

**TOM SLADE**  
**ON**  
**OVERLOOK MOUNTAIN**

**PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH**

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# TOM SLADE ON OVERLOOK MOUNTAIN



Tom stood up occasionally and chatted with the other two.

# TOM SLADE ON OVERLOOK MOUNTAIN

BY

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

*Author of*

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

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TO MY MOTHER

THIS STORY IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY  
OF THE AFTERNOON SPENT ON THE  
SUMMIT OF OVERLOOK MOUNTAIN

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# TOM SLADE ON OVERLOOK MOUNTAIN

## CHAPTER I

### TOM

If so it chance that you live in the city of New York and should, let us say, stop for a cooling drink of water in the interval of a ball game, pause for a few moments and consider this strange story of old Caleb Dyker and perhaps the water will not taste quite so good to you.

Old Caleb Dyker had never seen the great city of New York; he had never in all his life been away from the little village of West Hurley until he was put out, thrown out, or rather until his little village was taken away from him by the great city of New York.

If it is a good rule never to hit a fellow under your size, then the great city of New York is not a very good scout, for it knocked the poor little village of West Hurley clean off the map.

And that was because the great city of New York wanted a drink of water.

So poor Caleb Dyker, dazed and bewildered at this pathetic eviction from all that was near and dear to him, became a tramp and wanderer. And that is how Tom Slade fell in with him.

Tom Slade himself had something of the spirit of the tramp and wanderer. He was assistant at Temple Camp, the big scout community in the Catskills, and was the hero of every boy who spent the summer there. But he was restless. Perhaps his service overseas had made him so, and at the time of this singular chain of happenings the roving spirit was upon him.

Yet it is unlikely that he would have gone away from Temple Camp, that year at all events, if he had not fallen in with the queer personage who all unwittingly gave impetus to his dormant wanderlust.

It is funny, when you come to think of it, how these two, poor old Caleb Dyker and Tom, first met at a little crystal spring by the wayside where they had both paused for a drink of water. Because, you know, this whole story hinges on a drink of water as one might say....

## CHAPTER II

### HERVEY WANDERS INTO THE STORY AND OUT AGAIN

Poor Tom; of all the ridiculous errands to be on, that one of tramping down to Catskill Landing was the most ridiculous. Because Tom was a poor young fellow, and was no more able to buy the boat than Hervey Willetts (one of the young scouts of camp) was able to give an accurate and rational account of it.

It was really Hervey who started this whole thing, Hervey Willetts who started so many things. In his purposeless wanderings he had roamed to Catskill Landing one day and (as usual) had not returned for dinner.

“Why didn’t you come back for dinner?” asked the young assistant, rather annoyed.

“Slady, Catskill Landing is thirteen miles and you can’t hear the dinner horn that far. Besides, thirteen is an unlucky number.”

“We’ll have to get a radio if we want you to come home for dinner,” said Tom. “We’ll have to broadcast the dinner call.”

“Slady, don’t talk about radios, don’t mention the name; you ought to see the radio on that boat—the big cabin cruiser that’s for sale. I’d like to buy that boat, Slady, it’s a pippertino!” Probably he would have bought it and sailed away to South Africa in it quite alone, but for one trifling reason. The price of the boat was two thousand dollars, and Hervey had exactly two nickels.

“A pretty big pippertino, hey?” asked Tom.

“Oh, about seventy-five feet—well, maybe fifty, say. If I had that boat, Slady, I’d beat it for Japan and I’d come back by way of the Suez Canal. Two thousand bucks, that’s cheap for that boat, Slady. If I had two thousand bucks I’d buy that boat *in a minute*.

“You would, huh?”

“You tell ’em I would. It’s got everything in it, Slady, bunks, cook stove, compass, *everything*. Why I’d give a couple of hundred bucks just for that compass alone, I would.”

It is hard to say why Hervey would have paid such a price for a compass since he never cared in which direction he went and when you are climbing a tree or a telegraph pole, you need no compass to inform you that you are going *up*.

“Why, that rich man must want to give it away, Slady,” Hervey continued. “Two thousand bucks! Why it’s worth about, oh about ten or fifteen thousand anyway—maybe twenty. It’s a regular ocean liner. There’s a ladder up the side and everything; you just grab it and—”

“Oh, you swam out to it?” Tom asked. “It’s anchored off shore?”

“You can just kindly mention that I did. I swam out to it and all around it and everywhere. There’s a *no trespassing* sign; you just grab hold of that and pull yourself right up, easy as pie.”

“I see.”

“Maybe a lot of us could club together and buy it, hey?” said Hervey.

Tom smiled. If the scouts at Temple Camp could have scared up twenty dollars among them they would have been lucky. “We might club together and buy the anchor,” Tom laughed.

“Don’t miss it, Slady; go down and look it over. You can crawl right in through one of the port-holes—I did; it’s a cinch. Any dinner left?”

“You’d better go and ask Chocolate Drop,” said Tom.

With a stick which he always carried, Hervey removed his outlandish rimless hat, cut full of holes, and revolving it upon the end of the stick sauntered up toward the cooking shack singing,

“Oh the life of a scout is good,  
so good;  
He always does just what he should,  
I would.  
Big trees he can climb,  
And he’s always on time;  
The life of a scout is good.”

## CHAPTER III

### THE BOAT

It was odd how the memorable series of adventures which befell Tom was thus started by that blithesome visitor at camp, whom they called the wandering minstrel. He set fire to Tom's imagination in the same careless fashion that characterized all his artless, irresponsible acts, and ambled away again leaving poor Tom to his fate.

Tom went down to Catskill Landing to look at the boat. He did not tell any one he was going because he realized the absurdity of a young camp assistant with thirty dollars a week going to inspect a boat which was for sale for two thousand dollars. He just wanted to look at it; a cat can look at a king.

He did not go about his inspection in Hervey's original way; he secured permission from the man in whose care the boat had been left, and this man rowed him out to the boat which lay at anchor a hundred feet or so from shore.

Tom felt rather embarrassed at finding that some one representing the owner was to accompany him, and he had an unpleasant feeling that the man knew he was not a likely customer.

"They thinking of buying a boat for the camp?" the caretaker asked as they rowed out.

"Oh, I just thought I'd look her over," said Tom, non-committally. "It's a bargain, I hear."

"These rich fellers get tired of their toys, you know," said the man. "I suppose if that boat was down New York and he advertised her, she'd be snapped up quick enough."

"Who is the owner?" Tom asked.

"Homer, his name is; folks got a big place near Greendale. Oak Lodge they call it. He's in Europe now."

Tom climbed up on the deck of the boat with more reverence for it than ever Hervey Willetts had shown.

It was a cabin cruiser, one of those palatial motor-boats which seem all the more luxurious and attractive for being cosy and small. It had a quaint name, *Goodfellow*, which somehow seemed appropriate to its combined qualities of snug comfort and sporty trimness. It looked a wide awake, companionable boat.

It seemed to Tom that the owner must be a young man with a predilection for camping, and all the wholesome sport which goes with it, for in the little cabin there were fishing tackle, crab-nets, a tent and all the usual paraphernalia

of the scout and adventurer. A mere glimpse at the tiny galley with its oil stove and spotless tins was enough to arouse an appetite.

"It's a peach all right," said poor Tom; "it's a bargain at two thousand, I'll say that. I wonder why he wants to get rid of it?"

"Got the airplane bug, I guess," said the man.

"He's in Europe?" Tom asked.

"Climbin' mountains in Switzerland; last card I got from him said Loosarne or some such place. If all them mountains was stamped out flat I reckon Switzerland would be as big as the United States. Folks get crazes fer climbin' them mountains; they got ter go roped together, I hear. What rich folks is after is excitement, I reckon. They go sailin' on the streets in Veenus, judgin' from the post cards."

Tom did not hear these comments on European travel. He was gazing about, feasting his eyes on every enchanting detail and appurtenance of the boat. He derived a kind of foolish comfort from the fact that, the owner being away, the sale of this trim little floating palace could not be consummated for a while at least. Yet he stood a better chance of being struck by lightning than of being able to buy it.

"Well, you couldn't sell it anyway?" he said in a wistfully, questioning way.

"Couldn't give no bill o' sale," said the man.

"And she won't go yet then—anyway?"

"Not 'nes she slips her anchor."

Poor Tom could not drag himself away from the handsome little craft. He vaulted onto the cabin roof and sat with his legs dangling over the cockpit, gazing about at the accessories which spoke so seductively of nautical life; the anchor, the bell, the compass, the brass fog-horn in its canvas cover, the life preservers with *Goodfellow* printed on them.

Then, like a flash, he ceased his day dreaming and became the practical, alert young fellow that he was. He jumped down off the cabin roof, fully awake to his poverty and the fact that he was wasting this honest man's time.

"She's the kind of boat you read about, all right," he said.

As they rowed shoreward the man gave a little dissertation on boats which Tom later had cause to remember.

"Well, there's somethin' about a boat," he said, "yer fall in love with it. Now nobody ever loved a automobile. I guess that's why boats is called females in a way of speakin'; named after women and all that. Yer go crazy over a boat. I knowed men, I did, would let their boats rot, 'fore they'd sell 'em. You wouldn't hear uv nobody doin' that with a airplane. It's human natur', as the feller says.

"You never heered nobody speak affectionate about a automobile, now did

yer? Yer heered 'em praise it 'n say it could make the hills 'n all that, but yer never heered nobody speak soft like 'bout one, now did yer? Folks get new autos every year or two, but they stick ter their ole boats.

“When a boat brings a man in out uv a storm he jes’ kind uv loves that boat. He don’t look at his speedometer and say, ‘She done three hundred miles 'n she’s worth that much less.’ No sir, I can show yer half a dozen men 'bout here, up 'n down the river, wouldn’ sell yer their ole scows, no *sir*, not fer love or money, they wouldn’.

“Take Danny Jellif up here, owns the *Daisy*; you couldn’ buy the *Daisy*. 'Cause money don’t count fer nothin’ where there’s love; that’s how I dope it out. Mebbe these rich fellers is different, but not always, I guess. Leastways, yer get ter love a boat, she’s kind uv human. Mebbe Ted Homer is different; he didn’ name her a female name anyway.”

“Oh, lots of girls are good fellows,” said Tom. “Well, I reckon you know more about 'em than I do,” said the man as he rowed.

This was not the case, for indeed Tom knew very little about them. This was his first love affair. He was madly in love with *Goodfellow*. And it was pathetic that this beauteous damsel of his heart was so far beyond his reach. He was like a pauper in love with a princess and he felt that he would do anything in the world to win her. Anything? Well, most anything....



## CHAPTER IV THE STRANGER

If Tom Slade owned that boat he would make a cruise down the coast in it. As he hiked back to Temple Camp he thought of what he would do and where he would go and who he would take along—if he only owned that boat. He would rechristen it the—the—the—no, he wouldn't rechristen it at all; *Goodfellow* was a crackerjack name, he would call it *Goodfellow*.

And now as he thought of the name it seemed a particularly happy name for a boat, an inspiration, as Pee-wee Harris would have said. It meant trusty and fair and square, with a true sportsman's broad code of honor.

*Goodfellow*. Tom mused upon the name. It suggested pal, it suggested daring, and just a touch of blithesome recklessness. Above all it seemed to Tom to suggest pal. Good scout, good citizen, good pupil, good son, good brother; all good, no doubt, but such names for a boat! "*Goodfellow*," said Tom, "that's one peach of a name." Could it be that being a good fellow was really better than being any of these other things? Or was it just that the name was blithesome and sportive?

And just then he came upon the stranger. He came upon him at a little crystal spring by the wayside where hikers from Temple Camp often paused for a cooling drink. Out of deference to this little spring, the stone wall which bordered the road had been made to form a semicircle at the spot, leaving the water free to bubble up.

And at this spot, where the cold, hard wall respectfully stepped aside, to allow the spring to make its kindly presence known to the thirsty wayfarer, some flat stones projected from the rough, loose masonry, to form several seats. The Temple Camp boys never used these stone shelves, for by instinct they preferred the top of the wall. Therefore, it looked the more peculiar to Tom to see sitting on one of these hospitable projections the queerest, most wizened looking little old man that he had ever seen.

The little shelf on which he sat was so unobtrusive that he seemed to be sitting on nothing at all, in the very center of the small semicircle of stone wall. He looked like some whimsical statue sitting there with his two shrivelled hands resting on his crazy cane. His old-fashioned steel-rimmed spectacles rested at such a rakish angle on his nose that one of his eyes looked over one lens, while the other looked under the opposite one. And there was a strange, bright stare in his eyes which might once upon a time have suggested shrewdness. The whole whimsical aspect of this funny little old man was

emphasized by the fact of his looking straight ahead of him the while he talked; his interest in Tom's presence seemed quite impersonal.

Tom was nothing if not personal and hearty and, seating himself near this queer personage, he stretched his legs out in front of him, clasped his hands in back of his head, and said, "Well, you taking a rest?"

"It's all right to drink this water if you want to," said the old man in a crisp, choppy voice.

"You said it," laughed Tom; "no germs here, you can bet."

Then having rested momentarily he kneeled down, drinking out of his cupped hands while the little old man looked straight ahead of him, his withered hands clasped upon his cane.

"You needn't be ashamed to drink that water," he said, "it's honest water; all water that comes out of springs is honest."

"Well," laughed Tom as he lifted his cupped hands for another cooling draught, "this water certainly needn't be ashamed to look anybody in the face."

The water, indeed, seemed carefree and of a good conscience. It trickled down off Tom's face and neck as if it had a clean record and not a care in the world. He arose not only refreshed but cleansed. "You bet it's good, pure water," he said.

The little old man continued looking straight ahead of him and when he spoke it was with a kind of crisp finality, like an oracle speaking. It amused Tom, and he sat on the ground with his hands clasped around his drawn-up knees, listening to the queerest tirade he had ever heard.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CUP OF SORROW

“You never drink out of the Ashokan Reservoir, do you?” the old man asked.

“Well I don’t exactly drink out of the Ashokan Reservoir,” Tom said. “But you know it’s pretty hard to get away from the Ashokan Reservoir when you’re down in New York.”

“New York is a thief,” the old man said.

“Now who’s calling names?” Tom laughed.

“If you drink any water that comes from the Ashokan Reservoir, you’re accessory to a thief,” the old man said. “Drink spring water. Miles and miles of country was stole to make the Ashokan Reservoir. The village where I lived, West Hurley, was wiped out to make the Ashokan Reservoir. My home was took away from me.

“Why did New York have to come way up here for water? That water is poison—it has sorrow in it. If you drink that water you drink a bitter cup of sorrow. Every drink you take of it you’re drinking sorrow. Drink spring water. You’re a young man, don’t mix yourself up with a crime; keep your hands clean.”

“I don’t see how I’m going to keep my hands clean unless I wash them,” Tom laughed; “and down in New York the only way you can wash your hands is to turn on the faucet. What’s the big idea, anyway, Cap?”

“My name is Dyker,” said the old man.

“Mine’s Tom Slade,” said Tom. “You seem to have a grouch against the Ashokan Reservoir. You should worry. I suppose they had to clear away the valley to make room for it. What’s done is done; I wouldn’t let it bother my young life if I were you.”

“I’m seventy-three year old,” said the little old man, “and from the day they drove me out of my house ’til this very minute, I never drank a drop out of that cup of sorrow—”

“It’s a pretty big cup all right,” Tom laughed. “You wouldn’t laugh if you’d ’a’ been put out of your home. On that day I swore I’d never drink a drop of water out of that reservoir, and I kept that vow. I tramped as far as New York City, I did, but not a drop of it did I touch; I bought spring water and drank it. I wouldn’t drink sorrow any more than I’d wash my hands in another’s blood.”

Something in the little old man’s voice caused Tom’s mood of banter to

change and he gave a quick glance up at the whimsical, pathetic figure sitting there looking straight ahead across the fields. The withered hands were trembling and the funny rustic cane, memento of the woods and companion of his lonely travels, was shaking as if in very sympathy.

Of a sudden Tom's heart was touched by this aged wanderer. And then, as if by some new fight, he saw the poor old creature's crazy vow as something fine and heroic.

To set the vast Ashokan Reservoir at defiance was certainly a conception worthy of one cast in a heroic mould. To go to New York City and still not drink of the supply from that distant sea, was surely something in the nature of a stunt. Right or wrong, sane or insane, this poor little old man was made of strong material, the kind of stuff that heroes and martyrs are made of.

And Tom resolved that he would cease joking with him.

## CHAPTER VI THE UNKNOWN FRIEND

“Well,” said Tom, “where I belong we don’t bother much with the Ashokan Reservoir; we drink spring water at camp. I guess none of these places around here get water from the big reservoir. I belong at Temple Camp. You’ve heard of that place? It’s right in among the hills over there—big boy scout camp, you know.

“You say you’ve been batting around the country for twelve years? That gets me; that’s my middle name, flopping around like a tramp—I don’t mean a tramp,” he added kindly, “but a kind of a vagabond. Wherever there’s adventure, that’s the place for me.”

His voice was cheery, his manner offhand and friendly. It was hard not to like Tom, and it was easy to fall in the way of being confidential with him. He sat there on the ground, his knees up and his hands about them. His pleasant, expectant look seemed to encourage friendliness.

“I’m assistant manager over at the camp,” he said, “and I listen to more blamed troubles every day than you could shake a stick at, kids’ quarrels’ and one thing or another. But I’ll be jiggered if I ever heard any one say anything against the Ashokan Reservoir. I always thought it was a nice big reservoir; I hiked around it once. Pretty big engineering feat, I guess,” he added, in a way that seemed to invite confidences. “It’s a regular young ocean, I’ll say that.”

“I suppose you know the ocean is cruel,” said the old man, looking straight ahead of him.

“Yes, it’s pulled some pretty brutal stuff,” said Tom. “What d’you say we swap yarns?”

There was a moment of silence, broken only by the sound of the crystal water as it bubbled up merrily in its little rocky bed. Whatever dark and criminal record the vast Ashokan Reservoir may have had, this little wayside spring seemed to carry a clear conscience; its murmuring voice was like a lullaby; it seemed as innocent and carefree as a child. And these two, whose lives were destined to be so tragically interwoven, sat there in silence, while the pure, crystal water bubbled up. And for a few moments neither spoke.

“Did you ever get a bird’s-eye view of the reservoir?” the old man asked. “You never seed it from the top of Overlook Mountain, did you?” This was the first mention that Tom had heard of Overlook Mountain, on whose towering summit fate was reserving the greatest adventure, perhaps the greatest test, in all his young life.

“No, I never did,” said Tom. “Is that the mountain where they’re building a big hotel? Or rebuilding one or something or other?”

The old man ignored his question. “You go up there,” he said in his crisp, impersonal way, “and look down from the top and you’ll see the whole reservoir at once—”

“Looks big, huh?”

“You’ll see miles and miles of it, where villages and houses used to be. Old West Hurley used to be down there; it was wiped out. My house where I lived nigh on thirty year was took down. Mother, it killed her just like if you struck her with an axe. Wouldn’ you call that murder? My boy, my grandson, he was drove away with false charges on him—lies. Wouldn’ you call that as bad as kidnapping? Old Merrick, he done that; he was conspirators with ’em. He’s dead ’n where he belongs, he is, but the murderer is still at large.”

“You mean your grandson was accused of murder?” Tom asked cautiously.

“He were, and they was all lies,” said the old man. “But it was that reservoir, and all them engineers from New York that murdered mother.”

“You mean—she was your wife?”

“Thirty years we lived there,” the old man said. “Since I been alone I never touched that water. I don’t mix with murderers.”

Tom could see that the poor old man was shaking with emotion. Whatever grievance, real or fancied, was in his mind, it was by no means clear to Tom. He thought that the old man was not altogether rational. He was rather more interested in the murder which the grandson had been charged with, than with the murder committed by the great reservoir. He was rather more curious about the smaller murderer than the larger one. But it seemed almost hopeless to get a connected and comprehensible narrative out of the poor little old man.

“Who was your grandson accused of killing?” Tom asked.

“That were old Merrick that lived in Kingston. My boy weren’t no more guilty than you are.”

“They actually charged him with it?”

“Lies, all lies,” said old Dyker.

Tom paused in thought. He was not open-minded enough to eliminate a formal accusation from his mind. Who was this poor, little queer old man that his word should be accepted against the weight of an official accusation? And moreover, if the grandson were a fugitive as the old man had said, was not that fact in itself a cause for suspicion against him?

“How old would your grandson be now?” Tom asked.

“Maybe thirty,” the old man said. “He were only a lad when they hatched up the conspiracy against him. I ain’t seed him since. Abney Borden said he seed him once, passed him right by one night near the reservoir, an’ the lad didn’ speak to him. More like it were on’y his ghost, I says. Maybe just his

ghost looking for the old house; that's what I think. Lots of ghosts of the old West Hurley folks comes back lookin' fer their old homes."

"Humph," said Tom as he scrutinized his queer acquaintance musingly. He had about decided that the little old man was not altogether sane. "But the old village, I mean where it was, is under water, isn't it?" he asked.

"In dry spells they come, them ghosts," the old man said.

"Eh, huh," said Tom as if this were an interesting item in the manners and customs of spooks. "They don't expect the whole reservoir is going to be dried up, do they?"

"The old village is part on the slope of the shore," the old man said. "When the water gets low in a drought you can see summat of the old place, ends of streets, ruins and such like."

The old man's rather disconcerting manner of looking straight ahead of him while he talked, and uttering each observation with a kind of mechanical air of absolute certainty, had the effect of rather squelching Tom. And so in this instance he felt properly rebuked for underrating the intelligence of spooks.

"That's interesting," he said; "an old ruined village coming to light now and then. Sort of reminds you of a body floating to the surface, huh?"

"Whose body?" the old man asked crisply.

"Oh, nobody's body in particular," Tom said. "I just meant—sort of—you know—like a story as you might say. Sort of the same as if an old ship were to rise up in the ocean. You believe in ghosts," he added cheerily. "Now there might be such a thing as the ghost of a village, mightn't there? A dead village? Why sure."

The idea seemed not to impress the old man. But to Tom's ready imagination there was something captivating in the thought of some old ship, a gallant bark of former days, rising out of the unknown depths of the ocean, and haunting the endless waste.

He did not indeed, believe in ghosts, yet after all if a village that is long since dead and gone, and withdrawn from the sight of men in its watery grave, occasionally creeps forth, a shrunken, soulless remnant of its former self, an all but intangible shadow of what was once life,—is not that a ghost? And may not one fancy this spectral, silent thing waiting in the concealment of its grave for the releasing drought, even as the shade of some departed human soul waits for the darkness in which it may steal forth? But Tom did not voice these spooky reflections, for the old man's crisp voice recalled him front his musing.

"The reservoir, that were the murderer," said old Dyker; "it murdered mother. Whoever done the other murder, it were not my boy. He run away but he were innocent."

