque demonstration. His active mind had conceived the scout exhibition on a very large scale. He and his scout comrades were going to hike through the woods (perhaps even cook their supper there) and trudge up to the church lecture room like true pioneers, compasses, belt axes, jack-knives, cooking sets, marimba and all.

They were to arrive in Little Valley as if it were some frontier settlement and they had sojourned hundreds of miles to reach it. Then it would be explained to the audience (by the minister perhaps) that these scouts, disdaining railroads and buses, had "hiked through the woods" and so on. It would be a picturesque appearance upon the stage, far surpassing the gracious and graceful bows of Signor and Signora Liventi on the Keith circuit.

Poor Bruno and Tasca had to do their own scout shopping and they did it bashfully and unseen by other boys, for though they were proud to be scouts, they were diffident about coming out into the open in their new roles. In the evenings of that momentous week, while their old grandmother altered their precious new khaki suits to fit them they practiced the *Poet and Peasant* overture on the marimba, as their father had told them to do, and brushed up on some lively popular airs with a dexterity of teamwork that was uncanny. But

they did not forget to practice tying and untying a number of complicated knots (using the family clothes-line), for they had it on the highest authority that they must do these things in order to be accepted into the class of tenderfoot scouts.

As for Pee-wee, he was busy organizing the new Chipmunk Patrol, for his fame as a producer was second only to his fame as an organizer. He was, in fact, safely anchored in the Raven Patrol of the First Bridgeboro Troop, but he was continually revolting from its authority and starting new patrols which never attained the requisite number for membership. These patrols, after tremendous enterprise and glowing announcements, invariably fizzled out. The First Bridgeboro Troop, and especially the well-established Ravens, did not take these revolutionary undertakings too seriously. Usually a new patrol was started every time a strange boy moved to town. The present enterprise was not viewed apprehensively. The troop did not mind, and as for the little chipmunks that frequented the woods, probably they did not care either.

But the Liventi brothers cared. The Chipmunk Patrol meant as much to them as the Declaration of Independence did to the thirteen colonies. They saw it as the only way to get into scouting. So they studied the scout laws and practiced the salute and rehearsed the oath and tied knots and perfected their skill with the gorgeous, shining marimba.

As the days of that memorable week dragged along and they read about trailing and stalking and signaling, they became a little ashamed of their one great accomplishment. But then, they were ashamed of the whole business too; not ashamed exactly, but they could not bear to have the boys of the neighborhood know that they were preparing to be scouts; they were afraid that the noisy rabble that called them wops would somehow find new material for mirth in this. They hoped that Pee-wee would not speak of it. And he didn't speak of it—he yelled it.

## CHAPTER VII

### CHARLIE BULTON

On the day of the big affair in Little Valley, a day never to be forgotten in the annals of scouting, the Chipmunk Patrol had swelled to six members. First and foremost there was Pee-wee, patrol leader of course. He had adopted the wise parliamentary procedure of electing himself before there were any members to vote for anybody else; hence he had a safe majority of one.

Then there were Willis Harlen and Eddie Carlo from the troop that was no more. And there was Peter Tower, a discovery all Pee-wee's own. He was only three or four inches high, more or less, but what he lacked in size he made up in admiration for Pee-wee. He was under the scout age, which made no difference at all to our hero, since he owned a tent which Pee-wee had not failed to notice in a corner of the Tower lawn. He also had forty-two cents free and clear. Then there were the Liventi boys, Tasca and Bruno. The ceremony of initiation was deferred until after the big show, pending the rounding up of a complete patrol.

"Do we have to play the marimba?" Bruno asked wistfully of Pee-wee on the day preceding the grand pilgrimage. "Scouts don't do those things, it isn't in the book," the timid Bruno protested. He and his brother wanted to be real scouts, not marimba playing scouts; they wanted to be wild and primeval, and skilled in woodlore as Pee-wee had explained that all scouts must be.

"I know why you ask that," Pee-wee thundered; "it's because all the fellers are making fun of you and saying '*Yes, we have no music.*'"

Alas, this was true. The sensitive boys had not been able to keep their secret, the whole noisy, jolly throng of scouts and non-scouts had found out that the dark-eyed strangers were in Pee-wee's new patrol and that their specialty was playing the bimbo, which was the nearest they ever came to the correct name.

"Hey, Bimbo," called Charlie Bulton on the way home from school one afternoon that week. "Hey, playa da bimbo! I hear you're going to be boy sprouts, you two. Yes, we have no Americans in the Chipmunk Patrol. We got kids and has-beens and wops.

"But, yes, we got no Americans;  
We got no Americans to-day."

It was a pity that Pee-wee was not present to handle this situation; Bully Bulton, with all his cruel humor, had neither the voice nor the sticking qualities



of the head chipmunk. Nor, it may be added, had he the ingenuity of our hero in epithet and thundering repartee.

Tasca Liventi's eyes blazed. "I *am* an American," he said; "I was born in this country as much as you were."

"We've got right to be scouts," his less impulsive brother said. "It doesn't hurt you, does it?"

"*You hurt me?*" Bulton ejaculated, advancing menacingly for the benefit of the lookers-on. "What did you say about *hurting me?*"

Bruno stood his ground. They made picturesque figures, these two brothers, standing together as if at bay. There was a fine spirit in the face of Tasca as he stared, trembling but resolute, amid this vulgar show.

"I didn't say anything about hurting you," he said.

"Hey, how do you get that way—*hurting me?*?" Bulton persisted.

"Look out, Bull, he'll stab you," a boy said; "he gotta stillet'."

The Liventi boys had heard much talk of stilettoes before; the crude mimicry of their father's broken English was not new to them. It was the denial of their Americanism that hurt. Tasca's handsome eyes continued to blaze and his brother seemed to hold him back. "Nobody said anything about hurting you," the latter said. "Why you make a fuss?" The omission of a word now and then was the only suggestion of broken English these boys ever showed. "We got right to be scouts."

Charlie Bulton subsided; he appeared as if accepting an apology. But he was not going to let the brothers off too easily. "If Kid Harris had asked *me* to join his patrol he could have had a couple of hundred dollars to start with, the blamed little fool. My father gives away money enough every week to buy that little shack you live in. I suppose you dagoes think you'll go to camp this summer, but how are you going to do that without money? Your folks haven't got any money. You wouldn't be living on Terrace Avenue at all if it wasn't for those three old tenement houses standing there. It shows how much sense you have to swallow everything a kid like Pee-wee Harris tells you. If he'd asked me he'd have had a good start, maybe a thousand dollars. What does my old man care?"

But just the same Bully Bulton's old man did care. He wanted to see his son in the scouts and it puzzled the bluff, good-hearted man that somehow or other his son never seemed to make the grade. No one seemed to want him. "They had his number," was the laconic way Tom Slade put it.

Mr. Bulton believed in scouting and it is true that he had given a considerable sum in the scout drive. But this had not helped his son. At last he had fallen back on the almighty dollar to help this bullying, bragging son of his. He had told Charlie that he would give a hundred dollars to the patrol that he, Charlie, should grace with his membership. And that he would give Charlie

a new bicycle. He was a better sport than his son.

Charlie did not care anything about the scouts and as for Pee-wee, “why he was a mere kid,”—and so on, and so on. But he wanted a bicycle. And he was so false in his dealings with his father that he would let that hearty, self-made, generous man invest a hundred dollars in scouting just so that this bicycle might be won. Charlie would not remain in the scouts—only long enough to get the bicycle.

So it was not only his bullying spirit which had prompted him to menace and ridicule the Liventi boys. He was piqued that Pee-wee had not opened the way for him to join a patrol for convenience’ sake. He wished to join that budding patrol and then ride out of it on his bicycle. Thus the Chipmunks would be of some use after all. He had hoped that Pee-wee would invite him, then when Pee-wee had not, he had (like the vulgar bully that he was) taken it out, as they say, on the poor Liventi boys.

After that he decided to pocket his pride and make a direct proposition to the “Harris kid.” If the mountain will not go to Mahomet (as the saying is) why, then Mahomet would go to the mountain. Though, to be sure, Pee-wee was not much as a mountain. . . .

## CHAPTER VIII

### A FULL PATROL

It was Thursday and already the anniversary celebration up in Little Valley was on. On Saturday night the new Chipmunk Patrol was to hike up through the woods under Pee-wee's skillful guidance and contribute to the big concluding program. A great piece of luck had befallen Pee-wee on this very day; the Jansens had returned to Bridgeboro from Europe and Wendy and Billy Jansen (former scouts and good ones at that) had been recruited to make a full patrol. This windfall had so elated Pee-wee that he was celebrating it by sitting on the slanting cellar doors eating a huge and toppling piece of cake, when Bully Bulton strolled around from the lawn and sat down fraternally beside him.

"H'lo, Walt," said he.

No one ever called Pee-wee Walt; his family called him Walter. Pee-wee was his universal name, though his proper title was Scout Harris.

He glanced sideways in the midst of a huge bite as if to inquire the reason for this chummy salutation. Charlie Bulton sat down beside him.

"What are you doing around this neighborhood?" Pee-wee inquired. He had had many verbal encounters with Bulton, but it is to his credit that he cherished no enmities. You could be friends with Pee-wee by simply being friends with him. Or if you preferred to jolly or assail him he would gladly meet you on that ground. He never seemed to remember his mortal combats, perhaps because he had so many of them. "I got a full patrol," he said. "They're all going to take the oath when the troop meets next Friday. I'm going to have them in that troop, it'll make four patrols."

Charlie was not much interested in scout procedure. "You got a full troop, hey?" he asked.

"Not a troop, a patrol," Pee-wee said. "A full patrol is eight scouts; gee whiz, don't you know that? A troop is three or four patrols."

"How do you expect me to know when I never had a chance to be in one?" Bulton said.

"You had lots of chances," said Pee-wee; "any feller's got chances."

"Maybe I didn't have sense enough when I had a chance," Bulton said.

"Now you admit you haven't got sense," Pee-wee said, assailing the last crumbling remnant of cake.

Bully Bulton had often encountered Pee-wee as an adversary, but he had never appealed to him as a political power. The situation was new.

“Why don’t you start a patrol?” Pee-wee said. “Anyway, nobody’d join it because you’re so fresh and bossy.”

These words from the throne caused Charlie to pause and consider his course. “I’d like to join your patrol, that’s one thing,” he said. “I never meant to be fresh with you.”

“Anyway, I don’t care because I can be just as fresh as you can,” Pee-wee said.

Charlie saw that not much was to be gained by remorse. “If you and I were in together we could have *some* patrol all right,” he said.

“Just the same I’d be the leader of it,” Pee-wee warned.

“Sure you would; who’d try to stop you? Only we’d have a hundred dollars to start with and that’s something, I hope to tell you.”

“Who would?”

“We would.”

“I bet you haven’t got as much as twenty cents,” Pee-wee said.

“I bet my father has.”

“Maybe he has, but I’m not talking about him,” Pee-wee said. “Anyway, I got a full patrol.”

“Yes, full of what?” Charlie sneered. “Hey, listen here, Walt; this is honest and true I’m telling you. My old man says he’ll give a hundred dollars to any patrol I pick out to join.” This was not exactly what Mr. Bulton had said, for he knew something of his son’s status with the Bridgeboro boys. It was to be no matter of autocratic choice with the unpopular Charlie. “I guess a little, ole hundred dollars would start a new patrol off pretty good, hey? And he’d give another couple of hundred, too, after he saw we got started.” This latter announcement was altogether unauthorized.

“Do you expect me to believe that?” Pee-wee asked.

“I’ll take you to my father and you can ask him,” said Bulton. “Only what’s the use as long as you got a full patrol?”

“Scouts can find ways,” Pee-wee said.

And indeed he found many ways through trackless woods as well as over difficulties. But he knew in his heart that he could not stretch a scout patrol to include nine boys. He was the grand champion fixer, but here was something that he could not fix. For it was already fixed:

Scout Harris, patrol leader  
Willis Harlen  
Eddie Carlo  
Bruno Liventi  
Tasca Liventi  
Peter Tower  
Wendy Jansen  
Billy Jansen.

It was fixed better than in Pee-wee's fondest dreams.

## CHAPTER IX

### CHARLIE PROVES IT

There flashed through Pee-wee's active mind visions of how the First Bridgeboro Troop (his permanent scout anchorage) had started. It had been financed by Mr. John Temple. Perhaps here again was an opportunity to do something big in scouting. What would not a hundred dollars do for a budding patrol? Tents, cooking sets, archery outfits, perhaps a patrol radio set! Things all necessary in scouting. *A hundred dollars!* As for the prize that would come in this package, Bully Bulton in person, that did not trouble Pee-wee. He had no particular grudge against a boy whose voice was no louder than his own. And he knew that the purpose of scouting was not to exclude bossy and unpopular boys, but rather to include and improve them. . . .

But there was the full patrol.

Pee-wee was not too ready to believe Bully Bulton. He was a natural-born skeptic, especially where the fabulous sum of one hundred dollars was concerned. As we have already seen, he believed in going to original sources where boys were involved, that is, to their parents.

"You're a-scared to take me to your father," he said. "You're a-scared to let me ask him myself."

But here Bully Bulton was as good as his word. Jumping up with alacrity, he said, "Come ahead."

Pee-wee was in for it now. Bully Bulton was going to make good for once.

"You'll just start and go a couple of blocks and then you'll laugh and turn around—I know you," Pee-wee said.

"I cross my heart I'll take you to my father," Bully Bulton said.

Pee-wee contemplated him skeptically. "All right," he said finally, "wait a second till I get a couple of cookies."

He had not the slightest idea how he was going to accommodate this new and sensational turn of affairs to his already full patrol. But it was Pee-wee's habit to go head first and afterwards take note of where he was at.

Mr. Bulton owned a large hay, grain and coal establishment in Bridgeboro and to him Charlie presented the diminutive scout organizer and producer. Charlie had certainly made good handsomely, with no taint of bluffing. Pee-wee was the least bit embarrassed as he stood before the big, good-natured man who swung around in his chair, cocked his cigar up in his mouth and said, "So you're a scout, huh? You're Doctor Harris' kid, ain't you?"

"I'm a chipmunk. I can make a noise like one," said Pee-wee.

“Gosh!” said Mr. Bulton. “Yes, go ahead.”

Pee-wee emitted a piercing squeak. “Don’t you think that’s a peach of a name—chipmunks?” he said. “I can trail a chipmunk too. Even once I trailed a snake, only it turned out to be a mark from a feller dragging a stick, so it didn’t count, but anyway I got the badge for stalking.”

“And you kids go to camp, huh? And live outdoors, and learn to swim?”

“*Suuure!* And we cook ourselves and everything.”

“Cook yourselves?” laughed Mr. Bulton.

“I don’t mean we get cooked,” Pee-wee said, “but we cook things ourselves—potatoes and everything, and——”

“Well now, you listen here,” said Mr. Bulton. “This youngster of mine isn’t cooked, but he’s half-baked—know what that is? Now you fellers take him and make a real honest-to-goodness scout out of him. Take him away up to Mr. Temple’s camp up there and show him how to swim, and if you catch him teasing little girls hammer the life out of him. There’s a hundred dollars goes with him with my regards to the Chipmunks. As soon as he’s in you fellers get a check. Now I understand you’re the big scout around here, so I’m going to leave it to you, see?”

“Yes, sir,” said Pee-wee, greatly flattered.

“See if you can make a regular all-around scout out of this feller. You got a rule about tellin’ the truth, haven’t you? Well, show him that. Now clear out of here, both of you.”

Mr. Bulton turned abruptly to confer with a waiting clerk. But his son ran back as Pee-wee was going out and said in an undertone: “And I get the bicycle too, don’t I, pop?”

“Did you ever know me to break my word?” said poor Mr. Bulton.

## CHAPTER X

### ALL IS NOT GOLD——

The effect of Mr. Bulton on Pee-wee was as that of a tempest. Our hero was overwhelmed. He was overwhelmed not only by the hundred dollars, but by the masterful and hearty Mr. Bulton. He could not have refused to espouse the cause of Charlie Bulton while he stood before that scout financial angel, Charlie's father. And now he felt committed. It was the old, old story, so characteristic of Pee-wee, of overdoing everything. He always had three helpings of dessert. And now he had more than his share of boys for a patrol.

"One thing anyway," he said as he and Charlie walked along together, buoyant and full of plans as a consequence of the altogether sensational development, "I'm not going to ask Peter Tower to leave, that's one sure thing. Because I promised him ever since last summer."

Peter would indeed have been the logical one to dismiss, since he was under the scout age, but Pee-wee never thought of that.

"We don't have to fire anybody because it isn't started yet—not regular," said Charlie. "All we have to do is to say who we don't want in." You will notice he said *WE*; *he* was in already.

"Well," said Pee-wee, "Harlen and Carlo and the Jansen fellers, they got to stay in because they were scouts already and we want that kind because, gee whiz, I don't want all tenderfoots. And you can shut up about Peter Tower because I'm the boss and I'm going to have him in, so that's one sure thing."

Charlie thought it discreet at this juncture to make some reference to their capital. "We'll make a list of things we'll get with the hundred dollars, hey?" he said. "All camping things, hey?"

"Sure," said Pee-wee, rather preoccupied.

"Hey, listen, Walt," said Bulton. "Let's drop that pair of dagoes. What the dickens did you ever want to ask them for, anyway? They won't stick to scouting, kids like that. Anyway, do you suppose they'll be living here in Bridgeboro long? Why, those little houses are going to be torn down soon. First thing you know they'll beat it and be living out in Chicago or traveling around with their mother and father. Honest, Walt, we can't make scouts out of that kind."

"Who's *we*?" Pee-wee demanded. "How can you show fellers about scouting when you don't know anything about it yourself yet?"

"All right, *you* then. Only this is what I'm saying; I bet they never asked to be scouts."



"I said if they'd show me their mother and father I'd get them into the scouts," said Pee-wee.

"A lot they care," said Bulton. "You'll see none of the patrol will stick if that pair is in. And anyway, they won't stick themselves. They don't belong in Bridgeboro. Gee, you don't see my father or yours or Mr. Blakeley or anybody asking their father to join the Golf Club, do you?"

No, that was true. No one had asked the gracious, enthusiastic, gesticulating, kindly little Signor Liventi to join the Golf Club. He did not belong in Bridgeboro.

"Now you see 'em, now you don't," said Bulton. "What do we want anyway, music players or scouts?"

Pee-wee was silent.

"You're always talking about Temples," persisted Bulton. "Did those kids get invited up to Mary Temple's birthday party?"

No, that was right too, they had not been.

"We'll drop them," said Bulton, "and I tell you what we'll do. I'll take the place of one of them and we'll get Ben Maxwell to take the place of the other, and Ben's got a big radio set, so we won't have to buy that. That'll leave us a clean hundred to get maybe a big tent and a lot of scout stuff and make a good start. All-American patrol, hey?"

Pee-wee was silent. "How do you know they'll move away?" he finally asked.

"Why, surest thing you know, they will—circus actors. And anyway, I ought to have something to say because isn't it my hundred dollars that's giving us such a fine old start—isn't it?"

Again Pee-wee was silent. "Who's going to tell them?" he asked weakly.

"Why, Jiminy Christopher," said Bulton, encouraged, "it isn't like as if you had to fire them. All you have to do is tell them you changed your plans, see? Tell 'em you're going to start another patrol later."

"I am, too," Pee-wee said, soothing his troubled conscience. "And they can be in that, hey, if they're here?"

"If," said Bulton.

"They used to travel with their mother and father," said Pee-wee, still trying to square himself with himself; "maybe they will again, hey?"

"You go up there and tell 'em to-day," said Bulton. "Tell 'em you changed your plans and you're going to start another patrol after a while. And I'll come up to your house to-night and we'll make a list of all the things we're going to buy. What do you say?"

"All right," said Pee-wee hesitatingly.

"And maybe I can get the check to-night too," said Bulton. "I got my old man eating out of my hand."

“All right,” said Pee-wee.

“You’ll sure do it?”

“If a scout says he’ll do a thing, he does it,” said Pee-wee.

“All right then, so long, I’ll see you later,” said Bulton. “I’ll be up at about eight and I’ll squeak like a chipmunk outside your house, hey?”

“All right,” said Pee-wee.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE TRAIL

It is to Pee-wee's credit that, convinced though he was, he did not go at once to the little house of the Liventi boys. He walked past it, but he did not go in. He was glad not to have seen either of the brothers while he was near their home.

The three little houses huddling together in a close row seemed more than ever like outcasts on the fashionable Terrace Avenue. It seemed likely enough that Bulton was right about this ugly, little, out-of-date trio being doomed. One porch ran across the three little houses and this was made into three porches by little separating fences, long unpainted and falling to pieces. A woman was shaking a rug out of an upper window of the end house as Pee-wee passed.

The middle house, which was the Liventi house, was without curtains, nor was there even a sociable bench or chair upon the wretched little porch. Pee-wee wondered in what distant town or city the gracious and bespangled tenants of this poor abode were playing and bowing and smiling to applauding audiences. He went by very quietly and hurriedly, for he did not want to be hailed.

Why? Had he not a message to deliver in that house? Well, he told himself, they might not be home. . . .

After supper he realized that only about half an hour remained before Bulton's coming—before the promised squeak of the new chipmunk. Yet still Pee-wee pushed the mower around the front lawn (entirely unnecessary) before strolling up to the end of the block. Then he went.

All was quiet around the three little houses. Pee-wee allowed himself some comfort from the doubtful information that this unsightly little block was soon to be razed and that those roving strangers, the Liventi family, would be gone, no one knew where. Yet the enthusiastic gesticulations and ready compliance of the little actor man who talked broken English kept intruding into his mind. Well, anyway, he had done a foolish thing to make such a bargain with these strange boys, and now he was going to undo it.

He was going to start big, with a hundred dollars. . . .

He went up to the steps on tiptoe, he did not know why. But he did not pull the old-fashioned bell handle. From somewhere in the house he could hear music. He paused, listening. It was the marimba that he heard and the air was a familiar one to Pee-wee. It was a popular piece that he had more than once heard over the radio. *The Old Lake Trail*, it was called. It was a spirited piece

and was being played with all those running variations that characterized the Liventi method. Now and then the players paused, repeating a part, as if practicing. *The Old Lake Trail*, Pee-wee knew it well.

The word *trail* was always in Pee-wee's mind and he had used it much in his talk with these brothers. But the truth did not occur to him, which was that Tasca and Bruno had selected this piece as having at least a remote connection with scouting. It was about a trail. And they played it in march time to give an impression of hikers upon a lonely trail. They were going to surprise Pee-wee and every one by playing it as an encore, in the event of their winning applause. And they played it so that the messenger without could hardly keep his feet still.

