

**ROY BLAKELEY'S
FUNNY-BONE HIKE**

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

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ROY BLAKELEY'S FUNNY-BONE HIKE



“OUT I WENT AGAIN WITH ALL OF THEM AFTER ME.”

ROY BLAKELEY'S FUNNY-BONE HIKE

BY

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

Author of
TOM SLADE, BOY SCOUT,
TOM SLADE AT TEMPLE CAMP,
ROY BLAKELEY, ETC.

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ROY BLAKELEY'S FUNNY-BONE HIKE

CHAPTER I

WE GO

This is going to be the craziest story I ever wrote. But anyway every word of it is true—except a few small words. Even the punctuation is true. But I have to admit the story is crazy. It's the craziest story ever written in this world or any other world. I don't care how many worlds there are. The name I call it by is the Funny-bone Hike, but I should worry what you call it.

When you study first aid you have to know all about the different bones but the only bone I know anything about is my funny-bone. Anyway I don't care so much about first aid—I like lemonade better.

But one thing, I've got the Safety First badge. To get that you have to think up a safety device in your home. I thought of a safety pin. I've got ten other merit badges, too. Next to laughing my specialty is cooking.

So now I'll tell you about how all this crazy business started. It happened accidentally on purpose. Our troop was up at Temple Camp—that's where we spend our summers. One morning six of us went down to Catskill Landing in the bus to get some fish-hooks and jaw-breakers; I'm crazy about those, I don't mean fish-hooks.

The six scouts that happened to be along were Bert Winton, (he belongs out west) and Hervey Willetts, (gee whiz, he belongs everywhere I guess) and Garry Everson (he lives down the Hudson) and Warde Hollister (he's in my patrol and my patrol is the Silver Foxes and they're all crazier than each other, those fellows) and Pee-wee Harris (he's one of the raving Ravens of our troop) and Roy Blakeley, that's me, I mean I, correct, be seated. I was named after my sister because she was named before I was. I'm patrol leader of the Silver Foxes, but I'm not to blame, because they were wished onto me. I'm more to be pitied than blamed.

Now it's about ten miles from Temple Camp to Catskill Landing. And it's about three hundred and forty-eleven miles back from Catskill Landing to Temple Camp. I bet you'll say that isn't possible and I know it isn't possible but it's true just the same.

So this is the way it is. The first chapter of this story tells how we went to Catskill Landing and the next twenty or thirty chapters tell how we got back to Temple Camp. You can stay in Catskill Landing if you want to and not bother with the rest, I should worry. But the book includes the round trip only it wasn't so round; it was kind of square like a circle and rectangular and right-angular and left angular, and every which way. It was shaped like a lot of wire

all tangled up. The way back was so crooked that we met ourselves a lot of times going the other way.

So if you want to you can call this story The Tangled Trail. But I like the Funny-bone Hike better. Suit yourself.

CHAPTER II

WE START BACK

The scout that was to blame for the whole thing was Hervey Willetts. Believe me, that fellow ought to be kept in a cage. He belongs to a patrol named the Reindeers but he ought to belong to the tomcats because half the time nobody knows where he is.

His scoutmaster says he wanders over the face of the earth but, believe me, he wanders across the head of the earth and down the neck of the earth; the face isn't big enough for him. The scouts at camp call him the wandering minstrel because he goes all over and he's all the time singing. It was just a streak of luck that we happened to have him with us that day. He wears a funny little hat without any brim and with holes cut in it so his thoughts can get out because they make him top-heavy when he's climbing trees.

We were just starting to hike back from Catskill Landing when he said, "Come on, let's make it snappy."

"What do you mean, make it snappy?" I asked him.

"Let's put some ginger in it," he said.

"He means gingersnaps," Pee-wee shouted; "let's buy some."

"A voice from the Animal Cracker Patrol," Warde Hollister said; "here's a couple of fish-hooks, and a package of tacks, eat those."

"Put some ginger in what?" I asked Hervey. "I'd just as soon fill it up with ginger, only what?"

"The hike back," he said. "Let's start something."

Already that fellow was suffering from remorse because he had sat quietly for half an hour or so in the bus.

I said, "If I knew of volcanoes or wild animals on the way back I'd lead you to them, but the only wild animal I know of around here is the mascot of the animal patrol."

"Let's play Follow Your Leader," Hervey said.

"Not while we're conscious," Garry Everson spoke up; "not if you're going to be the leader. I have to be home by Christmas."

Bert Winton said, "I'm sorry, but school opens in a few weeks. Nothing doing."

"I'll follow you!" our little Animal Cracker shouted; "I don't have to be home Christmas. I don't have to be home till my birthday and that doesn't come for four years because I was born in leap year."

"Now we know why you're so slow growing up," Warde said.

“You’re a lot of tin horn sports!” Pee-wee shouted.

“I’m game,” I said. “I’ll die for the cause if anybody else will.”

Hervey said, “Listen.” Then he said, kind of sing-songy, so it made me want to walk:

Don’t ask where you’re headed for nobody knows,
Just keep your eyes open and follow your nose;
Be careful, don’t trip and go stubbing your toes,
But follow your leader wherever he goes.

Oh, boy, that started us off. We were like horses when they hear a brass band. Hervey gave me a shove and said, “Go ahead, start off, you’re the only patrol leader here, it’s up to you.”

“It’s your game,” I said.

“Go ahead, lead,” he began laughing, “and let’s keep it up till we get to Temple Camp. It’s no fun if you flunk.”

That was just like him, he didn’t care who led as long as he was moving. That fellow goes off in the woods a lot by himself and he doesn’t care anything about merit badges himself. He’s a funny kind of a scout but he’s awful generous. He can’t keep still, that’s one thing about him. Most scouts are always trying for things but all he cares about is action—he eats it alive.