"Never seen him since, huh?" Tom asked kindly.

There was no answer, but Tom could see that the old withered hands trembled on the poor rustic cane. Probably they did not bespeak any new felt emotion, it was just the trembling of aged hands.

It seemed to Tom that his chance acquaintance had said these same things so many times that they had lost all emotional power over him. It was rather the poor little old man's defiant attitude and a certain sturdiness about him, which somehow reached Tom's heart. Trembling, dependent hands and a resolution of iron, that was what touched Tom.

"And you've just been wandering around the country ever since?" he asked. "Mostly here in the Catskills, I suppose? Sort of a—" *Tramp* was what he meant but he caught himself in time and said, "Sort of an outdoor bug, hey?"

But the little old man's thoughts lingered on the main point of his interest. "Dead or alive, he were as innocent as you," he said.

"Well," said Tom cheerily, "I'm going to drink his health anyway. Here's good luck to him wherever he is." And he kneeled again and took another drink of the innocent, cool, refreshing water.



## CHAPTER VII IN THE WOODS

“What are you doing to-night?” Tom asked, scrutinizing the old man curiously. Then without waiting for an answer he said in his hearty way, “I tell you what you do; come back to camp with me and look us over, knock around there for a day or two and rest up. Nothing but spring water, absolutely guaranteed,” he added pleasantly. “We keep open house at camp, you know, and you’ll be welcome. What d’you say? It’s only about six miles from here across fields.”

“I walked as much as twenty mile a day,” the old man said. “I walked nigh on a thousand mile in the last ten year, I reckon.”

“Well, you’re about due for a little rest,” laughed Tom. “Come on back with me and meet the bunch, they’re just a lot of kids.”

“I travelled one summer with a circus,” the old man said.

“So?” said Tom.

“I sold needles one summer,” the old man added. “I got two dollars for being in a moving picture. You didn’t happen to see that picture?”

“N—no, I didn’t,” Tom answered thoughtfully. The crisp, disinterested way in which the old man enumerated his experiences seemed to preclude the possibility of getting him to discourse upon them. He delivered himself of random items, out of his apparently miscellaneous fund of adventures, in such a choppy way as to seem both amusing and disconcerting.

Tom suspected that his memory might be good enough to recall salient things, but not details. Moreover, it is very hard to discourse familiarly with one who does not look at you. Personal intercourse is quite as much with the eyes as with the voice. Tom had an amused sense of the handicap to conversation in the little old man’s queer way of talking, as if making dogmatic announcements to the world at large.

“Well, let’s stroll down to camp,” he said, rising. “When I meet a person who’s travelled as much as you have, I feel as if I want to know him better. Come on, what do you say we start?”

It was not until this request, accompanied by physical evidence of Tom’s intention to go, that the old man arose and started to accompany him. Tom could then see how small and wizened his companion was. Yet there was an odd contradiction, something grotesque and laughable, in his spry carriage. He was evidently a hardened pedestrian. With each step he jammed his cane down on the ground with a vigor that was quite inspiring. It seemed to bespeak a

strength of character out of keeping with his shrivelled little body and his shabby raiment.

As there seemed no hope of responsive conversation with his eccentric companion, Tom tried to beguile him with an account of the *Goodfellow*.

"Just been down to Catskill to look at a boat," he said. "Some boat, I'll say; regular little yacht. Belongs to a fellow named Homer that lives over the river. I'd like to own that boat. Two thousand buys it and it's giving it away. You know these rich fellows have always got to be getting something new and poor fellows get the benefit—if they're not too poor."

"That's what were offered for my boy," said the old man. Tom had thought to get away from that topic.

"Two thousand, huh?"

"A man is worth more'n a boat," said old Dyker.

"Oh sure," said Tom. "But that boat's worth a good deal more than two thousand. I'm plum crazy about that boat, it's got everything on it you can think of. It's named *Goodfellow*. Pretty good name, hey?"

"Old Merrick, he were rich," was all the old man said. Tom construed this as an indirect reflection against young Homer, because he was in the same hated class as the late Mr. Merrick.

As they made their way along, Tom fell to wondering what were the facts about this dark business which the little old man cherished in his memory. It was impossible to get a rational and consecutive account out of him, but evidently a tragedy had occurred some years back and not the least sad effect of it, whatever it was, was that it had set this poor old creature's wits askew and made him a wanderer.

From his own account he had tramped as far as the metropolis where he must have cut a strange figure with his shabby, rustic clothes and his crazy stick. Tom pictured him trudging down Broadway striking the sidewalk resolutely with his cane, heedless of the gaping throng. No wonder the moving picture people had used him.

Even now, as he trudged along beside him, bent and wizened and pathetic with a hundred dubious signs of lonesome poverty, there was a vigor about him which made him at once both ludicrous and picturesque. His whole being seemed so concentrated on the task of walking that Tom refrained from putting on him the added burden of conversation.

The first crimson glow of sunset was on the summit of the hills to the west and as this faded to the sombre shade of twilight, the countryside seemed suddenly to be pervaded by a stillness which by contrast emphasized every sound along the wayside. The pounding of the old man's stick upon the stony road seemed more aggressively audible, and Tom glanced amusedly sideways now and again, smiling at his companion's intentness.

Across the fields a laden hay wagon was lumbering homeward and its towering, disordered burden changed color in the witchery of the twilight as it moved slowly out of the dying golden area. The voices of the men seemed crisp and clear like voices heard across the water. Before the wayfarers, the road seemed clear cut and ribbon-like as it wound away into the black woods.

Here the arched and intertwined boughs made a dim tunnel in which a refreshing coolness was always felt. A shadowy calm—this stretch of a mile or so. It was always dusk in this foliage-covered way and in the twilight it was all but dark. There was the pungent odor of damp leaves and rotting wood.

The slight sound made by travelers here reechoed as if a score of spectral voices were complaining of the strangers' intrusion into their domain. The place was called Ghost's Trail and with reason, for one had but to pause where a death's head was graven on a wayside stone and call aloud, when there answered a wailing chorus out of the solemn depths. It was said that two large rocks were responsible for these ghostly medleys. But some there were who found the explanation in a murder which had once been committed at this lonely spot.

Be this as it might, there was something eery about this sequestered way which afforded a short cut to Temple Camp. The playing of the shadows conjured up queer figures which often seemed like human forms lurking among the trees. Such was Tom's first impression of a moving object ill-concealed beyond a trunk.

Soon, however, as the travelers came abreast of the tree, there emerged a gaunt figure, surprised into reluctant exposure, and trembling visibly. It was the figure of a youngish man in the last extreme of emaciation and shabbiness, but Tom could make no guess as to his age for before he could glimpse the face the stranger was already hurrying along the path in the direction from which our travelers had come. What Tom did notice with surprise was that old Caleb Dyker stood stark still, staring back at the almost fleeing form.

"You know him?" Tom asked. But his companion did not answer, only stood, as it seemed transfixed, staring at the apparition.

"You know him?" he repeated curiously.

"That you, Joey?" the old man called in the high pitched, broken voice of age. The moment seemed tense though Tom did not know why.

"Joey—that you?"

But the hurrying figure neither turned nor answered.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DERELICT FINDS A PORT

For a moment Tom's imagination pictured the stranger as the fugitive grandson and he was conscious of a certain amusement at the likeness of such a meeting to the happenings in a photo-play.

"Know him?" he asked rather anxiously.

"I thought it were Joey Ganley," the old man said.

"His folks were neighbors of mine in the old village. He went out west, Joey did, when they stole our homes. He done well out there and sent his mother money to build a house in the new village. You didn't happen to see that house?" The old man did not vouchsafe Tom any details by which Joe Ganley's fine gift to his mother might be identified.

"N—not to know it," said Tom. "I haven't been in West Hurley much."

"In Woodstock they have crazy artists," the old man said, apparently forgetting all about the stranger.

"That's near West Hurley, isn't it?"

"Some on 'em wears socks two different colors. One of 'em has long hair wanted to paint me in a picture. You don't happen to know him, do you? He gave me two dollars."

"I didn't know the artists over that way were so rich," said Tom. "No, I don't know much about the wild artists of Woodstock; I've heard about them though. Joey what's-his-name never came back, did he?"

"He made money and got married and settled down sum'eres out there. He was a foreman."

"Well then I guess that wasn't Joey," said Tom indulgently. The old man just trudged along, jamming his cane down with each step. He seemed to have forgotten all about the stranger.

Nor did the little episode linger in Tom's mind. But he thought it rather strange that a young man working as a foreman somewhere in the west should have prospered so exceptionally as to be able to send his mother money enough to build a house. And this notwithstanding the fact that he had married and incurred the expense of a home of his own. These things did not perplex him for he was not sufficiently interested, but the thought occurred to him.

Of one thing he felt certain, and that was that it was not the prosperous and filially generous worker in the west whom they had just encountered in this lonesome road. Old Caleb Dyker had been seeing things....

Tom wondered how much of the choppy and disconnected narrative with

which this eccentric little old wanderer had beguiled him had any foundation in fact. But he liked old Caleb Dyker, he liked his sturdy way of trudging along and jabbing his cane down on the ground. There was character in that.

He was amused at the old man's way of making announcements and at his apparent inability to enter into familiar and confidential discourse. There was something whimsical about him which Tom could not explain to himself. Perhaps it was the old man's habit of taking everything for granted, artists, movie producers, the great metropolis....

He seemed quite content to accompany Tom to camp without manifesting any becoming hesitancy at going there or inquiring about the character of the community which he was to visit. Tom thought his long wanderings must have bred in him the habit of living day by day and of never being greatly surprised at anything. To him his vigorous eccentricity was captivating.

## CHAPTER IX AT CAMP

And so they came to Temple Camp. And there, as it turned out, the little weather-beaten derelict, cast adrift by the great, blind, heedless monster of a reservoir, found a home for many weeks to follow.

The scouts of Temple Camp respected his declaration of war against the vast, watery usurper which supplied that other monster, the metropolis, and refrained from making fun of his heroic posture. Old Caleb drank only the fresh, clear, sparkling water which trickled down from its innocent source among the hills. And who shall say that he was not as great in his iron-clad resolve as was the ruthless, seething, grasping Bedlam which he defied?

Old Caleb became a favorite—nay, a pet—at camp, and he was soon adopted as one of its regular institutions. It cannot be said that he was unappreciative but he was so mellowed by time and hardened by a variety of adventures incidental to his roaming life that he seemed incapable of accepting individuals as such. He took the camp and all its people for granted, he seemed unable to distinguish one boy from another, but he appeared to like them all and certainly he was contented.

He possessed, if any one ever did, the unconscious faculty of adapting himself to his surroundings. He gave the impression that he would be quite at home anywhere, that no one could disconcert or abash him.

It was amusing how he failed utterly to take special cognizance of high scout officials who visited camp and who were accustomed to bathing in the sunshine of homage, even of awe. Old Caleb would probably have trudged into the White House or the Vatican without the least hesitancy, jabbing his stick resoundingly on the floor, utterly unconscious of the fame or identity of his host.

This much his eccentricity and wandering life had done for him (and it was no small thing); he would not have distinguished between the Pope and Pee-wee Harris. Perhaps it was just because his mind did not perceive readily enough to make these distinctions. He seemed to be mentally near-sighted. The world was big and he could see it, but individuals he could not see.

He always carried his outlandish stick with him wherever he went as if to be ready for the Ashokan Reservoir in case he met it face to face. But he did not talk much about the matters with which he had beguiled Tom on the day of their first meeting. Nor did the scouts of camp encourage him to talk of these things for indeed they were not greatly interested in his past.

First and last old Caleb did enough odd jobs to earn his board. He was a prime favorite with Uncle Jeb Rushmore, the camp manager, and with that dread potentate before whom every scout did homage, Chocolate Drop, the colored emperor and autocrat of the cooking shack.

Hour after hour old Caleb would sit in a tilted chair outside this holy of holies whittling handiwork with a jack-knife while a continually shifting audience of scouts lolled about on the grass.

He could make boats, and linked wooden chains and even complicated wooden edifices miraculously assembled in bottles. Some of these marvels the scouts put on sale in the neighboring village of Leeds and they were bought by summer boarders and the proceeds turned over to old Caleb. Pop Dyker he came to be called and he seemed to like it, or at least not to care....

And so things might have gone on till the end of the season and old Caleb gone sturdily forth again upon his wanderings if it had not been for a shipment of provisions which had been put off the West Shore train down at Kingston instead of at Catskill, the nearest station to the camp. That was because somebody or other of the name of Templeton lived at Kingston and his home was called Templeton Lodge and in the language of freight men, Templeton Lodge sounds exactly like Temple Camp.

It fell to the young assistant to go down to Kingston and get this business straightened out and, because it concerned food, Pee-wee Harris generously volunteered to accompany him. It was remarkable how many proffers of assistance Pee-wee made in the face of continuous rejection of his services.

The scout who accompanied Tom in the camp flivver was Brent Gaylong, a tall, lanky, wise-looking young fellow, who was in fact a sort of unofficial scoutmaster to a one patrol troop. The two most conspicuous things about him were a dry sense of humor and a pair of spectacles which perched halfway down his nose, giving him a whimsically mature and studious look; they seemed to remove him quite irrevocably from the field of thrilling adventure. Tom liked "Old Doctor Gaylong" as everybody did, for he was good company and an ideal companion for a journey.

## CHAPTER X ON THE TRAIL

Brent Gaylong sat on the middle of his back as he usually did and used the edge of the windshield for a foot rest. Tom drove the car. It was a Ford touring car and on the side of it in gilt letters was printed TEMPLE CAMP, BLACK LAKE, N. Y.

“A Ford’s the only car that has any romance about it, do you know that, Tom?” Brent spoke in his funny, drawling way. “There’s the same difference between the Ford and other cars as there is between a little old tavern and a modern hotel. Suppose somebody were to tell you the Waldorf-Astoria is haunted; you’d just laugh at him.

“The Ford is—you know—what d’you call it—picturesque. The Ford has the adventurous spirit. I’m for the Ford. In all this blamed automobile claptrap, the Ford’s the only car that has any personality. Did you read about that one that crossed the desert of Sahara? I’d rather be in the class with a camel than with a Cadillac. *Old* Fords especially. People do things with Fords; the Ford’s a good little old pal, shabby and romantic—like old Dyker. He’s a regular little old Ford.”

“You’re so crazy about romance and adventures and things like that,” said Tom in his matter-of-fact way, “would you be interested in a murder?”

“A good one?” Brent drawled.

“An old one,” Tom said. “The murderer is still at large. There was two thousand dollars offered for him but he was never caught. It happened, oh, ten or fifteen years ago.”

“That’s the kind I like,” said Brent. “All murders ought to be ten or fifteen years old. I like one where the wrong man goes up for life and then years after a young lawyer marries his daughter and hunts out the real murderer. New murders I don’t care about.”

“If you’ll be serious for a minute,” said Tom, “I’ll tell you about it and maybe you can help me. It’s got something to do with old Dyker.

“A long time ago his grandson was accused of killing a man in Kingston named Merrick. The old man kind of told me something about it, but you know how he is; it was a kind of a jumble.

“While I’m in Kingston I’d like to find out something about it if I could. Only I don’t just exactly know how. I thought maybe you could help me. About all I know is that an old man named Merrick was killed and that he lived in Kingston. Pop Dyker says his grandson never did it; I guess likely he



did, though. Anyway I'd kind of like to find out about it."

"That's a cinch," drawled Brent. "All that it's necessary to do is to go to one of the newspaper offices disguised as an every-day citizen. It might be well to carry a loaded fountain pen. In an offhand way ask permission to look over the old newspaper files. There you are."

"Trouble is I don't know just exactly what year it was, even."

"One might starve while wandering through the desert files," said Brent. "Your point is well taken."

"You make me tired," Tom complained. "If I knew the year that the old village of West Hurley was moved to make way for the big reservoir—I think that would be the year. You're so good at arguing and debating and all that," he added with his characteristic simplicity, "I thought maybe you could help me."

"Tomasso," said Brent, "leave it to me. I will track down the murder if not the murderer. If it is hiding in the fastnesses of the *Kingston Journal* I will find it. Leave everything to me. Mr. Derrick or whatever his name is, shall not escape me even though he is dead. I am a scout and I have the Pathfinder's badge. You go to the freight station and when you get through come to the office of the *Journal*. On entering steal cautiously to the file room. If you see me looking over the files do not recognize me unless I adjust my spectacles. That will be the sign that—"

"You make me tired," Tom said. "Are you really going to do it or not?"

"I am going to do it," said Brent. "But when you come if I am wearing a false beard do not be surprised. If I tap three times with my fountain pen you will know it is I and that the way is clear. This is a dangerous business, Slade, and we can't be too careful. Leave all to me."

"It's no wonder that Pee-wee Harris calls you crazy," said Tom.

## CHAPTER XI OUT OF THE PAST

When Tom entered the newspaper office after attending to the freight matter as well as several errands, he saw Brent sitting on a stool before a high table with a great bound volume of newspapers before him. His lanky legs were drawn up, his feet resting on a high rung of the stool, a pencil was over his ear, and his prosaic spectacles and studious air were so at odds with the adventurous role he had given himself that even sober Tom was fain to smile.

“Shhh,” said Brent, never looking up. “I have it; it was hiding in a Sunday edition. I crept stealthily through the Saturday issue and—”

“No fooling,” said Tom expectantly; “have you really found it?”

He stood at Brent’s side gazing at a heading which seemed to visualize to him the event which old Dyker had recalled in his rambling talk. The hazy reminiscence seemed brutally clear and definite now with this cold announcement before him. And as he read, not only the event was confirmed but the guilt fixed as well.

CRAZED YOUTH KILLS BENEFACTOR, the glaring heading read.

Tom glanced at the top of the yellowed sheet and saw that the issue was of a date fourteen years back. The thing had occurred before Temple Camp was dreamed of and when he was a hoodlum in Barrel Alley.

“Satisfactory?” said Brent in his funny way. Tom did not answer; he was too engrossed in reading.

“Henry Merrick,” the article ran, “was found murdered in his home yesterday. He had been struck with some blunt instrument while in his library and was lying partly under his writing table quite dead when the body was discovered by his aged housekeeper, Miss Martha Wildick, on returning at seven o’clock from a church meeting.

“All indications point to the guilt of one Anson Dyker, a youth of seventeen years who is known to have called at the house between five and five-thirty and who shortly before six o’clock was seen to emerge from a kitchen window and hurry through the thick shrubbery in back of the Merrick home.

“It is known that between five and seven o’clock Mr. Merrick was alone in the house save for the presence of this youth. It is probable that the crime was committed with one or other of several ornate fireplace instruments, for these, a shovel and pair of tongs and poker, were found strewn upon the floor. An overturned chair was the only other indication of a struggle.

“The motive which incited the maddened boy to murder was undoubtedly revenge though he also availed himself of the opportunity for robbery, for a metal strong-box believed by Miss Wildick to have contained several bonds and various notes and securities, and not improbably more than a thousand dollars in cash, was missing. No trace has been found of the boy.”

Tom could hardly read fast enough, “Young Dyker,” the report continued, “was with his grandparents an occupant of a small cottage in West Hurley owned by Mr. Merrick. Investigation reveals that the Dykers have cherished an unreasoning hatred of their landlord from the time he was compelled to notify them that the cottage, an old and humble abode, was to be torn down because of the flooding of the area to make the Ashokan Reservoir.

“When seen this morning, Caleb Dyker, the grandfather, while protesting his grandson’s innocence, declared that Merrick was a scoundrel and had received his just deserts at the hands of his murderer. Caleb admits sending Anson to Kingston yesterday with over two hundred dollars back rental to pay Merrick. This he drew out of the bank resolved to be under no further obligation to the man who was to ‘turn him out’ as he phrased it, from his home of thirty years.”

There was considerably more to this sensational report concerning mainly the suspected whereabouts of the fugitive boy, of whom there was no trace. Articles in issues of the paper immediately following rounded out the story in the original report and Tom read these with breathless interest to a point where the crime was relegated to an inside page and the reports of progress in the matter (or lack of progress) were brief and perfunctory.

From all these diminishing accounts he learned that the Dykers, notwithstanding that they had been in many ways the subjects of their wealthy landlord’s forbearance and benevolence for years, had been seized with a blind wrath against him when he was forced by the government to dispose of his property in the little doomed village. Evidently the Dykers had not perceived his innocence and helplessness in this matter. Simple and ignorant, they had seen him only as they had seen the whole great engineering project; he and it were ruthless destroyers.

There was much in the old newspapers to this purpose. The blind hatred of the Dykers was like the senseless wrath underlying a southern feud. They could see only one fact, and that fact, tragic indeed, obscured every other consideration. They were to be driven from their home.

The boy, susceptible and loyal, imbibed this hatred. Neighbors heard him say that he would like to kill the scoundrel Merrick. It was but a week or two prior to their necessary eviction that old Caleb in a burst of hatred and scornful independence drew out of his small savings the money with which to square his account with his detested landlord.

With this money young Anson had been sent to Kingston. Before starting he had been heard to say, *“If he starts talking to me and stringing me with a lot of lies, I’ll kill him.”*

That was the sum and substance of the known facts about the horrid crime, tragic sequel of misplaced hatred and vengeance; an instance of that blind, irrational malice so often persisting in the country.

It was easy for Tom to piece out the sad story of ignorant rebellion against the inevitable by these lowly people, of rash and fiery youth, of the grandmother’s broken heart and death, of the grandfather, homeless and lonely, wandering forth into a strange world. Tom pictured him very vividly with his stick and his old crooked spectacles.

And the vast Ashokan Reservoir, subject of his valiant loathing, had crept over its allotted area and finally filled the green valley and covered up the scene of the deserted village and the forsaken, devastated home.

Tom was recalled from his momentary reverie by Brent’s drawling, matter-of-fact tone. “I’m a better Sherlock Nobody Holmes than you thought I was. Look here. I’ve discovered everything but the married-and-lived-happily-thereafter part. Here’s a copy of the paper published only last week. Read that—down there—second column.”

In a paper which Brent pulled from his pocket and laid open on the big, dusty volume with its ancient news, Tom read with fresh interest the following item. It was prefixed by an inconspicuous heading which read, MERRICK OFFER IS PERPETUATED. The brief article ran:

“The death in Albany on Friday last of Horace E. Merrick, well known merchant of the capital city, recalls the tragic murder of his brother, Henry Merrick, in this city more than a decade ago. Henry Merrick, a kind-hearted and generous man, was brutally murdered in his home and all signs pointed to the guilt of a youth whose aged grandparents occupied a cottage owned by Merrick in the old village of West Hurley. The cottage was one of the many buildings necessarily demolished in clearing the area now covered by the reservoir.