But he had his duty to perform and he pulled the bell. Tasca opened the door, holding one of the marimba hammers. Pee-wee walked into the tiny, musty hall and to the poor little living-room where the old Italian grandmother in her motley shawl was so intent upon her sewing (and so removed from America's young life perhaps) that she only nodded at him. Then Bruno came through from the back room, his hair all disheveled from his musical acrobatics.

"H'lo," said Pee-wee.

"Did you hear it?" Bruno asked.

"Yes, but there's something I got to see you about," Pee-wee said.

Did Tasca and Bruno sense something wrong? Those whose hopes run high are apt to sense trouble and anticipate bad news. How could Pee-wee (rough woodsman and all that) know how high their hopes had run? The old woman, who knew not a word of English, caught the agitation of her grandsons and watched Pee-wee shrewdly.

"Is—isn't there going to be any show?" Tasca ventured.

Pee-wee paused. And before he found words to answer, he *found himself*—the real Pee-wee Harris. That was better than finding a hundred dollars. For of all the scout claptrap that money will buy, tents and archery sets and so on, Pee-wee Harris himself was the greatest piece of scout paraphernalia known to scouting. You could stagger him with a hundred dollars, but you could not buy him with it. You see how it was, he started after a hundred dollars and he stumbled into *The Old Lake Trail*. Pee-wee was again on the right trail.

"Didn't I say there was going to be one?" he demanded. "If I say a thing I mean it. You got to be ready by five o'clock Saturday afternoon. We're going to hike up through the woods to Little Valley and we're going to cook our supper in the woods and go by scout resources and things and maybe even we'll get all smutched up eating roasted potatoes and that'll show the audience we're real scouts and don't have to eat home or buy our suppers. So you fellers have got to be ready at five o'clock sure. Because maybe we'll stop in

Bennett's and get ice cream cones before we start.”  
There was the real Pee-wee Harris for you!

## CHAPTER XII

### CHARLIE SQUEAKS LIKE A CHIPMUNK AND PEE-WEE ROARS LIKE A LION

Pee-wee did not know what he was going to tell Charlie Bulton, but on the way home he found out. It was almost an hour now since he had had supper; already the demon of hunger was upon him, so he took a long cut home, as he called it, and went around into Main Street for a cent's worth of golf balls, these being three candy spheres, red, white and blue respectively, and so hard that concrete was like melting snow beside them. They could be reduced only by a long and patient process during which the cheek was like a balloon.

In Bennett's Fresh Confectionery, Pee-wee encountered Ben Maxwell, to whom he proffered a blue golf ball. Ben was a tall boy who had refrained from joining the scouts for no better reason than that he thought he was too big. This absurd excuse (rather more prevalent than it should be) was regrettable, because Ben was a fine sort of boy and scouting was the poorer without him. He was always quiet and friendly.

"How's the new crowd coming on, Kid?" he asked as they paused outside of Bennett's.

"You don't call 'em a crowd, you call 'em a patrol," said Pee-wee.

"Listen, Kid," said Ben, hesitatingly, as if doubtful whether he should say what was in his mind, "don't take too much stock in Charlie Bulton. He may be all right in a way, but he's just using you, Kid. Don't waste your time training him; why, he isn't even going to get a scout suit; he wouldn't be seen in one, that's what he told me. His father promised him a bicycle if he'd join the scouts. When he gets his bicycle, good-by, scouts. He's going to put one over on his father and he's going to put one over on you fellows. *Don't you let him.* He doesn't care anything about scouts. All he cares for is hanging out with that gang of big fellows down in South Bridgeboro. He'll be holding his father up for a Ford next year. Why, he told me he could get a driver's license as soon as he's sixteen and that then Bridgeboro wouldn't see much of him. Don't you be a step on a stepladder for anybody, Kid."

"Did he tell you that?" Pee-wee roared.

"He told me he didn't expect to be in your kindergarten class two weeks."

"Did he call it that?" the head chipmunk demanded.

"That's just what he called it," said Ben quietly.

"I promise you I won't tell him you told me," said Pee-wee excitedly.

"Why, you can tell him anything you want to, Kid, I don't care," Ben

laughed. “I just didn’t want to see him using you, that’s all. I was glad to see you take up with those Liventi fellows, too, poor little codgers. They’re a couple of nice, decent kids. Their father’s nice, too, only if you tie his hands he can’t talk. I saw him at the station Sunday night and he nearly knocked me over telling me his kids were going to be *scouta boys*.”

Pee-wee was silent. But his heart was glad.

“It’s only bluffers like Bulton that guy fellows just because they’re strangers and different,” said Ben Maxwell. “He’s like a windmill, his arms are always going and he never hits anything. All right, so long, good luck to you, Kid.”

Pee-wee stood aghast. He felt as one might feel who has danced to the brink of a precipice and then drawn back. He strode home, his wrath mounting. He found Bulton sitting on the lowest step of the Harris porch. Bulton was the kind of boy who never rang another boy’s doorbell; he seemed to have a natural aversion to this mild kind of boldness; he lacked self-possession with grown-up folks. So, having all but exhausted his voice powers in simulating the squeak of the chipmunk in front of the hero’s abode, he had settled down to watchful waiting. As luck would have it he was moved to give a final despairing squeak just as Pee-wee came along. The scout seized, upon this as a sort of text.

“You needn’t imitate a chipmunk!” Pee-wee roared. “Anyway, you don’t do it right; that isn’t the way they squeak, but anyway, you’re not a chipmunk anyway!”

“Where were you?” the astonished Bulton asked.

“That’s all right where I was,” Pee-wee shouted, releasing a diminished golf ball from his mouth to secure a freer play of his vocal artillery. “You thought you could get into the scouts just so you could get a bicycle and then you’d get out again and have the laugh on us, but now you can’t get in anyway” (Pee-wee extended his authority to include the whole scout organization) “because I won’t let you, because you’re not going to make a fool out of me or out of the scouts either—*geeee whiz!*”

“Who’s been telling you that?” Bulton asked.

“Do you think I’m a-scared to tell you? It was Ben Maxwell and I’d sooner believe him than you, that’s one sure thing.”

Bulton gave a fine and menacing display of injured innocence, projecting his face close to Pee-wee’s and demanding incredulously, “He told you that? That sap! Maxwell? He told you that? Wait till I see him, *just wait till I see him!* Where is he?”

Bulton rather overplayed his part with this last question and presently found that he must continue his bluff.

“You come with me,” said Pee-wee excitedly; “I’ll show you where he is

all right; you can hear him say it yourself. And you needn't think you're going to get into the Chipmunks, because you're not, and besides Bruno and Tasca are going to stay in it. Gee whiz, Ben Maxwell has got *your* number."

"You just take me to him," said Bulton, accompanying Pee-wee.

"Isn't it what I'm doing?" Pee-wee said. "And besides he says you're a windmill, you're always blowing and you never hit anything."

"You just take me to him," said Bulton ominously.

"Anyway, you bet if I was a tattle-tale I'd go and tell your father," Pee-wee said, "how you tried to cheat him and all. Maybe I would, anyway, only you say you can prove you didn't say that to Ben Maxwell."

Thus Pee-wee all unwittingly created a predicament for Bulton. That worthy, having carried his bluff and bluster for two whole blocks, was on the point of declaring Maxwell to be beneath his notice and their errand not worth while, when suddenly the shadow of his father was cast across the affair. Charlie could not afford to have Pee-wee going to his father with the truth about the bicycle. For Charlie's father also had Charlie's number, and Charlie knew it. He was deferred by these considerations from nonchalantly withdrawing from their mission and could only say, with not quite as much spirit as before, "You just take me to him, that's all."

"Isn't that what I'm doing?" said Pee-wee.



## CHAPTER XIII

### BEN MAXWELL

Crossing Main Street they entered Hollis Place where the big, white, old-fashioned mansion of the Maxwells stood. They did not have to cross the spacious grounds, for Ben was sitting quite alone on the old stone carriage step out at the curb. This had MAXWELL cut in it like an inscription on a gravestone. Notwithstanding the universality of the automobile, the Maxwells still kept their horses and their fine turnout was a familiar sight on Main Street. Ben was the kind of boy who is to be found lingering alone here and there. It was not that he was unpopular, for as Roy Blakeley said, "The fellows like him better than vacation." Perhaps it was because he was sufficiently good company for himself. He seemed to be a kind of looker-on.

Bulton carried his theatrical indignation straight into the arena, but Ben Maxwell did not even stand up. "Hey, Maxwell," said he with blustering menace, "did you tell this kid I wanted to join his scouts just to get a bicycle out of my old man—did you say that? Just tell me if that's true."

"I don't know whether it's true or not," said Ben; "but it's what you told me. Sometimes you don't tell the truth."

*"You call me a liar?"* Bulton roared.



“YOU CALL ME A LIAR?” BULTON ROARED.

“I’ve heard you tell some pretty good ones.” Bulton paused and there was a touch of anticlimax in his calm acceptance of this declaration.

“When did I tell you that?” he demanded. He spoke as if his premeditated assault hung upon every next answer. “When—just say when I told you that, that’s all.”

“Yesterday afternoon,” said Ben quietly; “right in front of the High School.”

*“In front of the High School?”* Bulton demanded, killing time.

“Well, maybe it was just beyond the High School,” said Ben.

“*Yaaaaah*, who’s a liar now?” Bulton sneered, looking triumphantly at Pee-wee.

Ben Maxwell arose leisurely and faced Bulton.

And as he did so Pee-wee felt a certain tremor and was constrained to silence as if the matter were quite out of his hands.

“Do you apologize for that?” Ben asked.

“For what?”

“For calling me a liar.”

“I’ll leave it to the kid; you said it was in front of the High School, now you admit——”

“Do you apologize?” Ben interrupted.

“No, because——”

And there was the end of Charlie Bulton’s wretched show. He went down amid his bluster and his silly technicalities. The blow was vigorous enough to deprive him of his balance and he was down on his knees before he knew it.

“Do you apologize?” said Ben coldly.

“You admit——” the poor fool began, still clinging to his technical claim of truth.

“Apologize?” said Ben.

“All right, I apologize, but just the same I’m right,” Bulton cried, as he got up on his feet. “It wasn’t in front of the High School,” he added, pulling out his handkerchief and pressing it to his eye. “You’ll get in trouble all right,” he wept. “I—I—wouldn’t—I wouldn’t—wouldn’t want to be in your place when I—I—when—I tell my father.”

He did not linger upon the scene of his ignominy. He felt wounded, not only in his eye, but in his soul. He had not intended that the encounter should be so precipitate and definite. For a boy to mean what he said, even to the extent of ignoring sacred technicalities, seemed unfair. His fine, blustering, menacing spirit was hurt. But most of all his left eye was hurt. And he departed ingloriously holding his handkerchief to it.

“He’ll tell his father the biggest string of lies!” said Ben. “Let’s follow along and see the old gent and tell him just what’s what, hey?”

“Are you afraid what might happen?” Pee-wee asked, somewhat aghast at the turn of affairs.

“Do I seem to be shaking?” Ben laughed.

“Do you think we ought to tell his father about the bicycle? We wouldn’t be tattle-tales?” the sturdy little scout asked.

“Kid, you’re all right,” Ben laughed. “You’ve got scout honor—what d’you call it—kidnaped. Everything about you is big except your size; you’re a

pocket edition of a giant. Bull's got a black eye, I'm afraid, and I have a hunch I ought to tell his poor old dad why I did it. What do you say?"

"Oh, boy, I bet it's good and black," said Pee-wee fearfully.

"Or maybe he was just making believe," said Ben. "He ought to be in the movies."

"No, I bet it's black," said Pee-wee. "Anyway you know what's best; come ahead, I'll go. Maybe we'd only be tattle-tales kind of techn—like a teckinality, hey?"

"Something like that," laughed Ben, lifting Pee-wee's hat and ruffling his hair for him. "Come ahead, then."

## CHAPTER XIV A PREDICAMENT

Pee-wee was right. Bully Bulton's eye was "good and black," relieved by touches of rich purple. Bully Bulton (in a way of speaking) had his scout badge and wore it on his left eye, though he did not think of it in that way. He was not a heroic picture as he sat on the couch in the living-room as Pee-wee and Ben were shown in by an apprehensive maid, who seemed more concerned for Ben than he was for himself.

Fortunately for the welfare of Charles his fond mother had gone to the movies with her two daughters and Mr. Bulton (contrary to custom) was able to deal with his son in his own way. There was no one present to call Ben a coward and a loafer. The father was sitting in his big chair contemplating his son.

"Mr. Bulton," said Ben, with a self-possession that lacked any taint of assertiveness, "as long as I was the one that hit Charlie I thought I'd come straight to you and tell you about it; I don't want you to think I'm a scrapper."

"I guess you can hold your own," said Mr. Bulton.

"And if you want to call up my father and tell him——"

Mr. Bulton shook his head. "No, I don't," said he. "Well, why did you do it?"

"He called me a liar; I wouldn't let anybody say that about me."

"No," said Mr. Bulton. "Did you tell him he was a—— Did you call him a bad name?"

"Do you believe I did?" Ben asked.

"No, I don't," said Mr. Bulton.

At this juncture Pee-wee took a double-header into the talk. "And anyway," he vociferated, "gee whiz, a black eye isn't so bad; if you're a scout you might fall out of a tree and get one; while you're stalking you might, *gee whiz*. Even you might get your arm broken if you're a scout, but anyway, I know first aid, because we have to study that, and he ought to put cold water on it. But, gee, anyway you got to admit Ben was right, because" (he was addressing Mr. Bulton) "would you let me call you a liar?"

Mr. Bulton smiled in an amused but rather disheartened way and glanced inquiringly at Ben.

"He——" Charlie began.

"Keep still," said his father peremptorily.

"It was just this, Mr. Bulton," said Ben; "you might as well know the truth.

Charlie told me he was trying to get into the scouts just to get a bicycle out of you. Then he said he was going to get out of the scouts again. He said they were a lot of kids and he had no use for them, but that he just wanted to get a bicycle. I guess that's about the truest thing he ever said, that he hasn't much use for the scouts. I'm not in the scouts, but I wouldn't stand to see this kid used like that. I believe if a fellow is a scout he ought to be one and stick. This little chap isn't working to get people bicycles."

Mr. Bulton silenced his son who seemed about to launch forth and said to Ben, "How does it happen you're not in the scouts?"

"Now you got him!" shouted Pee-wee. "Gee whiz, make him answer that—just you make him! Every scout in this town asked him that—so that proves it. He'd be assistant scoutmaster if he did, that's what he'd be. Because look, you can see yourself what he does, I don't mean black eyes, but how he has a sense of honor you see for yourself and that's rule one; he thinks he's so smart that he doesn't join because he stays home and reads a lot and helps take care of the horses, but anyway you got a big store and you're grownup and you can see if that's a reason he obeys all the laws and he doesn't know it and he can swim across the river, so I'll leave it to you if he ought to join and it just serves him right you make him answer." Pee-wee paused for air.

"All right, Kid," laughed Ben. "I'll join; you win."

"If you, if you go back on your word now you're as bad as he is," said Pee-wee, referring to Charlie. Pee-wee was not famous for his tact.

It would be hard to describe Mr. Bulton's feelings as he listened rather wistfully to this talk. He had no doubt about Ben Maxwell. He saw his own son tripped up in a mean scheme involving a deceit upon himself. The presence of this fine boy with honor bred in him through generations, and of the vociferous little propagandist, seemed only to emphasize his son's unworthiness. Here he was, dishonored and with a black eye, and it was not the first time that complaint had come to his father.

Mr. Bulton arose to show the boys out; he seemed disinclined to prolong the affair. But he laid his hand on Ben Maxwell's shoulder and patted it.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Bulton," said Ben as they reached the front door. "I guess maybe I wouldn't do it if the same thing happened again. I've got no use for scrapping. Fellows say *liar* and maybe they don't always mean what they say—it's just hot air."

Mr. Bulton only patted him on the shoulder. "It's best not to scrap," said he, as if stating a general proposition. "It's all right, my boy. You go ahead and be a scout and I'll call it quits."

"Do you make him promise it?" Pee-wee demanded.

"I make him promise it," said Mr. Bulton.

"I'm game—I give in," laughed Ben.

When Mr. Bulton returned to the living room where his son sat waiting and apprehensive, he did not voice the same sentiment in regard to fighting as he had to Ben Maxwell. His demeanor was grim, his speech crisp. By his manner he swept aside all possibility of controversy as to the merits of the affair; he went straight to the point.

“Well, sir,” said he, bringing his hands together as if to clinch a decision, “I’m going to give you a choice of two things, and a bicycle doesn’t go with either one of them. You’d better put some cold water on that and get to bed before your mother sees it. Cold water, isn’t that what he said? Wait minute—sit down. Now, sir, you’re going to have a choice of two things. You’re either going to join the scouts and make good with them, or else you’re going to military school. Now, Charlie, your mother can’t help you and your sisters can’t help you; you’ve got to help yourself. You’re going to get into that scout game (don’t ask me how you’ll do it) or else you’re going up to North Woodbine to military school.”

“I can’t—they won’t——” Charlie pled.

“That little codger says scouts are resourceful,” his father shot at him. “Now which will you do? As sure as I sit here I’m going to write up to North Woodbine to-night if you say the word. Now which will it be?”

“Do you give a hundred dollars?” Charlie asked fearfully. For the threat of military school had haunted him for months past.

“Never you mind about that, sir,” Mr. Bulton snapped; “you and I have no understandings at all—no presents or money involved. You get in on your merits and stay in on your merits or off you go to military school. There you have your offer. Now what do you want to do? You’ve had your way, Charlie, now I’m going to have mine. You signed your own school report, you played hooky, you teased little what’s-her-name so her mother was in here about it, you played craps and the captain was here about it, you drove a car without a license, you swore at your sister, the boys call you Bully, and now you’ve tried to play a trick on me. Now either the scouts are going to make you, or military school’s going to make you. Which do you say? Don’t argue—I don’t want to hear your voice. Scouts, is it? All right then. *I’ll give you until a week from Saturday to get in.* That’s the first of the month. I won’t mention the subject until then. If you haven’t got your credentials by that time you’ll march in line with those youngsters up at the Academy. That’s all I’ve got to say to you. Now you’d better go up and get to bed before your mother comes home.”

Bully Bulton crept upstairs, a pitiable figure. But he did not sleep. For indeed he had much to worry him. How could he get into the scouts now? He might go outside of Bridgeboro, but they would only tell him to join in his home town. And who would he ask in his home town? The troop, and its satellite the Chipmunks, were full to the brim. The other troop had gone to

pieces. Then he began wondering how Ben Maxwell was going to get in. Then he fell to thinking of North Woodbine Military Academy and of how they marched the boys here and there together, and ruled them with a discipline that he feared and dreaded. He would rather die than go to that horrible place. The thought of it haunted him as he fell asleep.



## CHAPTER XV

### A BIG HAUL

Pee-wee was fickle to every triumph; he passed from one glory to another, and nothing was so great and important as to deter him from casual discoveries and experiments. The thing of the moment was the greatest thing in the world to him. And the thing of the moment now was getting Ben Maxwell installed as a scout. But even such a glorious acquisition as Ben Maxwell could not tempt Pee-wee to tamper further with this full patrol of Chipmunks. He had had his lesson.

"I got an inspiration," he said excitedly as he and Ben walked home. "You know when I started the Chipmunks? I had to leave the Ravens, didn't I?"

"I suppose you did," said Ben.

"Sure, I did, only they don't admit it," said Pee-wee.

"They know it, but they don't admit it?" Ben laughed.

"Sure, because I got up patrols that broke up. But if I put you in there then they'll know I left, you can bet. They'll see the place is filled up, then they'll know."

"I guess you better not do that, Kid."

"Sure, I better do it, don't you worry, and that's a dandy patrol that is, the Ravens; they got two life-saving medals and over forty merit badges. And you'd fit in there fine, because you're kind of big and most of 'em are big, and anyway, you should worry because I'm in the troop just the same; I'm in there with my new patrol. Gee whiz, those fellers are crazy! I started a patrol at Temple Camp and all the members had to go home, didn't they? So that's why that broke up. Then I started one here, but it only had one feller and he got the chicken-coop—I mean the chicken-pox—and it left him so he didn't want to be a scout any more, so then I went back in the Ravens and Roy Blakeley, that's head of the Silver Foxes, they're all crazy only he's the craziest" (Pee-wee paused for air) "he said keep the patrol fires burning so I could always come back. He said absence makes the troop more quiet—you know him, he's always grinning."

"Well, I guess we'd better keep those fires burning," Ben said.

"That shows how much sense you've got even if you are smart," said Pee-wee, "because now I got a full patrol and even Mr. Ellsworth, our scoutmaster, admits it and he says we're going to be a fourth patrol in the troop and the only way I could get to be a patrol leader was to make a patrol to order, he said; he said I couldn't climb to the top so the best way was to start at the top and put

scouts in underneath me; that's logic. So that's the way I did, see? And if the Ravens don't admit it they'll see for themselves when my patrol gets all through with the big show up in Little Valley that I'm the boss of, then we're going to have the ceremony. Four of those fellers were scouts before and besides there's Peter Tower; he's a little feller and the Liventi fellers, that makes eight. And we got official repetition——”

“What?”

“That's what the United States won't give Russia.”

“Oh, official recognition.”

“Sure, so now will you go into the Ravens? Anyway you got to because you promised Mr. Bulton and you got to have your honor be trusted, that's a rule.”

“All right, Kid, just as you say. But I guess nobody can take your place. Some vacancy, huh?”

It was more than a vacancy, it was a vacuum.

The only way to handle this situation was through the scoutmaster, Mr. Ellsworth. The Ravens positively declined to take their resigning member seriously. “If you take him at all, take him serially, but not seriously,” said Roy Blakeley of the Silver Foxes. “Take him in small weekly doses.”

So Pee-wee went direct to the fountainhead with his new recruit. It was indeed a splendid gift that he was presenting to the well-established Ravens. Every scout in Bridgeboro had tried to get Ben but failed. Now the coveted prize had fallen into Pee-wee's hands (his usual luck); poor Mr. Bulton had turned the scale for him. It was a fine patrol to get into, especially suitable to a boy like Ben. It was the nucleus of the fine First Bridgeboro Troop and consisted of older boys. Pee-wee had been its mascot. It was a worthy patrol for a worthy member.

Ben would not be disappointed with scouting in the Ravens. It would be (Mr. Ellsworth realized) rather risky to chance him on the miscellaneous Chipmunks in this chrysalis stage of their development, even if there had been room in that crowded aggregation. The Chipmunks might (I only say *might*) fall to pieces. Rome fell and Russia collapsed. But Ben Maxwell, once secured, must be held at any cost. The Ravens was the patrol for him. Hence the famous saying which Roy Blakeley ascribed to our hero, “*There is danger in the Chipmunks. Scouting must be made safe for Ben Maxwell.*”

Therefore when Mr. Ellsworth presented Ben to the Ravens to take the place of the builder of new empires, the scouts of that ribald patrol sat up and took notice and acknowledged that the departed hero had celebrated his withdrawal with a glorious thunderbolt.