So the first thing I knew I was marching along with the other fellows behind me and they were all singing those verses and kind of marching in step to them. Gee whiz, we couldn’t get those verses out of our heads. It was awfully funny to hear Pee-wee shouting them. Even now it seems as if I have to write them down and I guess there’ll have to be an operation to get them out of my mind. I lie awake at night and say them. If you once get those verses in your head, *good night!* Most all the rest of that day we were singing them. I guess the people in Catskill Landing thought we were a lot of lunatics. So now I’m going to write those verses down again But you want to be careful not to let them get you or you’ll come to be a raving maniac. If you do you can blame Hervey Willetts.

Don't ask where you're headed for nobody knows,
Just keep your eyes open and follow your nose;
Be careful, don't trip and go stubbing your toes,
But follow your leader wherever he goes.

Don't start to go back if it freezes or snows,
Don't weaken or flunk or suggest or oppose;
Your job is to follow and not to suppose,
And follow your leader wherever he goes.

Don't quit or complain at the stunts that he shows.
Don't ask to go home if it rains or it blows;
Don't start to ask questions, or hint, or propose,
But follow your leader wherever he goes!

CHAPTER III WE GO SOUTH

When we started that crazy game we were near the landing. Maybe it would have been better if we had jumped into the Hudson. But instead of that I started marching up toward the railroad station with all the fellows after me, singing that song.

I went leap frog over a barrel and the rest of them did the same, singing, *Follow your leader wherever he goes*. All the while Pee-wee stuck on the top of the barrel because his legs were so short, but as long as he was the last one it didn't make any difference.

"Take a demerit," I shouted back at him. "What do you think you are? A statue?"

"He looks like a barrel buoy," Garry shouted.

"Don't look back, keep singing," Hervey called to Garry. "Never mind what's behind you."

"Sure, think of the future," Warde said. "And follow your leader wherever he goes."

Wherever he goes,
Wherever he goes,
Wherever he goes."

I went waltzing into a candy store, and picked up a five cent chocolate bar and laid down a nickel and kept going in and out around the ice cream tables. All the people in there started laughing. One girl spilled a glass of root beer that she was drinking. All of us fellows had small change, we never have any large change, so nothing happened to block the parade.

Out I went again with all of them after me, holding the chocolate bar in my mouth. I took one bite of it and threw it in the trash can. I heard Hervey do the same, then Bert, and I knew Garry and Warde could be trusted.

"Keep your eye on Pee-wee," I said.

"A scout isn't supposed to waste anything," the kid shouted, his mouth full of chocolate.

"None of that," I shouted back. "How many bites did you take? Throw it away!"

"I took—I took one bite—in two sections," the kid said.

"Come on," I shouted.

Don't quit or complain at the stunts that he shows,
Don't ask to go home if it rains or it blows;
Don't start to ask questions, or hint, or propose,
But follow your leader wherever he goes!
 wherever he goes,
 wherever he goes——

“Just keep your eyes open and follow your nose,” Warde said.

I kept going round and round a baby carriage till we were all dizzy and even the baby began to laugh. Then I went staggering in and out and over a lot of trunks at the station, and crawled under an express wagon and hopped on one leg along the platform. Everybody was screaming at us. We were shouting those verses good and loud.

There was an accommodation train standing at the station so we couldn't get across the tracks. Gee whiz, I don't call that very accommodating. I climbed up into the first car and started going back through the train, all the fellows after me, singing those crazy verses like a lot of wild Indians. The people in the cars stared at us. I dropped a cent in the slot and got a paper drinking cup and took a drink of water and then started carrying the cup full of water through the train. Along they came after me carrying cups of water.

All of a sudden, *kerflop*, the water spilled out on my face. That was because the train had started. I guess it happened to the rest of them because the people in the seats began to howl.

“Never laugh at another's misfortune,” I said. “You may get your own faces washed some day.”

“Hurry up,” Garry shouted.

“What's the difference?” Hervey said.

Somebody shouted, “The next stop is Alsen.”

“I hope it's a good stop, we've had a good start, anyway,” Bert said.

We might have got out at the end of the car, only it was a vestibule car and all closed up.

“Now you see what you did,” Pee-wee shouted.

I said, “Don't you care, you don't have to get home for four years. We ought to reach Alsen in about a year and a half.”

“Hurry through to the next platform,” Garry said.

I sprinted through the next car and there was an open platform there but by that time the train was moving too fast for us to get off. Safety first, that's our motto. Crazy but safe.

So then we had a meeting of the board of directors on the platform of that car till a brakeman made us go inside.

I said, “The plot grows thicker.”

“You're a fine kind of a leader,” Pee-wee said, very contemptible like, I

mean contemptuous. "What are we going to do now?"

"Be thankful I didn't lead you onto an airship," I said; "we're going to Alsen, it's a very nice place, houses and everything. Follow your leader wherever he goes."

"We're supposed to be headed for camp," the kid said.

"We're on our way there," I told him. "We're going west in a southerly direction."

"Alsen is only about three miles," Bert said.

"How do we know the engineer will see it when he gets there?" Garry wanted to know.

"Maybe he has a magnifying glass," I said. "I hope there are some things in Alsen."

"What kind of things?" Pee-wee wanted to know.

"Things to do," I told him.

"Where are we going to end?" he shouted.

"We're not going to end," I said.

"Temple Camp is west from here," he yelled at me, because the train was making a lot of noise.

"Do you blame me for that?" I asked him. "I didn't invent the compass, did I? If you're not satisfied with where Temple Camp is you'd better complain to Mr. Temple, he put it there."

"Oh, look at the big, high tree!" Hervey shouted. "Let's climb up that on our way back."

"Sure," I said, "and jump off the top. You'd be going leap frog over the Woolworth Building if you were leader. Be thankful you've got a conservative leader."

"A what?" the kid yelled. Just then he went backward off the arm of the seat plunk into a man's lap.

"Tickets," the conductor shouted.

I said, "Hey, mister, we're on a funny-bone hike, and the train started before we had a chance to get off. We have to go to Alsen. Do you know if we can get ice cream cones there?"

He just laughed and said he'd have to collect our fares. It only costs ten cents from Catskill to Alsen.