“The youth, Dyker by name, was never seen or heard of after the killing. His indictment by the Grand Jury was followed by the offer of two thousand dollars reward for his apprehension by the murdered man’s brother Horace.

“Horace Merrick’s will, leaving the bulk of his property to his son Borden Merrick, provides that the offer of two thousand dollars reward be continued throughout the lifetime of his son and heir. This stipulation seems to have been incorporated in the instrument as a matter of general principle and out of regard for his brother’s memory, as there seems little likelihood of the culprit being brought to justice at this late date.”

“Anything more I can do for you?” asked Brent in his usual manner of

quiet ridicule.

“Yes, there is,” said Tom. “Don’t say anything to Pop Dyker about our hunting these things up. Don’t say anything to him at all.”

“I’ll be as silent as the grave,” said Brent. “What do you say we get some lunch?”

## CHAPTER XII

### ANOTHER GLIMPSE OF THE GOODFELLOW

To Tom poor old Caleb seemed like a last, faint echo of the upheaval which had changed the face of nature and spelled sorrow in so many lives. He was like a floating timber tossed by the wind and sea, the last stray memento of some ship long since swallowed up in angry waves.

Tom was resolved old Caleb should not know that the offer of a reward for his grandson's capture was still open. He had hated but he had not killed nor sanctioned killing. Tom had no doubt now of the grandson's guilt but his better knowledge of the whole affair only strengthened his sympathy and liking for the little old man.

"Poor old codger," Brent mused as they started back. "I never knew his past history. I suppose a lot of folks lost their homes when the land was cleared for the reservoir."

"They were paid for them," said Tom. "I guess a lot of them were glad to get the money."

"You can't pay a person for his home," said Brent. "You can pay him for his *house*. Some of them tore their houses down, I heard, and carried them off and put them up again in the new village near the shore. That's some idea, moving a village.

"Do you know," he added, sprawling one of his legs against the windshield and the other outside the car, "I believe it's a good idea for a village or a city to move; it gets into a rut sort of and needs a change. It's bad to stay too long in one place. Now you take Brooklyn for instance, or Jersey City—"

"I often feel as if I'd like to get away and do something else for a while," said Tom, taking a serious view of Brent's talk. "I don't mean give up my job at camp, of course, but just get off on a kind of a—you know."

"Restless kind of—I know," said Brent. "Be nice to get off in that boat, huh? The one you were shouting about? Just flop around. I suppose you could bang down south in a boat like that. Start about, oh say in October, and hit Palm Beach for the cold weather. I'd like to go down to Dixie so as to get away from the Dixie songs we have up here. There's nothing like the water, Slady old boy. If I ever get rich I'm going to have a yacht."

Tom mused, his thoughts returning fondly to the *Goodfellow*. "She's some boat all right," he said. "Hang it all, now you've got me thinking of it again." Then, after a pause he said, "Like to take a little ride over to the Reservoir and pike around? It would only take an hour or so. I feel kind of restless to-day; I

don't want to go straight back. I'll show you the boat, too, if you care to see it, when we get back to Catskill. It doesn't cost anything to look at it," he added wistfully.

"Anywhere you want to go, Tommy," drawled Brent. "I'll look at anything you want to show me.

"That's very kind of you," said Tom, glancing amusedly at his companion. Brent reclined in an ungainly posture of complacent ease with a whimsically observant look on his face as if ready to be interested in anything and everything which did not require any physical exertion. It got on Tom's nerves a little, but it amused him.

They drove through the clean, pleasant city of Kingston and over the bridge across the Esopus Creek and along the fine, smooth highway which parallels the Ulster and Delaware Railroad. A ride of half an hour or so brought them in sight of the vast, artificial lake which furnishes water to the distant metropolis.

"Pretty big drink of water, hey?" drawled Brent.

"They say it's forty miles around it," said Tom. "The dam is way over at the other end."

They could not see the whole reservoir from the road, but they caught glimpses of it and could form an idea of its long, irregular extent.

Soon they came to the removed and rebuilt village of West Hurley near the shore of the reservoir. Close by, under the water as Tom knew, were the bones of the old dead village, traces of streets, odds and ends of demolished masonry, submerged memorials of the settlement which had once been there.

There was not much to the new village; it must have lost something in the process of removal and revival of the community life. Some of its simple buildings seemed comparatively new. The visitors looked in vain for any signs of actual reconstruction.

"Do you know," mused Brent in his slow, dry way, "I don't know why a reconstructed village shouldn't be just as good as a new one—same as an automobile or a typewriter. I'd kind of like to get a squint under the water though. What do you suppose we'd see?"

"If we were here during a drought," said Tom, "we'd see things on the sloping shore, that's what Pop Dyker said."

"Old village sort of pokes its nose up, hey?"

"Sort of like a ghost," Tom said.

"Comes up for air," said Brent. "Well, let's move along. I guess the new village won't get its feet wet, it seems to be well back."

They drove along the road a little farther and up toward Woodstock, which is the habitat of a queer race of poets and artists, and so on in a northeasterly direction till they came to Saugerties and found themselves back on the road

which borders the lordly Hudson.

At Catskill they paused for an inspection of the *Goodfellow*, Brent showing his usual amiable and whimsically passive interest at the prospect of acquaintance with this beauteous damsel of poor Tom's heart.

Tom was disappointed to find that his friend, the caretaker, had gone away and was not expected to return till late in the autumn. No one seemed to have the boat in charge and Tom (lacking Hervey Willetts' aggressive genius) was disinclined to venture upon that hallowed deck without permission. Nor was there a rowboat handy in which to circumnavigate the trim little cruiser and view it at close range.

So they contented themselves with a long distance inspection from the shore. The *Goodfellow*, in Tom's view, seemed rather the worse for her long period at anchor. She looked neglected. Her white sides were dirty and there was, even from the distant shore, the appearance of neglect about her. She lay well clear of the area of navigation and was safely padlocked to her buoy as Tom could tell by her heavy mooring chain.

A boat is at home in the water and will not deteriorate riding at anchor. But just the same the sprightly *Goodfellow* seemed to be suffering from the fickleness and neglect of her wealthy young owner. The flag-pole was broken. The awning over the cockpit was torn and its loose shreds flapped in the breeze.

One thing in particular Tom noticed, which seemed quite at variance with the former spick and span appearance of the little cruiser. The port-holes seemed to be covered inside with some dusty looking material, which might have been torn from the ruined awning. Why the caretaker should have thought it desirable to put these makeshift shades in the unoccupied craft, Tom could not imagine. But on second thought it seemed not so surprising. It would confound the curiosity of strangers, boys especially, who might row out and try to peek into the sumptuous little cabin.

Another thing he noticed which he could not so easily explain. This was an area of sooty black at the top of the little smokestack from the galley. Probably it had been there before and he had never noticed it....

On the way to camp he said to Brent, "Seeing her neglected like that only makes me want her all the more."

"You love her for herself alone," said Brent in his droll way.

"I read in a book," said Tom, "that if a fellow wants a thing and wants it bad enough and keeps on wanting it, in the end he'll get it."

"That isn't what you read, Tommy," said Brent. "You're thinking of something that Stevenson said; 'What a man wants, that thing he will get. Or he will be changed in the trying.' That's what you're thinking of, Tommy. A man can have anything he wants if he's willing to pay the price."



“Well, I haven’t got the price,” said Tom soberly. He seemed quite simple and unsophisticated beside Brent.

“How do you know you haven’t?” Brent said.

“I know whether I’ve got two thousand dollars or not, don’t I?” Tom said sullenly.

“Yes, but how do you know two thousand dollars is the *price*?”

“Because the caretaker told me,” said Tom. “What are you trying to do, kid me? You can’t buy a thing if you haven’t got the price, can you? You get on my nerves.”

“I can have the gold trophy cup in the glass case in Administration Shack if I want to pay the price,” Brent drawled. “I can steal it.”

“And you’d go to jail.”

“Sure, that would be the *price*, Tommy,” said Brent.

## CHAPTER XIII

### TOM GETS HIS WISH

On reaching camp, Tom was hailed by that human megaphone, Pee-wee Harris, who advised him in advance that he was wanted in Administration Shack. "There's a man with a team and there's a girl and he looks kind of like a cowboy and they want to see you," Pee-wee shouted breathlessly.

In front of Administration Shack stood a team of stout gray horses hitched to an old-fashioned, one-seated buckboard. On the rear part of this were a couple of barrels and several crates apparently full of provisions. On the seat sat a girl of about eighteen holding the reins. She wore a khaki middie blouse, the sleeves of which were rolled up man fashion exposing deeply tanned arms. Her hat was also of khaki and worn with an unconventional tilt backwards.

A half dozen or so scouts were standing about this antiquated rig, commenting freely on it and volunteering sage observations to each other as to its history, mission and character.

The young lady who sat enthroned upon its seat might have satisfied their frank curiosity on some of these points but she elected to maintain a detached silence. This did not deter the boys from including even her in their speculations.

"I bet she came from out west," one of them said.

"I bet they belong in a circus," another ventured.

As Tom approached to enter Administration Shack the girl's air of studied unconsciousness seemed to become the more intensified. She looked as if she would not have seen Tom even if he had been an elephant. And this notwithstanding that he was far from unpleasing to the eye.

As he passed behind the carriage, however, and up the porch, she availed herself of the opportunity for a furtive glimpse of him while his back was turned. As luck would have it he was just swinging around inside the screen door and he caught her, as it were, red handed. So in the acquaintance which was soon to start, poor Tom had at least this first little preliminary triumph.

In Administration Shack sat a man who might have been the girl's father or elder brother; he seemed rather young for the one and old for the other. Tom soon learned that he was her brother.

He was a youngish looking man, Tom thought about thirty-three or four, but the fact that he had been for several days unshaved made it difficult to hazard a guess as to his age. He wore a gray flannel shirt and baggy corduroy trousers. He sat in one of the rustic chairs, one leg over the other, and a

dilapidated cowboy hat perched upon his knee. He had been talking with Mr. Carleson, the resident trustee and camp executive.

Mr. Carleson wore the negligee camping outfit and he was far from being a parlor scout, but by contrast with the visitor he seemed positively nifty in his “roughing-it” attire. The studied protest against civilized formality made by scouting officials was here put to shame by this romantic looking stranger. He must have long since ceased to think of clothes from any point of view to have reached this negligent simplicity.

“Here he is now,” said Mr. Carleson, alluding to Tom. “Tommy,” he continued, “this is Mr. Ferris, who has charge of the work up on Overlook Mountain. They’re renovating the old hotel up there, you know. Somebody or other gave him the tip that he might find some one here who could help with the woods work, felling timber and all that; sort of an under boss. That the idea, Mr. Ferris?”

“It was the station agent at Catskill that told me about you folks,” said the visitor. “He seemed to think I might find a young fellow here who might like to take a flyer in work along adventurous lines—with pay. Just for a month or two of course. We’re trying to rush things through up there so the place can be re-opened next season. I guess there’s not much chance of that though, not the way things are going.

“We—eh—we lost a dog last week, killed by a wildcat. We went after the wildcat, found a bear that had been killed by a rattlesnake, found the rattlesnake’s nest and killed four of them. That wouldn’t appeal to you, I suppose? I tell that to every likely young fellow, it’s our star adventure, but it doesn’t seem to pull, somehow. My sister thinks she knows where the wildcat hangs out but we haven’t time to go after him.

“Let’s see,” he added, with the effect of wishing to be honest, “we—we have some eagles up there, too. Those are about the only inducements along the line of possible adventure. There’s a precipice you could fall off if you wanted to. Storms are pretty bad up there.

“We’re chopping down trees and building some rustic steps and putting up poles for the ’phone wires and doing a lot of odds and ends outside. What I’m after is a young chap ’bout your age who can boss a little gang of tenderfoots and keep them interested and get some work out of them; keep them from flopping.

“Of course I can’t guarantee the adventures, only the pay, but it’s a pretty wild spot up there. It’s no job in a department store. What I’m after is a young fellow whom I don’t have to manage but who can help manage. Mr. Carleson says you’re an all around scout and fond of adventure. If so I thought you might be interested. We’ll give you just what you’re getting here and any adventures you may have, thrown in—as a sort of a bonus.”

Tom liked this man from the first minute; he was amused at his wistfully hopeful way of setting forth the rather dubious advantages of life on the mountain. He looked inquiringly at Mr. Carleson.

“It’s up to you, Tommy,” said the executive. “If you want to go up there and help these people, we’ll manage to plug along. I know you’re about due for a little change. Maybe it would do you good to get away from the kids for a month or so.”

“You—you didn’t mean for me to go along with you right now, did you?” Tom asked.

“Why—no, and yes,” said Ferris. “Most fellows who promise to come don’t show up. I’ve become sort of superstitious about it. I usually grab them if I can. Of course, you’re not one of the riffraff, but, well, I’d like it a little better if you came along. A bird in the hand, you know. Does it appeal to you?” he added.

“Well, I guess yes,” said Tom.

“My sister outside there has a sort of a joke about them never showing up. She says the kind that are in need of jobs like that are usually the kind you can’t depend on. If I told her you were coming along up next Monday she’d just laugh.”

“Oh, is that so?” said Tom. “Well just for that, I’ll go if you’ll wait ten minutes till I throw some things in a duffel bag. If I wait till Monday the wildcat may die.”

“You’ll start by having the laugh on her,” laughed Mr. Carleson.

So it happened that twice, even before they were introduced, Tom had the laugh on this young damsel of the mountain. First when she relaxed her dignified composure long enough to steal a glimpse of him. And second when he came out ready to start. He enjoyed her slight chagrin in this second matter. As for the stolen glance, poor Tom was too simple in a way, to think twice about that.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE JOB ON THE MOUNTAIN

The ride to the summit of Overlook Mountain was the longest, slowest, hardest ride that Tom had ever been upon.

From Catskill to West Saugerties it was not so bad, though tedious enough to one accustomed to the sprightly flivver. From West Saugerties they had to go out of their way for several miles in a northwesterly direction till they came to Plaat Clove Post Office. From this settlement they followed the road south over Plattekill Mountain, a laborious enough climb, and so on past Echo Lake, a lonely, wood-embowered sheet of water on the lower reaches of Overlook.

Here began the climb of the rugged monarch on the wild, rock-studded summit of which some enterprising visionary many years back had shown the rashness and hardihood to erect a hotel. It could never have been a pronounced success by reason of its remoteness and inaccessibility.

There are hostelries perched as high as the old Overlook Mountain House but few with such laborious approach. Once it had been damaged by fire and renovated. Sometimes it had been open; often closed. It was and is barnlike and unlovely.

A secret wireless station is said to have been maintained in it during the world war. In its intervals of disuse ghosts, not averse to mountain climbing, are alleged to have patronized it. Counterfeiters and kidnappers are reported to have availed themselves of its remoteness. A disturbing reminder of its insecurity may be seen in the long cables reaching slantingways down from its eaves in every direction to safe anchorage in the rocky ground.

In the woods about it savage beasts can be heard in the night and among the crags of its precipitous eastern face the wild cries of the eagle and the hawk pierce the darkness. Even the homely old Mountain House cannot destroy the effect of primitive wildness under its very shadow.

In the memorable season when these events occurred, some sanguine dreamer with the means to indulge his fancy, had purchased and proceeded on a rather extensive scale to renovate the old structure and to improve its immediate surroundings.

Since the memorable exploit of Christopher Columbus it is unsafe to ridicule an adventurous enterprise, however Utopian, and there is this much, at least, to be said for the work that was started: it gave employment to a miscellaneous crew of workers at a time when work was scarce.

Life on the frowning old mountain with the uncertainties and discomforts

attending employment, proved to have no appeal to adventurous youth in the country below. The little band of workers, mostly amateurs, were recruited from distances and localities which gave the work a certain glamor until they experienced something of its rigors and isolation. Then they departed unceremoniously. It was no wonder that Nielson Ferris wanted one real scout to assist in the sometimes disheartening task which he was superintending.

## CHAPTER XV ON THE WAY

The buckboard seat was not wide enough to accommodate the three, so Tom sat in back with his legs dangling over, and occasionally, by way of stretching himself, stood up behind the seat, holding on to the back and chatting with the other two.

It was a slow, hard pull up the mountain, over a woods road which was hardly more than a trail. Again and again they stopped to rest the struggling horses, and Tom placed stones under the rear wheels.

“How many have you got working up there?” he asked.

“Oh 'bout a dozen just now,” said Ferris. “But only four of them are steadies. They come and go. We’ve got a chauffeur who lost his license and can’t drive; he’s not so bad. We’ve got an inventor who invented a substitute for gasoline; he’s waiting for a law suit to be decided in his favor—fifty thousand bucks I think he expects. He’s good for the summer. We’ve got an ex-soldier; he’s a good worker, but a queer duck.”

“Don’t forget the legitt,” said his sister.

“And we’ve got a legitimate actor,” said Ferris; “he’s a good worker too. Dances, sings and expects to play Hamlet next season.”

“He chops down a tree more artistically than any one I ever knew,” said Miss Audry Ferris. “He bows when he’s finished.”

“All he wants is a little applause,” said Ferris. “You’ll like them, the steadies. The rest are sort of transients. A couple of them aren’t half bad.”

“They won’t like you though,” said Audry.

“Thanks. Why not?” Tom asked.

“They’ll think you’re uppish.”

“That’s news to me,” said Tom. “I was never called uppish before. I don’t see how you can think that.”

“I didn’t say I thought so,” she said. “But your staying in the cottage with us will make them think so. That’s what they’ll say, *that you’re uppish*. That’s just what Ned Whalen will think; I can just *hear* him asking, ‘Well, how’s things in the Executive Mansion?’”

“Oh now—” her brother laughed deprecatingly.

“Oh yes, he will,” she said. “That’s exactly what he asked Will Daggett; Will told me so himself. He has that *abominable* sarcastic way about him. I know *just exactly* the kind of things he’ll say. Things that make you *mad*, but that don’t give you a chance to *denounce* him. I can just *hear* him now.”

"Nobody wants to denounce him," soothed her brother.

"I want to denounce him," the girl said.

"He's a very good worker," Nielson urged; "Will said so himself. Good outdoor man too. Get along," he concluded, addressing the struggling horses. "I can hear you flying off the handle some fine day or other and telling him how you hate him and then I'll lose the best worker I've got."

"I'm not an *idiot*," said the girl. "You seem to know just exactly what I'll do and say. Have I ever done or said anything?"

"You seem to know just exactly what *he'll* do and say," her brother laughed.

"Who was Will Daggett?" Tom asked by way of generalizing the conversation.

"He was a young gentleman," said Audry. "And he kept the accounts and stayed in the cottage with us. He went home to prepare for college."

"He failed to pass last year—g'long, Flossie," said her brother disinterestedly.

"You'll see," said the girl mysteriously, and evidently addressing Tom who was standing behind them holding the back of the seat. "You'll see for yourself. You'll be a *martyr* for living in the cottage."

"Well I don't think I'd like that," Tom said. "Maybe it would be better if I bunked in with the gang; maybe we'd all work better together that way. Especially as I guess most of them are older than I am. Gee, I don't want them to think I'm a boss."

"You may be right about that," said Ferris.

"Then why don't we all eat with them?" Audry asked.

"Because we're not in such close touch with them as Mr. Slade will be. He expects to work too."

"You bet," said Tom. "Of course I never really bossed a job; at camp I'm a sort of a boss over the kids, I suppose you might say, and I mix up with them, eat with them and all that."

"That's entirely different," the girl said.

"Y—yes, I suppose it is," Tom conceded. "But I don't know, up in lumber camps and places like that they all eat and bunk together, foremen and all—so I've heard."

"You see," said Ferris, "we have to watch our step up here. Our outfit is a sort of a potpourri. They're not regular laborers. We can't get laborers to come up here. Some of them are pretty well educated and started out in good homes. We have to be careful.

"You're just up here to help out and tip them off about tree felling and one thing or another that scouts learn. I don't want to use the word boss. It isn't a case of boss and laborers. It's more a case of scout and tenderfoots. Get me? I



don't want them walking off and leaving us flat, that's the main thing. You'll see," he added cheerily. "It's kind of *different*."

"I understand," Tom said.

"Lonely mountains are no places for hoity-toity distinctions," said Ferris. "This is a camp up here. See?"

"I get you," Tom said.

"You'll use your own judgment," said Ferris.

"Well," Tom said, "I guess I wouldn't know how to be a boss anyway. I'm just going to pile in and help. I have a hunch I'll bunk right in with them—friends all 'round."

There was a minute of silence, except for the steady trudging of the patient horses and occasionally the sound of a stone dislodged by their digging hoofs and rolling down the mountainside. It was not until Tom gave evidence of withdrawing to his seat on the rear edge of the buckboard that the girl observed:

"If you have to stay with them all the time in order to be one of them, if that's the only way you can get results, it shows your own weakness; it shows that it's your presence and not your personality that counts. If you were really *big* it wouldn't make any difference where you stayed. They'd *worship* you."

"I don't believe Mr. Slade wants to be worshipped," laughed Ferris.

"No, but he seems to think he has to choose between one thing or the other," the girl said. "It didn't make any difference where Napoleon was, his troops *adored* him.

"If you're afraid of what they think, that's just the very thing that will make them think the worst of you. You start by thinking what *they* would like best. It isn't *you* they will like; it's your decision. Tact isn't as big as personality. If you have personality people will love you even if you sit on a throne. I'd rather be liked for what I *am* than for what I *do*."

"Well then," said her brother, brutally reducing her talk to its common denominator, "we'll have Mr. Slade in the cottage if that's what you want."

"That isn't it at all," the girl flared up, blushing. "He as much as said that he couldn't win the men unless he played a part."

"Played a part?" her brother queried.

"Yes, played a part."

"You're thinking of our actor," Ferris laughed.

And Tom laughed too, feeling very much beyond his depth.

"It's just like a politician who goes around shaking hands with everybody to get votes," the girl said.

"You said they'd dislike me," Tom ventured to remind her.

"Yes, because you're not big enough to be one of them and yet not actually live among them. There are very few big enough to surmount artificial

arrangements.”

Poor Tom was quite staggered with such highbrow talk.

“How do you know how big Mr. Slade is?” Ferris burst out laughing. “You haven’t even taken a good look at him.”

This was not exactly true, for indeed she had taken a very good look at him. That was why she was arguing.

“Oh you don’t understand,” she sneered. “You admit he has to watch his step—you said so. If a person is born to be loved and trusted and looked up to, do you suppose he has to watch his step? I think myself that maybe it would be much better if Mr. Slade stays in the hotel where he can *watch* them.”

No doubt Brent Gaylong could have put this learned young lady out of the ring with one of his whimsical knock-out blows, but poor Tom was visibly impressed. There is a type of young fellow predestined to fall victim to the highbrow type of girl.