“*Ben Maxwell!*” the leader, Artie Van Arlen, whispered to Doc Carson as Mr. Ellsworth sprung the great surprise. “Good-night, we're in luck! How the

dickens did P. Harris ever scoop *him* in?"

"Jiminy crinkums!" was all Wig Weigand could say.

Leader Artie sprang forward, giving Ben a welcoming hand, and the whole three patrols gave three cheers for the new member who had fallen at last.

"Three cheers! Ravens, Foxes and Elks!" shouted Roy Blakeley. "United we stand, divided we sprawl! And has P. Harris left our home fireside? Oh, say not so!"

"No," laughed Mr. Ellsworth; "in fact, he expects to be more in our midst than ever."

"Say not so!" shouted Roy.

"I'm acting for him to-night," said Mr. Ellsworth.

"I thought he was an actor now," said Roy.

"I am presenting Ben Maxwell to the Raven Patrol (if the Silver Foxes will be quiet)," said Mr. Ellsworth, "on behalf of Scout Harris who presents him with his compliments to the patrol which he will always love, even if his duties carry him into a wider field of usefulness."

"Oh, say not so," wailed Roy. "A wider field of uselessness."

"He presents Ben Maxwell to the finest patrol in existence, with the exception of two others, and he wishes it understood that he personally and individually discovered, captured and delivered Ben Maxwell into my hands."

"Hurrah for P. Harris!" shouted Grove Bronson.

"Hurrah for Ben Maxwell!" called several others.

"This being Friday evening," said Mr. Ellsworth, "our hero is preparing his new patrol——"

"Is it an eight or a six?" called Roy.

"Or a four?" shouted Wig.

"Or a one?" called Hunt Ward.

"He is preparing his new patrol, the Chipmunks, for the pilgrimage to Little Valley to-morrow evening," said Mr. Ellsworth. "There, as you know, they are to participate in the Church Anniversary Celebration, and I have been ordered to keep my hands off. Shortly following their triumphal return, the full Chipmunk Patrol will be introduced to the troop and take its permanent place as a unit in our organization. The last words of Scout Harris when I saw him were, 'I regret that I have only one Ben Maxwell to give to my patrol.'"

"Them's noble words," said Doc Carson.

"Let's give another three cheers for Ben Maxwell," shouted Roy. "*Gee whiz*, I never thought we'd see *you* here."

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE CHIPMUNKS

Pee-wee loved glory far too much to permit of a sordid love of money. But he had come so near to having the fabulous sum of a hundred dollars with which to finance his sprouting patrol that now he felt almost as if he had actually lost that amount. His active mind, always running beforehand, had conceived a list of things he had intended to buy as patrol property. These included a large tent, patrol pennants, a radio set and a motion-picture outfit. This last was to enable the Chipmunks to remain in the show business and make a fortune out of it.

Now, suddenly, Pee-wee was without these things, for up to this juncture he had actually possessed them—in his mind. Of more immediate concern was the predicament of little Peter Tower who had nothing requisite to scouting but the scout smile, and would probably never acquire a scout uniform. Peter's parents were so poor that the unfortunate church mouse would seem a millionaire in comparison. But whatever the gods had denied Peter he was not lacking in admiration of his chief.

As for Willis Harlen and Eddie Carlo, they had been scouts and still had their scout suits. So also the Jansen brothers, whose people lived on Terrace Avenue and were wealthy. But they had seen Pee-wee's stock go down before and positively declined to invest in his enterprises on behalf of Billy and Wendy. But the Liventi boys, poor as their parents were, had the promise of new scout suits and red scarfs (that being the elected Chipmunk color), which articles of attire none of the other boys, not even Pee-wee, had secured.

Tasca and Bruno seemed full of a kind of mingled fear and joy as they betook themselves across Bridgeboro Bridge to the River Road where their comrades were waiting for them. Each of the brothers carried a huge, mysterious-looking, black grip with a gorgeous L painted in gold upon the sides. These strange containers held the dismembered marimba which could be reduced and disjointed and folded to a compactness hardly short of miraculous. The brothers laughed bashfully as they approached the waiting group; they had outdone themselves in the matter of regalia and were slyly happy. Mr. Ellsworth, who had as yet only heard of them, would have given them a hearty welcome and made them feel at once at home. Perhaps it would be expecting too much of Pee-wee and his comrades to do that. But these shy boys (strangers in a strange environment when all is said) needed something to set their nervous happiness at ease. They were all on edge and looked to Pee-wee

as if all the joy of their life rested in his hands.

“We not late?” said Tasca.

“Maybe after all I won’t have the marimba,” said Pee-wee. He was not fickle to his friends, but he was ever fickle to his ideas. “Because like Wendy says maybe it isn’t kind of like scouts, maybe.”

“We got it to play good,” said Bruno; “scout musick.”

“Just the same you have to do what I say,” said Pee-wee, “because I’m patrol leader.”

“Sure—we do,” said Bruno quite readily, but with a little note of disappointment in his voice.

“Everything’s got to be kind of like pioneers,” Pee-wee said. “I got some potatoes to roast on a fire and I’m going to show you how you always got to put a fire out that you build in the woods, but first we’re going to show you how scouts never starve no matter what—even at the North Pole they wouldn’t starve.”

Peter Tower gazed upon his chief with awe; he would have followed him to the North Pole gladly. Bruno and Tasca seemed impressed; they were very quiet and respectful.

Pee-wee continued, “Willis and Ed and Wendy and Billy are kind of bosses like sort of under the patrol leader on account of their being scouts before, so you got to do what we say.”

This appointment of officers left a standing army of three, tenderfoots with a vengeance, who seemed deeply impressed by their command and ready enough to obey. If Tasca and Bruno felt any little twinges of disappointment or apprehension no one saw it (or at least there was no one there to recognize it) in their willing, smiling faces.

“I say we don’t bother with anything that isn’t scouting,” said Billy Jansen. “This is going to be a scout show; I say nothing but scout stunts.”

“Sure, that’s what I’m going to have it,” said Pee-wee.

“You make me tired,” said Eddie Carlo. “Just about five minutes ago you said how we could have bought a motion-picture outfit only we didn’t get a hundred dollars. I suppose Daniel Boone went around with a motion-picture machine under his arm—you make me tired! You’re the one that’s not for scouting.”

Here was treason indeed.

“I did not!” yelled Pee-wee.

“Sure you did,” Eddie Carlo shot back and the verbal fireworks went off too rapidly to distinguish their origin.

“He did.”

“I did not.”

“That ain’t what I meant.”

“Why didn’t you say what you meant then?”

“Do you say I’m not leader?”

“No, but you said if it wasn’t for Liventis you’d have a hundred dollars, I leave it to——”

“Did I say that? I said Bulton is a bluff, I leave it to Willis.”

“You said,” said Willis Harlen with comparative calm though with not much tact, “that if Charlie Bulton had come instead of Liventis we’d have got a hundred dollars to buy stuff and you said we could have bought a motion-picture machine and now you’re trying to say you’re all for scouting, roasting potatoes and like that.”

“Did I want Bulton?” roared Pee-wee.

“No, but you wanted his hundred dollars,” said Willis.

“Ah, cut it out,” said Billy Jansen.

“I said then we could buy a scout suit for Peter Tower,” Pee-wee fairly yelled.

Peter seemed panic-stricken at the drawing of even his name into this tumultuous brawl. As for Bruno and Tasca they did not say a word. But Bruno cast his big, lustrous eyes upon Peter and for the first time took note of the little fellow’s shabby apparel.

“We don’t play it like you say,” said Tasca. He was not thinking so much about that now, as of the mysterious hundred dollars which somehow he and his brother had prevented the patrol from having.

“Listen here,” said Willis Harlen who seemed the most rational of the group. “We’re not talking about Charlie Bulton; gee, if we can’t find something better than him to talk about let’s shut up.”

“Didn’t I shut up?” roared Pee-wee.

“Now listen,” said Willis; “we’re not talking about a hundred dollars we didn’t get either. What’s the use of talking about something we didn’t get? We’re talking about whether this is going to be a regular scout stunt exhibition or not——”

“It is and I’m the boss!” Pee-wee fairly screamed.

“All right then, who’s kicking?” said Willis. “Let’s keep to scouting. We’ll give some scout exercises on the platform and you can do that mushroom stunt, and we’ll do the sneaking-up stunt—that’s all good scout stuff.”

“Sure it is, didn’t I think it up?” said Pee-wee.

“All right then, are we all agreed?” Willis asked, looking around and in a not unfriendly way at the Liventi boys.

Bruno looked at Tasca. “Sure, we do what you tell,” he said with a wistful smile. He also was not thinking so much about the marimba and their disappointment now. He was wondering about that hundred dollars; he felt almost as if he had stolen it. . . .

## CHAPTER XVII

### REAL SCOUT STUFF

The fireworks did not last long; it was agreed that not only the “show” but the journey should be consecrated to scouting in its wild and primitive aspect. And Pee-wee was to be the undisputed leader. The silent and obedient Liventi boys were not a little astonished to discover how readily their chief revised his most cherished plans and with what blithesome inconstancy he consigned the gorgeous marimba to the shelf. Not exactly to the shelf, either, for poor Bruno and Tasca had still to carry their burdens through the woods, which they did willingly and smilingly. Perhaps their father could have told them (and put an end to their puzzlement) that great geniuses like Pee-wee are apt to be changeable and flighty, victims of their own inspirations.

There was no bad feeling among these pilgrims to Little Valley, but the patrol seemed to fall into two sections as the hikers made their way through the woods. Perhaps it was because of their burdens that Bruno and Tasca followed instead of walked with the clamorous group. They were overshadowed by that arguing, planning throng of regular scouts who were arranging the details of their program as they hiked.

Now and again Pee-wee’s voice arose above the tumult repudiating or accepting “stunts” intended for demonstration purposes. These things were new and strange to the Liventi boys and they were too diffident to obtrude themselves into matters of which they had no knowledge. Poor little Peter, finding most excitement in proximity to the hero, ran along beside him spellbound by the discussion. There was nothing sensational about the two boys who came along after with their big black grips. Now and then Willis Harlen, who was a nice sort of boy, looked back and winked at them and whenever he did they would smile at him eagerly. The Liventi boys were off the program.

And Pee-wee was off the trail. He had scorned the regular path around through the woods to Little Valley and was taking a short-cut directly north guided by those wiseacres, the squirrels, and by his various scout lore.

“You fellers that are just getting to be scouts,” he said, “you better see how I do, Tasca and Bruno and Peter, because do you know how I can tell we’re going north? Do you see all those nutshells on the ground? That means there’s a squirrel’s nest in this tree. And it’ll be on the south side of the tree, because that’s how squirrels keep warm easier, so that’s how I can tell which is north.”

The tenderfoots seemed much impressed; poor Bruno and Tasca were

caught by the spell of this invincible thing, scouting, and began to see, perhaps, how their glittering and fancy instrument did not exactly fit in among these robust accomplishments. Their admiration reached its height when Pee-wee descended the tree announcing that the clew of the nutshells was verified; he had discovered a squirrel's nest in a hollow.

"So that shows that if we go straight that way," he said, pointing, "we'll be going straight north and we'll come out at Little Valley. And it's about a half an hour shorter. So that's the way scouts do, do you see?"

Bruno and Tasca were greatly interested; as for Peter Tower, he gasped in awe.

Pee-wee's changing interests now moved him to walk along with the Liventi brothers. "Lots of other things you'll learn too," he said. "Gee whiz, don't you care about playing that thing, because anyway now we got a lot of dandy new ideas."

"We do like you say," Bruno said cheerfully.

"How do you lose a hundred dollars account of us?" Tasca ventured to ask. "We get out if you say; we wouldn't have you lose that account of us."

"We got no money," Bruno laughed, shrugging his shoulders in a foreign way. For a second he seemed just like his father. "We got no money to put in. You let Bully in so we get out if you say."

"Cut it out," shouted Willis Harlen. "Are we hitting straight north?"

"Sure we are," said Pee-wee.

It turned out that they were hitting due north with such miraculous precision that after a little while they came out at the old deserted lumber camp which was due east from the last squirrel's nest that Pee-wee had inspected, for he had paused to shin up trees and inspect several. He paused in consternation. "Gee whiz, this lumber camp is in the wrong place," said he.

"It's just where it always was," said Willis Harlen.

"Maybe even a squirrel might make a mistake even," Pee-wee ventured, with a side glance at the quiet Liventi boys. They had set down their grips and were waiting without any skepticism in regard to their leader. "Can't a squirrel make a—can't he get rattled maybe?" Pee-wee demanded. "And go up and build a nest on the wrong side he might. That shows he's only human. Even scouts make mistakes."

"*You said it,*" laughed Willis Harlen. "Anybody got a compass?"

"I got one," Pee-wee said, producing one out of his storage warehouse of a pocket.

"Why didn't you use it then?" Billy Jansen inquired.

"Do you deny you said it was to be all regular scout stuff?" Pee-wee roared, assuming also a posture of terrible menace.

"Now don't let's start a scrap," said Willis.



“We went east instead of north and here we are at the old lumber camp. Blamed if I can tell which way Little Valley is from here. It’s going to get dark soon, too. I don’t see what good a compass will do us. We haven’t got time to roast any potatoes or anything else, that’s one thing sure.”

Pee-wee could not fail to realize that he had lost a little prestige—by putting his faith in ignorant and unprincipled squirrels who had never read scouting literature. He felt quite sure of little Peter, but he glanced rather anxiously at Bruno and Tasca. They were loyal in thought and look.

Then Pee-wee had an inspiration. “Sure we can’t use a compass,” he shouted, “because we don’t know which way Little Valley is and you’ve got to know where you’re at just the same as what point of the compass the place you’re going to is at. What good is it if we know which is north if we don’t know whether we want north or not?” He never said a truer word.

“But I know a way,” Pee-wee shouted, “and I’ll show you how scouts can do!” He saw to it that the three tenderfoots took note of this heroic proffer of rescue. “Do you see that big high tree—the one with the wire going through it? That used to bring power here to the camp, that wire. Do you know what I’m going to do? I’m going to climb away up in that tree and then I can see Little Valley. I’m going to climb way up to the top.”

“I guess that’s about the only way,” said Wendy Jansen. “Do you want me to do it?”

“No, I’m going to do it, because I’m patrol leader,” said Pee-wee. “Gee whiz, if scouts can’t do a thing one way they can do it another.”

So saying, he threw off his scout jacket and had recourse to a better and more scoutish medium of determining localities than the elusive squirrel, namely his uncanny ability to climb. The Liventi boys watched him as he scrambled up the trunk like a monkey and felt that here after all was a real scout, who could turn failure into triumph, and do things (as they hoped to be able to do) in the great outdoors.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### UP A TREE

From somewhere in the dizzy height of that great tree descended the voice of Pee-wee, agreeably thinned by the distance. “*Suuure*, I can see it,” he shouted; “it’s right over that hill; the other side of that hill is Little Valley Heights. Gee whiz, I know which way to go now all right.”

“That’s northwest,” Willis Harlen shouted back, consulting Pee-wee’s compass.

“Sure, we go northwest, right over that hill,” Pee-wee shouted. “I can even see the white church. Do you see where I mean before I come down?”

“Sure, come on down,” Willis called back.

It was characteristic of Pee-wee that he always went in easier than he came out. He was better at starting than at finishing. So perhaps it was symbolic of his adventurous career that he encountered some difficulty in descending the tree. Perhaps he had ascended on the south side and was trying to descend on the north side. At all events he soon became as much “rattled” as the most ignorant squirrel.

“Gee williger,” he shouted, “the limbs are a long way apart up here; I don’t know where they went to.”

He had handed himself very dextrously down from one branch to another, but here there was no branch below near enough to risk a similar feat. So he had to edge his way in to the trunk and shin down that. But it was alive with green caterpillars, so he availed himself of the next lower branch to descend as he had done before. Here the pests were not so numerous. But soon he found himself in a predicament. The branch which he was on gave under his weight and he realized too late that it was broken at its juncture with the trunk. He dared not stay upon it, yet he could not easily get off it. He had to think and act quickly.

About five feet below him the heavy wire ran through the tree’s foliage. He could not be certain of it, but he was certain from the ominous splitting noise that the branch on which he sat was going to break. There was another branch perhaps ten feet below him. Perhaps the wire would support him for a second while he groped for the branch below it. It was a pretty ticklish situation and Pee-wee was at his best here.

If it had taken him as long to do this stunt as it takes to read it, he would probably have gone down to his death. Even while the branch split and gave he pulled his shirt over his head like lightning and dropped it accurately across the

wire below him. Here was good scout work, for if he had to cling to the wire, at least it would not cut or dangerously chafe his hands.

He was not sure that he could reach the lower branch hanging full length from the wire. But he could not move in toward the trunk, nor would the sagging branch permit him to regain the branch above it. Of all the tight places Pee-wee had ever been in, here was the tightest. He could not even rally an audience for what he did, he did instantaneously. Moreover his comrades could not see him amid the foliage.

Just as the branch cracked warningly Pee-wee dropped and caught the wire, clasping the shirt around it with his two hands. For just a second he dangled, then the wire broke somewhere and with lightning instinct and dexterity he grasped the branch below which he had only been able to touch with his feet. Skill or luck, he caught hold of it, scrambled up, got his balance and was safe.

“What the dickens did you do?” Eddie Carlo called up.

“I saved my life,” Pee-wee shouted; “wait till I come down and I’ll tell you.” He could not climb and talk at the same time and do justice to both.

## CHAPTER XIX SUPPERTIME

They rallied excitedly around the shirtless hero. He bore, as a trophy of his heroism, a long scratch upon his round and frowning countenance; his curly hair was much disheveled and his trousers torn. But he was triumphant.

“What the dickens——” Eddie Carlo gasped.

“I saved my own life,” said Pee-wee; “I did it myself.” One might have thought that he intended claiming the life-saving medal for his self-sacrificing deed.

It was not necessary for Pee-wee to address his new recruits particularly under guise of talking to the whole patrol. No such ruse was necessary to impress them with his prowess as he thunderously related what had happened in the tree. As for Peter Tower he regarded Pee-wee not only as one who had dropped out of a tree, but as one who had dropped out of the clouds. Bruno and Tasca listened with eyes glistening, and with ready, approving smiles. If they said nothing it was only because they were new to this clamorous group, and diffident. But they saw well enough that their glittering, fringed marimba had no place here, and they were glad it was concealed in its two cases.

“Do you know what would have happened to me if I hadn’t caught that wire?” Pee-wee demanded. “I’d of come tumbling down with a lot of bones broken and then do you know what you’d have to do?” He was talking *at* the new recruits. “You’d have to make tourniquets and things, do you know what those are?”

“Are they something to eat?” Peter asked. His thoughts were probably beginning to run on this subject.

“No, they’re something to bandage a person up with and stop the blood from leaking, you have to know first aid.”

“How about some potatoes?” Billy Jansen asked. “As long as we know which way to go now, let’s have some eats in a hurry; we’ll get there on time, it’s only seven. Maybe my watch is a little fast at that.”

“I can tell by the sun, where’s the sun?” said Pee-wee.

“I haven’t got it,” said Willis Harlen.

“Come on, let’s eat,” said Eddie Carlo.

“Suppose I couldn’t of climbed to the top of that tree,” Pee-wee said. “Where would we be I’d like to know?”

“We’d be right here,” said Willis. “Come on, Tascy, sit down, you fellows, we’re going to eat in a hurry.”

Bruno and Tasca obediently sat down on their marimba cases and the others sat on the ground while Pee-wee dug down into a burlap bag which he had carried over his shoulder like a peddler. From this he extracted a few potatoes and a bundle of sticks which he had whittled to points. One of these was a shade roller. One was a fragment of a carpet-beater. But by far the most interesting thing which Pee-wee extracted from this grab-bag was an apparatus in several parts, one of which looked like a miniature bow and arrow. This was for the purpose of revolving a pointed stick held top and bottom, and by this process, if one were lucky, a collection of wood dust might be ignited at the revolving point of the stick. Once, after patient experimenting on a Saturday, Pee-wee had coaxed a spark into being and ignited this inflammable little area.

Upon the strength of his success with this romantically primitive device he had forbidden his patrol to carry any matches on their pilgrimage to Little Valley. After roasting potatoes en route, he intended to exhibit this scout implement, and demonstrate it to the audience.

He now instructed his patrol to gather twigs and form them into a pyramid; things began to look like business, as if they were going to have something to eat. Pee-wee wrestled courageously with the scout fire-maker (which had enjoyed great popularity among the Indians) squatting on a rock and pushing the bow part back and forth, revolving the pointed stick in its pointed hole filled with wood powder.

But nothing happened. Tasca and Bruno, sitting on their altogether unprimitive cases, watched the proceeding patiently without any pardonable inclination to levity. Peter Tower was all eyes. The others seemed interested. But nothing happened. Pee-wee pushed and pulled like a fiddler. One or two hopeful boys had added twigs to the little waiting pyramid. Billy Jansen was so optimistic that he began sticking potatoes on the ends of the roasting sticks. Pee-wee became red in the face and panted from pushing and pulling. But nothing happened.



PEE-WEE WRESTLED COURAGEOUSLY WITH THE SCOUT FIRE-  
MAKER.

“We got to be careful when the fire starts on account of it spreading,” Pee-wee panted. “You better clear away the dry grass around those twigs, because that’s one thing you got to be careful about”—he glanced at the Liventi boys—“starting forest fires.”

But the forest seemed to be safe enough.

## CHAPTER XX

### OUTSIDERS

There now occurs an intermission of about twenty minutes in this story during which absolutely nothing happens. Except that our hero manipulated his crude engine furiously with absolutely not the slightest result. It is true that the dust at the point of the stick got warm. But then Pee-wee got warm too. You could have as easily lighted a fire by contact with Pee-wee as by the inflammable dust made and provided.

“Has anybody got a match?” he finally asked.

“I guess that thing was made by the same squirrel that built his nest on the wrong side of the tree,” said Willis Harlen.

“Anyway scouts got to keep smiling,” Pee-wee said.

They were certainly all smiling.

“Lots of things don’t always work,” Tasca ventured. “Good idea just the same.”

It appeared that Bruno had violated his leader’s edict, and brought some matches; he had read in his scout literature that a scout should never go hiking without matches. These he handed, rather self-accusingly, to Pee-wee. Our hero accepted them without comment and soon a cheerful little blaze was crackling and mounting in the circle of hungry Chipmunks. They added more substantial fuel and squatted about, each with a potato-equipped stick in the fire. But the potatoes had a way of falling off the sticks which caught fire and there was difficulty in rescuing and identifying the potatoes.