I said to the fellows, "Well, so long as the engineer's going to be our leader for a little while I'll take a vacation."

So I sat down and began looking out of the window.

CHAPTER IV WE GO NORTH

Alsen is a tenderfoot village. It's about as big as Pee-wee, only it's more quiet. Pee-wee's size is like Alsen but his noise is like New York.

The train stopped at Alsen and we got off. Right there was a train standing at the station headed north.

"Talk about luck," Garry said. "I guess it was waiting for us."

I said, "I enjoyed my trip south."

"I was looking forward to hiking from here to camp," Hervey said.

"Believe me, it's nearer from Catskill," I told him. "A train can go a long way in five minutes."

"A comet can go billions of miles in a second," the Animal Patrol piped up.

"If I see a comet I'll get on it," I told him; "follow your leader."

"That's one thing I never did; ride on a comet," Hervey said.

"It's about the only thing you haven't done," I told him. "Come on, follow your leader."

I went marching up into one of the cars; Pee-wee tripped on the step.

"That's a short trip to take," Warde laughed at him.

"That could happen to the smartest man in the world," the kid said.

"All right, here we go back again," I said as we all tumbled into a couple of seats. Then I started to sing that crazy stuff about the Duke of Yorkshire:

There was the Duke of Yorkshire,
He had ten thousand men;
He marched them up the hill,
And he marched them down again.

And when they're up, they're up,
And when they're down, they're down;
And when they're only half-way up,
They're neither up nor down.

"Alsen is a mighty nice place, what I saw of it," Garry said. "I couldn't see it on account of the station. The happiest ten seconds of my life were spent there."

I said, "I wish I could have spent a nickel there."

"Are you going to start for camp when we get to Catskill?" the kid wanted to know. "I'm getting hungry."

"I thought you didn't have to eat for four years, that's what you said," I

told him.

“What are you talking about?” he yelled.

I said, “When we get back to Catskill you’re going to follow your gallant leader in an east westerly direction till we come to the—North Pole, I mean the clothespole, outside the cooking shack at Temple Camp. We’re going to reach the pole like Doctor Cook didn’t do. When I hang my patrol scarf on the clothespole outside the cooking shack that’s a sign our journey is over. From the West Shore Line to the clothesline, that’s our motto.”

“We’re starting,” Warde said.

“Get your dimes ready,” Garry said.

“I haven’t got anything smaller than a cent,” I told him.

“You mean you haven’t got any sense,” Pee-wee shot at me.

“I’m poor but dishonest,” I said.

Just then I heard the door at the other end of the car slam shut and a brakeman came through shouting, “Albany the first stop, the first stop is Albany.”

“G-o-o-d night!” I said. “The plot grows thicker.”

“It’s petrified,” Warde said.

“We’re lost, strayed or stolen,” Garry began laughing.

We all made a dash for the platform, but it was too late. We were foiled again. The train was going at about forty-eleven miles an hour.

“Now what?” Pee-wee demanded, very dark and solemn like.

“Answered in the affirmative,” I said; “we don’t.”

“Don’t what?” he said.

“Don’t care,” Hervey spoke up. “We can do some stunts in the State Capital. We can jump over the seats in the Senate. Albany is only about thirty miles away.”

I said, “Posilutely; we can get back inside of four years and have a couple of centuries to spare. Follow your leader wherever he goes. I may jump over the governor’s head; they pass bills over his head. You learn that in uncivil government.”

“The more we start for camp the farther we get from it,” the kid said.

“Correct the first time,” I said; “be thankful you’re not on a comet.”

“What are we going to do?” he wanted to know.

“Is it a riddle?” I asked him.

“No, it isn’t a riddle!” he shot back at me.

“Because if it is, it’s a good one,” I said. “It’s about the best one I ever heard.”

“I like the West Shore Railroad,” Hervey said; “it’s full of pep; it goes scout pace.”

“You wanted ginger in our trip back to camp,” I said, “and you’ve got

tabasco sauce. Gee whiz, you ought to be satisfied. We'll go back to camp by way of the island of Yap."

"You're the leader," Warde said.

CHAPTER V

WE KEEP ON GOING NORTH

One thing I'll say for Hervey Willetts and that is that wherever he goes there is adventure. He carries it with him. He couldn't just go on a hike, that fellow couldn't. He always has to start something.

Garry said, "Well, things seem to be moving."

"Oh, they're moving all right," Bert said.

Warde said, "There are only two directions left to go in."

"Have patience," I told him; "we'll try them all; there are four, east and west and up and down."

"And in and out," Warde said.

"Sure," I said, "that's six. I wonder how much the fare to Albany is—the round trip?"

"It's not so very round," Pee-wee said.

"It's a kind of triangular circle," I told him. "If we pay our fare both ways we don't get any dinner in Albany, we'll have to walk back. And if we don't have some dinner we can't walk. So there you are; take your choice. It's as clear as mud."

"You've got us into a nice fix," the kid said. "I knew you were crazy when you made us throw away those chocolate bars. The next thing you'll have us in jail."

"You should worry, you can eat the prison bars," I told him.

"Let's see how much money we've got," Bert said.

I had about seventy-five cents and the cap of a fountain pen that I use for a whistle.

Pee-wee had fifty-two cents and a lot of junk; we had a little over seven dollars altogether. It was lucky that was enough for our fare to Albany. But we didn't get much change. The conductor said the train went to Albany without change—I guess that's why we didn't get much.

"How can we hike back thirty miles to-day, tell me that?" the Animal Cracker wanted to know.

"That's easy," I said; "by doing two miles at a time, that makes fifteen. Are you getting frightened?"

"We don't know where we're going but we're on our way," Bert began singing.

"Maybe it won't be so far back as it is there," Garry said.

"Sure, because it's always shorter going south," I told him.

“Six of us ought to be able to earn seven dollars in Albany,” Warde said. “And we can take an evening train down.”