Tom, with all his prowess and wholesome intelligence, was simple and credulous. He felt that here was one who could see where he was blind. He realized how crude was his thinking in the light of Audry Ferris’ fine, discriminating vision. She was right, of course she was right. He was not big enough—whatever that meant....

“Well,” said he, “I’m going to live in the cottage if you’ll let me, that’s one thing sure.”

“Maybe you’d be more contented over in the hotel,” Audry said.

“It isn’t a question of where I’d be more contented,” he said. “You bet I’ll be more contented in the cottage with you—and Mr. Ferris. I think it would be best, too, just like you say.”

“Oh, I didn’t say so,” the girl expostulated.

“You’re right, anyway, that’s sure,” poor Tom vociferated.

“And you’ll meet Miranda,” said Ferris.

Tom was not curious. He felt that he did not care anything about meeting Miranda, whoever she was. He was quite satisfied with the girl who had made him see things as they really are....

And sure, thanks to her, his vision was now so clear, he scrutinized her rather more particularly as she stepped down from the buckboard when it stopped before a funny little cottage, under the shadow of the old hotel. She looked very winsome in her khaki knickers and high laced hiking boots.

“She’s one clever girl,” poor Tom said to himself.

## CHAPTER XVI NEW FRIENDS

If Audry Ferris “worshipped” people who are “big” she must have prostrated herself in adoration before the mammoth bulk of Miranda, the camp cook, who held sway in the cottage. No spiritual reasons had directed Miranda’s choice of this residence. She was there because she was there. And she was very much there. No white person ever was, or ever could be, as large in circumference as Miranda. To Tom the muslin girdle which encircled her waist seemed like the equator.

“Some day when you have a little time take a trip around her,” said Ferris to Tom.

The cottage, like the hotel, was held fast by iron rods reaching slantingways from the eaves all around and securely anchored in the rocks. The very security of these auxiliary holds gave one a feeling of insecurity that such outlandish makeshifts should be necessary to ensure the safety of a house.

It was all but dark when they arrived and a late supper was served them in the little living room of the cottage. It was very cozy eating there.

Tom could not reconcile himself to the incongruity of Miranda living in the cottage, she was so large and the cottage so small. She would have seemed more appropriately placed in the big barnlike structure nearby. Her hospitality was as large as her person and she informed Tom that whatever he required Auntie Mirandy was the one to see.

Her abounding maternalism included the whole camp, the one disturbing element in her comfortable employment being a rooted conviction that the old hotel was haunted.

“*Heered ’em?*” she vociferated in answer to Tom’s inquiry. “Lor’ I *seed* ’em, honey. I *seed* ’em wid my own eyes; Lord o’ mercy yes. I *seed* ’em *runnin’*.”

She had long since served supper to the group of hungry workers over in the kitchen of the big hotel. It was the custom of two or more of these to come over to the cottage and carry back the huge caldron and other utensils containing the meal for all.

Often, when Tom saw this steaming caldron, filled with stew or chowder, being borne across the littered, shaving covered space to the hotel, he felt that he would like to be among that miscellaneous band who dined in such primitive fashion among themselves. They bunked in three or four of the ground floor rooms and gathered on a back porch in one of the wings to chat

and smoke away the evenings.

They were here when Ferris, carrying a lantern, took Tom over after supper to show him the hotel and have him meet the workers.

“Boys,” said Ferris in his hearty way and with a kindly tact that increased Tom’s already strong admiration for him, “this is Tom Slade, comes from the big camp up Catskill way. He’s got a lot of this woodcraft dope and he’s going to get us started on the log cabin. Hope some of you’ll give him a hand.”

“Welcome to our city,” said a voice with a rich, musical volume to it. The words seemed to roll out as if they were greased.

“Meet Mr. Fairgreaves, Slade,” said Ferris.

Mr. Fairgreaves, as Tom could just about make out in the fitful lantern light, wore khaki trousers, a blue flannel shirt and a cutaway coat. A more outlandish combination could hardly be imagined, yet this coat, despite its incongruous companion garments, gave its wearer a certain gracious dignity which was heightened by a distinguished countenance, with dashing, wavy hair and an extensive, mobile mouth.

“Thrice welcome to our humble domicile,” he said.

He seemed so hospitable that Tom felt already a little qualm of remorse that he had elected to sleep and dine apart from this group. Somehow or other Mr. Fairgreaves’ ample welcome seemed to bespeak the friendly, rough and ready spirit of the place. It made Tom feel a little guilty.

There were eight or ten men lounging on the porch, ranging in age from twenty to thirty, Tom thought. He was introduced to but three or four individually, and these he supposed to be the steadies.

One who seemed youngish, although quite bald, he guessed to be the inventor with a fortune hinging on a law suit. Even in the dim light Tom could see that two or three were rather dubious looking characters.

One who leaned against the railing smoking a pipe wore a doughboy’s uniform and a slouch hat. Tom thought afterward that he was one who had been introduced as Mr. Whalen. But the introductions had been very haphazard and the darkness had made them all but superfluous.

When he went to bed in a funny little room in the cottage that night, the only one of the group he seemed to know by name was Mr. Fairgreaves. Mr. Fairgreaves’ black cutaway and melodious, rolling voice had triumphed over the darkness.

## CHAPTER XVII

### VOICES

The next morning Tom emerged ready and enthusiastic to be about his new labors. He was captivated by the backwoods character of the scene when he stepped out of the cottage. There is a romantic charm about a temporary camp. All permanent camps fall victims soon or late to the demon of civilization.

To be sure, the hotel and cottage were permanent structures, but the little group which Tom had joined lived a sort of makeshift life on the lonely mountain. They were planting poles down the mountainside for telephone and lighting wires, they were patching the masonry of the little reservoir which would later supply running water. But they had none of these discordant conveniences in their labor of preparation. The little community seemed like a lumber camp.

The skilled workers who had in some degree renovated the hotel were through, and Ferris' heroic struggles with the autocrats of labor were ended. Carpenters, tinsmiths and plasterers had held sway and departed to strike and demand shorter hours in other parts.

Only a lot of odds and ends remained to be done, work that could be attended to by the strange, miscellaneous group of needy adventurers who, hearing of the work up on the mountain, had made the pilgrimage there in hope of little more than board and keep.

How Ferris had secured the members of this dubious company, Tom never knew. Most of them had come great distances. Some of them had the Jack of all trades quality, but none of them was trained in any special line of work. Perhaps that was why they were not prosperous; strikers and organizers. But they all had a certain Bohemian, happy-go-lucky quality and did not take themselves too seriously. He thought they were ideal companions for rough, camp life.

Audry Ferris seemed not to share Tom's liking for this hapless band. Perhaps it was natural that a purposeful, intelligent girl of strong character should look askance at this handful of queer men exhibiting so much of the vagabond temperament. Perhaps she contrasted them with her brother, strong, responsible, efficient.

Their amiability and free and easy way of taking their employment, their humorous squint at the serious work of life, seemed to annoy her and she regarded them all with a sort of tolerant disdain. She had no faith even in the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, as Ferris called them, who by their fidelity

had certainly earned the right to some consideration. "They stay because there's nothing else they can do," she said.

Tom had hoped that he might see Audry before he began work but he had to be content with hearing her voice in the kitchen where she was talking volubly with Miranda. He thought that her non-appearance at breakfast might be attributable to the fact that she had forgotten all about him. But indeed it was because Miranda had neglected to iron a certain gown. Poor Tom did not flatter himself that it was on his account this gown had been wanted.

Audry was evidently discussing the latest case in the epidemic of desertions which raged on the mountain, and as Tom sat on the edge of the tiny porch waiting for Ferris he could not help hearing.

"Not able to do the work! That's all nonsense!" Audry was saying to the accompaniment of the clatter of dishes. "He could rest for a day or so and then go on, couldn't he? He promised Niel he'd stay a month, didn't he? It's his plain duty to stay—no matter *what*. He just wants to give up, that's all; he hasn't any sense of obligation."

"Lord a massy, chil'," said Miranda. "He done be sick dat boy, he shu done be sick. Der ain't no obilation when you sick, chil'."

"Yes there is," said Audry. "He said he'd stay and he signed a paper. Of course duties are sometimes hard and unpleasant. Do you think I don't know that? But if I *agreed* to do a thing and knew that I *ought* to do it, I'd do it no matter *what*. I'd rather be sick than be *weak—ugh!*"

"Lor', chil'," said Miranda, "you think ib young Massa Spade—"

"His name is Slade," said Audry impatiently. "And I can tell you beforehand that he wouldn't, so there. He's been all through the scouts and he's head of a big camp and everybody that has read anything about the scouts *knows* that good citizenship is—it's just a byword with them—I mean a slogan—it's their motto. He went to war, didn't he? Niel says he did, so there! Do you suppose he went because it was fun? Hmph! He went because his duty was above everything else. You can see it in his face."

"Ned Whalen, he done go to war too," ventured the amiable cook.

"I'm not talking about Ned Whalen," snapped Audry. "Maybe he was drafted and *had* to go. I'm talking about that Sparrow boy. He has no respect for his word or his signature or his employer. And he'll *never* succeed no matter *where* he goes because he's *weak*. Ugh!"

Whatever else poor Tom showed in his face, he certainly showed a becoming flush at this impetuous diagnosis of his character. He was greatly edified. More than that, he was resolved that he would be worthy of this unseen maiden's flattering pronouncement. His veneration of Audry's character and intelligence deepened. He thought her a very extraordinary girl, the sort of girl whom one could go to for advice. And all that sort of thing.

## CHAPTER XVIII ON THE JOB

“Who’s Sparrow?” Tom inquired of Ferris as they made their way across the clearing and into the woods.

A couple of young fellows were clearing out the basin of the tiny reservoir as they passed, throwing stones and timber out onto the ground.

Another seemed to be hoeing out a space for a garden. Still another was restoring a stretch of private roadway, evening its edges and discarding weedy growth. There was no view from the clearing, for the woods completely enclosed the spot. Tom glanced about with curious and lively interest.

“Sparrow? Oh, he’s a kid came up here after adventure. Nice boy. He’s got malaria or pip or something or other. He’s going home to-day. I had him picking stones. They come and go,” he added good-humoredly. “If a fellow can’t stick at something else I suppose we ought not to expect him to stick up here. If he could stick at a thing he wouldn’t be here. They’re a funny bunch.

“Ned and the legitt are about the best of the lot. I’ve wished them onto you for to-day; I want to get that little bridge up over the brook. Guess they’ll be waiting for us now. You can take care of a little job like that, can’t you? I thought we’d just chop down trees and make it of rough logs. Summer boarders like that sort of thing, don’t they?”

“Guess so,” laughed Tom. “I guess they’re a kind of a happy-go-lucky lot, hey?” he added.

“That’s it. Sis hasn’t much use for ’em. But I wouldn’t just call them failures. I’d like to know the history of some of them. Most of ’em are on the square, I’ll say that. The kid says they’re sediment. She imagines all sorts of things about them. She likes you though,” he added with hearty frankness. “She thinks you’re about the best since Daniel Boone.”

“She’s one smart girl,” said Tom. “You can tell that by the way she talks.”

“She reads books on—what d’yer call it—oh, she’s got one—*Character Building*, it’s called. Yes, she’s some little high brow.”

“She’s wonderful, I’ll say,” repeated poor Tom. “I don’t suppose I should have brought her up here at all,” Ferris said. “But you see we’re all alone and she had the flu bad last winter and I thought the mountain air would do her good. Well, here we are.”

They had reached a part of the woods where the path encountered a brook and it was here that Ferris wished to build a rough bridge which would be at once a convenience to strollers and a thing of some rustic beauty. The other

two were not waiting here.

“We could lay planks, I suppose,” Ferris said, “but I thought a sort of natural wood affair would be better, with a kind of a roof you know, and maybe a couple of seats; what you might call an arbor. It was the kid’s idea. Be more in harmony, hey?”

“Sure thing,” said Tom.

The word harmony had scarcely escaped Ferris’ lips when there appeared in the path some few yards off such a masterpiece of harmonious effect as to cause Tom to pause, in speechless wonder.

Approaching he beheld the gracious and pliant form of Mr. Fairgreaves wearing an expansive smile of greeting upon his romantic countenance. He wore his khaki trousers and flannel shirt, set off by his black cutaway, and over his shoulder he carried an axe. No pioneer of old could ever have carried an axe with such an air.

But the axe was not the feature of this sartorial medley. For upon the wavy hair of Mr. Royce Fairgreaves was a derby hat, the sight of which caused even sober Tom to struggle frantically to suppress unholy mirth. But yet it was not this derby of the woodland that was the headliner in Mr. Fairgreaves’ all star cast of apparel. Rather was it the air of Mr. Fairgreaves which cannot be described.





Mr. Fairgreaves appeared with a smile, an axe and a derby hat.

Behind him came the ex-soldier, also shouldering an axe. He wore a threadbare doughboy's suit and a large brimmed slouch hat. He seemed to have a certain humorous appreciation of his companion, yet Tom could not

have said exactly how. He was silent and sober, simply nodding a greeting as he approached.

“The top of the morning to you,” said Mr. Fairgreaves in his melodious, rolling voice. “We come most faithfully upon the hour.”

“Sleep all right?” Whalen asked Tom in a weary sort of way, which somehow bespoke real interest.

“Fine,” said Tom.

“Boys,” said Ferris, “I thought we might as well get started on this arbor bridge or whatever you’d call it. Slade has some ideas about it; he’s built log cabins and such things.”

“Forest architect?” said Whalen.

Tom thought he could discern in Whalen that quality which had caused Audry to call him sarcastic. He was not exactly that, but it was sometimes possible to imagine a sneer in some of his remarks.

His calling Tom a forest architect was like his calling the cottage the executive mansion. And there seemed always the faintest slur in his invariable habit of calling Audry the maid of the mountain. But there was nothing critical or disrespectful in the words themselves and Tom, with all his profound regard for Audry, could never find anything to criticize in Whalen’s talk. It sometimes annoyed him that he could not. But as they became better acquainted he felt that Whalen did not take much stock in Miss Audry Ferris and that this was the real reason why she did not approve of Whalen.

During the work which began that morning, Tom found his new friends companionable and cheerfully helpful. They began by selecting and felling trees, and by the middle of the afternoon they had laid four trunks across the brook and proceeded with the interesting task of chopping thinner timber for the rustic superstructure which they had jointly planned.

“We’ll have a seat on either side of it,” said Tom. “So’s any one can sit and rest or read in it.”

“Sip refreshment from the brook and wisdom from a book,” said Fairgreaves in his elegant way. “Miss Audry can come here with her book and imbibe wisdom under the arbor.”

“And distribute it,” said Whalen. “A seat for pupils would be a good idea.”

Tom said nothing. This was the sort of remark he did not like.

That very first evening, after about the pleasantest and most interesting day’s work that Tom had ever done, something occurred which to him was nothing less than a minor tragedy.

Mr. Royce Fairgreaves was called to other duties and thenceforth bestowed his pervasive personality and expansive smile elsewhere. Tom saw much of him thereafter, encountering him at various labors, usually in his derby and cutaway save when the heat forbade.

“I am called to a wider field of usefulness,” Mr. Fairgreaves explained, which turned out to be picking stones for the reservoir which he did with all the grace and dignity that were his. He picked stones as if Shakespeare instead of Ferris had planned the work for him....

## CHAPTER XIX TOM AND NED

As the days passed a picturesque, rustic structure arose above the rough bridge and closed it in. No taint of bare or trimmed wood was there about it, the little dim resting-place being devised entirely of timber clothed in its natural bark.

And as this work progressed Tom and his companion became close friends. Whalen had seen fighting in France and had a wound on his shoulder to show for it. Tom had also been "over there" and they found much to talk of while they worked and especially in their stroll to and from the hotel at luncheon time.

Tom always ate his luncheon with the men. He enjoyed this, and it left his conscience clear in the matter of dining with Ferris and Audry in the cottage each night. One and all, the workers took his affiliation with the "executive mansion" kindly enough. They seemed not to think it strange that he should make his headquarters there.

It would have been an unreasonable person indeed who could have thought ill of Tom. He was so simple and so friendly with all, that he soon became a general favorite. If the men thought of his identity with the cottage at all they probably thought of it good-humoredly in the light of his ready submission to the charms of Audry Ferris. He was rather younger than the rest of them.

"They treat me pretty fine, I'll say that," he observed to Ned Whalen one day at work.

"All the world loves a lover," said Ned Whalen.

"What do you mean by that?" Tom snapped.

"I mean all the world loves a diligent pupil. That better?"

"I'd like to know what you mean by that?"

"Don't you approve of a good pupil? When I went to school—"

"Yes, that's always the way you change things around," Tom said impatiently. "You make it sound as if you mean something else. No wonder they say you're sarcastic."

"They? You're not such a good pupil after all. You don't know the singular from the plural."

"Well, *she* then," snapped Tom. "And I admit she's a mighty smart girl. She's forgotten more than I ever knew, that's sure."

"She's the forgetful kind, huh?"

"Why look at the books she reads," said Tom. "*Good Citizenship* and

*Character Building* and all things like that. I haven't got brains enough to understand them—I admit it.”

“Arbor building is more in your line, huh?”

“There you go again.”

“I'm just saying that you made a good job of the little shrine in the forest. Looks pretty neat, huh?” They were sitting each on one of the two rustic seats, lolling for a few minutes before going home for the day. “We ought to fell another tree and saw the trunk in half and lay the two pieces side by side over that space right there. It'll be muddy there in the spring and fall. What d'you say?”

“To-morrow,” said Tom.

“Any time,” said Whalen.

“And another thing,” said Tom.

“I seem to be in for it,” laughed Whalen.

“No, but you speak of this place as if I planned it and built it. It's just as much your work as mine. That's always the way you talk before the bunch. Didn't you suggest the seats? Who said about having thatch on the top?”

“Guilty,” said Ned.

“Well then,” concluded Tom.

“You'd better not spring that stuff up at the cottage,” said Ned.

“No? Why not? You're just as good a friend of mine as—as—”

“Fairgreaves?”

“As anybody,” said Tom coloring. “I've learned more from you than you could ever learn from me, that's sure. And look at your war record—Reims, Verdun, the Marne—Why, I haven't even got a wound.”

“I'm sorry,” said Whalen.

“No, but that's just your darned sarcastic way,” said Tom. “You don't give anybody a chance to praise you or like you. Look at the way you came down here with the legitt just as if you were a tenderfoot and just did everything I suggested without letting me know that you know all about the woods and everything. It just makes me feel like a fool when I think how I told you things. And you ten years older than I am and a regular A-1 scout!”

“Terrible,” said Whalen.

“It just makes me feel like a fool,” said Tom.

“Don't let anybody make you feel like a fool, Tommy boy; not even the *Good Citizen*—or the character architect. You're all to the good, Tommy, only you don't know it.”

“I know what you mean by that, you mean Audry Ferris. But I'll tell you one thing, I've learned a lot from her.”

“Fine.”

“She doesn't know you, that's the trouble with her,” persisted Tom

generously. “She doesn’t know how generous and friendly and all that you are. You never tell anybody anything about your history. Why, she didn’t even know you had a wound till I told her. She hasn’t found you out as I have.”

“That’s where you’re smarter than she is,” said Ned.

“I’d just like her to see that wound,” said Tom.

“Oh, she’s too busy loving her country,” said Whalen. “She’s a nice little girl, Tommy, but Mirandy is my favorite.”

Whalen, quiet, ironical, modest and reticent, knew full well of Tom’s liking and admiration for him, for Tom was anxious to show this at every opportunity.

Perhaps it was because Tom had another friendship which he cherished that he felt so ready to acknowledge his fondness and admiration for this taciturn, lonesome man. Being rich in joy he could afford to be open-hearted. He never asked himself where his heart really lay; it was enough to be so opulent in friendships.

Ned Whalen had no friends save Tom. His fancy for the youngster who had been thrown with him was very strong and Tom’s cheery nature and unsophisticated squint seemed to furnish a measure of amusement in his silent, weary life. All the men liked him but he seemed to stand apart as a sort of looker on.

He certainly did not dislike the sweet young girl in whose company Tom found more and more delight. He found amusement in her aggressive, cocksure smartness. He admitted that she was very, very pretty. And he thought that was the best thing about her....

## CHAPTER XX AN ACCIDENT

Occasionally in their close intercourse, Tom had a curious feeling that he had seen Whalen a long while before, and he came to believe that he had seen him in France. That seemed likely enough, for they had both been in the fighting near Epernay and also at Chalons.

It was at odd times that Tom noticed this familiar look in Ned's face. Ordinarily he did not notice it. Once when his companion was lifting a heavy stone that familiar look struck him forcibly. He even spoke of it, and Whalen too thought it quite likely that Tom had seen him.

On the day following their chat in the rustic arbor something happened which gave a dramatic turn to these thoughts of Tom's. The incident was foreshadowed by thunderstorms during the night which shook and wrenched the cottage so that Tom in bed could actually feel the building lurch and jump in the slack of the safety cables, like a boat straining at its anchor rope. He realized then the wisdom of having the cables a little slack, for in such wind a sudden strain on a taut cable would wrench loose part of the structure.

In those recurrent frenzies of the elements the cottage seemed to jump and pull like some savage thing against its metal leashes. And the creaking of the rusted terminals made a clamorous medley. It was no wonder that Miranda thought the neighborhood was haunted.

All through the next day these recurrent storms continued. And in the intervals of unbridled fury a steady drizzle descended out of a leaden sky. The only bright spot in all the landscape was Mr. Royce Fairgreaves, resolutely faithful to his task of picking stones, armed with an umbrella. Most of the others lolled on the back porch of the hotel. Ferris sat in the cottage making up his accounts. Audry was engrossed in a book.

In a prolonged interval between showers, Tom and Whalen went into the woods to see how the roof of their little forest rest was withstanding the onslaughts of the weather. The tiny pavilion looked isolated and cosy in the dim woods. The saturated chips and shavings that still littered the spot imparted that pungent fragrance which comes from fresh wet wood. The ground was soggy, the thatched roof dripping, and the little brook running in a torrent.

The necessity of some supplementary work on the little bridge was apparent, for the water was pouring down one of the low banks and undermining the land on which the logs rested. The ends of the logs were

resting in mud and settling down rapidly.

"They ought to be longer," Whalen said.

"What do you say we fell that tree we started on and lay the trunk crossways underneath here?" Tom asked.

"Ought to do," said Ned. "It's going to pour again, though, in about ten minutes."

"Let it come," said Tom cheerily; "I'll scoot for shelter when it does."

Taking an axe that lay in one of the enclosed seats, Tom started for a tree a couple of hundred feet distant which had already been partially chopped for felling. Whalen sat in the pavilion watching him. Tom soon became so engrossed in his vigorous labor that he was not aware of the suddenly increasing volume of rain and the distant rumbling which heralded another spasm of the fickle weather.

"Would you like an umbrella?" Whalen called in allusion to Fairgreaves.