These became charred and brittle and when the festive woodland meal was over there was probably as much of the substance of the potatoes on the faces of our wayfarers as they had succeeded in swallowing. One might have thought that they were going to give a minstrel show instead of a scout exhibition. Pee-wee’s face in particular seemed almost completely made up for the rendering of a mammy song.

It can hardly be said that the patrol had any supper; there were potatoes enough, but the contents shrunk in the brittle, blackened shells was scarcely more nourishing than as many nuts.

Harlen, Carlo and the Jansens complained or ridiculed according to their moods, but the new members remained not only hungry, but respectful.

“Now you see the way scouts do,” said Pee-wee as they trudged on through the woods, ignoring woodland signs and trusting only to the distant hill; “they don’t ever have to get starved or lost or anything. Next I’m going to show you,

but not to-night, how a scout can make a bed on the ground so it'll be comfortable; you have to dig a hollow for your hip to go in and if I couldn't have got a fire we could have got some herbs to eat; scouts don't worry."

"The people at the church will be worrying if we don't get there soon," said Willis Harlen.

"Now I'm glad we haven't got any moving picture outfit," said Pee-wee, "because anyway now they'll see a real scout show, and if I had that hundred dollars maybe we wouldn't buy any things like that with it, because now I see that kind of shows are no good." He seemed quite in the true spirit of scouting, saw his progress thus far as a series of triumphs, and he did not spare the sensitive natures of the two Liventi boys in his accompanying discourse as he trudged along, his jacket covering a shirtless chest, his hat missing, his trousers torn, his cheek scratched, and his scowling face besmeared with black. "If we had motion-pictures and marimbas and things like that, we'd spoil it."

"Just the same we'd like to have that hundred dollars," said the Philistine Eddie Carlo.

"Sure we would," said Pee-wee, "but we'd buy—— Maybe we'd get Indian suits with feathers and everything."

"Oh, boy!" enthused Billy Jansen.

Tasca and Bruno smiled as if they, too, thought it would be fine to have Indian suits.

But Pee-wee did not let the matter drop there. "Music is all right," he said; "tom-toms and wild things like that that you have war dances with and dances of death, we had those at Temple Camp. Even a bicycle I don't want, like Bully Bulton; only one thing about him I like and that's the hundred dollars, because we could buy rifles, too; you don't call those civilized, do you? . . . I bet you can't play a tom-tom," he added, turning upon Bruno Liventi, who was trudging faithfully along beside his brother. "I bet you can't, can you?"

"No"—Bruno shrugged his shoulders—"I don't know that."

"That's what I'm going to have you play if you're scouts," Pee-wee informed them. "Zulus play those in South Africa; they play 'em when they're going to chop off somebody's head."

"Do you have to chop off people's heads if you're scouts?" Peter Tower asked.

"No, but you're not supposed to have civilized things like pianos and movies and victrolas and vacuum cleaners and marimbas and things like that, are you?"

"We sorry," Tasca said, with that winsome shrug of his shoulders.

"Don't you care," Pee-wee said, entirely forgetting his original musical proposition to these fine boys, "because now you're scouts and we got started and everything, I decided we'll get a tom-tom like a fellow made up in Temple



Camp; he was half-Indian.”

His casual attempt to solace Bruno and Tasca was not altogether successful. These willing, smiling, amiable boys had followed the noisy group, carrying their repudiated instrument, and trying as much as they could to be of the party.

Their diffidence and feeling of strangeness among these boys had been somewhat of a handicap to them in the beginning.

But now they felt like outsiders. Their marimba had been struck down by one mighty, reckless blow. And they had somehow stood in the way of this budding organization having the great sum of a hundred dollars. They had felt somewhat like intruders. Now they felt decidedly like outsiders. They had watched and approved Pee-wee’s triumphal progress; they had never thought of it as otherwise. They had not in speech or thought seconded the seditious utterances of Willis Harlen. They were loyal to their patrol leader and were glad to remember that he had performed a mighty stunt in the big elm tree. But they saw now that they did not fit. The whole thing was pitiful—their quietness, and the way they stayed together. Even their encouraging and approving smiles were pitiful.

It was Tasca, whose eyes had blazed with pride and a sense of indignity at Bully Bulton’s vulgar menaces, who now voiced the feelings of both as the two brothers followed along a few feet behind the others. Pee-wee’s voice could be heard in frantic altercation with the Jansen brothers about the details of their realistic exhibition.

“We better get out?” Tasca said simply. “They right about the marimba; that is not scouting—musick.”

“Musick is scouting,” Bruno said.

“Yes, tom-tom,” Tasca smiled.

“What is that?”

Tasca shrugged his shoulders, “Like a tin pan, I think.”

“We take a hundred dollars away from them,” Bruno said.

“That makes worse,” said Tasca. “That is the bad part. The musick I don’t worry.”

“We tell him when we go home?” said Bruno. “Yes, but not now,” Tasca said. “Anyhow we see the show.”

The two trudged along together.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SHADES OF NIGHT

“When we get to the top of the hill,” Pee-wee said, “we’ll see the village; we’ll see the lights down there in the valley.”

The village of Little Valley nestled between hills through which a river ran. Approaching it by railroad or by bus, you entered the valley at its end. But approaching it scout fashion—if you prefer that way—you looked down upon it from a hilltop and then it looked like a toy village spread out in its quiet, green valley.

Darkness had fallen when our scouts ascended the hill and it was half-past eight by Willis Harlen’s modern, reliable watch. There was not a boy among them, except Pee-wee, who did not feel that it would have been better to go by jitney. But the deed was done now; they had had their fill of Pee-wee’s scouting, if they had had their fill of nothing else.

When they reached the top of the hill there was nothing to be seen beyond it. To be sure there were a few shadows which they thought were houses. But either this was the wrong hill or Little Valley had moved away.

“That’s funny,” Pee-wee said; “gee whiz, it used to be here. I came this way before. Anyway, let’s go down, hey?”

The Liventi boys uncomplainingly picked up their useless burdens, the others started down and they followed. Midway down the hill Pee-wee discovered a path which formed the last part of the short cut he had intended to take. He soon recognized it, even in the darkness, by a couple of boards across the tiny brook which ran down to join the river.

“Now I know where we’re at,” Pee-wee said, “I don’t care what.”

“Where’s the village?” Wendy Jansen ventured to ask.

“You can’t blame me, you got to blame Willis Harlen,” said Pee-wee combatively. “Because anyway the village is there and I brought you right and you can’t deny it, because I know this ford and this path, but anyway his watch is wrong; if the sun was out I could prove it. I bet it’s twelve o’clock and they’ve all gone to bed, that’s the kind of a watch *he’s* got.”

It appeared indeed not only that the sun had retired, but that Little Valley had retired also. At all events it did not seem to be there. Bruno and Tasca had one advantage among these harassed and weary pilgrims. When they paused they could sit on their big, oblong grips. They now picked these up again dutifully and followed their companions along the winding path down the long hillside. Little Valley should be about half a mile away—that is, if it were there

at all.

“We had supper in daylight,” Eddie Carlo said.

“What did you call it, supper?” Billy Jansen asked.

“Yes, and didn’t I go up in the tree and save my own life so I could see where the village was?” roared Pee-wee. “And didn’t I see where it was with my own eyes, didn’t I, and come down and tell you, and if you started the wrong way who’s to blame? Only, anyway, we were talking a long time because I was talking a lot and maybe they all went to bed, hey? Maybe it’s good and late, hey?”

“Come ahead,” said Willis Harlen, “I know that ford, too; this is all right.”

“Sure it is,” said Pee-wee.

They descended the hill, crossed a field, and saw shadows and one or two tiny lights. Then they came to the fizzled-out end of the little main street.

“I know what it is!” Pee-wee shouted. “Now I know! They’re all at the church, they’re all at the show, everybody’s there, maybe they’re up to our part and they’re waiting for us—I bet they are! Come on, hurry up, I know where the church is; it’s two blocks and then you turn to your left and it’s right there; you turn up another block, come on, hurry up!”

It looked like business now; the belated patrol hurried along after Pee-wee who proceeded with such desperate haste that he did not notice the complete darkness of the shop windows. If this meant a turnout in honor of the scouts (a thought which Pee-wee permitted himself to entertain) it was certainly a great honor. If he had stopped to think at all, which he did not, he would probably have stuck to his original theory that it had somehow or other got very late, and that the respectable little village had retired.

“Come on, hurry up, I know where the church is!” Pee-wee shouted.

It did begin to look like business at last—or rather to sound like business. Tasca and Bruno, feeling rather nervous, notwithstanding that they were out of it, hurried along, lugging their big oblong bags decorated with gorgeous L’s in gold.

“Do you remember how I said we should show them first aid?” Pee-wee panted as he ran. “Remember how I said we’d make believe my jaw was broken? Have you got the gauze—bandages. Remember my jaw got broken, come on, hurry up!”

That indeed would have been a terrible catastrophe. Pee-wee with a broken jaw!

## CHAPTER XXII

### FIXED BY THE FIXER

The arc light which hung in the middle of the street and commonly showed the pretty church buildings was out, and the interior of the buildings was quite in darkness. Not altogether so, either, for the lecture room where sociables and such functions were held emitted the faintest glimmerings of light through its windows. And there were voices within.

Pee-wee and his comrades entered rather puzzled and were confronted by a strange sight. The place was illuminated, if you call it that, by a dozen or more candles placed at strategic points in the little halls. From the style of their holders it was evident that these had been drafted from kitchens, parlors, bed chambers, and even cellars, for one which stood upon a chair on the platform nestled in its own tallow on a piece of a brick, on which homely pedestal it may have done duty in some neighboring cellar. Several of the candlesticks were ornamental and had evidently descended from sideboards and buffets to burn for a while in this wider field of usefulness. The light which these hastily recruited candles gave was not exactly dazzling, and even an ornate kerosene parlor lamp which reënforced them did not help much to dispel the gloom.

But there was no gloom of spirit in the room. The chairs which had been arranged in rows facing the platform were occupied with a sprinkling of people, good-natured and hopeful souls who had remained after the main body of the audience had departed, upon the conviction that there was to be no more light that evening, and no entertainment. These loyal lingerers were kept in humor by one of those hearty and robust personalities who are able to turn misfortunes into picnics and find material for mirth in anything that happens to be at hand. This was Mr. Smiley, Rotarian and Elk, and chairman of the entertainment committee. He was stout and jolly and of an irrepressible good humor, and he dominated the dim scene.

“Ah ha!” said he, grasping both the hands of our astonished hero. “Here’s the Boy Scouts from Bridgeboro! The electric lights may fail us, but you can always depend on the Boy Scouts. Welcome to the darkness, scouts!” He spoke to Pee-wee, but loud enough for the scattered audience to hear, and there was responsive laughter.

“We hiked all the way,” Pee-wee said, his hands still held in Mr. Smiley’s hospitable grip. “We cooked our supper in the woods.”

“Fine! Fine! Regular scouts! A cheer for our big brother, Bridgeboro. I see we can always depend on the Boy Scouts.”

“Sure you can,” said Pee-wee.

“I’m sorry we can’t be prepared as scouts are supposed to be,” said Mr. Smiley, “but the light of our lives went out, as the poet says, just about when we were going to start. But I’m glad to see you’re not like the Public Service.” Pee-wee was overwhelmed. “Folks, give three cheers for the Boy Scouts—what’s your name, Harris?—give three cheers for Harris of Bridgeboro who led his troop——”

“It’s a patrol,” said Pee-wee.

“Who led his patrol over the mountains to our village to show us what scouts can do! Folks, I wish the lights were better so you could get a better look at Harris of Bridgeboro. Where’s your shirt, Harris of Bridgeboro? Never mind, it’s better to be without a shirt than without lights.”

“What’s that on his face?” some one called.

“It’s a dark area,” said Mr. Smiley; “all is darkness here to-night. Scouts of Bridgeboro, we’re making a stab at trying to light this place with our smiles—you mustn’t mind us.”

Indeed the mood of those who had waited was receptive to any kind of amusement. And Pee-wee furnished a fine target. Miss Tripler’s kindergarten children, who were to have given the Dance of the Fairies, had been withdrawn because there was not sufficient light to do justice to their fairy disportings. Mr. Slick, who had consented to do some tricks, had departed, saying that no one could observe his dexterity. Miss Jenkins had sung three songs, and Carl Winthrop (the Paderewski of Little Valley) had played twice. Those who remained now were held only by the humor of the situation and by Mr. Smiley’s genial performance. He was better than any of the scheduled entertainers would have been.

“Here,” said Mr. Smiley, seized by a sudden inspiration, “while we’re waiting for the lights——”

“A swell chance,” some one called.

“Never mind,” said Mr. Smiley, “while we’re waiting, ever waiting, with a faith that’s ever strong, let’s hear Harris of Bridgeboro recount how he and his scout followers came through the woods and cooked their supper——”

“Speech, speech!” some one called.

“Shoot it,” shouted another.

“Harris of Bridgeboro forever!” called a third. “Hop up there and tell what’s left of the audience about the Boy Scouts,” said Mr. Smiley, giving Pee-wee a shove; “get ’em interested so somebody’ll start a bunch up here. What we need is some one to prod us up—am I right?”

“What we need is electric lights,” one called.

“We’re dead up here and we don’t know it,” said Mr. Smiley, giving Pee-wee a push that landed him on the platform. “I’m not worrying about lights,

that subject is out——”

“So are the lights,” called a ribald voice.

“What we want is scouts in Little Valley,” said Mr. Smiley. “Silence, everybody,” he said with upraised voice and turning to the audience.

“Ladies and gentlemen, loyal waiters and good losers, we’re going to hear Harris of Bridgeboro, head of the Chipmunks. They can’t give us a demonstration because there isn’t light enough to show the black on their faces. For those who can’t see at all I will say that Harris of Bridgeboro bears the scars of battle on his mighty frame. His face is black, from eating potatoes, he tells me.

“I got this scratch by climbing a tree,” Pee-wee said.

“Go on, Harris of Bridgeboro,” Mr. Smiley encouraged.

Thus launched, Pee-wee found it not difficult to proceed before that amused and quite informal audience. And they could certainly hear him even if they could not see him very clearly.

“Hear, hear!” said Mr. Smiley. “Silence—the whole twenty-five or six of you.”

“Anyway, we were going to show you some stunts,” Pee-wee said, a trifle bashfully, but still boldly enough, “but anyway, I can tell you about how scouts have resources and things like that.”

“That’s the idea,” said a voice.

“Maybe you don’t know how squirrels always build their nests on the south side of trees, only sometimes they don’t,” said Pee-wee.

“Right,” encouraged Mr. Smiley, who remained on the platform as if exhibiting him; “tell us all about that.”

“That’s how we got started the wrong way,” said Pee-wee, “but anyway, when we got to a place that used to be a lumber camp I climbed up a big tree so as I could see Little Valley, where it was, and I could see it.”

“We’re always here,” said Mr. Smiley.

“So then I started coming down,” said Pee-wee, “and I couldn’t reach a branch on account of being too short——”

“Harris of Bridgeboro is small but powerful,” said Mr. Smiley.

“So then I took off my shirt and dropped it on a wire that went through the tree, and I dropped and caught hold of that wire and it busted, but I didn’t care because——”

“May I ask where this happened?” asked a man’s voice in the back of the room. “Did you say the old lumber camp?”

“Sure,” said Pee-wee, “but anyway——”

“Well,” said the man, trying to talk without laughing, “then the whole thing is explained. Harris of Bridgeboro broke the relay wire that supplies lights to Little Valley. It runs through the woods from Bridgeboro and right past the site

of the old lumber camp.”

“Hurrah for Harris of Bridgeboro!” some one shouted amid uproarious laughter. The laughter increased and continued and seemed at times hardly short of hysterical. A lady who had remained loyal to the “sociable” screamed and screamed uncontrollably. The mirth came in waves, it was an ocean of joy, unaffected by the comparative darkness. Pee-wee stood upon the platform silent, aghast.

As for Mr. Smiley, he quietly turned around, leaned over the piano, buried his face in his folded arms and shook. His jolly, round form shook Santa Claus fashion, “like a bowl full of jelly.”

## CHAPTER XXIII

### A NEW BOSS

Pee-wee could stop the electric lights of Little Valley, but he could not stop the laughter. It flowed and rippled and died down, then suddenly burst forth again in an uncontrollable storm. The audience got control of itself only to suffer devastating relapses. The mirth even acted as a drawing card in this scene of waning interest and deserting loiterers outside and even from neighboring houses came in to see what all the tumult was about.

Mr. Smiley was one of the last to recover. He straightened up, turned around on the platform, and catching the joyous lady in a hilarious scream said, "Let us have an end of this unseemly mirth, Mrs. Mackintosh."

"How about yourself," Mrs. Mackintosh managed to respond, and there was another wave of laughter.

It was only by diverting the interest from the excruciating matter that Mr. Smiley could restore something like order. His twinkling eye caught sight of Bruno and Tasca sitting together in the front row, a line of vacant chairs on either side of them. They seemed a lonely pair in the dim light, almost the only occupants of the front row. But Mr. Smiley's twinkling eye discovered them and his casual readiness for anything new caused his gaze to dwell upon those two big black cases which stood in front of the boys.

"What in all creation have you got there; a couple of coffins?" he laughed. "They brought their own coffins in case of fatal accident! Can you beat the Boy Scouts? What's inside those, anyway?"

Bruno and Tasca had witnessed Pee-wee's exploitation and had seen it only as a triumph for him. The laughter was for Pee-wee, not at his expense. They were happy to see him favored by this round, jolly man. Now they were seized with embarrassment at being so suddenly singled out.

"What's in those things?" demanded Mr. Smiley from the platform.

"Marimba," said Bruno, bashfully.

"*Marimba*, what's that?"

"Musick," said Tasca; "to make musick."

"Yes?" Mr. Smiley bawled back heartily. "Come ahead up here and let's have some *musick*. Can you play those things without much light?"

"Sure yes, it's only one thing," Tasca laughed.

"Well, bring it up here and give us a selection; you don't need much light for that. Come on up, don't sit squirming there, just hand those things up here—by golly, they look like coffins! Folks, we're going to hear some music."



“I got to ask our leader,” Tasca protested nervously.

“Who’s your leader?”

“Harris, he’s patrol leader.”

“Harris of Bridgeboro?” Mr. Smiley roared good-humoredly down at them. “Now you boys never mind about Harris of Bridgeboro, I’m boss here. Anybody here say I’m not boss? Hand those coffins up here and hop up yourselves; never you mind Leader Harris. Come right up and give us a tune. What’s it made of, wires?”

“No wires,” Bruno said, with an inquiring look at Pee-wee, who was sitting on the platform steps.

“Well then, there are no broken wires,” said Mr. Smiley as he lifted the two cases up to the platform; “hop right up, you’re scouts, you can jump. Never mind Leader Harris, I’m boss here.”

“You ask him,” Tasca almost pled.

“Harris of Bridgeboro, world’s greatest wire walker, I mean wire breaker, these boys are going to give us a tune on the flandingo; is it all right? It’s all right, here, give me your hand——”

Mr. Smiley was certainly the boss. And a big, genial, hearty, dominant boss he was. Even Pee-wee melted into ready submission as he saw the big merry man unfasten one box, then the other, and extract (without the necessary skill for this operation) the two parts of Signor Liventi’s gorgeous instrument.

“How does the contraption go?” Mr. Smiley asked, wrestling amusingly with it. Loose ends of shiny metal fell this way and that, a richly colored velvet hanging with a gold embroidered L on it, got somehow in the way of a glittering nickel brace, and Mr. Smiley laughingly yielded up the puzzle to the boys who understood it too well.

“This way it goes,” said Tasca, setting it up with nervous hands. It was odd how these boys who had played in theaters should be so nervous now in the terrible shadow of Pee-wee and his Chipmunks.

“Golly, that’s a lolapazusa!” said Mr. Smiley admiringly.

There stood the marimba across the stage, its nickel legs and braces shining even in the dim light, its fringed velvet lambrequin with the fancy gold L facing the audience. A sumptuous piece of machinery it seemed, complicated as these vaudeville instruments are, for stunning effect. And there behind it stood Bruno and Tasca holding four sticks with balled ends.

If any in that shattered audience was astonished to see an instrument so magnificent put together with magician’s skill they did not show it save by a little sigh of surprise here and there. It seemed indeed a queer sort of apparatus for Boy Scouts to have with them. But the suddenly aroused interest of those stragglers was presently to be drowned in consternation. Tasca Liventi, aged thirteen, laid one hammer at the very end of the long, graduated row of

wooden bars, drew it swiftly over the whole area, running up the scale with a thrilling clearness that caused more than one loiterer to sit up with eager ears. Bruno struck one, two resounding blows with his right hand and, lo, in a moment the four arms of these two boys seemed in a hopeless tangle out of which arose a lively melody almost drowned in such theatrical runs and variations as Little Valley had never heard before. Back and forth these two boys moved behind their instrument, crossing and recrossing each other's arms and making the little church hall to echo with their lightning and resonant strokes.

Then they paused and for just a second there was silence, a silence that seemed only to emphasize the wonder of that rousing music. And then the listeners burst into tempestuous applause. The volume of this spontaneous tribute must have been reinforced from loiterers outside and new arrivals. It is certain that even as the playing ceased, one after another tiptoed into the room and sat down quietly. Where they came from it would be hard to say; it just got abroad that something was happening, something bigger than the breaking of a relay wire, and Little Valley, or that part of it, made a pathway to the church door.

Even the jolly Mr. Smiley was stilled into something like awe and all he could say was, "More, give 'em more."

So the boys, who were misfits in the Chipmunks, gave the swelling audience more. Their father had told them what to play second and in another moment their four hands were not distinguishable individually as with vigorous and deft strokes they played the *Poet and Peasant* overture. Not a false stroke did either make. And as they came to the stirring end and their hands moved like lightning, the music resounded in the street and caused passers-by to pause and listen.

Some one opened the doors for a man to pass within holding a floor lamp, which was quickly lighted. Others entered too, and stood in back or took seats, listening. The place was almost filled. But Bruno and Tasca did not take note of these hurried tributes to their playing. Their hair was down over their foreheads, their eyes were on those wooden bars, they moved back and forth never lifting their intent gaze; they were in another world.

Then silence. And then deafening applause. They had heard such applause before, but now it meant little to them, for they knew that all this was not a tribute to them as scouts, that it had nothing whatever to do with scouting. Together (they seemed always together) they stepped around beside their stentorian instrument, bowing gracefully. Pee-wee gazed at them with awe. Were these the boys who had followed along, dutifully and silently through the woods, lugging their repudiated burdens? Why, they had captured Little Valley! They had triumphed over the darkness which Pee-wee had caused. The

whole neighborhood was flowing into this reechoing room. Silent, diffident, Tasca and Bruno Liventi had made a noise louder than any noise that Pee-wee could possibly make. Somebody brought a big student lamp in and some more candles even as the brothers bowed. Little Valley was at their feet.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### PAID IN FULL

“One more,” Mr. Smiley urged as Tasca shook his head; “there are a lot of people here who haven’t heard you.”