“I’m not going on any more trains,” Pee-wee yelled. “I’ve had enough of trains. If we come back on a train it won’t stop till it gets to Poughkeepsie, and then if we come up on another one it won’t stop till it gets to Montreal. You don’t catch me getting on another train.”

“Follow your leader,” I told him. “Follow your leader wherever he goes.”

Everybody in the train was laughing at us, but what did we care? It might have been worse, we might have been on the Erie.

“We’ve got enough left to wire to camp, if the worst comes to the worst,” Bert said.

“It’ll have to be worse than that before *I’ll* wire,” said Hervey.

“I’ll say so,” I told him. “I’m not worrying, this train knows where it’s going. If we forget to get out at Albany we’ll get out at Buffalo and you can follow your leader across Lake Ontario. That used to be in my geography.”

“I guess it’s there yet,” Garry said.

“Take a slap on the wrist for that,” I told him.

“You all make me tired,” Pee-wee said, very disgruntled.

“Well, you’re having a good rest,” I told him. “We’re on our way to Temple Camp, don’t worry. We’re only taking a long cut. Our trail is tied in a knot. We’ll get there when we get there—maybe a little sooner. All you have to do is follow your leader wherever he goes.”

“Absolutely, positively,” Warde said; “that’s understood.”

“Even if he goes to sleep,” I said; “excuse me while I take a nap. I expect to have a long walk this afternoon.”

Just then the train began slowing down and the whistle started blowing very loud and shrill. A brakeman with a red flag came hurrying through the car.

“I guess there must be a mosquito on the track,” Garry said.

“Maybe the engineer’s going to pick some blackberries,” Warde said.

All of a sudden—bang! the cars knocked against each other, the train stopped so suddenly. The whistle blew three or four times very quick and shrill.

In about one second I was on my feet. “Follow your leader,” I shouted. And through the aisle I went with the rest of them after me all singing those crazy rhymes that stuck in our minds like glue.

Don’t start to go back if it freezes or snows,
Don’t weaken or flunk or suggest or oppose;
Your job is to follow and not to suppose.
And follow your leader wherever he goes.

CHAPTER VI

WE MOVE HEAVEN AND EARTH

You can bet we didn't lose much time getting off the train. "Follow your leader," I said.

Garry said, "We're in luck; we're only about six or seven miles north of Catskill."

"You don't call that luck, do you?" Hervey said. "Just when I was counting on a nice trip to Albany."

"I suppose you'd like to make a mistake and get on an ocean steamer," I told him.

"Mistakes?" the kid shouted. "You're the one that made mistakes famous."

"Sure," I said, "and you're the one that put the wise crack in animal crackers."

"The last syllable of a doughnut is named after you," Pee-wee shouted.

"Always thinking about doughnuts," I said. "Look on the track, there's a friend of yours." Right plunk across the track, about a couple of hundred feet ahead of the train was a donkey hitched to a funny kind of a wagon that was all machinery inside.

"I guess it goes by clockwork," I said.

"It looks as if it doesn't go at all," Bert said.

"It did us a good turn anyway," I said; "it made the train stop."

Gee whiz, we had to laugh. The man that owned that outfit was an Italian and he was yelling Italian at the donkey and trying to make him start. I guess the donkey didn't understand Italian.



“I GUESS THE DONKEY DIDN’T UNDERSTAND ITALIAN.”

A lot of people got out of the train and stood around watching and the engineer sat in his window looking as if he were very mad at the donkey. But

anyway the donkey didn't care. When we got close enough we could see that the wagon had emery wheels in it for grinding knives and scissors and scythes and things like that and they went by a gas engine.

The man was shouting, "Hey! Whater de mat? You go! Hey, whater de mat?"

I said, "We ought to have someone who can translate Italian. Suppose you shout at him, Pee-wee; if that doesn't start him nothing will."

The man kept jerking the donkey's bit, all excited, and shouting, "Hey you, giddup, whater de mat?"

Two or three passengers started pulling and jerking the donkey, and one tried to push him, but it didn't do any good. I felt mighty grateful to that donkey. Anyway he had a will of his own, that's one sure thing. About a half a dozen passengers kept tugging at him but it didn't do any good. He just braced his legs and let them pull.

I said, "Maybe if we hold some grass in front of him he'll follow it." But that didn't work; I guess he wasn't hungry.

Pretty soon Warde said, "I've got an idea; let's move him with the gas engine. That engine's about six horse power; it ought to be stronger than one donkey power."

"It's an insulation!" Pee-wee shouted.

"You mean an inspiration," I told him.

"Hey, giddup; hey you," the Italian kept shouting, all the time hitting the donkey with the whip.

I said, "Nix on that, it doesn't do any good. What's the use of licking a donkey when you've got a gas engine to move him with? You leave it to us, we'll move him."

The man said, "Mova de donk; hey boss, mova de donk!"

"Sure," I said, "we'll move him; we go to the movies and we know all about moving. Have you got some rope?"

I don't know where the rope came from; maybe it came from the train and maybe it came from the wagon. Anyway we fastened it through one of the holes in the fly-wheel and wound it a couple of times round the shaft. Then we dragged the rope over to a tree on the edge of the woods, behind the wagon and tied it there. Everybody was laughing and the Italian was shouting, "Hey, maka de gas, boss! Pulla de donk!"

We told him to start the engine and let it run very slowly. Goodnight! Laugh? First there was a kind of straining and creaking, but we knew the engine was fixed solid because it was bolted right through a heavy engine bed to the floor of the wagon. The rope was so tight it looked as if it would snap. Pretty soon the donkey began to feel the pulling because he braced his hind legs; he looked awful funny.

“I bet on the donkey,” somebody shouted.

“I bet on the gas engine,” somebody else put in.

Everybody was laughing and the Italian was all excited, waving his whip in the air and running about shouting, “Hey, giva de gas! Pulla de donk!”

All of a sudden the donkey gave way and back he went after the wagon. He kept trying to brace himself but it wasn’t any use; the little engine went ck, ck, ck, ck, ck, shaking and trembling, and back went the donkey after the wagon, till the whole outfit was off the track.