"Not yet," laughed Tom.

"Better come in."

"I can't stop now," Tom called, cheerily. "Let her come."

The low, distant rumbling continued, a dazzling streak of lightning lit the sky, the woods were bright for a moment, and as the sudden light subsided through a series of lesser flashes, the dark leaves on all the trees were standing upright and fluttering madly in the heightening gale.

In another minute the storm was upon them, rending the air with its thunderous clamor, brightening the troubled woods with its appalling, momentary light. Peal after peal of thunder shook the earth.

The whole woods were agitated by the rising wind. Twigs and leaves flew wild, and a great branch nearby crashed in a tree and hung limp among the swaying branches. Split and torn, with its long, fibrous area of white showing, it looked like a suffering, stricken thing.

What happened, happened quickly. Tom's cheery bravado could not persist long in such a frenzy of the elements, and pushing back his streaming hair from his face he laughingly surrendered to the storm and called that he had had enough. Whalen could not hear him, his voice was belittled and lost in the uproar.

He was just starting to run when there came a quick, deafening report followed by a tremor beneath him as if he were in a rocking boat. And then a prolonged, sharp peal, and a flash that blinded him. The whole of creation seemed to shake. He had a curious conviction that a chipmunk was running up his arm, and half-consciously he tried to catch it.

He was in the borderland of consciousness, vaguely aware of movement nearby. And he had an appalling sensation of sinking. The earth seemed to be falling away under him. In that brief movement of lapsing consciousness he



thought he was in the ocean and that some frightful creature of the deep had caught his foot. Instinctively he wrenched and tugged but all in vain.

Then his senses returned and he was tingling all over. But he knew that he was not at sea for there was the odor of burning wood and of soaked foliage, and fresh wet earth. He could not see but he knew that he was on land.

Yet still something did hold his foot—held it fast. Held it as the jaws of a tiger hold. He tugged and pulled and became panic-stricken. But the merciless jaws held fast. He was lying in a very welter of oozy mud. He wriggled, squirmed, but only an excruciating pain in his ankle followed these frantic efforts.

“Where am I?” he called. “What—”

And then again his wounded hearing was stricken by a tearing, rending tumult very close by and he seemed to be tossed at the mercy of some terrible upheaval. And still those unseen jaws closed tighter on his foot and held it as the relentless jaws of a tiger hold....

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE FACE IN THE STORM

The first thing of which Tom was fully conscious was of a face very near him. A face drawn and distorted by strain amounting to agony. A face rigidly set in the maintenance of superhuman effort. It was grim, even ghastly in the mingled suffering and resolve that it bespoke.

Even as Tom saw it in his dawning consciousness, a kind of despair crept over it and this was swallowed up in a still more overpowering resolve. The mouth was set like the jaws of a vice. Here were physical strength and power of will united to the very utmost. And yet they seemed to fail little by little to be inadequate.

Close by Tom saw two bare arms upright and rigid with the veins standing out like ridges. They supported a great fallen trunk which lay almost prone. The eyes of that face were far away and intent as if seeking something far off in the woods.

Tom Slade had seen that distant stare before. In the strain of sustained and violent effort the face had the drawn look of age upon it. Gaunt, haggard, troubled and set. It was like a face grown old over night.

Tom Slade had seen that aged face before. It was not in the war that he had seen it. Here was the ever baffling miracle of kin resemblance with two score years eliminated by one little minute of sublime effort and suffering.

Tom Slade had seen that face before.

Yet perhaps it was only his languid, returning consciousness that conjured up a kind of recognition in that rigid, strained countenance. At all events he was too weak to feel intense surprise.

“Pop,” he murmured, with the faintest suggestion of a laugh at the incongruity of the thing.

“Well I’ll be—Pop Dyk— How the dickens did *you*—”

Then he heard the voice and it seemed strained like the face. As if it cost an effort to speak. An expenditure of strength which could ill be spared.



“See if you can pull your foot out now,” said Whalen.

“See if you can pull your foot out now—easy. It’s caught in the roots. Don’t worry, I’ll hold the trunk. Right? Crawl out then—I’ve got it.”

“Ned!”

“Yep, crawl out—*quick!*”

Tom obeyed. Pulling his foot out from a tangle of upturned root he crawled out from under the huge trunk which had fallen above his body and been stopped in its descent, heaven alone knew how, and held a yard or two above his prostrate form by those straining human props extending upward from a crouching form.

The big tree, proud in its towering height, had been struck by the demon of the storm. Where it had stood and where Tom had been passing was now a jagged, cavernous hole where tentacles of root dripping with fresh, black earth lay exposed.

The stately tree had been an easy victim of the lightning bolt, which had also touched and stunned Tom. But those arms of flesh and blood and steel had extended taut, straining, but indomitable, bearing the mighty burden which had all but crushed the life out of the trapped and stricken victim.

“All right?” said Whalen in his quiet way.

“My foot must have been caught in one of the roots,” said Tom breathing relief. “I guess I got struck too. It was a grand mix-up. You saved me. If that had fallen on me—”

“Well it didn’t,” said Whalen.

Tom climbed over the prone tree to where his friend waited. The storm was abating, the rain returning to its sullen habit. The pervasive gloom of the steady drizzle and the sodden sky was returning.

Whalen was drenched, his clothing torn, and he was breathing heavily. Despite his abounding gratitude which transcended every other thought, Tom was impelled to give a sudden, quizzical, puzzled look at his rescuer. Not that he expected to find any hint of the resemblance he had seen before.

He wanted to make sure of himself, to reassure himself that he had not been fully conscious before. He believed that he had been “seeing things” and he wished to check up this conviction. Surely a resemblance, however striking, noticed amid such conditions, was not worth thinking twice about.

Yet there *was* something in Whalen’s face which for the moment startled Tom. Perhaps he only *fancied* a resemblance now. But it was not this which startled him. It was a certain troubled look in his friend’s face, a look as of fear and apprehension. Whalen always had a weary look and it was his weary manner of utterance which made him what Audry Ferris called sarcastic. He had that look now and it was pitiable, for added to it was a troubled look. A suggestion of anxiety.

“Who did you think I was?” he asked.

Tom, like the good scout he was, answered cautiously and cheerily, “I guess I don’t know what I thought or what I said. I know you saved my life, that’s sure.”

Whalen seemed about to ask another question but refrained, apparently relieved and satisfied. And so they started for the hotel.

“I’ve seen stunts,” said Tom, “but I never saw anything like that. You saved my life. And you’re a wonder. Were you holding the whole business up or was I dreaming?”

“You think you were dreaming?” Whalen asked.

“I was nutty for a couple of minutes, that’s sure.”

“I saw the tree struck,” said Whalen quietly, “and I saw it go over. The earth must have caved under you. The next thing I saw the tree was caught in the branches of another tree—it was almost down and slipping down every second. You must have been knocked silly. I got there before the tree fell the rest of the way. So here we are. Guess it must be nearly supper-time. Your foot hurt?”

“Ned,” said Tom, stopping in the path and looking straight at his friend. “I always called you Whalen—”

“Yes?” said his companion with a kind of weary curiosity. “Spring it. What is it?”

“Nothing, only after this I’m just going to call you Ned. I know you’re quite a little older than I am, but just the same I’m going to call you Ned *always*.

“Don’t approve of Whalen, huh?”

“Sure I do,” said Tom, his voice full of feeling and with a simple boyishness which well became him in the circumstances, “only—what I mean is—you know what I mean—it’s that, oh just that you’re my closest friend. You saved my life, gee whiz, you old grouch, now you’ve got to take me for better or worse. Go ahead now, say something sarcastic.”

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE OBSCURE TRAIL

Ned Whalen said nothing about the incident in the woods. But Tom did not fail to advertise his friend's exploit. His generous enthusiasm seemed to amuse Whalen. Fairgreaves, too, was lavish in his colleague's praise. All, including Ferris, acknowledged Whalen's heroism. But Whalen himself seemed untouched by the episode.

It cannot be said, even, that he seemed more closely drawn toward Tom than before. He liked Tom and seemed to find entertainment in the young fellow's freshness and enthusiasm. But he did not seek him out. Perhaps that was just because he was taciturn and solitary of habit.

At all events his duties presently intervened to put an end to their companionship. Tom became a real boss in the pleasant task of erecting a log cabin summer-house, while Whalen went to boss the job of planting poles for the electric wires down the south side of the mountain. As the work progressed farther and farther down the mountainside the men began taking their lunches with them, and since Tom dined in the cottage at night, he and Whalen met only occasionally.

Tom was disappointed and a little piqued that the incident in the woods had not aroused Whalen to something like a stronger sentiment of friendship. But he was sensible enough to realize that Whalen was much his senior, and also that he had acquired a certain habit of detachment from every one. He was reserved and solitary, with a kindly, wistful squint at things and people. Even Tom could not shake him out of his whimsical, lonesome habit.

Only one person understood him thoroughly and that was Audry Ferris. At least that was what she said. "I'm always suspicious of people that have two meanings to everything they say," she observed to Miranda. "He may be physically strong (alluding to his exploit) and all that, but just the same I don't trust him. He's like the rest of them—ne'er-do-wells. If they really amounted to anything they wouldn't be here. I wouldn't be a bit surprised—"

"Lor', Miss Audry," Miranda said. "I allus say dat man he no human man—he no human man, I say dat. Das what I say, I say he *no human man*. He got ghost blood dat man—he shoo have. No human man can hold up no tree—dat man am no human man. I say so when I see 'im creepin' along de ledge in de night. Why he go dere? Huh? Why he go dere? You go 'long dat ledge an' you find a ghosts' meetin' place, das what I say. Why he go dere in de night? I tell Misser Ferris, I tell him right out, I say dat man am *no human man*."

“I’m sure I don’t want to go along that ledge,” said Audry. “I’ve been along it as far as I care to go, thank you. Ugh, just to look down those crevices is enough for me. It makes me dizzy just to look down there. Why in one place you have to step across a canyon that’s miles deep. Ugh, it just makes me *shudder*.”

“Da’ shows ony ghosts can go dere,” Miranda said. “Dey can float—dey can *float over cannons*.”

“No, because along there are lots and lots of rocks with peoples’ initials carved on them,” Audry said. “They’re years and years old. It shows that people were up on this mountain as much as fifty years ago, that’s what Niel says. I’d like to see all those carvings along there but you couldn’t tempt me to go. I’m not afraid of spooks but I’m afraid of precipices.”

“Spooks is worsen den prespices,” said Miranda darkly.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### TOM AND AUDRY

Tom and Audry took many strolls in the evenings and often sat in the little pavilion which he and Whalen had built. On these occasions he told her much about the scouts and especially about Temple Camp.

“Do you know,” he said as they sat in the little rustic shelter one evening, “the first time I saw you and noticed how you wore knickers and khaki and all that, I thought probably you were just out for adventure; you know what I mean. Gee, I never thought that you took an interest in the other side of scouting. Most kids that go in for it don’t stop to think about anything but just fun and adventure.”

“I’m not exactly a kid,” she said prettily.

“Oh, I didn’t mean that, but I mean—you know—”

“The idea underlying scouting,” she said.

“Yes that’s it, the idea underlying it.”

“Service and citizenship,” said Audry.

“That’s just it. Most fellows don’t think anything about that at all. I guess I don’t either. I guess most girls don’t either. You see lots of them that wear khaki and knickers and all that, and go hiking, who don’t really understand what it’s all about—I mean scouting. That’s where you’re different from other girls.

“When you were afraid to walk along that ledge with me I was sort of disappointed. But I see now I should never have asked a girl to go out on a place like that. There’s something else besides stunts in scouting, I’ve learned that from you. All this chasing around in the woods doesn’t mean anything unless you’re strong for service. You’ve got to learn to be strong in every way—so as to make good citizens.”

Poor Tom, he was very far gone in admiration for this girl in khaki who was afraid to go out on a ledge. He saw the new light which she showed him with a readiness which should have flattered her. It was just her own teaching reflected as in a mirror.

What he never thought to remind her was that the great outdoors, the woods, the rough life, and even the dangerous ledges, are what make one big and broad. And that if one is big and broad and wholesome, why then he has a fine character and if he has a fine character he is a good citizen. And that’s all there is to it. Poor Tom, with all his wholesome, adventurous life, could not see this because pretty and clever Audry Ferris got in the path of his vision and



dazzled him. She was not superior to him, she was only smarter.

“It isn’t strength of body that makes a soldier,” she said. “It’s strength of character. To have the strength to do something unpleasant because it’s right. That was what won the war. That was what triumphed over militarism—bodily strength.”

“You—bet—your—sweet—life,” said Tom. “I wish some of those kids at Temple Camp could hear you talk. They seem to think scouting is just a game. Why you never see any of them studying. We have laws, good ones, but do you suppose they ever read them? Not much.”

“As I understand it,” said Audry, “it isn’t just building bonfires and sending signals and all that. It’s the idea of service—”

“Why sure it is,” Tom vociferated. “You see right through it.”

“Service for the common good,” she said.

“*Absolutely*,” said Tom.

She had read the phrase in a book but poor Tom did not know that.

“That’s the trouble with these men up here,” Audry said. “They have strength enough, goodness knows. But they’re all failures. They’re not assets to their country.” This imposing phrase she had likewise derived from a book. “That’s how you are different from them—you have character.” Tom gazed delightedly at her. “You can efface yourself,” she said complacently.

Tom did not want to efface himself. He felt that he was just beginning to live. He felt rough and crude in her presence, and a little ashamed that he had made such a god of the woods. He had not understood scouting in its finer sense.

“Trouble with me I’ve been mixed up with a crew of wild Indians,” he said. “I was in service and I saw fellows die for the cause, too. But I never sat down and thought about these things as you have.”

“If your scouting is any good at all,” Audry said, “it isn’t because it teaches you to cook. Mirandy can do that.”

“Sure she can,” laughed Tom in admiration of her lucid wit.

“If it doesn’t teach you service, what use is it?” Audry persisted, looking at him with her big, brown eyes.

“You said it,” said Tom. “God and country, that’s what the scout handbook says.”

“That’s why I wasn’t so carried away by what Mr. Whalen did,” said Audry. “A great many men are strong and even brave. It’s character that counts. These men are all deficient in some way. None of them will ever really amount to anything because they can’t lay a course and follow it.”

Tom was speechless with admiration.

“But you have character—purpose,” she said.

They arose to go and Tom helped her over puddles which had remained

after the late rains. He did not release her hand as promptly as he might have done. And when he did, he ventured to adjust the sweater which hung rather loosely on her shoulder. He was all for service.

“I think a fellow can learn a lot more from a girl than he can from another fellow, don’t you?” he asked. “I mean especially—you know what I mean—if she—sort of—you know—has an influence on him?”

His passion for service had become so great that on their way to the cottage he reached over and adjusted the sweater on her further shoulder so that it might more effectually protect her from the rising breeze. He did this carefully, not hurriedly.

After he had left her he was sorry that when they spoke of service he had not reminded her that Ned Whalen had been in service and had a cruel wound to show for it. His thoughts lingered on Whalen but he thought of him mostly in connection with Audry. His thoughts of Whalen were a sort of by-product....

## CHAPTER XXIV GHOSTS OF YESTERDAY

The ledge mentioned by Miranda was not haunted, but if any place in this world *were* haunted it would be such a place. Any spook would sign a lease for the premises on sight. It was not so much the ledge (which was just a large flat stone) as the trail leading to it, which justified Miranda's fearful apprehensions.

From the clearing behind the hotel an obscure trail leads through a jungle of rock and forest. It runs along the summit of the mountain. But the southern face of Overlook is precipitous, and it is along this precipitous part that the old trail runs. If one goes far enough along this trail he will find it winding away from the sheer, rocky face of the mountain and following an easy descent through the woods. But for a mile or so it runs along the brow of a mighty cliff.

Covering this almost sheer descent is a jungle in which, probably, no human foot has ever trod. Climbed would be a better word, for indeed walking would be out of the question in this almost perpendicular chaos of rocks and deformed trees. Here and there a rocky crevice may be seen, and far down in its narrowing depth a jumble of nature's debris, trees distorted by confinement and vegetation strange in color for the lack of sunlight.

Here rattlesnakes hold sway, and in a certain gleam of sunshine which penetrates one of these narrow canyons for a few brief moments each day, may be seen what looks like a little group of gray twigs, said to be the bones of some hapless pilgrim precipitated down between the narrow walls of rock many years ago.

Certain it is that along the obscure trail above which winds its way between the brow of the precipice and the forest, many rocks may be found with initials carved upon them, the idle handiwork of adventurers who visited the mountain in days long gone by. Most of these rocks are usable as seats whereon to rest and contemplate the expansive panorama to the south.

For this path along the brow of old Overlook is like the gallery of some vast theatre. In the distance below may be seen the village of Woodstock, and beyond, the great Ashokan Reservoir with all its little bays and capes in clear view. From this lofty vantage point its whole conformation is as clear as on a map.

If from the crown of this impartial giant you look afar at Woodstock and then at the vast reservoir which spreads over the green, undulating valley; and

then if you think of another little village, partly obliterated and partly pushed aside by that inland sea; why then, it is not hard to get the point of view of some poor little old man, who was turned out of house and home. For the old mountain seems to make everything plain. Serene, towering and apart from all the passions and enterprises and bickerings of men, it makes one see the great city of New York as a kind of invading bully.

But most of the hardy tourists who left their memorials upon these everlasting rocks never saw the reservoir, for only the spacious valley was there when they gazed afar from the mountain. Some of these carvings antedate the old hotel, most of them antedate the reservoir. The authors of some of them might have been killed in the Civil War.

What has become of all those people who gazed from Overlook Mountain a half century, some near a full century ago? Where are Minnie and George who in 1861 cut their names thus in union with a crude graven heart between? Tottering grandparents now, perhaps.

What has become of Carl who loved Alice, as he confided in abiding scratches to a boulder? And who was Alice? What has become of C. L. and of Esther B.? And who was it that made his fatigue immortal by scratching *I'm tired* on a bordering rock? Let us hope he is rested by now. Who was Annie Garis who in 1857 paused here? And who was B. J. who appears thus unrevealed beside her? Who carved the death's head and when? Does Martha Bentley 1867 still live?

Perhaps that dim, lonely trail intersected by challenging crevices and buried here and there in dim foliage, *is* haunted by the shades of sturdy tourists who rested here in the far past. From what point did they ascend in those days? And whence came they? From near or far?

Perhaps the faint sounds which Miranda heard on dark nights were made by Esther B., or perchance by Minnie, come back out of the region of shadows to revisit the ancient resting place of herself and her George. Perhaps the weary shade of him who was so tired returned at times to rest upon the favorite rock. Perhaps the spook of Annie Garis came back in search of B. J.

Perhaps Mirandy was right. Who shall say?

## CHAPTER XXV AT TWILIGHT

Tom had never explored this old trail. It was one of the things that he had been always intending to do but had never done. He had hoped that Audry might introduce him to its romantic neighborhood and indeed she had piloted him as far as the first intersecting crevice, where she balked.

On a certain evening after supper he was sitting on the little porch of the cottage. Audry was busy with her accustomed task of helping Miranda with the dishes and he could hear her girlish, cocksure talk in the kitchen. Audry was always very positive about everything. She knew what she knew.

On the campus, as they called the clearing, Whalen and Fairgreaves were picking up bits of wood. Tom smiled as he observed the graceful, athletic form of the amiable Fairgreaves. Each time he stooped he looked as if he were bowing to some grand lady. His khaki trousers and cutaway coat made him look outlandish.

Yet, thought Tom, here was a kind man. If Fairgreaves were a failure at least he could enjoy the success of others. He was the soul of generosity. He could not be so bad. Perhaps the world needs just such amiable ne'er-do-wells as Fairgreaves.

Tom was just about to go over and join them in their self-imposed after supper task when Fairgreaves sauntered with ingratiating step toward the group on the rear porch, where the chauffeur who had been deprived of his license was playing a harmonica.

The inventor who was waiting for the million dollar suit to be decided in his favor was sitting on the railing smoking a pipe. Billy the sailor sat with his feet against the rail. They all seemed to be enjoying their ease.

Billy the sailor was telling how he had once assisted in killing a skipper who had killed a seaman. The men all seemed to think that was a pretty good thing to do. They were not too conventional, these men.

"What's new, Legitt'?" one of them asked as Fairgreaves approached them.

"There is nothing new under the sun," said Fairgreaves elegantly.

"The hell there ain't," said Billy the sailor.

Whalen did not join the group but sauntered off with an effect of aimless weariness toward the edge of the clearing and disappeared in the woods. It seemed to Tom that his stroll and its direction were wholly unpremeditated.

Tom had lately wanted a chance to talk with Whalen alone. He had seen his former companion come and go and had been with the others when Whalen

was present. But he wanted to see him alone. There was no particular reason for this, except that he felt an impulse to renew, if possible, some measure of their former intimacy.

He had long since ceased to attach (if indeed he had ever attached) any significance to the look on Whalen's face in the woods. That striking resemblance to his little old friend, Caleb Dyker, had been a thing seen in a moment of half-consciousness and amid surroundings altogether dramatic and unusual.

Yet he had wondered if there were any particular reason why Whalen avoided him. He had decided that there was not, that it was just his friend's moroseness and lonely habit. Probably Whalen looked upon him as a kid, thought Tom. At all events here was a chance to chat with him in the good old way he used to do....

Tom soon found that he was on the trail along the brow of the mountain. By the time he reached the point which marked the limit of Audry's daring, Whalen had disappeared around a bend in the winding trail.

Tom leaped the crevice and soon found himself in the thick of the jungle. On his left the heavy undergrowth encroached upon the almost indistinct path as if to crowd the passerby to the very brink of the overgrown cliff. Below, the abnormal, upturned wilderness with its tilted trees and half-exposed roots, and its great insecurely lodged boulders, looked dark and forbidding in the cold twilight.

In this witching hour the path seemed very lonesome. Shadows played like living things among the trees. The great reservoir afar off looked the color of steel in the gathering dusk.

And the initialed rocks along the trail, wrapped in the gray coverlet of twilight, might easily have been imagined to be ghosts out of the past.

On one of these bordering rests a shadow flitted back and forth making the initials of some unknown pilgrim to shimmer in the changing light and hover on the verge of invisibility like some departed shade. How interesting and romantic, thought Tom, for some former visitor who had left his memorial in this silent haunt, to return and search it out.

He had passed around another bend of this sequestered, lofty trail, when he saw Whalen sitting on a rock some hundred feet or so distant. His back was toward Tom, for he had turned about and had somewhat altered his sitting posture to gaze at the darkening panorama in the extensive country below.

As he thus sprawled unaware of Tom's approach, the latter's eye was caught by something shiny on the rock. As he approached nearer, he saw it was an open jack-knife.