“Tis not scout show,” Tasca said to him. He was still fearful of his redoubtable leader.

“Well, whatever it is, let’s have more,” Mr. Smiley urged as the deafening applause continued.

So then the brothers played *The Old Lake Trail*, the piece which they had practiced because it had the words *lake* and *trail* in it. And there was not a foot in that room that did not beat time. And again the audience rose in a very tempest of applause. “They’re professionals,” some one in front said to another. Amid the clapping, Bruno heard this, he heard it just as he and his brother stepped back modestly after their final bow.

He backed right into Mr. Smiley which caused some laughter, and that jovial gentleman put his big arm around the blushing boy’s shoulder and beckoned the other brother to the shelter of his other arm. And so they stood, radiant and happy, their shoulders encircled by that big, smiling boss. The audience seemed to like this immensely, for the waning applause arose again.

“Three cheers for the musical scouts!” called Mr. Smiley. “Everybody—one—two—three!”

“It is not real scouting,” Tasca said to him. “This musick, this is not scouting like Boone.”

“Boone, who’s he?”

“Scout,” said Tasca.

“Oh, you mean Daniel Boone?”

“We are not real scouts,” Bruno smiled at him, as if to check this misplaced enthusiasm. “He knows we are not the real scouts.”

“Who, Harris of Bridgeboro?” Mr. Smiley laughed, easily sensing the situation. He laughed heartily.

By this time some of the people had ventured upon the platform where Pee-wee and his scouts formed a group around Mr. Smiley who seemed to radiate cheer and good feeling. Pee-wee did not even presume to be boss.

“So you’re not scouts, hey?” Mr. Smiley laughed. “Well now, you listen here. You have to come to Little Valley if you want to learn things—how ’bout that, Mr. Gordon?”

“Right,” said Mr. Gordon.

“A scout,” said Mr. Smiley—“this is my idea of it—a scout is a fellow that does things. He’s a fellow that does things and does ’em good. See? Old Daniel Boone didn’t play the flangingo, because he didn’t have any flangingo to play. But I understand he played the fiddle—it was probably a nightmare. So you two fellows can do something that Daniel Boone couldn’t do.”

“That’s a dandy argument!” shouted Pee-wee.

“Am I right, Harris of Bridgeboro?”

“*Suuuure*, you’re right! Gee whiz, ain’t I the one that asked them into the scouts—I’ll leave it to Bruno. Ain’t I the one that asked you into the scouts?”

“Yes, you did sure,” said Bruno.

“But we take a hundred dollars from them,” said Tasca.

I suppose it would be hard to say just what a good scout is. Many think that Pee-wee is the scout par excellence. And far be it from me to dim his glory. He is himself the grand champion dimmer. Personally, I would say that Mr. Smiley was a pretty good scout; at all events he had one quality much esteemed in scouting; he understood people and could size up a situation. He now put his arm over Tasca’s shoulder and drew him into an anteroom.

“Any trouble among you boys?”

So then Tasca told him in that winsome, shrugging way he had how he and his brother were really not scouts (in the wild, primitive way, you understand) and how the Chipmunks had lost out on them.

“Oh, hooo,” said Mr. Smiley, pulling a long face; “that’s too bad, too bad. Well, you run along back and tell Harris of Bridgeboro to stick around, ’cause the show isn’t over yet—see? And tell him Roosevelt played tennis, but he was a pretty good scout all the same. And I do picture puzzles, but all the folks up here tell me I’m a pretty good scout at that; run along now.”

The people who told him that had his number. They had made him Commissioner three times, they put their money in his bank, they made him serve on the school board, he was the whole orphanage with something left over, and goodness knows what the church would ever have done without him. No one begrudged Josiah Smiley his wealth.

When he returned to the platform it was filled with stragglers, hanging about and examining the wonderful marimba. Pee-wee was making a noise like a scout, or like a dozen scouts, and a few of Little Valley’s younger set were drinking in his words.

“Now see here, you flangingo players,” said Mr. Smiley, drowning even Pee-wee’s voice. “When anybody comes to Little Valley and starts the village running around after lamps and candles and things and rounds up a hallful of folks in the dark, why we just don’t let ’em get away with it. We come right back. We had the biggest run of fizzles here to-night that we ever faced; it’s wonderful the things we didn’t see. But we heard you two *scouts* (he gave the

word a tremendous emphasis) and we'd have gone a good many miles to hear such music. Whenever I see a lake or a trail, I'll think of you fellows. So I guess you must be scouts, huh?"

"Well, I'll say!" some one enthused.

"All right then," said Mr. Smiley, "here's a check for fifty dollars for each of you. I'm not giving these to performers, but to *scouts*, honest-to-goodness scouts; fellows that can turn failure into success. A scout is a fellow that obeys his elders, so don't talk back—here Liventi one—Liventi two—fifty each and good luck to you. I'd advise you all to go home by the bus. And when you get to Bridgeboro tell 'em Little Valley is on the map, dark or light. You'd better hurry home now, you boys."

"I'm the one that discovered them!" Pee-wee shouted. "You got to admit I'm the one that discovered them!"

"I'll admit anything," said Mr. Smiley, "only don't miss the bus."

## CHAPTER XXV

### “THE MAIN FELLERS”

Bruno and Tasca seemed ashamed rather than elated as the Chipmunks left the hall amid hearty farewells. The crowd gave them a fine send-off, and amid much laughter watched them trudge up the dark street to where the Bridgeboro bus passed. Certainly no one would have said that Pee-wee had lost prestige; rather had he gained prestige and glory. Roy Blakeley once said of him that he never failed, but that when he *did* fail he always succeeded. He and his aggregation now departed amid merry laughter and shouts of approval. Whatever befell, Pee-wee was always a circus.

But the Liventi boys, and particularly the sensitive Tasca, felt that somehow they had usurped some of their leader's glory. They were honestly sorry for this. Tasca lost not a minute in handing the two checks to Pee-wee. It never occurred to him that an endorsement would be necessary.

“You haven't got a right to give them to me because they're not mine,” Pee-wee said. “Gee whiz, you got them fair and square.”

“They are for that hundred dollars,” said Tasca; “it is for the patrol.”

“It's not the same as that,” Pee-wee said, “because I know all about scouting and Mr. Bulton said his hundred dollars was for the patrol, but anyway did I take Charlie Bulton in? Didn't I stick to you fellers? I leave it to Willis if I didn't.”

“Yes, you did sure,” Tasca said.

“Did you think I don't know now that you're scouts?” Pee-wee continued. “Do you think I don't hand it to you for what you did? Wasn't I clapping? I'll leave it to Wendy Jansen if I wasn't clapping—a lot. I was stamping my feet, too. Anyway, I never said you were not scouts, only I said about the marimba; now I see I was wrong. Anyway, I'll take the money for our patrol if you promise to stay in. But just the same I'm the leader and you got to play that whenever I say.”

The bus came along, its headlights casting a cheerful light in the darkness. They were the only lights to be seen save that inside the cozy, almost empty bus. In the glare of those headlights Willis Harlen, quiet and observing, saw that Tasca's eyes were glistening.

“You got to take them before we get in,” he said; “you are the leader. Just the same you have to do like I say—you take them?”

“Only you got to promise always to stay in my patrol, no matter what,” said Pee-wee. “Even if the Silver Foxes or the Ravens or the Elks try to get

you, ever. You got to promise you'll stay in this patrol—do you?"

"We are Chipmunks sure," said Bruno, smiling happily.

So they all filed into the bus and took possession of it with their clamorous talk and vehement contradictions. And now the others could see that Tasca's big, dark eyes were glistening.

"What's the matter, Tascy?" Willis Harlen asked. It was the last straw, that nickname, and now Tasca's glistening eyes overflowed.

"You're not mad because I call you Tascy, are you?" Willis asked.

"Sure he's not," Pee-wee said. "Look at me, do I get mad when they call me Pee-wee? I got called a lot of nicknames, geeeee whiz. That shows you like a feller if you call him a nickname, don't it, Wendy? Sure it does. It shows you like him a whole lot."

"I like it, I didn't say not," said Tasca. "Maybe even we might call you Tabasco," said the inventive Pee-wee. "You wouldn't care."

Tasca shook his head happily; no, he wouldn't care.

"I like," he said.

"And maybe we'll call Bruno, Pruno," said Pee-wee, well launched upon this new field of inspiration. "And that's a dandy nickname, because it reminds you of prunes."

"He like it," said Tasca, smiling.

"Sure, because now you're the main scouts in this patrol," said Pee-wee, sprawling as the bus made a turn, "and always the main fellers they're, the ones to get nicknames; you wait till you get to Temple Camp, you'll see."

"We like to go there," Bruno smiled.

"So now do you promise to stay in," Pee-wee persisted, "and be like, kinder like, special friends with us? Do you say that if the patrol takes the money?"

"Sure, we always like to stay in," Tasca said.

"Gee whiz, even I'd rather have you than Ben Maxwell, I would," said Pee-wee. "Maybe we'll buy saxophones, hey, and start a band? And you'll be the bosses of it."

Let us hope that this horrible proposition was never carried out. To leave a town in total darkness is bad enough. But to blow an aggregation of saxophones in its ears would be past endurance. Even the jolly Mr. Smiley could hardly find mirth in that. Pee-wee reënforced by a saxophone would be hard to beat.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE LAND OF THE ENEMY

The following Friday night the Chipmunks, with their great celebrities, the Liventi boys, were to be ceremoniously accepted as scouts. Mr. Ellsworth had been too much occupied, and certainly Pee-wee had been far too much occupied, to permit of a meeting of the new patrol with its scoutmaster prior to that date. Mr. Ellsworth knew, of course, that tremendous things were going forward, but he preferred to meet the complete new patrol as a unit rather than confer with its individual members during the changing period of its formation. He knew Pee-wee if any one did. On that memorable night of increasing our well-known troop to four patrols, Ben Maxwell was to take scout oath and become a Raven of the Ravens.

During this interval of less than a week two things happened destined to have a bearing on our story. One was that the *Bridgeboro Daily Bugle* (or *Bungle*, as some called it) published a humorous article about Pee-wee breaking the power wire to Little Valley and then proceeding to that benighted village to give an exhibition. No doubt the story was too good to be omitted, and it was touched up somewhat, to give it additional humorous effect. This conspicuous disporting in the public prints increased what might be called Pee-wee's neighborhood fame to a town fame; it dragged both him and his patrol into the limelight and led to events which will later be faithfully recorded.

The other happening of interest must now be noticed. On the Wednesday following the total eclipse of Little Valley, Charlie Bulton, having returned from school, loitered about his home for a little while trying to muster the requisite courage to do something which he had intended to do for three days past. Less than two weeks remained now before the first of the month, a fateful date for him, for on that day he was to report upon a certain matter to his father.

Mr. Bulton had remained completely silent about his ultimatum to his son; he had been bluff and pleasant, but Charlie knew there was no dodging the horrible alternative which confronted him if he did not get into the scouts. He would have to make good in the scouts, too, but that was not worrying him now. His father's very friendliness had an ominous significance. There was something grim in his silence. Charlie, who had seen his ill-doing overlooked and forgotten before, had an uncomfortable conviction now that his father meant business.

There are some boys who like boarding school, and some to whom

boarding school is an effective threat. There are few who take kindly to the thought of military school. And certainly Bully Bulton regarded it with horror. Perhaps he exaggerated the rigor of military school life. At all events he knew it meant discipline, drastic rules, and no opportunities for bluffing. He was a queer combination, this boy. He was certainly not in love with his home or home town. He hung out with a group of older boys of doubtful character down in South Bridgeboro where he played craps and gratified a liking for driving a grocer's delivery car, notwithstanding that he had no driver's license. In Bridgeboro he teased younger children.

This boy, having a certain dubious independence about him which kept him pretty much away from home, was panic-stricken at the thought of being sent to military school. The fear kept him awake nights and, seeing no opening into the less harsh alternative of scouting, he had almost been driven to asking his implacable father for another chance. But he had seen little hope in that direction.

He now did a queer thing, which throws some light upon the character of one of the boys involved; he went up to see Ben Maxwell. It was natural enough that he should not try his hand in a second encounter with Pee-wee. Still he might have gone to see Mr. Ellsworth, only he had a rather contemptible fear of facing grown people. Particularly he stood in awe of Mr. Ellsworth. Yet it was odd that in his extremity he turned to the very boy who had struck him and caused his humiliation. So that is what I mean by saying that it throws a sidelight on Ben Maxwell. He was that kind of a boy. Bulton bore him no resentment, or if he did he conquered it, because he knew that Ben Maxwell was the boy to help him. That was Charlie Bulton all over. And it was Ben Maxwell all over.

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Charlie Bulton's rather ignoble disinclination ever to ring another boy's doorbell deterred him from giving an appearance of manliness to his call. He must employ his skulking habit of hanging around and when luck did not favor him in this, he bethought him to "squeak like a Chipmunk." This unauthorized use of Pee-wee's patrol call had finally the effect of bringing a curious servant to the door of the Maxwell home.

Perhaps Bulton thought that Ben's ear would be peculiarly susceptible to the official squeak now that he was himself in the same troop with that adventurous unit, the Chipmunks. But indeed Ben Maxwell, intelligent reader that he was, had already gone deeper into the handbook than patrol calls. In point of fact, these realistic simulations of forest voices so dear to Pee-wee had not greatly interested him.

Ben came out at the servant's summons and sat on the porch swing with Bulton. "I thought it was a Ford in trouble," he said. "I was going to bring out an oil can."

"Is it all right to sit here?" Bulton asked.

"Sure, who's going to stop us?"

Bulton did not begin very tactfully. "You got me in Dutch all right," he said.

"You mean you got yourself in Dutch," said Ben. "I wasn't the one that fixed you, anyway; it was Pee-wee Harris. You've got to thank *him*. You tried to get him to do a rotten mean thing—chuck those Liventi fellows—and at the last minute he flopped and couldn't do it. I told him all what you said to me, and you know blamed well it was true, but he flopped on that mean trick of yours before I said a word to him. He couldn't put one like that over on the Liventis when it came right down to it. And look at the Liventis now; they're the big thing in the troop. Pee-wee is lying awake nights for fear somebody'll steal them. Pee-wee is the one that licked you, Charlie, he's some fixer, that kid."

Pee-wee would have been glad to hear this.

"Why didn't he fit me into that Raven bunch?"

"He didn't remember there was a place there until he just happened to think of it. All of a sudden he got an inspiration—whzzzz—just like that. When are you going away?" Ben swung the seat back and forth, talking cheerfully and frankly as if he and Bulton had never had any trouble. It would

have been impossible to say whether he liked him or not.

“You said it all right,” Bulton said in a way intended to be darkly significant. “That’s just what I’m going to do—go away.”

“Military school?”

“You tell ’em I’m not, no, sir; I’ll run away first.”

“Why, what’s the matter with military school?”

“Yere, what’s the matter with it! They put you in padded cells—a guy told me you get the handcuffs put on you in those places. It’s worse than wishing a guy onto the navy.”

“What’s the matter with the navy?”

“That’s a pink tea alongside of military school, *believe me*. Do you think I want to get razzed for everything I do and wear a blamed uniform and everything? Not me!”

“I don’t believe they do all those things,” Ben laughed.

“Well, they won’t do ’em to me,” said Charlie; “not while I’m conscious. I know a guy down in South Bridgeboro, he’s getting razzed all the time like I am; we’re going to both beat it, that’s what we’re going to do.”

“Where you going to beat it to?”

“That’s all right, leave it to me.”

“If you’d have stopped going around with that big fellow down there that drives the red Ford and didn’t hang out in the lunch wagon so much I guess you wouldn’t have to go to military school,” said Ben. “The trouble with you is you think you’re big; you’re kidding yourself.”

“Didn’t I try to get into the scouts?”

“Yes, but look what way? You don’t care a hang about the scouts.”

“How about you?” Bulton asked.

Ben laughed. “Well, I always kept out of it,” he confessed. “They all seem so much smaller than I am, I don’t know, I just never sort of got started, that’s all. But I’m in for it now,” he laughed at his own expense. “They gave me their handbook and I’ve been reading it and it’s got a lot of good stuff in it, I’ll tell you that. There’s some stuff in there that small fellows couldn’t do; it’s made to fit big fellows too, all right. It’s got me started all right.”

“My old man wished it onto you,” Bulton laughed.

“Well, it’s wished on,” said Ben.

“Yes, and I heard you call them kids lots of times,” Bulton said; “now you turn around and join. You’re just as bad as I am—gee! I bet you have no use for them.” He paused. “Why the dickens do you let my father kid you into joining? Why, he couldn’t even kid me like that—you’re easy.”

“Oh, I fell for it since then,” Ben laughed. “I’ve got it bad, I’m going to make a stab for the swimming badge; I’ve got it marked in the book. I’m going to be a regular merit-badge hound.”

“Yes you are—not,” said Bulton skeptically; “not you.” Then he ventured upon the matter which had driven him to Hollis Place. “It’s a wonder you wouldn’t give *me* a show,” he said.

“For shows see P. Harris,” laughed Ben.

“No, but no kidding. My old man says if I get into the scouts I don’t have to go to military school. I got till the first of the month. When you come right down to it I’m not saying anything against the scouts; they’re all right, you got to hand it to ’em. But I’m out of luck. The troop here is full; four full patrols—that’s the limit, isn’t it?”

“Guess it is.”

“I guess they don’t break the rules either, huh?” Bulton queried rather anxiously.

“Guess not. You don’t want to get into the scouts anyway,” Ben said good-humoredly.

“Oh, no, I suppose you know all about me,” Bulton sneered. “Didn’t I try to get in over in New Borough? I can’t get in till they start a troop, can I?”

“Why don’t you tell your father that?”

“Oh sure, a fat chance *I’d* have of getting *him* to listen. He’s saying nothing and sawing wood. Nothing doing. He’s through till the first of the month, then he’s going to make a noise like a father. What can I do, I leave it to you? I’m in bad with this crowd here, and anyway, they’re full so that settles it—don’t it?” he added anxiously.

Ben felt sorry for him. It seemed likely enough that in his panic fear of military school, Bulton had really tried to become a scout in New Borough. And his reiterated sly queries about his chances in Bridgeboro were contemptible and yet pitiful. He knew enough of Mr. Ellsworth to know that he was not the man to ignore the rules of scouting for the accommodation of a boy whose standing was none too good among the scouts of Bridgeboro. Charlie knew that in Bridgeboro he had made a big mistake and lost his chance.

“Isn’t there any troop down in South Bridgeboro?” Ben asked.

“Naah, they wouldn’t bother with it, that bunch. Why, you know Andy that has the fish boat—he comes up here? I could make eight dollars a week working for him and can this whole burg if I wanted to. He goes way down the coast and up the Shrewsbury and everywhere; I’ve been off with him. I guess you’d call that adventure, wouldn’t you? Even with a chance like that I tried to get into the scouts over in New Borough, only they haven’t got any there. I can’t make them to order, can I?”

“That’s the way Pee-wee does,” Ben laughed.

“Oh, yes, that kid is the scream of the town. If he doesn’t keep quiet he’ll wake the town up. This burg is dead and it don’t know it.”

“Any fellow can start a patrol, the way I understand it,” Ben said thoughtfully.

“Yes, and how long would it take? And besides what do I know about the game? Believe me that wouldn’t go with my old man.”

Ben was thoughtful. Idly he kicked the swing seat back and forth and so for a few moments they both rocked and said nothing.

“Well, there’s one thing sure,” said Bulton boastfully; “I don’t go to military school and get razzed. I can go out west on a ranch if I want to,” he observed with fine independence.

Ben ignored this bombastic talk and was thoughtful.

“Why, they give you bread and water for supper in those joints,” Bulton said.

Still Ben was thoughtful. And presently Bulton made another characteristic mistake. What he said somewhat dimmed the glory of his heroic proposal to run away and live on a ranch. “If you want to swap your place in that what-d’-you-call-it patrol off to me I’ll give you eleven dollars.”

“What do I want with eleven dollars?” Ben asked in the best of good humor. Still he seemed thoughtful.

“You got no use for that stuff,” Bulton said, coming boldly to the point.

“Oh, yes, I have. Didn’t I tell you I’ve got the swimming badge stuff marked in the book?”

“Why don’t you can it and give me a show? They’d take me in if there was a place, and you said so.”

Well, it was out at last.

“Well,” said Ben pleasantly, “I’ll tell you why I don’t do that. I can say the same thing about you that you said about me. I don’t think *you’ve* got much use for that stuff. Just the same,” he added in a spirit of fairness, “maybe if you got in you’d stay in and make good on account of your father.”

“You leave it to me,” said Charlie boastfully.

“But just the same I won’t do it,” Ben said. “I told your father I’d join, and I told the kid I’d join, and I told Mr. Ellsworth I’d join, and my father’s crazy about my joining, and I want to stay in myself. I’m in now and I’m going to stay in. I’m not a quitter, but I want to stay in, anyway. Why, I bet I can tell you the very page in the handbook that tells about the swimming badge—what d’you bet? Page sixty-four. Oh, I’ve got the bug all right. The blamed thing’s got me started.”

Charlie Bulton looked at him enviously, hopelessly.

“Rule number two, a scout is loyal,” said Ben rather humorously; “he is loyal to his scout leader. See how well I know the rule. If he says he’ll do a thing he does it. I’m getting it all down pat. If it keeps on like this I’ll be taking off my hat to an old lady and maybe swimming across the Hudson River, you

never can tell. Take a tip from me, Charlie, and don't worry about military school."

"You just leave it to me," said Charlie darkly.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE BIG DAY

Ben Maxwell was the kind of boy that somehow doesn't readily get into scouting. He was tall for his age; perhaps that had something to do with it. Also he was a great reader and found company in books. But that very quality, when he once did go in for scouting, plunged him head over heels in it. The boy that rushes in does not always make the best scout.

Ben, half amused at himself for having this business "wished on him" by Pee-wee and Mr. Bulton, took the handbook up into his cozy den, climbed up on the window seat, and was soon lost to the world. He was aroused by the first chapter on Scoutcraft and the tests and requirements for the numerous merit badges interested him greatly. He was interested in how to build log cabins and make tents. He was caught by the bits of information about wild animals.

Also he glanced casually at the list of laws and he read the paragraph about the good turn, that kindly feature of scouting which perhaps has come to be better known than anything about it. But it cannot be said that he lingered over these things. He had never noticed that scouts do more good turns than other people. He chuckled a little (for he had a sense of humor) at the thought of most scouts whom he knew burdening their minds with these obligations.

He had quite a shop in the roomy attic of his home and he was therefore much interested in the various models of bird houses pictured in the handbook. He thought he would like to try making some of these. He was interested in what the book told about swimming, for he was an expert swimmer. He thought the book had some good stuff in it, and he was mighty glad he had gone in for scouting. I cannot honestly say that he set out next morning to do a good turn.