“He followed his leader all right,” Bert Winton shouted.

“Come on,” I said, “we have no time to be wasting here, let’s thank the donkey for the good turn he did us and then see if we can find out where we’re at. We’re probably somewhere.”

“Sure if we’re somewhere we ought to be able to get somewhere else,” Garry said.

“We don’t know which way to go,” Pee-wee said.

“We’ll go every which way,” I said, “and then we’ll be sure to strike the right way. One direction is just as good as another if not better. Come on, follow your leader.”

So off we marched into the woods singing:

Don’t ask where you’re headed for nobody knows,
Just keep your eyes open and follow your nose;
Be careful, don’t trip and go stubbing your toes,
But follow your leader wherever he goes.

As the train started all the passengers looked out of the windows laughing at us and waving their hands. Anyway we were more powerful than that train because a donkey could stop it and we could move him off the track, so it could get started, and that proves how smart boy scouts are even when they don’t know where they’re at.

CHAPTER VII

WE REACH THE FICKLE GUIDE POST

"I'd like to know where we are," Warde said.

"We're in the Catskill Mountains," I told him.

"You might as well say we're in the universe," Pee-wee said. "What good does that do us?"

"You mean to tell me it isn't good to be in the universe?" I asked him.

"It's one of the best places I know of," Garry said.

"Sure it is," I told him. "Anybody who isn't satisfied with the universe _____"

"You're crazy!" Pee-wee yelled.

"Follow your leader," I said. "Follow your leader wherever he goes."

"Follow your nose," Bert said.

"No wonder he goes up in the air so often if he follows that," Garry said.

"Do you think I'm going to go marching around the country for the rest of my life?" the kid piped up.

"Don't quit or complain at the stunts that he shows," I said. "You want to go somewhere, don't you? Well, I promise to lead you somewhere. That's just where you want to go. What more can you ask?"

I kept marching in and out among the trees, touching some and not touching others, the other fellows after me. Pretty soon I hit into the road that crossed the track. We were about a quarter of a mile from the track then. I kept along that road, sometimes walking on the stone wall and sometimes going zigzag in the road. I knew we were going west and I was pretty sure that Temple Camp was southwest, but I didn't know how far. I thought that pretty soon we would come to a crossroad and that there would be a sign there.

Pretty soon we did come to one and there was a sign there, all right. I was glad of that because the road we were on had made so many turns I didn't know for certain which direction we were going in. Besides, the sky was all cloudy so I couldn't tell anything by the sun.

"There's a sign post!" one of the fellows shouted.

"Saved!" another fellow yelled.

I didn't strain my eyes to see what was on the signboard, but as soon as I saw it I began passing in and out among the trees along the road, grabbing each tree and going around it. All the while we were singing those crazy rhymes. So that way I came to the sign post and grabbed hold of it and around I went, only, good night, the post went round with my hand.

"There's a good turn," I shouted.

"Now you didn't do a thing but make the plot thicker," Pee-wee yelled at me at the top of his voice. "Now you've got everything mixed up."

"I changed the whole map of the Catskills," I said. "That's nothing; see how the map of Europe is changed. I don't think much of a signboard that changes its mind."

"I don't think much of a scout that changes a signboard," Pee-wee shouted.

We all stood there staring at the sign. On the top of that post were two boards crossways to each other and on each board two directions were printed with arrows pointing. On one board was printed *COXSACKIE 8 M.*, with an arrow pointing one way, and *ATHENS 5 M.*, with an arrow pointing the opposite way. On the other board was printed *CAIRO 9 M.*, with an arrow pointing one way, and *CLAYVILLE 7 M.*, with an arrow pointing the other way, and underneath that board was a little board with *TEMPLE CAMP* printed on it. I guess scouts put that there.

But a lot of good that sign did us because all we knew was that Temple Camp was in the same direction as Clayville and we didn't know which direction Clayville was in.

"Follow your leader and you don't know where you're at," Pee-wee said, very disgusted like.

"Wrong the first time," I said. "The poem says follow your nose. Would you rather believe the guide post than that beautiful poem? The poem never changes but the guide post moves around. We know where we're at, we're right here; deny it if you dare. We're smarter than the guide post."

"You're about as smart as a lunatic," the kid shouted. "If you hadn't touched that we'd know which way to go. Now where is Temple Camp?"

"That's easy," I told him; "it's where it always was."

"You mean *you're* like you always were," he said; "you're crazy."

"Let's move it around again," Hervey said, "and we'll say the first verse and let go the post just as we finish. Then let's go the way it says."

"Good idea," Warde said; "let's all agree that we'll go whichever way the Temple Camp arrow points."

"There are four directions," Pee-wee said. "We'll stand just one chance in four of going the right way."

"There are only two directions," I said; "right and wrong. Deny it who can. So we stand a fifty-fifty chance of going right. Anybody that knows anything about arithmetic can tell that. Come on, follow your leader wherever he goes."

I grabbed hold of the sign post and started walking around with the rest of them after me singing, "Follow your leader wherever he goes." Some merry-go-round! We sang the first verse and I stopped short when we got to the word *goes*.

“Come on,” I said, “Temple Camp is right over that way. Follow your leader.”

“Trust to luck,” Hervey said; “if it’s wrong, so much the better. Let the guide post worry. They had no right to put a pinwheel here for a guide post.”

“Just what *I* say,” I told him.

“How about others coming along?” Warde wanted to know. That fellow makes me tired, he’s all the time using sense.

“Now what have you got to say?” Pee-wee yelled. “A scout is supposed to be helpful.”

“Sure, he’s supposed to help himself to all the cake he wants, like you,” I said.

Warde said, “As long as we’ve had all the fun we want here, let’s set the post right before we go.”

“We haven’t had all the fun we want,” Hervey said.

“Sure we haven’t,” I put in. “We haven’t begun to have any yet.”

“I care more about dinner than I do about fun,” Pee-wee said.

“Do you mean dinner isn’t fun?” Garry asked him.