As soon as Whalen became aware of Tom he turned about, which was natural, but it seemed to Tom that there was something unnatural in the new

attitude. He fancied a trace of agitation about Whalen, which was quite unlike him. As he approached it seemed as if Whalen were on the point of coming to meet him but decided suddenly to remain where he was.

“H’lo, Ned,” said Tom cheerily. “Taking a walk? Or a rest, I mean?”

Perhaps it was because Whalen did not think and act quickly enough, or perhaps it was because it was repugnant to his nature to indulge an impulse to concealment; or it may have been that in that short moment of panic he found a kind of cynical abandonment the easiest course. Whatever the cause, he made no additional effort to conceal certain carvings on the rock.

Tom saw that the jack-knife had been used to scrape the gray mold out of the letters comprising two names, one carved above the other.

The carving, apparently, was by no means as old as much of the idle handiwork along the path for the figures *1907* were cut beneath the two names. Nor had the work that appearance of creditable care about it which characterized some of the other specimens; the letters were sprawling and irregular. But the names were easy enough to read and Tom Slade, with more presence of mind than Whalen showed, read them aloud without the least suggestion of astonishment or even interest.

“Anson Dicker or Dyker—Joe Ganley. Huh. Wonder who those fellows were, hey? Couple of wearie willies maybe. Any objection to me sitting down and resting, Ned? I don’t see much of you these days. Nice and quiet along in here, hey?”

## CHAPTER XXVI

### TOM IS TROUBLED

If Whalen had any apprehension that the name of Dyker was familiar to Tom it must have been dispelled in Tom's purposely desultory, cheery talk.

But Tom went back to the cottage that night with a burden on his mind. Ned Whalen, his friend and rescuer, was Anson Dyker, he felt sure of it.

He had been sitting on a rock talking with the grandson of his little old friend down at Temple Camp, the fugitive murderer of Henry Merrick in Kingston. Here upon this lonely mountain the derelict had been cast up and he, Tom, had found him gazing down afar at the vast reservoir which covered the home of his boyhood.

Could there be any doubt of it? Tom thought not. He recalled the look and features of old Caleb as he had seen them in the straining, momentarily aged countenance of his own rescuer. He had ceased to think of that. But now he thought of it in the light of the new discovery. Whalen had searched for that mold-covered record of a visit to the mountain when a boy. And he had been agitated and for a moment had thought of concealing his discovery upon Tom's approach. Oh, there could be no doubt of it in Tom's mind.

He knew who Joe Ganley was. He recalled the day he had walked to Temple Camp with old Caleb and they had passed a man in the darkness who the old man had thought was Joe Ganley, a former neighbor in the old village. Joe Ganley. So he and the grandson must have been pals. At least in their boyhood they had made the journey up the mountain together.

Now that he had seen the name cut in the rock along with young Dyker's, Tom tried to recall what old Caleb had told him about Ganley, that he had settled in the west and prospered and sent money back to his mother with which to build a new house. Tom recalled that he had thought lithe young man must have been exceptionally prosperous to do that. The talk, he recalled, had been occasioned by the erratic little old man mistaking an emaciated, shabby stranger for Joe Ganley.

And that was about all that he remembered of the trivial incident. Now here was this same name carved with that of the grandson on a rock on the mountain top. These two boys had climbed the mountain in nineteen hundred and seven. That was before the murder, before the valley was flooded.

Tom did not sleep that night. The shock of his conviction that Whalen was none other than the fugitive Anson Dyker kept him awake. And in sequel of his discovery, he lived over the story, as he knew it, of the tragedy which had



shocked the countryside so long ago.

How different the lives of those two boys who had trudged up the mountain together fifteen years before. When the reservoir drove them out, one went out west, prospered, married, sent money home. In his accustomed surroundings far away did he ever think of his name carved on the top of Overlook Mountain?

And the other. What a botch had he made of his young life! Killed a kindly generous old man and fled. Killed him in futile and insane frenzy. Struck him down in misguided passion born of the worthy love of his grandparents and his boyhood home. How could any person capable of such feelings, such love and loyalty, do such a horrible thing? And this solitary, taciturn man, Ned Whalen, had been that boy.

In his musings, Tom thought of poor old Caleb and his cane, of his wanderings, and of himself, Tom, finding a haven for him at last. He thought of the old man's sturdy hatred and defiance of the great reservoir and of his resolute conviction of his grandson's innocence.

But Tom knew more about it than poor old Caleb did, and this train of musing turned his thoughts to Brent Gaylong, good old Brent, and how he had sat on the stool in the newspaper office in Kingston with the full account of the whole business open before him.

He thought (he did not know why) of something that Brent had said to him. He was always recalling things that Brent said. "*You can have anything you want if you're willing to pay the price. I can have the gold cup in Administration Shack but I'd go to jail and that would be the price.*"

Tom had laughed at the time but now he was appalled at the awful truth of it. For he knew now—as he lay there wide awake in the little cottage on the summit of Overlook Mountain—he knew that the sprightly *Goodfellow* was his, that he could stand upon its deck and look about and say, "She's mine!" That he could raise his owner's pennant and sail away in her *if he really wanted to*. Two thousand reward....

Price!

Good old ramshackle, lanky, whimsical Brent. How Tom Slade wished that he could see him now. So that he could tell him the price didn't interest him....

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE CRIMINAL

Then Tom fell to thinking about Anson Dyker and wondering where he had been in that long interval since his crime. He had been to the war, and Tom was glad of that, for his service and his cruel wound seemed like an atonement. But all the while Tom knew that there is no atonement for murder—but one. And the thought made him shudder.

He emerged the next morning, troubled and perplexed after a restless night. It seemed to him that he had lived over the whole drama in which the Dykers and the old village and the great reservoir had played a part. Perhaps he saw the little family's sorrow and trouble more vividly than he was able to picture that other home in Kingston where blind murder had stalked. Yet he did think of old Henry Merrick and saw him through the haze of time as a kindly old man.

Tom had borne many responsibilities upon his young shoulders but he had never carried such a depressing weight of perplexity as now harassed him. He had kept other people's secrets, but he had never kept a secret from the state, from the law. His youth and essential simplicity were very strongly manifested in the uneasiness he felt at having to bear the responsibility of such knowledge, and to keep it secret. And in his perplexity, his fondness and admiration for his friend Whalen, deepened to a kindness and sympathy such as he had not felt before.

Whalen had never given him a chance to show his friendship and gratitude. But the matter was out of Whalen's hands now. He did not know that Tom knew. Tom had an odd feeling that Whalen would be just the sort of person in whom to confide such a secret, just the sort to share it and advise with him.

That was what Tom wanted now—not some one to advise him. Not exactly that. But some one to share the knowledge. He felt a certain boyish fear at knowing this dreadful truth all by himself, and being in the position of outwitting the law. With all his prowess he felt very nervous and very much at sea.

It is to the credit of Mr. Fairgreaves that Tom in his first panic of doubt and uncertainty should have thought of him as a trusty friend. He might have done worse than go to Mr. Fairgreaves. He thought of Ferris and for no very good reason he deferred and then abandoned the thought of taking him into his confidence. He thought of making the trip to Temple Camp and talking with Brent, and what demon of evil prevented him from doing this heaven only

knows. The upshot was that he spoke to no one and was greatly troubled. He felt that he was accessory to a crime and oddly this made him feel that he was in some way false to his friend and rescuer.

So he sought Whalen out (he tried always to think of him by that name) and tried to square himself with his own conscience by a certain gentleness of friendship which spoke well for Tom. At such times he sought to reassure himself that Whalen suspected nothing and then he would feel guilty because of his friend's apparent faith in him.

If Tom had been a little older and a little more sophisticated perhaps he would not have felt the burden of this secret. He might have taken the view that if the government wanted his friend it was for the government to find him. Sometimes he did almost reach this attitude, but always the figure of poor old Henry Merrick loomed before him.

Finally he resolved upon a certain course. He would tell Whalen that he knew his identity and he would speak of the murder and the state's accusation. Whalen would deny his guilt. Then Tom would accept his denial and promise secrecy. There would be nothing wrong in shielding an innocent man....

So he waited one evening for Whalen to come up from where he was working putting up poles down the mountainside. The other men came along first and as usual Whalen followed a few minutes afterward. He came up the steep road with a spade over his shoulder, looking lonesome and weary. He wore a soiled white canvas jacket or rather smock, which gave him a little the appearance of a foreign peasant.

He looked older than his years even, and Tom had no difficulty in recognizing his resemblance to old Caleb. It was noticeable mainly in a certain strained look, and in an unusual relation of the mouth to the nose. Also he had that far away look which was so eccentric in old Caleb but which in the younger man seemed wistful and to bespeak a certain lonesomeness. On this occasion even his walk suggested old Caleb, except that, oddly, old Caleb was very spry while the younger man seemed weary. Tom's heart went out to him as he came up the hill.

Tom felt very nervous and ill at ease. He did not know how to begin. He had never felt altogether at ease with Whalen, because Whalen had always treated him as a likable boy. He found it hard to put himself on a level with his friend.

"What have you got there?" Tom asked, referring to something Whalen held in his cupped hand.

"A problem," Whalen said.

"What do you mean, a problem?" Tom asked, seeing a tiny bird sitting very comfortably on a few wisps of grass in Whalen's sheltering hand.

"Why birds leave home," said Whalen.

“It’s a robin,” said Tom.

“A feathered friend,” said Whalen.

Tom had heard Audry Ferris speak of birds as feathered friends and he had a feeling now that this rescuer was poking fun at her phrases. In another moment he was certain of it.

“I’m strong for service,” said Whalen. “Poor little codger, he must have fallen out of his nest.”

“That’s your middle name—rescuing,” said Tom generously.

“Service,” said Whalen.

“She—she couldn’t be any kinder to a bird than you are,” Tom said.

“Who?”

“Oh, you know who. It’s just exactly like you to bother carrying that little —”

“Waif,” said Whalen.

“—Away up from below,” concluded Tom. “What are you going to do with it anyway?”

“Bring it up in the way it should go,” said Whalen.

“You can’t tame a robin,” Tom said.

“He’ll fly away when he gets ready,” said Whalen; “he’ll beat it for the woods and join the bunch. He knows the duties of citizenship, don’t you, Chippy?” And he poked the tiny, delicate bill ever so gently with his finger.

“You’re a boy scout,” he said to Tom. “Do you know how to make mush?”

“For him to eat, you mean?”

“Eh huh.”

That was the end of Tom’s fine resolve to tell Whalen what he knew, to hear the welcome declaration of innocence, and to swear loyalty. The poor little robin had spoiled the whole thing. And the murderer was not just then approachable on any other subject.

## CHAPTER XXVIII IN CONFIDENCE

The next resolve Tom made, he carried out. He took Audry Ferris into his confidence. From the first he had known that he would do this. He had hesitated and put it off because he knew that once done he could not undo it. He did it because he was under the spell of her superior intelligence, or what he flatteringly thought to be her superior intelligence. Also he was under the spell of her charm and he felt that to establish a sort of confidence with her would give him the right to think himself a little nearer to her.

He was that sort of young fellow who tries to ingratiate himself with a girl by acknowledging her superiority. At all events he was ready enough to acknowledge Audry's. And she was ready enough to show him the light.

"I don't suppose you'd care to walk a little way out on the ledge trail," he said one evening. "If you would there's something cut on a rock along there that I'd like to show you. Then we could sit on the rock and I'll tell you something; there's something I want to tell you and talk over with you. Maybe you can give me your advice, because there's something that's worrying me. There are names of girls carved out there, I saw them, so it shows girls can get out there all right."

"Just because others have done foolish things is no reason I should," Audry said. "I'll go but not past the first crevice. It makes me feel creepy to think of jumping one of those caverns."

Tom would not admit to himself that he was a trifle disappointed at her not being more venturesome. He even adopted her view of the matter and said, "Maybe those bones down at the bottom of one of the crevices are all that's left of one of those girls, for all we know."

"Ugh, what a ghastly thought!" said Audry. "I'm sure I don't want my bones bleaching at the bottom of a canyon, thank you."

"I've been thinking about a girl named Esther," said Tom; "Esther B—"

"You never told me about her. What's her last name?"

"B," said Tom.

"Oh very well, if you're ashamed to tell her name," said Audry. "You never even told me you knew such a girl. Is she dark or light?"

"She's dead for all I know," said Tom. "Esther B. is carved on a rock along the trail."

They walked in silence toward where the clearing led into the trail, then along the narrow, obstructed way till the obscure, overgrown path ran close to

the precipitous descent and the distant reservoir lay full in view.

“That’s Woodstock,” said Tom; “that village about half-way.”

“Oh I’d love to go there,” said Audry. “They must be *wonderful*, those people, those artists and writers. They’re doing something *really worth while*. They’re all *thinkers*.”

“Well we’ve been doing a pretty good job on the mountain,” Tom said.

“Oh don’t mention that work in the same breath with the Woodstock colony,” said Audry. “Those people down there are all *thinkers*. You don’t mean to say that Fairgreaves and Whalen and Billy the sailor are constructive, do you? That they are *originating* anything, in the higher sense?”

“No, I suppose we’re not,” said poor Tom.

“You mean *they*, not *you*. I bet you’ve known a lot of girls that you never told me about—not dead ones.”

“Yes, I’ve known some dead ones,” laughed Tom. Then instantly remorseful for the pleasantry he said, “But I’ve learned more from you than any girl I ever met; gee, you’ve got more brains than all of them put together.”

“I suppose they invite you all over,” she said, “in Bridgeburgh where you live?”

“Bridgeboro,” said Tom.

“Do you correspond with any? I bet there’s one you like especially.”

“I bet there is,” said Tom.

“Tell me her name?”

“It’s a funny name,” said Tom.

“Is she interested in serious things? Tell me her name.”

“Goodfellow,” said Tom. “She’s a boat.”

Audry seemed relieved. But she did not forget to be argumentative. “You can’t say that you *love* a boat,” she said.

“Well, I wasn’t exactly talking about love,” said Tom.

For a moment this seemed to silence her. Then she rose to the surface with the kind of analytical talk that always edified poor Tom. “You can’t say that you’re really fond of a thing that can’t offer any *response*. You can’t really say that you’re *fond* of a boat. You might say you like a boat.”

Tom seemed greatly impressed. “Well, I like that boat, you can bet,” he said.

So then he told her about his only sweetheart, the *Goodfellow*. They sat on a rock some yards short of the first crevice and she listened to his recital of the charms of the gay little cruiser which it seemed he was permitted to like but not to love. He had never known before that there was anything technical about one’s feelings.

And the distant *Goodfellow* was Tom’s friend in this, that she made it easy for him to tell all that was on his mind. He told Audry he had first gone to

inspect the boat admitting that it was a crazy thing to do. "Because I'm no more in her class than I am in yours," he added.

He was soon telling her how he met old Caleb Dyker and of how they talked at the little wayside spring, and of the old man's story. Her interest was caught and her great brown eyes, sobered to an intense listening expression, were very rich and beautiful. And she listened to him without comment, which was unusual. He had really never seen her listen before, and he was stirred to something like eloquence in his narrative by the compliment of her attentive silence. If he was confused at all it was not because of his usual awkwardness of speech, but because her eyes were upon him.

And soon he had told her the whole story, including the recent happenings on the mountain which identified Whalen with Anson Dyker. Tom had never before seen her so soberly receptive. She had never looked at him so long and so steadily. He found that her big, lustrous, listening eyes were quite as wonderful as her intelligence. Well not quite, but almost....

## CHAPTER XXIX THE ONLY WAY

It was something of a shock to Tom that Audry emerged so readily from the spell of his narrative and came right down to the main point.

“I don’t see how you can ask me what you ought to do—if that is what you mean.”

Tom sensed what she meant and tried to hold off the shock of it by pretending not to understand. “You mean I ought to speak to him? To tell him I know who he is? And ask him if he really did it?”

Audry was at least more honest than he in her straightforwardness. “What do you mean, *tell* him? Do you mean *warn* him?”

“N—no, not just exactly—”

“Of course he did it,” Audry said. “But it isn’t a question of whether he did it or not; not as far as you’re concerned. He’s a fugitive from justice. He has a charge hanging over him. Any good citizen who knows the whereabouts of a person indicted for murder will notify the authorities. Is that what you wanted to ask my advice about?”

“Y—yes,” said Tom weakly. He felt ashamed, wretched. “That’s what I—it’s hard—that’s why I wanted to—sort of to ask you. I—I know you don’t like him.”

“I don’t see that it’s a question of liking—”

“Oh yes, it is too,” Tom flared up in a burst of sentiment and loyalty. “It’s a question of liking with *me* anyway. Do you think I forget how he saved my life? Do you think I forget his—the way he’s treated me? Hard? It’s so hard I won’t do it—I *can’t* do it. Gee, Audry, don’t ask me to do that,” he added weakening. “I’d do anything you said but don’t ask me to do that. It’s because I like you so much and I know you’re so much smarter than I am—that’s why I came to you. You can see now how much I care about you, can’t you? There must be *something*—”

She laid her hand on his where it rested on the rock and the act was not without feeling.

“Something—there must be *some* way,” he almost pled.

“Listen, Tom,” she said. “And please don’t think it’s because I don’t like him.” She closed her hand on his a little. “You won’t think that, will you?”

He did not answer.

“You went to war, didn’t you—Tom? You had to shoot men—to kill them. Didn’t you? It was no pleasure for you, I know that. It was just your duty, and



you conquered your feelings and did it. Didn't you, Tom?"

He nodded assent.

"You didn't think about your own feelings, or your own danger, did you?"

"Neither did he," said Tom, his voice breaking.

But she ignored this. "The nation, the government, the law, justice,—all those things are more important than you or I. Aren't they—Tom?"

"I suppose so."

"If men cared more for their mothers and their wives and their sweethearts—listen, Tom—if men cared more for their mothers and their wives and their sweethearts than they did for their duty as citizens—Tom—there wouldn't have been any of our boys over there."

"You—you don't like him—I know."

"Listen, Tom—*please listen*. I like *you*, isn't that enough? I like you so much I'm not going to be disappointed in you. Yes, I mean it. I wouldn't have told you except for this. And if you don't be strong and manly—a good scout—"

"Scout?" sneered Tom, his voice rising in defiance. "You want me to go and squeal on the one that saved my life! Scout! How do I know he did it anyway? I can't swear absolutely that he's the man; I don't *know* he's Anson Dyker. Anyway maybe he's innocent. No *siree*, you don't get me to—"

"Now you're being dishonest with yourself," she said calmly. "If he's innocent, he has nothing to fear."

"Then I'll talk to him and get him to go to Kingston and—"

"No, you won't do that, Tom, because that would give him the chance to escape. If a fellow is strong enough to sacrifice his life he is certainly strong enough to sacrifice a friendship. He is not going to let sentiment stand in the way of his duty."

"A lot of sentiment *you* have," he sneered.

"I have more than you think," she said, looking at him earnestly.

"I suppose you'd like me to take the reward too," he sneered. "I won't do that—I tell you right now I won't do that—I'm not a—a—a—skunk."

"That would be for you to decide—"

"Yes, well it's already decided."

"You might show your friendship by accepting it," she said.

"Some friend!" he said in a tone of bitter mockery.

"Two thousand dollars might help him at his trial," she said, with intelligence and fairness which struck Tom. "But that's your own affair."

"Do you think he'd take it?" Tom asked bitterly.

"Tom," she said not unkindly, "what's the use of talking about it? If you knew what you wanted to do—"

"It isn't a question of what I *want* to do."

“Of course it isn’t. I want you to feel just as you do—so there. I’m glad you do feel that way. You’re splendid, Tom. I always knew it.”

He looked straight at her now as if she were his strength, his refuge. His eyes were haggard, strained. “Go on, what is it?” he said.

As if in reward for his docility she closed her hand again on his where it rested on the rock. It seemed to give him strength—strength to follow, to obey.

“Listen, Tom; are you listening? An indictment—you know what an indictment is, don’t you?” she said kindly. “It’s an accusation—by the state. You and I are part of the state; do you see? It’s our accusation—no, no no, *please* don’t be angry, Tom—I just mean that it isn’t a question between you and Mr. Whalen and the state, see? Because we’re a part of the state—you and I.”

It cheered and consoled him to hear her couple their two names in this way. It made them seem like—like partners.

“That indictment stands, Tom; it stands until it’s answered. Running away and hiding somewhere else doesn’t answer it. Don’t you see? And it is not for you and me to set ourselves up as judges. It’s just a question of good citizenship, Tom, that’s all. I wish now you had read the book I asked you to read.

“You have to go to Kingston and tell them, the authorities; because there’s a stigma on you till you do. You have to think of your highest duty and that is your duty as a citizen. Then when they—when the case comes to trial you have a right to help him all you can. And you will try to, I know you will. I just thought that if you took the two thousand dollars you could hire a lawyer with it maybe—because I know he’s poor.”

“Poor,” Tom whispered in pitiful, broken tones; “Yop.”

“You can be a good citizen if you will, and then a good friend if he’ll let you. Please don’t, Tom—oh please—no, no, listen, Tom. I just want you to do your duty. Listen,” she pled. “I will have the money that Niel pays me for helping him—about three hundred dollars—and you can have that too. We’ll chip in to help him, Tom. And then—maybe—he’ll be freed—he’ll have his freedom in the right way. *Free* just like you and me. Don’t you see, Tom?”

He nodded his head in reluctant assent.

“You must go and tell them, Tom, you must tell them that he is here. If we disrespect the law we can’t expect the law to protect us. Do you know what an indictment says, Tom? How it begins? It says, ‘We the people.’ Tom—poor Tom—I’m sorry, oh, so sorry. But you’ll do what’s brave and right, won’t you? Yes, you will. You came to ask me and I *have* to tell you. It’s just like—I know—it’s just like going to war and shooting mothers’ sons, Tom. But you were a soldier and a scout and that means you’re a *citizen*. Aren’t you, Tom? And you’ll do your plain duty, won’t you? You asked me, Tom, and I’m

telling you—you'll—I knew you would....”

Yes, she knew he would because he hung his head, then of a sudden clasped his hands before his face. It was only for just a moment....

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE DEPARTURE

And now, in addition to Audry's intelligence, was her kindness. Even in her firmness and certainty she had been kind. Of course she was right, poor Tom saw that. The only rebellion that still persisted in him was rebellion against a fate which could contrive two diverse obligations. But he knew now that the kindly obligations of friendship are as nothing where stern duty is concerned. It was odd how he kept wishing that Whalen were not concerned in this matter, so that he might ask him what he thought about it. He had such a regard for Whalen's opinions, for the little things Whalen had said in his quizzical way....

Tom passed a restless night, feeling troubled and contemptible. He knew that he would never himself have resolved upon the course which Audry advised, and the more he realized this the deeper was his regard for her nature and her intelligence. She seemed to him to have a kind of second sight, a clear vision which saw things in their true light.