Ben could not dally long with the handbook for the spring examinations were on in all their horror and he had to study. When he went to school on Friday morning he was prepared, as the scout motto has it, to encounter the demons of mathematics and civil government. And beyond these rocky heights he was looking forward to his first attendance at scout meeting in the evening. He was ready to take the oath and plunge in, and he had his personal scout program planned out in his mind.

As he passed along Pennington Street he saw a little group of people standing in front of the Bulton house. They seemed intent upon the conversation of Mrs. Bulton and a policeman. Apparently they were neighbors.



The young clerk from the drug store on the corner was among them, hatless, and he seemed to be saying something of interest. Poor Mrs. Bulton's face was a picture of suspense and anxiety. She looked from one to the other with eyes that had known no sleep, as if she found some little measure of hope in every casual suggestion. The policeman was jotting down something in a little book and Mrs. Bulton watched him as if this in itself gave her comfort.

As Ben slackened his pace the drug clerk withdrew from the group, and so he and Ben walked together as far as the drug store.

"Is it about Charlie?" Ben asked.

"Sure, he didn't show up last night; he beat it. Blamed young fool, they'll get him all right. His mother thinks he went out west. Guess mothers always think that, hey? She wants it broadcast and then she doesn't want it broadcast; she doesn't know what she wants, I guess. Wants an alarm, then doesn't want an alarm; she's all rattled. The cop's going around to the old man's place. He sure keeps his folks on the anxious seat, that boy."

"I know him," Ben said; "he doesn't want to go to military school."

"He'll go there now, all right," laughed the drug clerk as he hurried into the store.

Ben was deep in thought as he went along. His first impulse was to return to tell Mrs. Bulton of his talk with her son for whatever value it might have. Then he bethought him that it really had no value. A lot of blustering boasts. He believed that Charlie would not, could not, go out west; that he had neither the money nor the real spirit of adventure to carry him to that legended refuge of eloping boys, a ranch. Charlie was not up to the measure of such fine romance. But his poor mother thought he was.

South Bridgeboro was about Charlie's speed, Ben thought. He did not know whether Charlie's parents were cognizant of his favorable standing with the choice spirits of South Bridgeboro, but he suspected that they were not.

Two thoughts were now uppermost in Ben's mind. One was that the drug clerk was right. He believed that when Charlie was returned to his home he would be packed off to military school without further ado. The other thought was that in running away from home the path of least resistance for Charlie would be Crazy Andy's fish boat, which that well-known river peddler kept tied up in South Bridgeboro. For one thing Charlie had spoken of working for Andy and had intimated that a livelihood awaited him in such a vocation. Then Ben knew, as perhaps the Bultons and the authorities did not, that Charlie's object in running away from home was not to seek adventure, but to avoid being sent to military school. It was not the ranch, but the military school that Charlie was thinking about. He was not adventurous enough to run away, but he was cowardly enough to hide. . . .

These were the thoughts that rushed through Ben Maxwell's mind on that

memorable Friday when he was to triumph over mathematics and civil government, and in the evening he formally accepted as a scout of scouts. He walked along swinging his pack of books and thinking. This was to be the big day in school. And he was prepared. Then at the corner of Main Street and Cedar Place he paused. He started slowly across Main Street, so preoccupied that a motorist tooted his horn. Ben jumped out of the way, did a little maneuvering to get through the traffic and went back across the street again. A man sitting in a parked car watched him and probably wondered why he had skipped and zigzagged across only to return to the side he had left. It was just Ben Maxwell becoming a scout, but of course, the man did not know that.

“Hey, Smitty,” said Ben, running pell-mell into the musty little stationery store of Smitty the news-dealer, “take care of these books for me till this afternoon, will you—here, catch ’em!”

He was gone before the shrewd Smitty had an opportunity of asking him whether he intended playing hooky in this crucial school period. For Smitty had a son of his own who was in the throes of examinations. Going to the door of his little store he could not see Ben at all. The whole proceeding seemed to him very singular. . . .

## CHAPTER XXIX THE BROKEN TRAIL

Like most towns that grow up along rivers, Bridgeboro was long and narrow—it spread along the river. A mile or more downstream it fizzled out in marshland and scattered houses. Then there was a wider area of marsh and sparse woodland, and then South Bridgeboro. The main street of Bridgeboro, which paralleled the river, petered out into what they called the Old Pike Road and this ran down through South Bridgeboro.

South Bridgeboro was not a nice place. The Half Way House was there, but there was nothing half-way about it; it was downright disreputable, both in character and appearance. The houses of South Bridgeboro were old and ramshackle. Yet the place had a certain savor about it imparted by the river. It marked the farthest point up-stream to which large motor-boats and tugs could ascend, save at flood-tide, and there was a colony of them there. They were dirty and shabby craft, fishing boats mostly. There were several dilapidated house-boats too, occupied not for romance or pleasure, but to save their tenants the payment of rent. Yet there is a kind of pleasing romance in this. South Bridgeboro looked like a Mississippi shanty-boat colony on a small scale.

Crazy Andy had the most outlandish craft that ever was seen by mortal eye. Once a week, at full tide, he chugged up to Bridgeboro in his hobo of a boat and sold fish at the boat club float. He caught these fish down the bay off Atlantic Highlands and in the Shrewsbury River. Sometimes he would not be seen in South Bridgeboro for weeks at a time. He was a marine peddler. But South Bridgeboro was his headquarters. Andy was not exactly crazy; he was not half crazy. He was about a third crazy. Ben Maxwell believed that Crazy Andy's unquestioning hospitality would encourage Bulton to seek refuge with this roaming merchant of inland waters. Charlie had intimated rather mysteriously that a chance was open to him in the service and companionship of this happy-go-lucky boss. Ben knew little of the life of South Bridgeboro. But this much he knew; that very early every Friday morning Crazy Andy chugged down the bay and fished till the middle of the morning, then sold his catch at some town or village convenient to his fishing ground. On the side of Crazy Andy's boat was a dirty canvas sign on which was printed a phrase which had stamped itself on his simple mind when he had first heard it:

CUT OUT THE MIDELMAN  
FRESH FISH

Ben indulged the dubious hope that by some chance or other this redoubtable foe of the “midelman” might be delayed in South Bridgeboro, and that he would find Charlie Bulton there. If luck favored him in this he would know what to do next.

He ran all the way to South Bridgeboro for no bus was scheduled to pass that way for an hour. He stumbled, panting, to the little wharf, catching his foot in a big seine that was spread out on the wharf to dry. There was no sign of Andy’s boat. Ben was not exactly disappointed for he had hardly expected to find it. Yet his frantic running had given him a sort of false hope which was now dashed. He gulped and held his side which had a cruel stitch in it. For a few moments he was not able to get breath enough to speak and could only smile in a way of painful explanation at the man who was bailing a boat at the wharf.

“I—I—did—I did some—running,” Ben laughed. “Did Andy—go—did he go away with his boat yet—Andy?”

“Went about half an hour back,” the man said.

This was not so bad, for usually Andy made a very early start. But a miss is as good as a mile on the water; you can’t run after a boat.

“Yer wanted fer ter see ’im? Yere, he was monkeyin’ with his engine tryin’ ter get ’er started.”

“Was anybody with him?” Ben asked.

“Didn’t see nobody.”

“Was—gee, my side hurts—was—do you know if anybody was down here in a car or—or—anyway—looking for somebody?” Ben asked.

The man shook his head and went on bailing, “Not’s I know of,” he said.

Ben did not know whether to feel encouraged or not. Andy had started downstream but a half hour before and could not have gone very far. But there was not much cause for elation in that. From this point the river widened until it became Newark Bay, which as you know, is a part of the greater New York Bay. Marshes stretched away on either side; it was quite out of the question following the river in the hope of overtaking and hailing a boat upon it. On the other hand the man had not seen anybody with Andy. Perhaps there had been no one. But if Bulton were with him and hiding in the little hole of a cabin for fear of being seen, why then the authorities who were sure to come down here would have no clew. And that was as Ben Maxwell would have it. Well, what should he do next, he wondered.

## CHAPTER XXX

### A QUEER TRAIL

It was curious how as he stood there on that wharf the thought came jumping into his mind that by that time his class would be all agitation on account of the examinations and that he, Ben Maxwell, was not there. The scene in the school was vivid to him. It seemed funny, because he had never been away from school except on the very infrequent occasions of illness and these had all been when he was a younger boy. He had never been away from school and out in the sunlight and free air during school hours. It made him feel strange.

Perhaps the fact that his absence was unauthorized increased this feeling of uneasiness. Yet he felt quite sure of himself, as to what he was doing, only strange. There were the examinations going on, and here was he standing on a wharf which smelled of stale fish and water-logged wood, and fish nets; that sickening, pungent odor of the waterside. How strange for him, Ben Maxwell, to be here so soon after he had started off to wrestle with the demon of mathematics and civil government.

Well, he certainly could not justify this bizarre enterprise by standing and holding his aching side. If he remained inactive he would feel unpleasantly like a truant, and at such a time! Yet what could he do, he wondered. Then it came into his mind that if he went to Brickyards there *was* something he *might* do.

Brickyards was a place about a couple of miles down the river and separated from it by the wide marshes. There were several brick-yards there and so the place was called Brickyards. Ben knew that from this place a single track railroad line crossed the marshes to the river and went over the river on a drawbridge. He knew this because he had been under that bridge in a motor-boat. Below South Bridgeboro the river was unapproachable by reason of the marshes. The only way to reach the river two or three miles downstream was to go from South Bridgeboro to Brickyards and then count the ties, as they say, along the trestle and so to the bridge.

Ben thought that if he did this and was quick about it there might be at least a forlorn hope of reaching the bridge before the boat reached it. It was dangerous, it might be unlawful so far as the railroad property was concerned, but it was the only thing he could do. Either that or take the bus up to Bridgeboro and show up late for school. Well, he thought, if this kind of thing was being a scout why it wasn't so "kiddish" after all; even Charlie Bulton would have to admit that.

Richard III of England being in desperate straits offered his kingdom for a horse. What would Ben not have given for a speed boat. He started along the road which led away from the river and across the low waste country to Brickyards. As often as he started running fast his side began to hurt so he went along at a dogtrot with his handkerchief stuffed in his mouth.

It was a pity that Ben had not yet hit upon the scout pace in his handbook. You can outwit fatigue with that and make good time too. Soon he became so frantic with anxiety and the desire to get ahead that he stopped altogether, took a little rest, then started in to run with all his might and main. The freakish stitch in his side did not recur. "I—I—guess I—left it behind," he said. He was in continual fear that it would return and stay his progress. But it did not and he ran at full speed to Brickyards.

Here again he must pause, panting. There was nothing at this place but brick-yards and shanties where the workers lived. Ben was afraid that these negro laborers might refuse to let him get onto the trestle. But brick-yard negroes do not concern themselves overmuch with the transgressions of others. One of them smiled at him with enormous mouth and white teeth and called, "Hey, looky out you done fall, youngster!"

Once upon the trestle Ben felt that he was getting somewhere. Running to Brickyards, he was going directly away from the river and the journey seemed absurd and hopeless. But it had brought him to the trestle and now he was headed for the river. He looked behind, but no one was pursuing or even watching him; he was safe.

Safe from pursuit at least. He experimented with his feet, trying how he could make the best progress, whether by stepping on every second tie or by running and balancing himself upon the heavy timber which flanked the metal rail. There was an element of danger in this for if he lost his balance he might go sprawling between the ties and break a leg. But he used his hands with such good skill that he was able to get along at a pretty good speed. His speed and deftness in keeping his balance with outstretched hands gave him a sense of exhilaration. He was not afraid of a fatal fall from the trestle for it was not more than three or four feet above the marsh; the worst that could happen to him would be tumbling down into the oozy bottom beneath the crowding cat-tails. That might have its perils, but he could always, he thought, catch hold of one of the trestle supports.

After a mile or two, however, he noticed that the cat-tails did not grow up to the trestle. That was because the meadow land was gradually falling away to the river bed while the trestle, of course, remained level. He soon realized that he was at a considerable height above the marsh. The friendly, flanking cat-tails were now far below him. He was not nervous, but he was annoyed that he must lose time in being more cautious. He no longer ran upon the heavy

timber, but moved to the center of the trestle and stepped on every second tie. He could not make very good time doing this, and he was anxious and irritated. When he looked down between the ties he was a trifle nervous too, because the marsh seemed far, far below him. Of course he would not fall proceeding this way; he might possibly miss his footing and fall on the ties, but he would not go through. In the center anybody but a nervous fool was safe. It was just as well not to look down and run a chance of getting rattled.

Then suddenly he heard the shrill whistle of a locomotive.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### SIGNALS

Ben heard the distant metallic rattling of a train; the sound became louder, that invincible, steady sound of a train going straight about its business. That incessant metallic clanking that reechoes around mountains, heedless, unceasing. He could see the bridge now in the distance. There was no habitable shore on either side of the river and the bridge-tender's house was in the middle of the bridge, queer abode for a human being, in the middle of a bridge that was in the midst of a vast extent of oozy meadowland.

Then Ben saw the river, but he was almost too frightened to find hope or consolation in the sight. It lay like an iridescent ribbon across the meadowland. He knew that a train was coming toward him and would reach the bridge before he did. He saw a large tug-boat in the river approaching the bridge. In a minute the locomotive would frown upon him, run him down. . . .

Then slowly the bridge began to move. There were two piercing shrieks of a whistle from the middle of the structure, and as it lumberingly swung around there were three answering shrieks from a locomotive somewhere beyond. A red light had flashed, too, a mile along the track across the bridge. Thus by light and sound the bridge-tender had warned the engineer that he was opening the bridge and the engineer had answered.

So it befell that the train which would have crushed Ben Maxwell's life out came slowly to a stop across the river in full sight of the frightened boy. The bridge moved slowly around to let the tug pass by and Ben hurried to the point where the trestle ended abruptly, because the bridge had swung away from it. He looked down now from the broken end of his perilous trail upon the silver stream which flowed about thirty feet below him. Across the river stood a great, frowning, impatient, steel monster, waiting because it had to wait.

The bridge-tender had given the tug precedence over the train because that sturdy, indomitable little craft was towing a row of barges and could not easily stop without confusion and perhaps catastrophe. There upon the end of the trestle stood Ben Maxwell, whose life had hung upon the question of right of way between a train and a tug. He shuddered to think of this. He stood there trembling, watching the triumphant tug steam through at the head of its cumbersome flotilla. Then, as it passed, a small boat was visible falling in behind this train of barges, fortunate in getting through on their account. For bridge-tenders do not swing their bridges open for little fishing boats. These must wait their chance till more important craft demand their rights upon our



inland waters. And that shabby little fishing boat had waited there for upwards of three-quarters of an hour till that screaming autocrat, the tug, had come along. So the *Hel'n B* of New York did her good turn. And now it was time for Ben Maxwell to do his.

Ben knew it was the boat he wanted. He did not recognize it, but could Providence mock him and all his striving and panting now? It *must* be the one. And so he did what they tell you about on page sixty-four of the Scout Handbook.

Only they do not tell you to do such a stunt as he did. They are not crazy. Ben Maxwell gave one look down upon the river, then dived from the very end of the trestle where the bridge had swung away from it. And meanwhile, the big, waiting, steel monster across the stream which had been forced to spare him so he could do this thing, puffed away and seemed restive at this interruption to its noisy progress. But the engineer with his elbow on his little window looked down in consternation as he heard a splash, and saw a figure swimming steadily across the path of a dirty little motor-boat with a piece of canvas and some printing on the side of it.

## CHAPTER XXXII IN BEN'S HANDS

He scrambled up on the deck of the boat and dropped, exhausted, down into the cluttered cockpit. "H'lo, Andy," he laughed almost hysterically; "h'lo, Charlie—now—you—you—now you see me, now you don't." He leaned back against the rail shaking his head and sweeping his streaming hair back from his eyes and forehead. He was all a-tremble with fatigue and joy. "I—I thought I'd—find you here," he added with nervous laughter. "Some surprise, hey? Gee, but that water's cold."

It was a happy quality of Andy that he was never astonished at anything. His simple mind had no place in it for thrills. He took the world as he found it. He had accepted Bulton as a permanent helper without asking any embarrassing questions. Now he accepted Ben as a caller out of the deep with no more sign of astonishment than his silly laugh. "The water's cold," he repeated, as if this were a good joke.

As for Charlie Bulton who sat on the cabin roof dangling his legs into the cockpit, it would be difficult to describe his thoughts. The boat was a good distance from his home. As he had seen the river widen toward the bay and had listened to the steady purring of the motor as the boat moved into the broadening expanse of water, he had begun to enjoy a feeling of security. They might search everywhere, including all the ranches of the West, but they would never find him now.

Then suddenly there was a splash a few yards off and the boy who had struck him in the eye climbed over the side and leaned back clutching the rail, half-gasping, half-laughing, and seemed neither angry nor conscious of the amazing character of his act. It was impossible for even Charlie Bulton to sneer at such a boy. He feared him and respected him. He had now almost a superstitious feeling that he could not get away from him.

"Where did you come from? I didn't see you," he asked in consternation.

"Oh, just from the end of that trestle," Ben said. "See where it sticks out over the river? Where the bridge is swinging back now? I dived from that. If it hadn't been for the—gee, but it's cold (he shivered and laughed)—for the bridge and that tug and those barges, I guess I'd be several small pieces by now. Hey, Charlie, we both counted out in mathematic and civ gov; misery loves company, hey? Do you think the school will be able to get along without us?"

Charlie Bulton hardly knew how to take this, it was so uncondemning and

fraternal. It seemed to place the two of them on a level, to make the morning's work a joint undertaking. He saw himself caught, and there was no dreaded sequel to his escapade. Somehow he felt that there would not be any as long as the matter were in Ben's hands.

"You took some chance, boy," said Bulton.

"Sure, but look at the news I've got," laughed Ben. "Say, Charlie, you're in the scouts, don't say a word. You're—listen here—you're in the Raven Patrol, that's the crackerjack patrol of Jersey, that is; Doc Carson, Grove Bronson, Wig Weigand, you know them. They've got medals and prizes and everything—big fellows too, most of them. Why, you know El Sawyer, he's in it. For the love of Christopher, put us ashore somewhere, Andy, we'll be bunking into the Statue of Liberty next. Where are we at anyway? I'm punk in geography."

"You want to get out?" Andy asked.

"I hope to tell you we do," said Ben. "Sorry to put you to any trouble, but big things are happening in bunches. I hope I've got money enough to get the two of us to Bridgeboro," he laughed, feeling in his pocket. "Look at these two bills, will you? Wet? I hope they're fast colors."

"I've got a couple of dollars," Bulton said. It was his first tentative confession that he was beaten. All the forces of heroism and character and good-humor and unshakable friendship had combined to conquer him. So it was that for the second time Ben Maxwell knocked him clean off his feet. But in how different a way!

"There's no use using your money as long as I've got some," Bulton said.

The wretched fugitive intended to incorporate in that simple remark much that he did not know how to say. The proffer of his own money to take them home was about the best that he could do in the way of expressing admiration and trust and the willingness to follow and take his chances with this friend who seemed so much the master of the situation. He could not quite bring himself to say he'd go, but he offered the little money he had with him.

It was a long time before Charlie Bulton could in any sense be called a hero. But he began being a scout then and there in that widening expanse of water which was changing from a river to a bay. It was the first time in his life that he had ever felt a thrill of admiration and a feeling of unquestioning trust. Before you can be a hero you must be affected by heroism. And Bully Bulton had got that far at all events.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### FRIENDS

Crazy Andy was a convenient soul to deal with. If big things were impending he certainly would not stand in the way of them. A shrewd observer might have deduced (and perhaps Ben did deduce) that Crazy Andy was not an active collaborator in Bulton's elopement. In any case he did not seem inclined to charge his young companion with breach of contract. He was a willing and accommodating soul, and he set the boys ashore as agreeably as he had taken Bulton aboard. Then he chugged on down the bay sitting in the stern of his outlandish boat, holding the tiller.

A board on which to clean fish was fastened on the deck and into this were stuck two murderous-looking knives, perhaps to cut out the "midelman." Yet poor Andy seemed almost too amiable to defy that bogey of modern times.

Ben and Charlie found themselves on the float of a boat club in Bayonne, and here Ben was able to dry his clothes in the living quarters of the steward. They went in a jitney up the Boulevard to the Hudson Tube station in Jersey City, and thence to the terminal of the railroad that ran through Bridgeboro. It seemed queer to Ben to be out of school at this time of day, to see the crowds and the people hurry to and fro; it seemed like a world he did not belong in, so much does school fill the lives of those who attend it. He could not accustom himself to the fact that at half-past eleven on a Friday morning he was waiting for a train to take him to Bridgeboro. His big resolve had come to him in the middle of Main Street on his way to school, and here he was. Probably Charlie Bulton did not have these feelings for two reasons; he was not impressionable, and he had more than once indulged his taste for absenting himself from school.

Ben's attitude was uncritical and chummy. He somehow made the fugitive feel that they were both equally involved in an escapade. I think it throws a pretty good sidelight on Ben's character that Bulton seemed to have complete faith in his companion's ability to encounter grown-up people and straighten this matter out. Certainly he was not thinking fearfully of military school as they rode out on the train.

"All you have to do is leave it to me," Ben said.

"How about my father?"

"You're in the scouts, aren't you? It isn't the first of the month yet. He hasn't got a leg to stand on. How can you go to military school if you're in the scouts? Can't be did. We'll send Pee-wee to talk to him if necessary—that'll

knock him.”

“Are you going with me to my father?”

“I’ll say so. I’m worse off than you are if it comes to facing him.”

“How?”

“Oh, never mind, I’m not worrying.”

“Yes, but how about my staying away all night?”

“That’s not keeping you out of the scouts.”

“Yes, but my father (it was amusing how he had ceased calling his father his old man), how about——”

“Look here, Charlie, we’ve got your father cinched. He said if you were in the scouts by the first of the month—and you *are*. No matter what he says, that’s our come-back. You’re in the swellest patrol anywhere around; you’ll just fit in, too, because, like I said, they’re sort of older fellows.”

“Yes, and how about school?” Charlie was becoming a little more anxious and apprehensive as the train neared Bridgeboro.

“It’s still there,” said Ben. Which was not exactly reassuring to Bulton.

“Boy, but you headed me off all right, I’ll say that,” Charlie volunteered.

“You’ll be doing things like that,” Ben laughed.

“Are you going to stick to me all day?”

“Absolutely; we’re in the same boat—I mean we’re out of it, that’s a joke. He’s a queer duck, Andy, isn’t he?”

They reached Bridgeboro early in the afternoon and the absence of boys and girls from the streets was noticeable. In the window of the *Bridgeboro Evening Bugle* building was a bulletin exhibiting in advance items of news which would appear in the afternoon edition.