“I’m just as crazy as you are,” Bert said to me, “but we might as well go crazy in the right direction if we can only find out what that is.”

“Carried by a large minority,” I said; “the board of directors is appointed to find out the direction, so we can go crazy in that direction.” Warde said, “The trouble is that other people that pass here are not so crazy as we are and they’d like to know which way is which. Some people are peculiar.”

“Some people are worse than peculiar,” the Animal Cracker shouted.

“The compliment is returned with thanks and not many of them, and we wish ourselves many happy returns of the way. If anybody knows the way this merry-go-round of a sign post is supposed to stand let him now speak or else forever after hold his peace.”

“Piece of what?” Pee-wee shouted.

“Piece of pie,” I said; “that’s what you usually hold, isn’t it?”

Warde just went up to the sign post kind of smiling and turned it around till he got it just where he wanted it.

“What’s the idea?” I asked him.

He said, “Well, there are a couple of ideas.” I said, “I didn’t know we could scare up as many as that among the whole lot of us.”

“Maybe I’m wrong,” Warde said, “but I think that the side of the post with dried mud on it should face the road. That mud was spattered by wagons and autos. And I think the side that isn’t sunbaked faced the woods where it’s damp and shady. And I think the board where the paint is faded is the one that faced the sun. And so I think that Cairo is over *there*, and Athens over *there* and Temple Camp over *there*. See?”

“Hip, hip, and a couple of hurrahs!” Hervey Willetts said. “That means we can cut through these woods and come out at the end of the old railroad branch. There’s a big apple tree over there, I fell out of it once. It’s all woods over there and we stand a pretty good chance of getting lost again.”

“What kind of apples are they?” Pee-wee wanted to know.

“Baked apples,” I told him.

So then I started off with the rest of them after me, singing *Follow your leader wherever he goes*.

CHAPTER VIII

WE DO A GOOD TURN

“There ought to be plenty of apples on that branch,” I said, as I went along. “What branch?” the kid wanted to know.

“The old railroad branch,” I told him. “Don’t you know that apples grow on a branch?”

I guess none of us knew anything about that old branch but Hervey Willetts. That fellow knows about the funniest things and places. He can take you to old shacks in the woods and all places like that. He knows all the farmers for miles around camp. He knows where you can get dandy buttermilk. And he knows where you can get killed by quicksand and a lot of other peachy places. He says that’s the kind of sand he likes because it’s quick. He believes in action, that fellow.

I said, “As long as you know where we’re going suppose you be leader for a little while.”

“I’ll be leader,” Pee-wee shouted.

“Let Hervey be leader,” they all said.

So I fell behind and I was glad to get rid of the job of leading for a little while. But, oh boy, it was some job following! That fellow swung up into trees and turned somersaults over stone walls and hopped on one leg over big rocks—good night, we didn’t have any rest.

“You wanted ginger,” he said.

“Sure, but we didn’t want cayenne pepper,” I told him. “Have a heart.”

Gee whiz, that fellow didn’t miss anything, trees, rocks, fences, and all the while he kept singing:

Follow your leader,
Follow your leader;
Follow your leader true.

If he starts to roll,
Or falls in a hole;
Or shins up a tree or a telegraph pole.
You have to do it too,
 you do;
You have to do it too.

I can’t tell you about all the crazy things that fellow did. It looked awful funny to see the rest of us following, especially Pee-wee with a scowl all over his face. I guessed Hervey knew where he was going all right because no

matter what he did he always came back to a trail.

Pretty soon we came to the old railroad branch. A long time ago that used to go to some mines. We followed the old tracks through the woods. Hervey walked on one of the rails and we all tried to keep on it, but it was hard balancing ourselves he went so fast.

I guess maybe we went a half mile that way and then we saw ahead of us a funny kind of a car on the track. It wasn't meant to carry people, it was meant to carry iron ore, I guess. It was about as long as a very young trolley car. A long iron bar, a funny kind of a coupling I guess it was, stuck out from it. It was all open, like a great big scuttle, kind of. There were piles of stones and earth and old holes all caved in nearby. Those were the old iron mines, Hervey said.

"Gee whiz," I told him, "I've been to Temple Camp every summer and I never saw this place before. Christopher Columbus hasn't got anything on you."

"Follow your leader wherever he goes," he said, and over the end of the car he went and, kerflop, down inside, all the rest of us after him. There was straw inside.

That fellow couldn't sit down long. In about ten seconds up he jumped and shouted, "Follow your leader."

I was so tired I could have just lain in that little car till Christmas, but I got up and so did the others, all except Pee-wee.

"Come on, follow your leader," I said.

"Not much," he said; "I'm going to lie here and take a rest. I've had enough funny-bone hiking. If you think I'm going to follow you all over the Catskill Mountains without any dinner, you're mistaken. I know the way home from here, it's easy. Go ahead and march into the Hudson River if you want to for all I care."

"Which way do we go from here?" Hervey asked him.

"We follow the tracks straight along," the kid said. "That will bring us to the turnpike and all we have to do is to go through Leeds. *There*, you think you're so smart."

"Righto," Hervey said; "just climb out of the other end of the car and keep going, right along the track."

"Smart kid," I said.

"Do you think I'm going to be turning somersaults all the way home?" he wanted to know. "The next time I join a parade it won't be with a lot of monkeys."

"Those somersaults were all good turns," Bert said.

"This place is good enough for me," Pee-wee shot back at him.

So we left him there sprawled out on the straw and followed Hervey in and

out of old holes, kind of like caves, and all around and over piles of earth and everything till pretty soon he stopped and said, panting good and hard, “What do you say to a plot?”

“I take them three times a day and before retiring,” I said. “What kind of a plot? A grass-plot?”

“Let’s have some fun with Pee-wee,” he said. “Did you hear him say he knows the way home from here? He thinks all he has to do is to climb out the other end of the car and keep going along the track to the turnpike.”

“Well, isn’t that right?” Warde asked.

“Sure it’s right,” Hervey said; “only it depends on where the other end of the car is. See? That car’s on a turntable if anybody should ask you.”