He was going to do as she said. Moreover, her suggestion about the reward had given him a fine idea, an idea which soothed his conscience somewhat and made him feel less despicable. He was going to think of his whole mean performance as something done for Whalen's sake. He would have felt a little better about this if he could have honestly believed that there was any chance at all of Whalen being innocent. Well, anyway, he would do his stern duty—Audry was right.

And he would take the reward, too. Every cent of that money would go to help Whalen—Dyker—in his trial. If he refused help coming from such a source, well then, Tom would—no he wouldn't—yes he would—he would buy the *Goodfellow* and use it for charity. There were lots of scout troops of poor boys; he would take them on outings; it should be their boat, not his....

He asked Ferris' permission to be absent for a day, perhaps a couple of days. It made him feel mean, contemptible, to see Ferris so generous, and friendly and openhearted; it seemed a reproach. He went into the kitchen of the cottage to say "So long," to Miranda, and he envied her that she was so carefree, crooning an outlandish song. He loitered and balked at starting. Audry was there, hustling about with graceful, girlish efficiency, putting away dishes. She seemed not to notice him, but Tom construed this as a sign of the confidence she reposed in him.

He spoke as if they had had no talk the night before. "I'm going down the

mountain,” he said; “going to take a day or two off.”

“Are you going to Temple Camp?”

“Maybe, I don’t know. I’ll be back to-morrow night, I guess.”

She held out her hand cordially and said goodbye. “You’ve got a nice day for a tramp,” she said.

He started down the south slope of the mountain intending to go through Woodstock and trust to getting a lift to Kingston. He balked at forming any further plan in his mind. He would probably go to a police station, maybe to the prosecutor’s office, he did not know. All he knew was that it was low, contemptible, this being a good citizen. Maybe he would go on to Albany and call on Mr. Borden Merrick, nephew of the murdered man, who had continued the offer of a reward. Perhaps he would—no, the matter wasn’t in his hands. Well, he guessed he would go to a police station....

Down the mountainside he came on Whalen and Fairgreaves. They were standing near a hole which had been dug for a pole. He had thought they were working elsewhere.

Sitting with his back against a tree nearby was Billy the sailor smoking a pipe, preliminary to starting work. His absurd little hat was cocked forward and it gave him a look of swaggering indifference, which bespoke his liberal code of conduct. He looked too seasoned and sophisticated to be subjected to arguments by young ladies. It made Tom feel a little mean and false to look at him. Whalen wore his canvas smock. He looked up at Tom with his weary, pleasant smile. Fairgreaves delivered himself of a magnificent gesture of salutation. “Going forth into the world upon your travels?” he asked.

“Just for a day or so,” Tom said. He did not pause for he could not speak with Whalen. The pleasant little group made him sick at heart. As he tramped down the road he thought, perhaps he only fancied, that Whalen’s gaze followed him curiously, inquiringly.

“Don’t take any bad money from good people,” Billy the sailor called....

It was a hot, dry day, just past the zenith of summer. The dust was thick on the stony road and the bordering woods showed the effects of the drought which had continued from the day of the memorable storm. A few withered leaves had fallen before their time as a result of the arid spell. The grassy ridges along the narrow, enclosed road looked rusty. Tom’s shoes were gray with dust as he made his way disconsolately down the mountain.

After a little while he came to Mead’s Mountain House, spacious, white and cool looking in its pleasant clearing on the mountainside. Summer boarders sat upon its spacious veranda and children played about the grounds. The fine old place seemed high enough without going higher.

A man in a golf suit called to Tom and asked him how the work was going up the mountain and he answered half-heartedly that things were going all

right.

“They going to be open for business next season?” the man persisted.

“Guess so,” called Tom abstractedly.

Another seemingly interminable stretch of steep and dusty mountain road brought him to Reynolds’ at the foot of the mountain. Here an elderly woman with bobbed hair and a young man in a blue velveteen jacket and a streaming yellow scarf bespoke the proximity of Woodstock.

He saw more of these artists and intellectual lights as he passed through the village and he was guilty of a momentary treason in wondering what on earth they did to justify the homage of Audry Ferris. They seemed a queer lot, to be cited as “worth while” and constructive. Tom wondered what they constructed.

One of them who stood in the village square gloried in irreconcilable socks, one green and one red. In one of the shop windows he saw specimens of pottery and outlandish pictures. He supposed these were the things they constructed. He thought that cultured Woodstock was a false alarm. Then he bethought him that Audry knew more than he did about such things. And that he ought to be thankful to know such a girl....

## CHAPTER XXXI

### TIME

Tom got a lift to Kingston and here he weakened. He would wait a little before calling at a police station. They would probably be busy just then; he did not tell himself why. He strolled about the hot, parched city, watched the traffic, looked in shop windows. In many of these, newspapers had been spread over the goods to protect them from the merciless sun, and he read the headings of stale news—anything to give him an excuse not to hurry.

He paused and looked at churches and public buildings. He watched a man lettering a name on a window. He loitered to examine a Ford tractor outside a hardware store, and he inspected some axes and spades which stood in an empty flour barrel. They spoke of the mountains and reminded him of the fraternal little group up there. He thought of those three, his good friends, lowering the pole into the earth. They would be sitting around eating their lunch by then....

A Ford business car with SHADYSIDE DAIRY printed on it stopped, and an aggressive looking young fellow with red hair swung out of it, hustled into the hardware store and out again. He had a handkerchief tucked in around his neck in deference to the heat.

“Where’s the police headquarters?” Tom asked him.

“Well, you go down three blocks—jump in, I’m going that way.”

“Some heat,” said the young fellow as they rode along the bricked thoroughfare. “If we don’t get some rain pretty soon there’s going to be trouble. *Whew*, but it’s hot. There’s a lot of wells drying up where I come from.”

“You belong here?” Tom asked.

“Near Catskill.”

“You going there?”

“Yop.”

“I’ll go along if you don’t mind.”

The young fellow glanced at Tom rather curiously, which was natural, seeing that he had asked for police headquarters and ended by wanting to go to Catskill. But he did not trouble himself further with the ins and outs of such a matter.

“Did you think I was going to give myself up?” Tom laughed. It was a nervous, forced laugh.

The young fellow seemed not to care for he only said, “Look at that

blamed radiator steam, will you? That's the worst of a Ford. Puts you in mind of a geyser. Can you beat it?"

"You'll have to put in some water," said Tom. "They'll be charging for water pretty soon, I'm thinking, if this blamed weather keeps up."

Tom's suddenly revised plan was to go to Temple Camp for the night. He wanted to visit camp and so far as Whalen was concerned a day one way or the other wouldn't make any difference. Then, as he got to thinking, he realized the dilemma he was in. How could he go back up the mountain? He certainly wouldn't accompany the detectives there and witness the arrest of his friend. Yet he had not said that he would not return. Was he, then, to be like all the other irresponsible, undependable recruits who had deserted Ferris?

Well, anyway, he would spend the night at Temple Camp, then in the morning he would go down to Kingston by train and call at police headquarters there. He would feel fresh in the morning. And so on and so on....

He was aroused out of his musing by his companion's voice, "I came near getting held up on this road one night, came near being touched for three hundred bills. But I got by with Lizzie all right. I had to laugh; they got a blow-out. Did I duck! I thought it was a gun."

"I guess there are a lot of hold-ups," Tom said. His interest was only passive, his mind preoccupied and troubled.

The young fellow rattled on, "There was a big truck along here last night—broke down. Some load of hootch, oh boy!"

"Yes?" said Tom in a way of half-interest.

"I'll say so. One case was all over the road—puddles, broken glass—I gave 'em the lend of a wrench."

"Did you report them?" Tom asked.

"*Naaah*, I should worry. I wouldn' do the bulls out of a job. I never kidnap nobody else's job."

Tom seemed interested. Here, at last, was a unique view of law breaking and of detecting and apprehending.

"Not for mine," said the young fellow. "That's what we pay 'em for and they're loafin' most of the time."

Tom reflected. Here was a young fellow, evidently honest. He could be trusted with three hundred dollars. He seemed to be a wholesome, right thinking young fellow. Yet he would not report what he had seen. Was he really an accomplice then? He seemed very rough and crude and vulgar in contrast to Audry Ferris....

"Yer goner get out at Catskill?" he asked.



## CHAPTER XXXII

### ALONE

It was late in the afternoon when Tom alighted at Catskill. It seemed good to see the familiar surroundings in the riverside town which was so much frequented by the scouts from Temple Camp. There was Sholsen's Sweet Shop where they bought sodas and cones. There was the platform outside the grain and feed store where they waited for the bus and jollied Pee-wee. It was all like a balm to Tom's troubled mind.

He soon forgot his red-headed companion of the ride and thought of Audry and felt ashamed of his dilly-dallying. A fine mess he had made of it so far. Twenty miles or more above Kingston! The whole day had gone for nothing.

He felt weak, inefficient. And he had an unpleasant feeling of being an idle wanderer. He was ashamed of his aimlessness, the very quality which Audry had such a high contempt for in the men. That made him think of the men, of the inventor and the chauffeur without a license and Fairgreaves and all of them. And Whalen. He wondered what they were doing at that minute....

He was not in a hurry to go to Temple Camp. He had an odd feeling that they would wonder why he came, and suspect something amiss. Besides he wished not to face old Caleb Dyker. He thought he would wait until after dark before starting. Then by the time he reached camp, old Caleb would be in bed.

It did not increase his self esteem thus to loiter and kill time in order to avoid some one. He felt rather shiftless to have to hang around Catskill for three or four hours. What would Audry think of such a thing? Why had he not gone about his stern duty in Kingston instead of coming way up here?

He strolled down to the river where he thought it would be cooler. A little north of the Day Line landing was an old float from which the scouts had sometimes fished for killies. A fishing skiff was drawn partway on it. It belonged to Louis who lived in the little house nearby. That was the only name he had—Louis.

Tom sat on an old water-soaked crate that had been rescued from the river. He felt tired now—and lonesome. And utterly miserable. Near him stood a small rusty can and he kicked it idly with his foot and knocked it over. As it rolled away over the float it left a little scattered pile of damp earth full of wriggling angleworms. He watched one of these squirm a yard or two. Then a swallow swooped gracefully down and picked it up. He wondered about the bird which Whalen had befriended and whether it had flown away.

The gathering twilight increased his disconsolate feeling. But it was cooler

by the river, or else the weather was changing. A freshening breeze blew in his face and he opened his shirt front and clutched his shirt away from his chest and shoulders so as to enjoy the fullest measure of relief the welcome breeze afforded. A single cloud appeared in the sky. The boat began bobbing and made a clamorous noise as its stern beat the water and its bow knocked against the float.

Out in the middle of the river, and bathed in the rich glow of the sunset, was his friend the *Goodfellow*. She was dancing in the choppy water and her glazed port-holes shone golden. She seemed sportive and carefree. A shimmering path ran from her almost to Tom's very feet as if to give him safe conduct to her hospitable deck. It was funny how this sunlit way ran straight from him to her. And now she turned about, her graceful prow straight toward him, and seemed to bow a kind of welcome to him.

The *Goodfellow*!

The cloud in the sky grew larger and darker. This unbearable day had tempted the storm demon. Relief, if only for a short while, was coming at last.

It was not now in the spirit of covetousness that Tom longed to be upon the trim little cruiser. He would not think of buying her, not unless Anson Dyker, answering the charge of murder, should refuse the money which he, Tom, would, oh so gladly, proffer. But it seemed isolated out there, and that accorded with his mood. He was overwhelmed and borne down by the grim duty, which was his. How could a thing which made him feel so contemptible, so despicable, be a good thing to do. "*It is your accusation, you're a part of the state.*" How logical, clear, true, was Audry's reasoning. Of course she was right. She had read books and all that and she knew.

Tom wondered what Whalen—Dyker—would say, and how he would act, when they went up there to get him. Tom thought he would just give that weary look, lay down his axe and follow the men, the detectives. Perhaps it would even be a relief to him. Would he have to know that Tom was the one—the good citizen? He would just say good-bye to the men in that taciturn way of his; he could never be excited, he could never be otherwise than brave—*never*. Tom was glad to think that there was one up there who would be loyal, elegantly loyal, and try to cheer him. Fairgreaves. He was all right, Fairgreaves. Cutaway coat and derby hat and royal manner, but he was all right.

He hardly saw where he was going, so deep and vivid was his musing. And so utterly wretched was he. In a kind of trance he went to the little house and asked if he might use the boat. Louis knew him and gave a ready consent. He was proud to be of service to the young assistant at Temple Camp. Then the next thing he knew, he was out upon the river rowing toward his first love, the *Goodfellow*.

His going was not quite so aimless as his journey away from Kingston, for now he had an hour or two that must be passed somehow. And he wanted to be alone. It seemed to him like a night before execution. Out there he would decide just what he would say in Kingston—the very first thing in the morning. It had to be done so he might as well do it early.

But now he wanted to be alone.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### GOODFELLOW

He liked rowing in the choppy water. It meant the first energetic work he had done all day. For just ten or fifteen minutes he put all his fine vigor into his encounter with the wind-blown river. It would be easier rowing back, he thought.

It was dusk when he tied the skiff to the *Goodfellow's* rail and climbed into the cockpit. The gay, striped awning which had covered this at the time of his first visit was blown to shreds which fluttered in the breeze like a dozen or more forlorn pennants. One faded remnant had wound itself like a bandage around one of the nickeled stanchions.

The boys of the neighborhood had evidently used the boat to fish from, for several rusty bait cans rolled about the deck as the *Goodfellow* rode the choppy water. The noise they made was emphasized by the surrounding stillness. A little leaden sinker hurried back and forth and here and there in a kind of bewildered way, rolling under seats and out again, as if it had lost its way.

Tom rested on the long seat which ran around the deck with the rail for its back. The little sliding cabin door was closed and its rusty rollers creaked as the boat rocked. On the bulkhead at either side of this tiny door hung a circular life preserver. On each of these was printed *Goodfellow*. In his abstraction and distress of mind, he thought wistfully how Pee-wee Harris had once likened such a life preserver to a doughnut. It is odd how such irrelevant thoughts flit through a troubled mind.

As he gazed at the name printed in black letters, he recalled how he had first been captivated by it. *Goodfellow*. Not good scout, not good citizen. But just goodfellow. He mused upon the name. And from musing upon the name he came to think of Whal—Anson Dyker. He had been a mere boy when he did that rash, insane thing. Tom's heart went out to him now. There was something touching about the man. Must he die? *Die!* He, Tom's rescuer and friend? Must he sit in a chair and...

He tried to think, tried to think all by himself. With his simple, honest mind, he tried to think—out there in the boat that he loved. He had no book knowledge to help him, no fine spun principles. He had gone to Audry in his trouble and perplexity and she had shown him the way. And now, in the deepness of his sorrow, he had braved the rising wind and come out here to his first love—just to be alone.

And she, too, helped him. Here in the little cruiser, where Audry would not

have dared to venture on such a night, surrounded by the dark water and enveloped by the solemn twilight, Tom Slade found himself. With the mighty mountains flanking him on either shore, the towering, rugged heights clothed in the dim silent forests that he loved, he thought—in his own simple, boyish way. These things, the water, the woods, the mountains, were *his* books....

“There is a law—capital punishment,” he mused. “But if a man, a citizen, doesn’t believe in that, they can’t make him serve on a jury. It—it isn’t just the same—maybe—but I won’t—I *can’t* do anything that makes me feel *mean*. They can’t make a man testify against his wife. Or a woman testify against her husband. That shows that love and all things like that are stronger than citizenship—that shows they admit it themselves. They make allowance for human nature. We didn’t send German Americans to the front—I know because I was there. They let people think they did, but they didn’t. Stern duty—yes. Talk is cheap. *Goodfellow*, that’s—that’s one good word—if—if anybody should ask you....”

Tom Slade could lift any small scout at Temple Camp by the collar and hold him out straight with one arm. And the squirming youngster would always wriggle his neck afterward from that iron clutch. The hand which was accustomed to doing this now tightened on the rail against which he leaned. And the power of a resolution which Audry Ferris dreamed not of, was in that brown hand. And his eyes, inscrutable and grim, looked straight at the name *Goodfellow*, on one of the life preservers before him. Half-closed, grimly determined, they looked.

And the frowning mountains on either side of the darkening river were no stronger nor more immovable than Tom Slade, scout. No maid (unless it were the *Goodfellow*) and no scout organization with all its fine program of character building and citizenship could feel the blame, or perchance take the credit, for his towering, defiant resolve.

It was just Tom Slade of Barrel Alley who once upon a time had knocked a city marshal flat with a quick right-handed violation of the law, because that dignitary had set a beer can on his mother’s picture. It was that same right hand which struck the railing now. Tom Slade of Barrel Alley.

“If anybody thinks,” said he, “that I’m going to squeal on a friend, *they’ve got—one—more—good—long—think*. Maybe I might give away the one that saved my life—some day—maybe I might. *But not while I’m conscious!*”

Thus this good fellow came through the storm, just as the gallant little *Goodfellow*, his first love, had braved so many storms out there in the wide river, neglected and alone.

## CHAPTER XXXIV THE BOAT ROCKS

And now a quick exhilaration seized Tom; the tempest was over. It was a pity that Audry Ferris could not be there to feel the full force of his breezy air of emancipation. To see him come swaggering up out of the valley of the shadow. To take note of that careless, independent whistling of a song, which seemed to proclaim to the world, "I should worry." But these things would keep. His spirit seemed likely to last a day or two—oh, goodness, yes.

He was just going to celebrate his emancipation by getting up and throwing those boisterous tin cans overboard when the boat lurched enough to cause him to keep his seat. Just in that moment his exhilaration was chilled by a blighting thought. If he did not tell, perhaps Audry would. The secret was between these two.

Presently something happened which startled him. Simultaneously with a lurch of the boat came a sound from within the cabin, a sound as of someone falling. Then the sliding-door rolled slowly open. A can rolled across the deck, making a clanking sound as it struck an iron cable cleat.

In the dim light within the cabin, Tom could see a hand; it seemed very white in the gathering darkness. It was on the floor and the arm extended past the opening, so that all Tom could see was just this hand and arm. It seemed to him as if the hand belonged to one crouching, and who had cautiously rolled the door open for him to enter.

He went in, then paused aghast at what he saw. If the hand had started the door, then it had been hospitably opened by a dead man. In the lurching of the boat the figure, apparently, had rolled out of the starboard bunk. It was in a sunken, half-sitting posture against the bunk. The head hung sideways, the glazed eyes leering at Tom as in ghastly welcome. He could not get it out of his startled senses that this thing had gotten out of the bunk, pushed the door open, and sat there on the floor in an affected attitude of subservient greeting. It seemed to say, "Here I am at your feet; walk in, won't you?"

Tom was startled, agitated. But he was not panic-stricken. He laid the body decently upon the floor, crossways so it would not roll with the rocking of the boat. It was the body of a man under middle age, partly clothed. He had been for many days unshaven, and was in a pitiful state of emaciation. Tom thought he had been dead for only a day or two. He pulled some shreds of awning from across the port-holes, threw open the heavy brass-bound glass disks, and let in the fresh evening air and such light as the late twilight afforded.

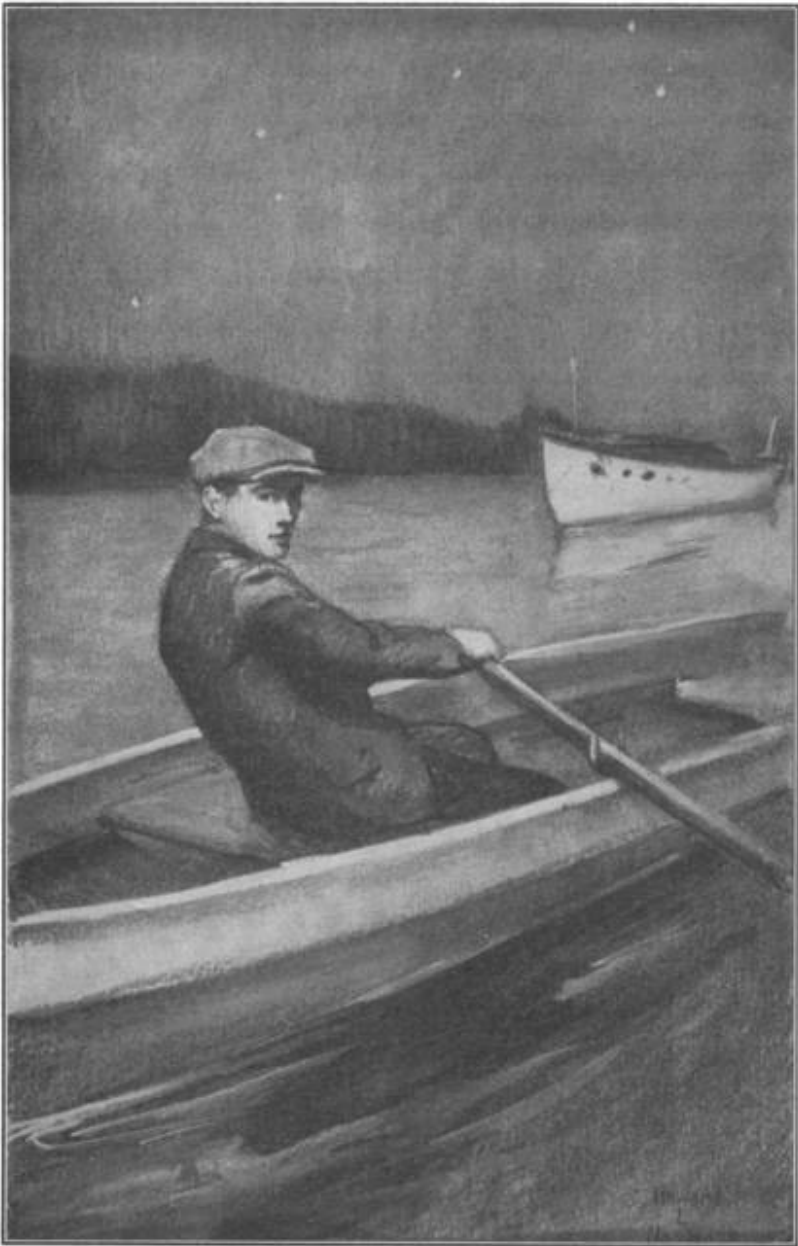
He was too perturbed to see or think of anything outside the tragic circumstance of death, but a hasty glance about the cabin showed all too plainly that the boat had been the lonely refuge of this wretched, gaunt creature for many days. Whether anybody knew of his refuge Tom could not conjecture. He supposed that the owner was still abroad. No doubt the dead man had been fully cognizant of the measure of safety he enjoyed. Tom thought he might have died of consumption; he could not bear the thought that he had died of starvation.