#### BRIDGEBORO BOY RUNS AWAY FROM HOME.

#### SEARCH BEGUN.

one of these announcements read. This was the first real reminder to Charlie of the seriousness of what he had done and the possible consequences. There it was in black and white before him. It was hard for him to believe that his cheery companion or the scouts could now save him from the dreaded military school. He was trusting, not to his father, but to Ben. Ben had done wonders and might do them again. He stuck close to Ben.

Yet he hung back a little as they approached Mr. Bulton’s big hay, grain and coal place on Main Street. Now was coming the test. Suppose Mr. Bulton swept all their talk aside and closed the matter summarily.

“Will you talk to him?” the wretched Charlie asked.

“Sure I will,” Ben answered cheerily.

They went through the big, dim place that smelled of hay, and into Mr. Bulton’s little office. Poor Mr. Bulton was at that very moment engrossed in a

telephone conversation, evidently with the authorities, about his missing son. His back was toward the boys as he sat sideways to his cluttered desk and somehow the sight of his back and all those papers which he had to attend to whether or no, made Ben feel sorry for him.

“Here’s Charlie, Mr. Bulton,” Ben said.

The big, bluff man, who had promised his son a bicycle almost as a bribe to get him to join the scouts, swung around and stared speechless.

“Charlie stayed all night on Andy’s fish boat,” Ben said, “and I kind of suspected where he’d be and I went down and got him so he wouldn’t miss his first scout meeting to-night. So it’s all over except the shouting, I guess,” Ben laughed. “He’s in the Raven Patrol, First Bridgeboro Troop.” It suited his purpose to emphasize the scout phase of the situation to the exclusion of everything else. “You know you said, Mr. Bulton, that if he joined the scouts by the first of the month—didn’t you? Well now, he’s in and if he doesn’t show up at every meeting he’s going to get me in bad, because I’m the one that got him in. That’s all I’m thinking about. I guess he can tell you all about what happened to-day, only I want to be dead sure he’ll be on hand to-night, because I wouldn’t know what to tell those fellows. That’s why I came here with him.”

Mr. Bulton reached for his hat and started toward the door. “Come home to your mother, Charlie,” he said rather grimly. “She’s lost enough sleep already. We’ll talk later.”

“Will he be at scout meeting to-night?” Ben asked. Charlie looked piteously at him.

“He’s going home now,” said Mr. Bulton. “I’m going to see you later and talk to you, Benny.”

“You made a promise, Mr. Bulton,” said Ben respectfully, but with a fine spirit. “You’re thinking about Charlie, but, gee, I’m thinking about the patrol. You said if he was in the scouts by the first of the month it would be all right. Can’t you tell me now if he’ll be on hand for the meeting?”

“He’ll be on hand for the meeting,” said Mr. Bulton emphatically.

“Thanks, Mr. Bulton,” said Ben. “So long; I’ll see you later, Charlie.”

Bully Bulton looked at his friend with brimming eyes. Perhaps he was still apprehensive and fearful of his father. But Ben had triumphed for the third time and Bully Bulton saw him as invincible. This self-possessed, cheery boy had struck him in the eye. He had appeared like an apparition out of the water many miles down the river, friendly and cheerful, and had brought him, Bully Bulton the bold fugitive, back home. And now he had stood up and fixed it with a man who, Charlie knew, never broke his word.

And still Ben Maxwell had more fixing to do. But Charlie Bulton, scout of the scouts, did not know that.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### WELCOME

There was no taint of sneakiness in Ben Maxwell's nature. But just the same he practiced a certain sly tack that evening. He waited outside Charlie's house for him. For one thing he did not want to hear reference made to his own heroic part in bringing Charlie home. But mainly he did not want Mr. Bulton to refer to the promise he had genially exacted from him that he go in for scouting. He would hardly know how to answer any casual queries along this line now. He had chosen to return the fugitive to his anxious father, hold him to his promise to Charlie, and then withdraw from the affair.

I think we need not pause to consider what happened in the much-relieved Bulton household that day except to remark in passing that Mr. Bulton said a dozen times (Mrs. Bulton said it was a hundred) that if he had not made that fatal boy scout proposition to Charlie, he most certainly would pack him off to military school the very next day. But he had not only made it, he had allowed Ben Maxwell to clinch it, and there was the end of that terrible boggy.

Ben had found it easy to justify his escapade at home, though he modified its perils in the telling. Charlie had found no such easy sailing, for indeed his flight was wholly without glory. Still, with his mother as an ally indoors and Ben as an ally out-of-doors, he fared pretty well.

"What did your father have to say?" Ben asked as they walked to scout meeting.

"He says I've not only got to go in, but stay in," Charlie admitted. "He says I've got to make good. Gee, he gave it to me straight. But he always keeps his word; you've got to hand it to him."

"Don't you want to make good?"

"Do you think I'd flop now, after what you did?"

"You'll have a lot of fun, too," said Ben. "Why, I sat up till one o'clock in the morning reading that blooming handbook. There are dozens of different things you can go in for. When you once get into the swing of it you'll go daffy about it. Honest, it had me going all right."

"How did they fix it for me?" Charlie asked.

"Why, we're—they're—going to fit you in nice and easy," Ben stumbled. "You'll see."

The First Bridgeboro Troop had a picturesque little building all to itself. A house on Hill Street had been moved around the corner to a more desirable location, but a small wing of this house, containing a kitchen and a pantry, had

been left standing. There it remained quite alone, and it was not hard to fancy a certain aspect of bewilderment about it suggesting a lost or deserted child. There is an interesting story about this fragment of a house left behind and I mean to tell it to you some day.

The members of the troop had put clapboards on the open side of it and they used it for a troop room, paying a small yearly rental to the owner who had gone away without his kitchen and pantry. The kitchen had a stove in it, and the pantry had shelves in it well adapted for scouting paraphernalia. The members of the troop had decorated the two rooms becomingly as a lair of scouts and these rooms were the scene of much fun and turmoil.

Ben and Charlie found the three established patrols and Mr. Ellsworth waiting. Pee-wee and his Chipmunks were not there, but there was news of that busy hero. Mr. Ellsworth, with a twinkle in his eye, handed Ben a note which had come from the conqueror of Little Valley. He did this because Ben was a member and he wished him to see it as the others had done. He glanced curiously, but not unpleasantly, at Charlie Bulton. The scouts stared at him rather more frankly. Probably some of them knew of his running away, though none knew of Ben's part in the episode.

The note from Pee-wee was scrawled on birch bark, a style of stationery which, in deference to scouting, he affected. It read:

I can't get to scout meeting till late, maybe ten o'clock, even maybe half-past nine, because on account of Bruno and Tasca playing at the Elks Club and I have to be there, because I'm their manager. So has my patrol because we got a rule about all sticking together when Tasca and Bruno play at shows, but anyway we'll be there so as to get installed, so tell Mr. Ellsworth.

W. HARRIS, Leader, Chipmunks.

"That kid's in luck," said Doc Carson.

"You mean we're in luck," said Roy; "he won't be here till ten o'clock, maybe even half-past nine. Maybe it will be even eight before he gets here; the pleasure is ours."

"He sure does stumble on luck, that kid," said Warde Hollister. "Those Liventi fellows are the biggest thing that ever happened."

"Sure, and he invented them," vociferated Roy. "Honest, if Buffalo Bill was alive I bet he'd land in Pee-wee's patrol," Westy Martin said. "Look at the Jansen fellows, both of them crackerjack scouts, and they fell kerplunk into his arms."

"Well," said Artie Van Arlen, leader of the Ravens, "we ought not to kick. If anybody had told me we'd have Ben Maxwell in our patrol I'd have said, 'You're crazy.'"

"There's where you said something," said Wig Weigand. "Well, then," said



Mr. Ellsworth, “let’s all give three cheers of welcome to Ben Maxwell of the Ravens. The Maxwells lived in this town when it wasn’t any bigger than Pee-wee. I remember Ben’s grandfather when I was a little kid; Uncle Caleb, we used to call him; he drove a team of white horses. I tell you, fellows, you Ravens, that you’re making a great scoop! You’ve got all the good stuff of about a dozen generations stacked up in one honest-to-goodness scout. The only thing I’ve got against him is that he held off so long. Well, he’s a great reader, I understand. How ’bout you, Ben?”

## CHAPTER XXXV

### MORE THAN SCOUT

Ben was leaning back to the wall, a trifle abashed, but laughing. The troop's interest in him and in its own affairs diverted attention from Charlie Bulton who sat rather disconcerted near his friend and sponsor. Guests were not uncommon at troop meetings and Charlie was glad to be overshadowed by Ben and to be out of the spotlight. The turmoil and confusion of enthusiastic voices, and the scout talk, made him feel quite like an outsider.

"You fellows make me laugh," Ben said.

"A scout is supposed to laugh," Roy interrupted, picking up a cruller (there were always crullers and lemonade at scout meeting) and throwing it at Ben. "Do your cruller eating early," he said; "pretty soon P. Harris will be here."

"They've got you with your back to the wall, Ben," laughed Mr. Ellsworth.

"Well, I'm going to do a good turn," Ben laughed back at Mr. Ellsworth. "You say I wouldn't join the scouts, but just the same I always knew something about them. Once a fellow that was a scout, that I met up in the country, told me about good turns and I asked him what he did and he said his mother dropped a towel and he picked it up for her. (Laughter.) I asked him to tell me another one and he said his patrol leader shut the window because his grandmother felt a draught. (More laughter.) Pee-wee Harris told me (uproars) that if I go to the store for my mother that's a good turn. He said he went to the store and bought a dozen cream puffs for his mother, and he ate two of them \_\_\_\_\_"

"What was the matter with the other ten?" Roy asked.

"So I kind of thought," Ben continued, "that I wouldn't bother getting in with the towel grabbers and the window shutters——"

"Window shutters; that's a joke!" Roy shouted.

"And the cream puff runners," Ben concluded. "Now I'm going to do a good turn, a kind of a one, and I'm going to see if you towel-grabbing, window-shutting errand chasers will stand for it. I'm new at the game and maybe Mr. Ellsworth will say it isn't a good turn at all. Anyway, I'm going to get a line on scouting here to-night, no matter what. My back's to the wall and I've only got one shot to fire——"

"Shoot," said El Sawyer.

Ben continued: "I want you fellows, you Ravens, to take Charlie Bulton into your patrol and let me step out. I'll feel more like a scout if I do that than if I stay in. I read the handbook and I think I've got the dope on scouting.

Charlie has been in bad and he stayed away last night——”

“Yes, and you went and got him and dived off Brickyards trestle,” Grove Bronson of the Ravens shot at him.

The cat was out of the bag; those who had not known, knew now. Charlie Bulton (be it said to his eternal credit) had told a couple of boys the whole affair, featuring Ben as its hero, and so the complete story had reached the ears of at least some of the scouts.

“All right, I brought him back——”

“*You dived off Brickyards trestle into the river,*” Grove persisted. “You swam out and——”

“All right, I dived off Brickyards trestle and swam out,” said Ben. “And here we are, the two of us, and when I get you alone, Charlie, I’ll slam you for going around and telling a whole lot of stuff.”

“That’s all right, I know my business,” said Charlie Bulton; “I’ll tell anybody I please.”

“That’s the way to talk,” said Mr. Ellsworth. At last Charlie Bulton was making a noise like a scout.

“You ran to South Bridgeboro——” Grove began mercilessly. He seemed to be well posted.

“Oh, cut it out,” said Ben. “I brought Charlie here to-night to get him into this troop. I promised his father and I promised him. He’s *got* to get in—and he wants to get in. And he’s going to make good. There’ll be plenty of chances for me. If I can say I was in long enough to do one good turn, I mean a regular one, I’m satisfied. Now, if you fellows won’t stand for that, all right, don’t ever start talking scout stuff to me again. I had my little test. Charlie had his little test. Now you fellows are getting your little test. If you don’t say all right, then you can go picking up towels for all I care and eating cream puffs——”

“We can do that, too,” said the irrepressible Roy.

“The big stunt of yours means something to us,” said Doc Carson, his disappointment unconcealed. “We’ve been counting on you and making plans for you.”

“Well, I’ve been counting on you, too,” Ben shot back.

“Besides,” said Wig Weigand (Raven), “you’re in now and you can’t be a quitter. We’ve got you down for the gold cross some day, boy. And we’ve got you down to win the swimming contest up at camp.”

“All right, towel grabber, I’ll do as you say,” said Ben. “Only you’re wrong about me being in; I didn’t take that oath yet.”

Mr. Ellsworth, who had been watching Ben keenly, now glanced equally keenly at Artie Van Arlen, leader of the Ravens. Ben had indeed made a fine picture leaning back against the wall as if he stood at bay and was equal to the occasion. He winked fraternally at Charlie Bulton, who awaited in suspense

the issue of this discussion.

“How about it, Artie?” Mr. Ellsworth asked.

“I’ve been trying to get a chance to speak,” said Artie. “We’re not towel grabbers or window shutters——”

“Do you deny you’re cream puff eaters?” Roy demanded.

“Only this kind of a good turn kind of knocks me off my feet,” Artie said.

“It’s a regular one,” said Mr. Ellsworth.

“It was too good to be true,” Wig said.

“It’s just as good as it ever was,” Mr. Ellsworth said. “It’s up to you, Artie.”

“All right then,” said Artie, “I’ll tell you fair and square that if Ben had taken the oath we wouldn’t let him out. When you join, you join, that’s the way I look at it. Suppose we all went around resigning for other fellows! But this is different. Boy, it’s some good turn, *I’ll* say! Ben’s a better scout than any of us before he starts. Only it’s kind of—you know—sudden. He says we ought to join him in his good turn and we’re game. We’re no towel grabbers in this patrol.”

“You said it,” shouted Wig.

“How ’bout you, Charlie?” said Artie, turning to Bulton. “If you come in will you stay in?”

“Yes, and he’ll make good,” said Ben.

“He ought to after what you did to-day,” Grove shot out.

“The principal thing I did was to miss mathematics,” said Ben.

“Then you ought to be satisfied without joining the Ravens,” shouted Roy. “Congratulations!”

“Before we go any further,” said Mr. Ellsworth, “I want every member of these three patrols to give three cheers for Ben Maxwell, the best scout that ever didn’t join the scouts. But the scout goblins will get you yet!”

I am glad to be able to tell you that Charlie Bulton was moved to stand up and cheer with the others for the boy who had saved him and made him. And his cheer had the true ring. It was much better than his former attempt to squeak like a chipmunk.

And so, after a brief talk with Mr. Ellsworth, during which Charlie nervously made known his qualifications for tenderfoot (learned that very day from Ben’s handbook) he stood up and raised his right hand scout fashion and took the good scout oath and became a member of the splendid Raven Patrol of the First Bridgeboro Troop. It was a gift from Ben Maxwell and he did not forget that while he was holding up his hand.

Bully Bulton had raised his arm many times. He had raised it in menace before little girls and younger boys. He had even raised it at his father behind his back. But he never raised it to such good purpose as on that Friday night

when he accepted scouting as something to have and to hold, resolved to stick and to *make good*.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### OFF WITH THE OLD LOVE

At a little before ten o'clock there was a commotion outside and voices upraised in frantic argument. This heralded the arrival of our hero from whom we have had a vacation lasting through several chapters. But in that restful period the head chipmunk was not sleeping, he was not even quiet. Only he was so far away that you could not hear him.

The success of his new organization cannot be denied. The Polliwogs and the Alligators had died untimely deaths. That peerless patrol, the Hoptoads, had all hopped away. But the Chipmunks seemed destined for a great career. Everything had gone Pee-wee's way. Willis Harlen and Eddie Carlo brought fine dowries of scouting to the new patrol. The Jansen boys, good scouts both of them, had dropped out of heaven plunk on Pee-wee's head. As for Bruno and Tasca, they were a sensation. Photographs of them were published in the Bridgeboro paper.

They had, since we saw them last, played twice in public, for the Elks and for the Woman's Club. And Pee-wee and his Chipmunks had been in attendance. Both of these performances had brought substantial gifts, and the Chipmunks had nearly a hundred and fifty dollars in its treasury. Pee-wee must have been an ungrateful leader indeed to be unmindful of his manifold blessings.

This was the first scout night since the memorable eclipse of Little Valley and Pee-wee had become something of a celebrity in the interval. He was even being talked of as Bridgeboro's boy mayor for a day. That interesting innovation of giving a boy official authority for a day which had been introduced in the great metropolis, was to be copied in our pleasant suburb, and who of all the boys in town held out such promise of entertainment as our redoubtable chipmunk? The local paper was for him, and the *Pathé News* had even made inquiries about the rumor. Pee-wee's boom was on.

But on this evening the Chipmunks were to be formally accepted as scouts. Mr. Ellsworth had judiciously declined to take cognizance of the new patrol until it was complete and past the stage of initial turmoil. But he was ready to believe that Pee-wee had struck out a masterpiece at last. The quiet Liventi boys had made the Chipmunks famous.

Pee-wee entered the troop rooms with a remark that showed he had not, even in his mounting glory, forgotten those lowly gatherings under that humble roof.

“Are there any refreshments left?” he demanded.

“Here, eat the dish,” said Roy; “here’s the pitcher, too.”

“Why didn’t you save eight crullers?” Pee-wee thundered. “*Gee whiz*, don’t we get any crullers?”

“They’re the only things you *haven’t* been getting,” said Connie Bennett. “You seem to be getting everything that isn’t nailed down.”

“Geeeeeee *whiz!*” complained Pee-wee, gazing into the empty dishpan.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ellsworth was shrewdly inspecting the new organization. He knew Willis and Eddie for former scouts and shook hands cordially with them; also with the Jansen boys whom he knew slightly.

“And these are Bruno and Tasca!” Mr. Ellsworth said, smiling pleasantly at the brothers, then grasping their hands. “The big feature of the Chipmunks, eh?”

“We know not much scouting,” Tasca smiled bashfully.

“Only musick,” said Bruno.

“I discovered ’em,” Pee-wee said, “and I’m the manager of ’em and I’ll leave it to Mr. Ellsworth if they’re not dandy scouts.”

“They are certainly dandy scouts,” said Mr. Ellsworth, his gaze wandering to Peter Tower who quailed in panic fear as the scoutmaster’s kindly eyes scrutinized him. It was an amusing scrutiny.

“How old are you, my boy?” Mr. Ellsworth asked.

“I’m nine,” Peter answered fearfully.

“He’s going to be twelve,” Pee-wee vociferated.

“No doubt,” said Mr. Ellsworth, shaking his head ruefully and turning a stern, but not unkindly look at Pee-wee.

“He’s—he’s kinder old for his age,” Pee-wee ventured.

It was a rueful look that the scoutmaster gave Pee-wee. It did not mean that little Peter was a hopeless case, but that Pee-wee was a hopeless case. “For a scout that knows his handbook——” and Mr. Ellsworth shook his head dubiously.

“He’s—he’s, just the same he’s going to be a dandy one,” Pee-wee almost pled.

“My little friend,” said Mr. Ellsworth, smiling down at Peter Tower, to that diminutive chipmunk’s panic embarrassment, “you know a boy must be twelve years old before he can join the scouts. Our friend Walter is so enthusiastic that sometimes he overlooks things——”

“There’s a cruller on the floor that he overlooked,” said Roy, tossing a last, lonely cruller to the disconcerted Pee-wee.

And there stood our hero, cruller in hand, subdued and feeling a trifle disgraced. Probably Mr. Ellsworth was the only living being who could silence and abash him. Of all the astounding sequels flowing from Pee-wee’s frantic

enterprise, here was the most unfortunate. Of all the unpremeditated confusion of which he was the genius here was a climax more touching than any he had ever wrought.

Poor little Peter Tower stood gazing at Mr. Ellsworth as if he were a god. Perhaps his embarrassment lessened in some measure his disappointment. He had not attained to a scout uniform, nor had he even a best suit to wear on such a momentous occasion. But he sported a mammoth bow tie which almost obscured his neck and chin. It was the nearest approach to full dress that his mother could manage.

“You understand, don’t you?” Mr. Ellsworth asked kindly.

“Yes, sir,” said Peter timidly.

“When you’re twelve years old you can join the scouts.”

“Yes, sir,” said poor little Peter.

“And you must show yourself a good scout now,” said Mr. Ellsworth, “by not feeling bad or angry.”

He was not big enough to be angry in that august assemblage, but he did feel bad; no one knew how bad.

“We have a boy here,” said Mr. Ellsworth, “who stepped out of his patrol to-night to make room for another boy. He is a real scout; a good sport, and generous. You can be as brave as he, Peter, can’t you?”

“Y-yes, sir.”

“Who did that?” Pee-wee shouted, indignant that any news or action had escaped him.

“Ben Maxwell did that,” said Artie of the Ravens, “and Charlie Bulton took the oath in his place.”

“Charlie Bulton!” roared Pee-wee. “Then that shows how it’s dandy the way things happened, because now Ben Maxwell is in my patrol and that shows how I’m always lucky, because now he’s a chipmunk anyway, because he promised his father and me that he’d join and you can’t get out of it, Ben; I’ll leave it to Mr. Ellsworth if you have to keep your word. So do you join the Chipmunks? *Oh, boy, I’ve got Ben Maxwell in my patrol*, and now I’ve got Bruno and Tasca and so now you can see if I’ve got a regular patrol—*geeee whiz!*”

Roy Blakeley gathered up a couple of chairs and pushed them, together with the table, toward Pee-wee. “Here’s the furniture,” he said. “Here’s the pitcher and the dish, too. Is there anything else here that you haven’t got? The human steam shovel, he gets everything! Scouts will please take out their watches and jack-knives and hand them over to Chipmunk Harris—*goodnight!* Here, take a couple of honor scouts—take Warde, he’s got the gold cross. Can you beat that? He gets Ben Maxwell after all! The human scoop! Please hold me while I faint!”



## CHAPTER XXXVII

### RULES IS RULES

And there stood Peter Tower bewildered by all the turmoil, and aghast that these boys should be so audacious with the leader of the Chipmunks. It was Ben Maxwell who, off-hand and cheery as he always was, stepped over to him and stroked the little fellow fraternally on the shoulder.

And Peter felt reassured and more at ease in this boisterous company with that self-appointed friend near him. For was not Ben the tallest boy among those noisy heroes? And of the easiest bearing? They might circumvent Pee-wee and shout him down. But they could not batter down that easy self-possession, that fine and modest assurance in the very presence of which they felt a stilling respect.

And so the noise subsided when Ben spoke. And Peter felt at home and knew he had a champion. If he had lost the Chipmunks and gained Ben Maxwell, could he be so very poor? Perhaps he needed such a friend even more than he needed a patrol. Certainly the hero of the Chipmunks had not been very close to him. Heroes are such busy people!

"You and I'll start a little patrol all by ourselves, hey?" Ben said kindly.