“If it were a dinner table it would interest Pee-wee more,” I said.

“I noticed there was a kind of platform under it with grass growing through the cracks,” Warde said.

“Come on, let’s see if he’s asleep and we’ll turn it around,” Hervey said. “The woods look the same no matter which way you go. Follow your leader.”

He started tiptoeing over to the tracks holding his finger against his lips and we all did just the same. I had to laugh, it seemed so funny. He kept singing, *Follow your leader*, in a whisper.

That fellow ought to be in my patrol, he’s so crazy.

CHAPTER IX

WE FOLLOW OUR LEADER

There was Pee-wee, sprawled on the straw inside the little car, sound asleep. The funny-bone hike had been too much for him, I guess. Hervey got a stick and pushed with it against the rail right near the edge of the turntable. We had to all get sticks and push before we could budge it.

It squeaked as it went around, the part underneath was so rusty. We brought it to one full turn so that the car stood with the long coupling at the opposite side from where it had been before. We thought we might as well let Pee-wee sleep a little longer so we went to a tree that Hervey knew about and got some apples. Then we went back and sat in a line on the edge of the car with our feet hanging inside and started eating apples. After a little while we began singing, *Follow your leader*, and that woke Pee-wee up.

He opened one eye, then he stretched his arm, then opened the other eye and sat up, staring.

“Wheredgerget thabbles?” he wanted to know, rubbing his eyes.

I said, “Here, catch this and eat it.” Then I said, “Scout Harris of the raving Raven patrol, alias the Animal Cracker, you have been elected by an unanimous majority to lead the funny-bone hike. What say you? Yes or yes? Do you know the way to Temple Camp?”

“A fool knows the way to Temple Camp,” he said, very disgusted like.

“And you claim you’re a fool?” Warde asked him.

“I claim you’re a lot of lunatics,” Pee-wee said, sitting there and yawning and trying to eat an apple at the same time.

“It’s your turn to lead,” Garry said. “Our career of glory is over and we want to go home.”

“I’m tired of this crazy stuff and I don’t believe anybody here knows the way to camp,” Bert said.

“This branch crosses the turnpike,” Pee-wee said. “Don’t you know the little wooden bridge where the tracks cross the road?”

“Oh yes, the dear little wooden place,” I said; “how well I remember it!”

“You turn left on the turnpike and go through Leeds,” the kid said.

“Ah, but suppose the turnpike shouldn’t be there any more?” Garry said. “Some strange things have happened since we started in a north southerly direction from Catskill.”

“That’s because you had crazy leaders,” Pee-wee shot back. “If you’re sensible and want to go back to camp I’ll show you the way.”

“Oh we’re sensible,” I said.

“You’re the worst of the lot,” he shouted.

Hervey said, “My idea is, just like I said, to follow the track right along the same way we were going and that will bring us out at the turnpike.”

“If the turnpike hasn’t been turned around,” I said.

“We’ll be careful not to touch it with our hands when we get there,” Garry said.

“I’ll lead you,” Pee-wee said; “it’s easy from here; I could do it with my eyes closed.”

“If you’ll keep your mouth closed I’ll be satisfied,” I told him.

“But it isn’t going to be any funny-bone hike,” he said; “I’ll tell you that.”

“It’ll be a backbone hike—straight,” I said. “There’s no place like home.”

“Home is all right, it’s a good place to start from,” Hervey said.

“Well, then, take us home; I’m ready,” Bert spoke up. “I don’t want any more funny-bone hikes wished on me. Wish-bones are good enough, I’m hungry.”

So Pee-wee climbed over the end of the car, and started along and we all followed.

“Follow your leader wherever he goes,” I said.

“He’s going straight home,” Pee-wee said.

“Are you sure you got out of the right end of the car?” Hervey asked him.

Pee-wee was still kind of half-asleep, and he stopped and looked around. “Sure, we got in at the end where the coupling is,” he said. “Come on, follow me.”

“You can’t fool Scout Harris,” I said; “not even with a couple of cups of couplings. Forward march, follow your leader!” And we started singing:

Where’er we may roam,
There’s no place like home.

Pee-wee marched on ahead like a little soldier, munching an apple.

CHAPTER X

WE RETRACE OUR STEPS

He marched along the tracks for about half a mile, through the woods. As he went along I remembered what Uncle Jeb said, that the woods look different when you're going in the opposite direction from which you came. He said the way a tree looks depends on where you stand. And it's the same with hills and everything. So that's why the woods only look familiar when you're going the same way that you went before. That's the reason for blazing trails.

Uncle Jeb says a person looks different front and back and it's the same with woods. Pee-wee marched along back the same way we had come, very bold and sure.

After a while he said, "I don't know why we don't come to the turnpike."

"Maybe it's because it isn't here," I said.

"Are you sure you're going the right way?" Bert asked him.

"Sure I'm sure," he said; "only it's longer than I thought it was."

"Maybe it got stretched," I said.

Pee-wee just kept trudging along and he said, "Maybe it seems long because we're kind of played out."

"Oh, we don't care as long as you get us home," Garry said.

"We trust you implicitly," Warde told him.

"You're our guiding light," Garry said.

Pee-wee just trudged on.

Pretty soon he said, "As long as you're all so tired, maybe I can find—I think I know a short cut."

"Take us the way the raven flies," I said; "the shorter the quicker."

"I can see a road over there through the trees," he said. "That goes into the turnpike. It'll be easier walking on the road."

"As long as you know you're going the right way," I said.

"Sure I'm going the right way," he said; "what's the use of getting scared. We'll be home in twenty minutes."

"That'll be nice," Garry said.

"Won't I be glad!" said Bert.

"Just you follow me," Pee-wee said.

"We're following," I told him. "We're following our leader wherever he goes. We know the animal cracker knows the woods. Have another apple?"

Next he left the tracks and cut over to the left where we could see a road through the trees. He hit into the road and hiked along.

“Sure you’re right?” Bert asked him.