The walls of the cabin were very much besmeared with soot from a smelly, filthy oil stove. There were a very few odds and ends of food. Fishing tackle lay about and an old crab net. It was the lonely tenant of the *Goodfellow*, and not boys, who had fished, probably in the shelter of the darkness.

On the little table a few papers were in a pasteboard box. An empty soup-can had been fastened to the slab by a tack driven through the bottom. In this stood a fountain pen. A bottle of ink had slid off on the floor. Among the papers was a queer pasteboard device, with a disk that turned; it was some kind of an elaborate weather chart. There were many clippings about the weather stuck on a nail in the bulkhead.

An unfinished manuscript of yellow paper was hanging in a large fish-hook also fastened to the bulkhead. Tom glanced at this, read a few lines, took it out into the better light of the cockpit and read more. When it was too dark to see he tiptoed into the chamber of death and sought amid the squalid disorder of alien paraphernalia for a lantern, but could find none. Nor could he find any matches. He thought these might be in the dead man's pocket. He did not search for them. He folded the loose pages, put them in his pocket, and tiptoed out into the cockpit again. The moon was coming up full and glinting the water which still rippled, sometimes into whitecaps, in the fresh breeze. The threat of storm had passed. The night was clear and cool.

He rolled the little cabin door shut and fastened it. He picked up the cans which were rolling and clanking about the deck and cast them in the water. It was very still then. He could not remain here. Even the sound of his own footfalls on the deck startled him. He tiptoed to the rail, climbed over and into the little waiting, bobbing skiff, and rowed for the shore. Once away from the boat he was glad for the companionable clanking of the oar-locks; it was a good wholesome, cheery sound.



Tom rowed for the shore after finding the man's body.

The port-holes of the *Goodfellow* were golden in the moonlight. The sordid, makeshift camp in the cabin must be bathed in the moonlight now, he thought. As he gazed back at the little cruiser it was hard to believe that in her



cosy cabin, death, solemn, unexplained, held her solitary vigil.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### LAST WORDS

It was in the light of a store window in Catskill that he read hurriedly the few pages which he had found in the cabin of the *Goodfellow*. The first three or four were written in a firm hand, the rest were scrawled, and evidently written under stress. The writing had been left unfinished. He could hardly credit his senses as he read:

“As long as I can’t do what I intended or get away from here I might as well confess. I would of confessed long ago to clear an innocent man only I heard he was killed in the war and charges against him can’t hurt him. I want to say I tried to go to but they wouldn’t take me on account of my hart. I tried in Denver. I killed Henry Merrick in 1908. It wasn’t Anson Dyker. First he told me how he hated Merrick that was the day him and me tramped up Overlook Mountain we were pals. He says he would kill Merrick for what he was going to do if he done it the next year when they would be clearing the valley. I says he better look out how he talked. He says he would do it anyway and I says yes you will you talk big.

The day Uncle Caleb sent him to pay old Merrick in Kingston I was just out of Elmira a week and I was shutting craps with coreys farmhand near his house so he asks me to go with him to Kingston to the old mans and I says no I wouldn’t. Anyways I follered him. I knowed he had over a hundred dollars. I caught up with him an I says tell your granfather yer lost it an we’ll go out west I dare you. He says no he wouldn so I follers him and went in the cellar way of Merricks by the window that was busted. It was all in the bushes like. I hered him payin Merrick upstairs and he gives Merrick the devil talkin like a regler kid. He got so mad when he couldn get out the kitchen door he climed out the winder then I went up and soked old Merrick with the iron and took the money that was in a onvelop and a tin box to. There was papers I didn know how I culd get money on them so I buried them in our old well in West Hurley. Anyways I had near two thousand ter go out west with en I sends money back sos they’ll think im all right and workin. I sends my mother five hundred. She thot I was married en working en everything.

Las year I was took sick with my hart en couldn work no more en I was in hard luck. I reads in a paper how old Hurley is all so yer can see it in dry weather en I come east ter get the papers I left in the well sos I could turn em inter money, but thats all bunk anyways it ain’t dry long enough for the old village ter show yet. I waited all this time en go there every night till I get sick. Now its a month it ain’t rained en nothing doing yer cant see a thing so I says its all bunk.

When I didn have no more money left I come here. I guess Im a goner now I have to spells yesterday. I couldn go ashore since the first one I had while I was swimming out but that wasn much. Now I got em all the time anyways the game is up but if anybody says Im lying they can see fer thereselves what I hid if it ever gets dry enough.

Joe Ganley.

P S it was me killed old Merrick.

As long as my mother is dead please notify Al Burnam 82 Kent St Dawson Ohio why I didn come back en tell him he can have my things in the room en he can tell Doc Conway in the hospital he was right I gotter hand it to him.

Sent word ter Alice Darrel too she lives at 407 Harrison street Dawson. I gotter sit up it hurts when I lay down and it hurts ter write. P. S. its straight about the—”

Here the narrative broke off. Tom paused, too dumbfounded to replace the pages in his pocket. For a few seconds he was like a statue. Then he moved along the street in a kind of trance, bumped into a man, was vaguely conscious of saying "Excuse me." And just a trifle more conscious of asking someone else where the police station was.

It cannot be said that he seemed happy, the whole thing was too solemn and grim for happiness. But beneath his excitement was a deep, abounding joy, a joy not prejudicial to his pity for the poor wretch who had penned those lines in remorse and bitter disappointment and lonely suffering.

It was not the man's crime-stained history which Tom thought of now, only the heartrending tragedy of his awful end. And in his grateful joy he was sobered and subdued by the solemnity of death which neither crime nor sordid environment can destroy. And so this returned native lying stark out there on the moonlit river was respected as he had never deserved to be. For men are known by the company they keep. And that night he was in company with the Angel of Death.

## CHAPTER XXXVI HOMEWARD BOUND

Tom's sensational discovery seemed to take the edge off his new resolve in the matter of his duty. Kind fate had taken the matter out of his hands. But he had made his resolve before that discovery. And right or wrong he gloried in his independent decision. He thought of Audry with a kind of bravado.

But all thoughts now were subservient to his new and urgent duty. Hurrying to the local headquarters of police, he told hurriedly of his harrowing discovery, laying the manuscript before the official on duty.

For a few terrible minutes he thought they were going to hold him. But they seemed in the end to be impressed with the straightforwardness of his narrative and let him go after taking his name and address. One of them recognized him as assistant at Temple Camp and doubtless that fact saved him the exasperation of being detained. He said nothing about Whalen for he saw no reason to do so. He would bring Whalen into the light, but in his own way. He wished to manage that end of it. His brain was seething with plans.

Now that he had gotten the burden of his discovery and its startling revelation off his mind and into the proper hands, his one thought was to reach the mountain before the countryside was ringing with the news. The officials had darkly warned him that they might want him any time.

He caught a train down to Kingston, had a bite to eat there, then started for the mountain on foot. It is a long walk over the fine highway from Kingston to West Hurley, but he was accustomed to long hikes, and his excitement gave him an elastic energy. He recalled that Billy the sailor had tramped all the way from Poughkeepsie. His tumultuous thoughts beguiled the journey like a circus. He seemed to be on springs. Twin lights came rapidly along from both directions, now and then a horn honked its warning, once he called asking for a lift but got no answer; he did not care.

"They, the powers that be," he panted, "know where the culprit—the real culprit—is, and I'll take care of my end of it—all right, all right." In his exhilaration it never occurred to him that he had revealed the whereabouts of the murderer of Henry Merrick and might, technically, be entitled to the reward. He was, at least, the means of exposing the ultimate sequel of that old crime.

But he did think of the—thing out there on the river, lying face upward. And he could not repress a certain measure of pity when he thought of those days of wistful waiting; waiting for the drought to bring the ghost of old West

Hurley once again to light.

But these were not pleasant thoughts for a lonely wayfarer at night. So he thought of Mr. Fairgreaves, the courtly, the magnificent Mr. Fairgreaves. Well, he would see them all in the morning....

It was midnight when he reached West Hurley and he was not yet tired. He realized how futile was his steady, rapid stride. He could not sleep when he reached the cottage. And he could not see any one before morning. Why hurry? He conquered his nerves and resolved not to hurry.

While West Hurley slept, Tom walked down to the shore of the reservoir. The moon shone upon it and the shimmering area of the vast storage lake looked like a golden island. Not a sound was there. If the water was low, he could see no sign of it on the near shore.

Somewhere under that water, in old ruined masonry, was a box with valuable papers. It seemed preposterously romantic—like buried treasure. And a poor stricken wretch with the stigma of old crime upon him had waited and waited for the stubborn water to subside—and had died waiting.

Three deaths so far—and sorrow and homelessness. And folks away off in the great city of New York turning on their faucets, and watering their lawns, and putting out their fires with this same water, and never thinking, never knowing....

## CHAPTER XXXVII THE BRIGHT MORN

The long tramp up the mountain proved to Tom that he was weary. It seemed as if he would never reach Mead's. Oh, for Mead's! Then he would know that another hour's climbing would bring him to the summit. No more landmarks to watch for, just the unbroken stretch of woods road, up, up, up....

He entered the cottage like a thief in the night and was soon stretched upon his ugly little iron couch. But he was too tired and excited to sleep. His knees ached. He lay listening to the safety cables clanking in the wind.

Far off in the woods he could hear the call of a wildcat. And the cheery little crickets nearby beguiled him with their soothing orchestra. A katydid soloist entertained him. Well, one thing he would do, he would arouse Anson Dyker—Whalen—out of that blamed sarcastic calm of his. Oh yes, he would do that. He had the ammunition.

Early in the morning he went down into the deserted kitchen and made himself a cup of coffee. He had never before seen the kitchen quiet and deserted. A holy calm pervaded it, and it seemed unnatural not to hear the clatter of dishes, the vocal accompaniment by Miranda, and the emphatic voice of Audry edifying her with her theories and conclusions. The kitchen was not kitchen without Audry in the full swing of debate.

It seemed good to be out in the fresh, early morning. He felt no ill effects of his long tramp except that his knees ached. He was not going to run the chance of missing Whalen by waiting for breakfast. Besides, he wished to see Whalen before he saw any one else. He would rouse him, he would make him sit up and take notice....

He strolled down the mountainside a few yards and sat on a discarded line-pole and waited. He watched the much praised early bird and noted the unhappy fate of the early worm. Luck was with him for after a little while Whalen came down the road alone.

So much had transpired in Tom's mind that it seemed to him that he had not seen Whalen for weeks. He was carrying his axe and smoking a pipe. He looked very peasant-like in the early morning, picturesque in his canvas smock. He had a kind of easy efficiency about him, a kind of unobtrusive reserve force of experience and intelligence and power.

"Back again?" he greeted.

"Where's the legitt?" Tom asked.

"Getting his suit pressed," said Whalen.

“Would—will—do you mind stopping? I want to speak to you.”

Whalen stopped, leaned against a tree. Tom unconsciously paid him the compliment of being perturbed and not sure of himself. It was always so when he talked to Whalen.

“I—I—Ned, I know who you are.”

“Yes?” said the other.

“Don’t be—I know you’re Anson Dyker.”

“I thought you knew,” said Whalen quietly.

“*You—thought—I—knew?*”

“Eh, huh.”

All the wind was out of Tom’s sails. “What do you mean?” he ejaculated. “Weren’t you afraid I’d go and tell?”

“No.”

Followed a pause. Whalen was perfectly calm.

“You mean to tell me you weren’t afraid?” Tom demanded in amazement. “You didn’t think I’d tell?”

Whalen puffed his pipe. “I *knew* you wouldn’t,” he said.

“Well—I’ll—be—. Is there anything you don’t know?”

“I didn’t have to know much to know that.”

Followed another pause.

“Thanks,” said Tom, his voice trembling. “I—*thanks.*”

“Not at all,” said Whalen.

Here was an anti-climax. It left Tom with eyes glistening. Whalen just leaned against the tree puffing his pipe. But Tom rose to the occasion.

“Well then, I’ve got another one for you,” he said. “I’ve got two more shots. I found the murderer of Henry Merrick and I took his confession to the police. They’ll have to squash the indictment against you, or quash it, or whatever they do. The man is dead. It was—you knew him—it was Ganley.”

Now Whalen looked straight into Tom’s eyes with inquiry, incredulity.

“And I’ll tell you something else,” said Tom. “You didn’t know—when you saved my life you didn’t know, did you, that I’m the miracle man? You didn’t think about me—listen—you didn’t think about me being a little old boy scout, did you? Something for a service—good turns. Oh, I’m the little Santa Claus all right. I’ve got your grandfather down at Temple Camp—waiting to be called for. All you have to do is to go and claim him. He’s having the time of his life, thank you.” He was smiling all over, his eyes brimming. “You—you think you know so much about me—you think you’re smart—you old grouch—you didn’t know that, did you? Go on, say something sarcastic now. All I wanted was to stay here long enough to put it all over you. Go ahead, say something sarcastic—you—”

He could say no more, he was all but hysterical with joy. “I could—gee, I

could never get you to sit down and talk with me—I—I'm all right, sit down and I'll tell you the whole thing—Ganley—he came back, he was dead on a boat in the river, he wrote out everything.”

“Poor Joey,” said Whalen.

“Sit down,” said Tom, “and I'll tell you the whole thing. I won't tell you unless you sit down. I bet you don't believe me, do you? Knew I wouldn't tell. You took awful chances, let me tell you that.”

“So, Tommy?”

Whalen sat down on the log, seeming bewildered, skeptical, keenly curious. Tom's first shot had missed. But the other two had struck the lonely, taciturn man. His eyes were pathetic with suspense. He seemed even still to harbor a kindly doubt about crediting this exuberant boy.

“Tell me everything you know, Tommy,” he pled earnestly.

“What do you suppose I got up for at five o'clock?” said Tom.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

T. S.—A. F.

In half an hour the sensational news was all over the little community on the mountain. Ferris was astonished, but he had always been too discreet to inquire too closely into the antecedents of his crew and was not likely to be shocked by dramatic revelations.

Billy the sailor seemed so unperturbed that Tom thought he must have known something all along; but that was unlikely. Probably his own sprightly career had fortified him to bear up under startling disclosures of a dubious character. Mr. Fairgreaves said he had known that "our silent comrade was carrying a burden." Meanwhile the taciturn man who was the subject of all this excitement went to work as usual.

And Tom sought out Audry Ferris. She was sitting on the lowest step leading to the vast, bleak veranda of the hotel; she was reading a book and had an air of advertising her loneliness and exclusion from the general stir. Perhaps it was only the vastness of the unfrequented veranda which gave this appearance of conspicuous isolation.

"Audry," said Tom, "I guess you've heard the big news."

"I'm sure I'm very glad," she said; "my brother told me."

"I meant to tell you but I hardly know what I've been saying and doing this morning. Sounds like a movie play, doesn't it? Anyway, I'd rather speak to you the last thing—"

"Are you going away?"

"Just for a day or so again, down to camp. The old man, old Caleb, is there, you know. Audry," he added after a pause, "there's something I want to say to you. Because I know you'd rather have me be honest with myself than be anything else. Before I discovered that dead man, I had already made up my mind that I wasn't going to give—Whalen—Dyker—away. I thought it all out and I decided not to. I guess you were right—I'm not saying you weren't. Only I found out I couldn't do it. Maybe it wasn't only because he saved my life. I guess all the time I kinder thought he couldn't be guilty; just sort of instinct as you might say. So you see you mustn't give me credit."

"I'm glad, Tom; I'm glad everything came out as it did. All's well that ends well."

"Only I don't want the credit," said Tom.

"I wonder why he ran away if he was innocent," she said.

"I don't know," said Tom, "I didn't ask him. Maybe he lost his nerve; just

the same as you lost your nerve when you thought about stepping over the crevices along the trail. He wasn't any older than you are now."

"Oh, I suppose you regard me as a perfect kid. And I know you think I'm a coward. Do you think I'm a coward?"

"No," said Tom hesitatingly, "but I think maybe it would be good if you—sort of—went—were—you know—more adventurous. I learned a lot in the trip I just took. Maybe you won't know just exactly what I mean, but you can get your ideas of what you ought to do from being out in the woods and away on the water and all that. Maybe those things are just as good as books."

Again she looked straight at him with her big, sober, listening eyes.

"This is what I mean," Tom said. "You see, I got to know Ned Whalen and you didn't. I got to know him by being off in the woods with him and seeing all what he could do, and what kind of a man he is. And I kinder felt it was right to be loyal to him. And you see I was right. So maybe reading and kind of deciding things that way isn't best. You can't say there are two sides to scouting, studying and thinking—and then having adventures. It's having the adventures that help you. Maybe I'm all wrong but if you're not brave in one way you won't be brave in another. Anyway, just like you say, everything's all right that ends well."

"It's a quotation, Tom, '*All's well that ends, well.*'"

"I don't know much about quotations," he said.

"Are you sure you're coming back? You didn't do one thing as you promised to do."

"I'm sure I'm coming back—to-morrow."

"I do think maybe you're right, Tom."

"You think all those people down in Woodstock are wonderful people, because they write and paint and carve things, and all that. But they're not as much as Whalen. He's big in every way. When you're just near him you feel it even though he doesn't say much. Maybe you don't know what I mean."

"I think I do know. Are you surely coming back to-morrow night? You know you said you were going to do one thing and then you didn't do it. So how can I know *what* to think?"

"I did just what I wanted to do, didn't I? Nobody can tell me what I ought to do. And I'm coming back to-morrow night—because I want to."

"Would you like me to hike out to the ledge with you; all the way?"

"Sure, and I'll show you all the initials."

"Esther B's?"

"If I can find it."

"I don't believe there's any such one there. That's why you're afraid you can't find it. I bet you know a real girl by that name." A pause. "Don't you?"

"No, I don't. We'll carve our own initials away out on the ledge, hey?"

Tom said. “Farther than any of the others—away, way out at the end of the trail. Hey?”

“Oh let’s,” said Audry....

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### “HERE’S LUCK”

By evening the country knew the whole extraordinary story and only a legal formality was necessary officially to clear Anson Dyker of the stigma and peril which he had known for fifteen years. His rash flight in boyish panic so long ago had taken him to South America, and when he had wandered back, the courage to go and give himself up was lacking.

He told Tom these things as they hiked down to Mead’s whence they rode to West Hurley station and caught the train into Kingston. Here they waited for the West Shore train to Catskill.

He had been all over the country since the murder, worked in a mining camp in the West, in a lumber camp in Michigan. He had been as far as the islands of the south Pacific in his lonely wanderings. The recurrent resolve to return and give himself up had ebbed away as the crime became a dead letter.

He felt that he was another man living in another world. The rash boy he remembered grew dim, and finally disappeared altogether. Then had come the war giving him the opportunity he craved—concealment in the roar of battle, safety. And in the end he had braved the danger of recognition and gone to work on the old mountain which he remembered as a favorite haunt of his innocent boyhood.

Tom could not discover that Anson bore any resentment against Ganley because the latter had not given himself up and cleared his comrade. He seemed to have a forbearance, a largeness of charity, which was divine. Perhaps his rough, wandering, adventurous life had made him *big*, to use one of Audry’s favorite words. So possibly Tom was right in his rather awkwardly expressed theory that the vast outdoors, and the hazard and adventure, are the best teachers. Whalen, victim of injustice, had a kind of seasoned goodness and tolerance about him which you may not learn from books on character building....

They alighted from the train at Catskill, and scanned the river for a glimpse of the faithful *Goodfellow*. But she had been brought ashore and was under official guard while a morbid throng crowded about staring at her and trying to look into her little cabin. Tom glimpsed her from a distance and it touched him to think of the gallant little *Goodfellow* under arrest.

None of the good people thereabouts knew who the rough looking man was who accompanied Tom Slade through an unfrequented street, and the two were soon upon the familiar road leading to Temple Camp. Poor Tom was in

mortal fear lest the monster of the law intervene to spoil his program. But no one interfered with them.

And so in a little while they came in sight of the little crystal spring by the wayside where hikers from Temple Camp often paused for a cooling drink. Just as before, Tom could see the wall which seemed respectfully to step aside so as to allow the spring to make its kindly presence known to the thirsty wayfarer.

And just exactly as before, upon one of the hospitable stone projections which served as seats, Tom and Anson Dyker beheld a wizened little old man sitting like a funny statue, his two aged hands resting upon an outlandish cane. It seemed as if he had been sitting there all this time; that *he* was real and Overlook Mountain but a dream.

“Out for a stroll, Pop?” Tom asked.

“You’re the one I met here,” said old Caleb, with that crisp style of announcement which had always amused Tom.

“You tell ’em I am,” said Tom.

“I’m the one told you this was good water; I live in that camp now.”

“Still walking, I see.”

“Man came to camp wanted to take my picture.”

“Get out! Look here, Pop, I liked this water so well that I brought a friend of mine here to try it.”

“The Ashokan Reservoir is poison,” old Caleb said.

Tom was just about to present Anson in a mock way of introduction, when the whole matter passed out of his hands. He could not have described what happened. He had an uncomfortable feeling of being an outsider. He saw Anson in a new light, infinitely gentle, with an unutterable joy welling up within him. He saw him sitting sideways on the wall, arm around the poor old shoulders. He heard him saying, “It’s just me, granp’, don’t you know me? It’s Anse.”

He was slow in understanding, but he understood. He showed no emotion, but rather an accustomed familiarity with his grandson which went to Tom’s heart. But his old withered hands trembled and with one of them he adjusted his old octagon-shaped steel spectacles and looked straight at his grandson. It was so unusual for him to look at any one individually that the act seemed filled with pathos. Tom wondered how they were going to explain everything to make it comprehensible to his mind.

Fortunately it was not necessary to explain. Old Caleb was of an age and condition where reasons are not necessary, where only facts count. He did not even ask where Anson came from or how he and Tom had met. But he clung to him as a child clings, as if he feared he might run away. And when he had struggled through the first shock he scrutinized his grandson in a sternly

critical way, and seeming reassured of his identity he released one hand and took a fresh hold with the other. Old Caleb did not pour out his soul, but he hung on. And in the alternate clutching of those two withered hands there was all the pathos of reunion. Anson smiled at Tom and submitted. The fugitive was caught and held at last....

“So that’s your name, is it—Anse?” said Tom. “Well then, Anse, you see where I’m sitting down, here on the ground? This is just the way I sat talking with Pop two months ago. And I told him that wherever you were I was going to drink your health in good, pure, innocent, spring water. Didn’t I, Pop?”

“I was in a movie,” said old Caleb; “I got two dollars, Anse. You didn’t happen to see that play?”

“So now,” said Tom, winking at Anson, “so now I’m going to drink to your health again. Down with the Ashokan Reservoir! May it dry up—only it never does.”

And just as before, how long ago it seemed, Tom kneeled down, made a cup of his two hands, and took a long drink of the innocent, cool, refreshing water.

THE END

[The end of *Tom Slade on Overlook Mountain* by Percy Keese Fitzhugh]