"*You can't do that! You can't do that!*" Pee-wee fairly screamed. "A troop only has four patrols, so you can't do it. Do you think I don't know the rules? You're in my patrol now and I can prove it, so that settles it! Gee whiz, do you think I don't know the rules?"

"He knows the rules!" Roy moaned. "Please excuse me while I drop dead. *He knows the rules! Good-night!*"

"Do you say you're a chipmunk?" Pee-wee demanded of Ben. This glorious sequel to all that had happened had driven every other consideration out of his seething mind. "You promised Mr. Bulton; you can't deny it! And anyway, I'm going to have you be assistant leader and that'll make you leader while I'm being mayor for a day, so now you're in my patrol, see?"

"Are you going to run on the Republican ticket or the theater ticket?" Roy shouted.

"He's not going to run, he's going to jump," said Doc Carson. "Honest, that kid gets everything except the measles. *Ben Maxwell!* Can you beat it?"

"All right," laughed Ben. "I'm a chipmunk."

"Can you make a noise like one?" Pee-wee shouted at him.

"He can make a noise like a scout and that's enough," said Mr. Ellsworth.

"He can make a noise like a friend," said Artie.

“He’s got to learn to make eleven different kinds of noises,” Pee-wee vociferated.

All the while little Peter Tower stood bewildered at the clamorous voices and at the turn affairs had taken. He would probably have been panic-stricken but for the encircling arm of Ben Maxwell.

“You come up to my house to-morrow afternoon, Pete,” said he. “You know the house with all the grounds around it on Hollis Place?”

“Where the stable is?” Peter asked joyfully. “With the gold horse blowing around on top?”

“Right; we’ll call our little patrol after the weather vane; we’ll call it the Gold Horse Patrol, hey, Pete?”

“You can’t do that!” Pee-wee shouted.

“Oh, yes, we can,” said Ben. “And we’re going to put up a tent on the lawn; it’s my lawn, and I can do what I want to with it. And we’re going to study scouting and get ready for twelve years old. You’re going to study under the assistant leader of the chipmunks. And when we go to camp this summer you go with us—now there’s no rule against that. And up there we’re going to stick together—there’s no rule against that. We’re going to get along fine and dandy without any rules. And you’re going to learn to ride horseback up at my house—now don’t anybody tell me there’s a rule against that! By golly, you’d think the Boy Scouts owned the earth. And when you’re twelve years old you’re going to take a running jump and land kerplunk in the middle of the Chipmunk Patrol and they’ll all be tearing their hair with jealousy. So don’t you forget to come up to-morrow afternoon. Come right in through the big gate and walk through the grape arbor and come to the stables and I’ll introduce you to my big white horse and you can ride on him——”

“Up on top of him?” Peter asked.

“On the very top of him; and he’s going to be yours to ride on. What d’you know about that? So now you just give a look of haughty scorn at the Chipmunks and tell ’em they’ll have to wait for you. We’ll make ’em wait, huh, Pete?”

And Peter Tower smiled all over.

So Ben Maxwell became a chipmunk, and Peter Tower became his pupil. Everything fell into Pee-wee’s hands as usual. But perhaps Ben Maxwell was more of a friend than he was a scout.

Or perhaps he was more of a scout than——

Oh, well, you’ll have to decide for yourself just what he was.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII HIS HONOR THE MAYOR

School examinations being over and the spring term nearing its end, the pupils were invited to vote for a boy to be Bridgeboro's mayor for one whole day. Pee-wee's exploit in connection with the entertainment at Little Valley had brought him into public notice, and increased a fame already great among the hilarious element of Bridgeboro's younger set. Roy Blakeley constituted himself a sort of campaign manager for the leader of the Chipmunks. It was he who originated the slogan which went far toward carrying Pee-wee into office. *He isn't a politician, he's a scream.*

Pupils were encouraged by their teachers and parents to vote for Pee-wee to be Bridgeboro's boy mayor for a day. He polled an enormous vote among the girls, who probably saw in his election prospects of several days' continuous giggling. The scouts were unanimous for him, and even little Peter Tower who, by the inexorable progress of events, had been eliminated from his hero's patrol, had the rare privilege of voting for him. Pee-wee was carried into office by one of those popular waves which there is no resisting.

I suppose that the memorable Saturday on which Mayor Corbin stepped out of office to make way for Bridgeboro's boy mayor for a day, had been selected as being a sort of off day when no very important matters would come up. I suppose (I only say I suppose) that this day had been hit upon because it would be a day of routine business for the chief executive. I do not know how these things are managed in New York where the boy mayor for a day is a feature of Boys' Week. All I can say is that important matters did come up while our hero was in office and that he did his full duty.

The occasion was a great honor, not only to the scouts, but to all the boys of Bridgeboro. The *Bugle* was ready with its camera; even the *Pathé News* was on hand to "shoot" the leader of the Chipmunks while at his official desk. Better still, there was to be a surprise banquet in honor of the retiring executive when the day was over. This was to be held under scout auspices in the assembly room of the school and there was to be ice cream. Pee-wee, who was to be the guest of honor, knew nothing of these plans of his troop. There were to be other things, but particularly ice cream. On this occasion everybody would have a chance of meeting the retiring statesman and shaking hands with him. It would be a wonderful event, as Roy Blakeley said, and every one would be happy in celebration of the fact that Pee-wee was no longer mayor.

I have followed and recorded faithfully, I hope, Pee-wee's career as a

scout. His adventures in the troubled waters of politics were brief and I shall now relate these to you without any partisan bias. At eight o'clock on Saturday morning His Honor, the Chipmunk mayor, as he is known in local history, strode down Terrace Avenue into Main Street, and thence to the Municipal Building, accompanied by a hilarious throng. Mr. Borden, who was Mayor Corbin's secretary, was waiting for the diminutive executive in the doorway of the building and our hero passed out of sight of his clamorous following to take up the burdens of government.

Standing by the mayor's formidable big desk, Pee-wee was photographed in the act of taking the oath of office. He was then photographed sitting at the desk (which almost completely obscured him) with official pen poised in hand, while Secretary Borden stood dutifully at his elbow holding a batch of papers. Still another picture was taken, showing him signing the proclamation relative to Boys' Week which began on the Monday following. It seemed an appropriate duty.

Pee-wee then received and welcomed a group of hikers who had footed it all the way from the West and were paying their respects to Bridgeboro as they passed through. They had been sitting in an anteroom waiting, and were glad enough to sit and wait, it may be supposed.

"These young men," said Secretary Borden, "have hiked all the way from Chicago and they bring a message of greeting from the mayor of that great city to the mayor of New York. They want to pay their respects to the acting mayor of Bridgeboro."

"Even I know more about hiking than the regular mayor," Pee-wee said, "because I did a lot of hiking, and I bet you don't know how to go scout pace, that's one thing. If you go ten paces walking and ten running you don't get tired. I bet you the mayor of New York don't know how to go scout pace."

Following this official reception, Pee-wee was permitted to consider the wisdom of furnishing the truant officer with a new bicycle. He wisely requested to see the old one (thus setting a good example to extravagant executives and legislative bodies the country over) and on perceiving it to be hardly better than a wreck, he signed the voucher. "Gee whiz, you've got to show *me*," Pee-wee said; "that's only fair."



PEE-WEE AS MAYOR, CONSIDERS THE TRUANT OFFICER'S APPLICATION FOR A NEW BICYCLE.

Perhaps if more executives said, "Gee whiz, you've got to show me," there would be a welcome reduction in taxes. Pee-wee was a pretty good mayor for a day, at that.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### OFFICIAL ORDERS

Late in the afternoon Pee-wee did the greatest thing in his brief political career, an official act ranking with the issuing of the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation. The sanitary inspector of Bridgeboro was ushered into the mayor's sanctum to report on a very serious condition of affairs. Secretary Borden explained to His Honor that the Board of Health had been active in a much-needed drive to establish sanitary conditions in a number of bakeries and other establishments in Bridgeboro where edibles were manufactured and sold. Salitaro's fruit store was notorious among those places handling perishables where the sanitary code had been flagrantly violated.

"These people as well as the Pizzio Brothers' place," said Secretary Borden, speaking for the inspector, "leave decaying fruits and vegetables in their back yards and have been repeatedly warned that this is in violation of the law. They have been hailed into court and fined. But nothing seems to have any effect. The same with Pydorf's Bakery; the condition in their cellar where the baking is done is a menace to health. Some of these places have taken warning and are now complying with the law. But Inspector Spottem has here a list of eight or ten places of which the proprietors have been warned and fined, but still treat the law as a joke."

"I bought lots of iced cakes in Pydorf's," Pee-wee said. "They have dandy doughnuts too—with jelly in 'em."

"But their cellar is unsanitary and it's dangerous," said Inspector Spottem. "The people of this town have a right to see this ordinance about cleanly conditions enforced."

"Sure they have," said Pee-wee. "Gee whiz, what's the use of having any laws? It's the cellars that count more than the crullers do. Because, anyway, if you get sick on account of those things then you can't eat crullers, can you?"

"You certainly can't," said Inspector Spottem, smiling.

"Now I'll tell you just where Mayor Corbin stands on this matter," Secretary Borden explained in a very kindly and helpful way to the mayor for a day. "This condition has been going on for months. Mayor Corbin told the Board of Health to proceed, that means do something about these places. They were all warned and some of them acted on the warning. Some of them didn't take the thing seriously and were fined in court. Then they woke up. That was all they needed. But there were some that went merrily on. You understand

how that is?"

"Sure I do," said Pee-wee. "Maybe they think they can get fresh with the law, hey?"

"That's just it," said Secretary Borden, winking at the inspector. "Now Mayor Corbin told Mr. Spottem not to put up with any more nonsense from those places, but to close them up. Then maybe they'll come to their senses."

"Sure, you bet they will," said Pee-wee.

"Now Mr. Spottem has a list here of a few places which he purposes to close up—if Your Honor says the word. The Board of Health can act—it has teeth. All that is needed is the mayor's say-so. That the idea, Mr. Inspector?"

"That's the idea exactly," said Mr. Spottem.

Pee-wee felt very important. He had, to the extent of his capacity, helped to keep bakeries and such places open. He had saved many of Pizzio's bananas from ever reaching that objectionable heap in the back yard.

"Maybe they think they can get fresh," he said.

"The danger is in their getting too stale," Secretary Borden ventured. "Now for the sake of the people of this town don't you think that it's time for Mr. Spottem to act? It's up to you as mayor. I can only tell you what Mayor Corbin intended to do. But it's up to you. You can say the word now and by sundown to-day every place on Mr. Spottem's list will be closed up tight. Or you can shift the responsibility and leave it for Mayor Corbin to do on Monday. I'd like to see you go out of office doing something big (he winked at Inspector Spottem) and let these people know that our scout mayor is right on the job, ready to *act*. Now what do you say, Mayor Harris?"

"Do you think I'm a-scared to act?" said Pee-wee. He was somewhat aghast at the thought of the appalling authority he was asked to exercise. Suppose Pizzio should meet him in the street some day and take violent revenge. What would Pydorf do upon learning that his greasy shop had been summarily closed by a Boy Scout?

But Pee-wee was no coward. He would not neglect a duty any more than he would neglect a doughnut. He would not decline a responsibility any more than he would decline a banana. He took everything that came his way, responsibilities included. Perhaps he was even sorry that he could not eat them.

"Sure, you bet, go ahead and close them up," he said. "Anyway, it'll serve 'em right. Gee whiz, I'm not a-scared of them. If Charlie Pydorf gets mad at me because I closed up his father's place I'll shut him up too, because I'm not a-scared of him, you ask Roy Blakeley."

"Then I have your word to go ahead?" the inspector asked.

"Sure you have," said Pee-wee.

"All right then, we'll act at once."

It being late in the day, Pee-wee seemed on the point of timing his

departure so that he might be a witness to the dramatic scenes consequent upon his order. He never missed a fire or failed to accompany an ambulance. And he saw in the forcible closing of these delinquent establishments a delightful prospect of brawls and disturbances which it would be pleasant to witness. It must be confessed that these delectable promises of riot interested Pee-wee rather more than sanitary conditions in Bridgeboro. But he had done his official duty with creditable courage. He would have enjoyed being on hand outside the shop of the voluble and excitable Pizzio to see his official mandate carried out and perhaps throw a tomato at Pizzio as an additional evidence of the majesty of the law. But he was deterred from these delights by an official duty which put the crowning glory on his all too brief career as mayor.

He was just considering the propriety of grabbing his hat and following Inspector Spottem when the mayor's secretary (who had proven himself a tactful lieutenant to the mayor for a day) called his attention to a paper pertaining to a matter which had been overlooked in the pressure of official business.

"This Chautauqua entertainment business," said Mayor Corbin's secretary, picking up the paper. I suspect he enjoyed being the mayor for a day's secretary quite as much as Pee-wee enjoyed being mayor. "They want permission to use the school assembly room for their entertainments. The question that Mayor Corbin was considering was whether the thing is educational."

"It's no good," Pee-wee said. "I gave shows and I know about them, and gee whiz, they have lectures and things. Do you call those entertainments? The Liventi fellers in my patrol can play the marimba better than the things they have in those Chautauqua shows."

The secretary tried to explain the situation and invoke Pee-wee's official judgment. "Yes, but you see the point is right here. If the Chautauqua program is educational it might be all right to let them use the school assembly room. Mayor Corbin wants to put a stop to this using of the school assembly room for all sorts of purposes that have nothing to do with the school. The town gets nothing out of it; do you see?"

"Sure, I see," said Pee-wee. "Do you think I'm sticking up for schools?"

"Well then," said Secretary Borden, "if the Chautauqua is just a series of shows, we'll refuse to let them use the school for their purposes. And that brings up the question which was under discussion here yesterday and which Mayor Corbin left for you to decide. Are we to open the school for every Tom, Dick and Harry that won't or can't hire a hall? The school assembly room is for commencements and such things; lectures, perhaps."

"Sure, that's right," Pee-wee said, "because, gee whiz, let 'em get a place of their own, unless it's about school, that's what *I* say."



“Only school affairs,” concurred the secretary. “That seems to be the point. We’ve got to call a halt somewhere.”

“I’ll call it,” said Pee-wee, emboldened by his sanitary mandate. “Gee whiz, that’s fair. Anyway, I got no use for the Chautauqua, and that’s a dandy idea about not letting everybody use the school; that’s what *I* say.”

“Well, then that’s settled,” said the mayor’s secretary. “I’ll answer the Chautauqua’s letter and tell them they’d better use a tent.”

“Tell ’em P.S. they can stay away altogether if they want to,” said Pee-wee.

“And about the general use of the school assembly?”

“They don’t get a right to use it, anybody, not unless it’s about schools,” said Pee-wee.

“Except by special permission,” said the secretary. “This opening of the assembly room for every sort of purpose just by going to the janitor ceases.”

“You bet your life it does,” said Pee-wee.

He was so enthusiastic in the public welfare that for a few moments he seemed to expect that he and Secretary Borden were going around personally to stand guard at the school ready to assault unauthorized invaders. The mayor seemed beset by a mania to follow up his own official mandates immediately and participate in their rigorous enforcement.

“And I guess that’s about all,” said Secretary Borden.

“Shall I go home?” said Pee-wee.

“Yes, Your Honor,” said the secretary, “and let me congratulate you on the success of your administration.”

“If you’re head of a patrol it’s easy to be mayor,” said Pee-wee. “Gee whiz, it’s awful easy. Do they have to do like I said, all those people?”

“Well, I guess.”

“I’ll go and make ’em to-morrow if they didn’t close up,” said Pee-wee.

“The mayor’s word is enough,” said the secretary.

“So long,” said Pee-wee.

“So long, Your Honor,” said Secretary Borden. Pee-wee found a large group waiting outside to see him emerge.

## CHAPTER XL THOSE WHO WAIT

Pee-wee retired to private life, but not to the quiet which should follow a stormy political career. There was no quiet for Pee-wee, nor for any one who came within miles of him. As mayor for a day he had done big things, as he was soon to realize. It was a pity that he could not live thereafter in illustrious retirement as Washington did at Mount Vernon.

On that very night he betook himself to the testimonial affair which was to be, in a sense, his coming out of office. But all unknown to Pee-wee it was to be more than that.

Upon arriving at the scene of festivity, he found a large group of Bridgeboro's young people waiting on the sidewalk. The scouts were there in force, Bruno and Tasca with their marimba. But many of the older boys and girls of town were there also, willing to honor the retiring mayor if it afforded them an opportunity of getting a few dances. Thus society followed our hero to thrive upon his fame. A gay party of young people had even come from Little Valley in a big touring car; vulture-like, they had been drawn by instinct to the scene of prospective delight. They had scented music and dancing from afar. The flapper and the cake-eater know where dancing will occur the same as the savage beast knows where water is to be found.

"It's a most *exasperating* thing!" chirped Miss Minerva Skybrow. "We've been standing here for ages and ages. What on *earth* do you suppose can be the matter?"

"It's perfectly abominable!" echoed Miss Joy Eaten. "I think a *complaint* ought to be made, that's just what I think."

Evidently many complaints had already been made, there seemed a very chorus of them. "Standing here in the dark, it's disgraceful!"

"I never *heard* of such a thing in my *life*!"

"They have late fashionable affairs down here in Bridgeboro," called a young fellow in the touring car from Little Valley. "Maybe they have their entertainments in the dark the same as we do."

The waiting throng represented every mood—mirthful, ironical, disappointed, and downright angry. The scouts were merry and ready with withering retorts from the Little Valley group who sat in the touring car humorously commenting upon the dilatory habit of Bridgeboro. Among these verbal warriors the two Liventi boys sat patiently and silently on their marimba cases. In the hope of engineering a dance several girls had besought them to

bring their stirring instrument.

“Hey, Mayor Chipmunk,” Wig Weigand said, “you don’t happen to know anything about Janitor Jim, do you? Did he give you the keys?”

“Isn’t he around?” the ex-mayor asked.

“Not so you’d notice it,” said Doc Carson.

“I have a hunch that he isn’t going to appear in person,” said Dorry Benton. “We were around at his house and his wife said she thinks he went to the automobile show in New York. She said he had orders not to open the school for anybody without permission from headquarters.”

“Oh, merrily, merrily, what care we if he never opens it?” called Roy. “School is closed, oh, school is closed!”

It was certainly closed. Its interior was not even bathed in the dim light which had enabled the fragments of an audience to see our hero in his sensational appearance at the church entertainment. The school was shut up tighter than ever Pee-wee was in all his adventurous career.

“It’s just too exasperating!” wailed a weary-maiden. “We were going to have such fun dancing to the marimba. What on earth do you suppose can be the matter?”

“I know what’s the matter,” Pee-wee shouted, aghast at the commendable promptness with which his official mandate had been put into effect, “but anyway, gee whiz, this isn’t a school affair—you got to admit it isn’t a school affair——”

“It isn’t an affair at all,” chirped one of the girls from Little Valley.

“I gave an order that the school mustn’t be opened,” our hero bravely confessed, “because anyway all kinds of people use it, so I said they couldn’t, not even the Chautauqua, and girls and fellers can’t have it opened just to dance and have a lot of fun, because it’s only to get educated in, but anyway, I didn’t think it would be so quick.”

“You gave an order not to open the assembly room to-night?” roared El Sawyer.

“Do you blame me if Janitor Jim goes to New York?” Pee-wee demanded. “Geeeeee whiz, do you call that logic?”

“He got orders from the mayor not to open the assembly room and then he put the keys in his pocket and went to New York,” moaned Grove Bronson. “The meeting is adjourned. Three cheers for Mayor Harris! *Good-night!*”

A ghastly wail arose from the Little Valley car, followed by a chorus of moans. No word was said. But the horn tooted in a conclusive way and the engine started, as if there were no words available to that weary carload of pleasure seekers. And so the machine moved off, and as it went around the corner a despairing cry arose in the darkness from one of those girl visitors from Bridgeboro’s little suburb. Perhaps she had been present at the total

eclipse of Little Valley. Who shall say?

## CHAPTER XLI THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS

But the terrible official arm of Bridgeboro's mayor for a day reached farther than the school. Those who had come to dance soon went their several ways in sorrow and despair, but the ex-mayor paid the penalty for his official rectitude.

The four patrols, unattended by the older social element which had rallied to their standard only to turn their celebration into a dance, adjourned to their troop rooms for refreshments.

"Anyway, I'm glad of it," Pee-wee said, "because anyway, they just came so as they could make fun of us and dance, that's just like 'em; we should worry, because what do we care about their dances? They're a lot of sharpies and flappers, that's all they are—gee whiz, I know them. All they wanted was just to see the assembly room opened and then they'd push all the chairs out of the way and start in, and even they'd want some of our refreshments too, maybe, hey?"

"You did right, Mayor Chipmunk, to give that order," said Wig Weigand.

"We foiled 'em, hey?" said Pee-wee.

It seemed good after all to be in their own familiar meeting-place. The space was somewhat inadequate to the four full patrols that were present with a few non-scout guests, among whom little Peter Tower stared and smiled, and was more than ever in awe of his hero and former leader. If he was not a scout, at least he was going to have his fill of ice cream.

"I just happened to think," said Ben Maxwell, "that Bennett's will be delivering the ice cream and stuff at the school and they won't get in. I think I'll hang around there and come back with them. First I'll go to the school and look around, then I'll go to Bennett's."

"Good idea," said Artie Van Arlen.

"The sooner the quicker," said Roy. "They said they'll deliver it about nine o'clock."

"All right, I'll take care of it," said Ben, hurrying away.

It is with deep regret that I approach the tragic termination of this narrative, the only story with a sad ending that duty has ever compelled me to record. But when Ben Maxwell returned he announced that Bennett's Fresh Confectionery had been summarily closed up by the strong arm of the law because of unsanitary conditions in its manufacturing department. He further stated that an order from the mayor that very day was the cause of this drastic

proceeding. It was one of the places on Inspector Spottem's list. Bennett's, the happy hunting ground of Pee-wee, where he had bought sodas and cones and lolly-pops and banana splits and chocolate sundaes, aye, and golf balls three for a cent, had been plunged in darkness by Bridgeboro's boy mayor for a day.

"Oh, say not so," moaned Roy Blakeley.

"Yes, I say it's so," laughed Ben. "Bennett's is closed up as tight as the school, and so is Schmitt's Candy Parlor across the street. The prince of darkness closed them up, and that's all there is to it."

Pee-wee said not a word, only gaped at the returning messenger. Then a sudden thud was heard and Roy Blakeley was seen upon the floor, inert, face down, and speechless. Thus died the famous leader of the Silver Foxes. It is true that he came to life again in about ten minutes. But anyway, he dropped dead, there is no doubt about that. His coming to life again is another matter.

THE END

[The end of *Pee-wee Harris, Mayor for a Day* by Percy Keese Fitzhugh]