“Do you think I don’t know the way?” the kid said, very disgusted.

“Don’t start to ask questions, or hint, or propose,” I said.

Pretty soon he came to a crossroad and *g-o-o-d night magnolia!* Right there, staring us in the face was the fickle signboard that I had turned around. Oh boy, you should have seen Pee-wee. The apple he was eating fell out of his hand and he just stood there staring. He couldn’t even speak.

“Don’t ask where you’re headed for nobody knows,” Hervey said.

I said, “Have no fear, our gallant leader is with us. Raving ravens do not get rattled. Trust to Scout Harris. He knows the way. Follow your leader.”

Maybe that signboard had been a pinwheel, but there it was at the very same spot where it had been before.

Warde said, “That’s one good thing about scouts, they always come back.”

I said, “Pee-wee led us the right way, only in the wrong direction.”

“Just as you said,” Garry put in, “the turnpike has disappeared. That’s why I never liked turnpikes, they’re so fickle.”

“There’s something wrong here!” the kid shouted.

“Sure,” I said, “it isn’t your fault, it’s the turnpike’s.”

“I started in the right direction,” Pee-wee shouted, “and I kept going in the right direction, you can’t deny it. I’d like to know how we got here?”

“That’s what *I’d* like to know,” I said.

“I suppose we just walked here,” Bert said; “we followed our leader.”

Hervey started singing:

The turnpike turned round
And the trail it got bent,
We followed our leader wherever he went.

“Anyway, I’m sure I started in the right direction,” the kid said; “I don’t care what anybody says.”

I said, “Sure, if the right direction changes its mind that isn’t your fault. Come on, let’s go back. It’s long past dinner-time.”

“Let Warde be leader,” Hervey said; “he’s the only one here who has any sense.”

So we started following Warde back along the trail till we came to the railroad tracks and along those to the little iron ore car.

Hervey said, “The best way to find out which way to go is to spin the car around and call the coupling the arrow-head and go whichever way that points.”

“You’re crazy,” Pee-wee shouted. “Will you talk sense and let’s start for camp? We’ve been starting for camp all morning.”

“That’s the right way to do,” I told him; “have a lot of different starts and if

you can't use one you can use another. Didn't you ever hear of having two strings to your bow? A scout should never try to go anywhere without having two or three extra starts."

Just then Hervey and Bert and Garry started moving the turntable around and, *good night*, you should have seen Pee-wee stare. All of a sudden he went up like a sky rocket.

"Now I know what you did!" he yelled. "You turned this around while I was asleep—you can't deny it. You made the right direction the wrong one!"

I said, "The right direction is just as much right now as it ever was. You can't blame us."

"You're all crazy!" he screamed. "Are we going to go home to camp and get something to eat or not? Do you think I'm going to starve?"

"Not while you're conscious," I said. "Would you like to lead the way foodward or shall we elect another leader? What say we all? Shall Pee-wee lead us to the promised land or not? Answer, *not*. You're rejected by a large plurality."

"Let Garry try it," Hervey said. "Warde's all right only he has too much sense."

So that time we started in the right direction, following the old tracks toward the turnpike, with Garry leading us. We kept singing *Follow your leader* just the same as before.

CHAPTER XI

WE WAIT FOR THE BOAT

Now this is the chapter where we're all so hungry. It's dedicated to Hoover. The name of it was "The Famine" only I decided to use another name. But believe me, in this chapter we're hungrier than war-torn Europe. All that morning we had been marching around the country singing those crazy rhymes and we were having so much fun that we didn't realize it was past dinner-time. All we had had was one bite of chocolate each except the two bites that Pee-wee took. Seven bites isn't much for six scouts.

Pretty soon we came out into the turnpike and then we knew the way back to camp. It was a pretty long hike but we knew the way. All we had to do was to follow the turnpike south till we came to the blackberry road and that would take us into the road to camp.

I said, "I hope the camp is still there."

Warde said, "If we get back in time for supper we'll be lucky."

"How about lunch?" Pee-wee wanted to know.

"Nothing about it," I said; "it just isn't."

"Do you think I'm going to walk ten miles with nothing to eat?" he shot back. "You call this a funny-bone hike, it's a famine hike, that's what it is. They'll find our skeletons some day marching around through these woods _____"

"Following our leader," I said.

"That'll be a funny-bone parade," Garry said.

"It'll be a bone parade all right," I told him.

"Maybe we'll strike a farmhouse," Bert said.

Hervey said, "I know a better idea than that. What time is it?"

"Two o'clock," I told him.

He said, "Good, I thought it was later. Do you like fish?"

"How many fish?" Pee-wee wanted to know.

"Oh just about," Hervey said.

"If you're asking me," I told him, "I could even eat some fish-hooks I'm so hungry. I could eat a whole school of fish."

"I could eat a whole university of them," Garry said.

"Do you like them fried?" Hervey asked us.

"*M-m-m-mm*," I said; "I can just hear them sizzling now. Lead me to them."

He said, "We'll have to wait for them. Let's hang out on the bridge and

pretty soon the fishing boat will come along; it always comes up from the Hudson about this time. I know the men on that boat, I've been out fishing with them. They'll give us a couple of fish and we can cook them. You leave it to me, I'll fix it."

"What kind of fish do they catch?" Pee-wee wanted to know.

"Smoked herring and salt codfish and canned salmon," I told him, "and whales."

"I could eat a whole whale," he said.

"Sometimes they catch fish-balls," Hervey said.

"Fish-balls or footballs or baseballs or masquerade balls, I don't care, I could eat anything," I said.

So then Hervey led the way along the turnpike till we came to the bridge across the creek. That creek is pretty wide and it empties into the Hudson. We were feeling all cheered-up on account of the chance of getting something to eat and we marched along shouting:

Don't quit or complain at the stunts that he shows,
Don't ask to go home if it rains or it snows;
Don't start to ask questions, or hint, or propose,
But follow your leader wherever he goes.

Then Hervey started shouting:

We're going to have our wish,
We're going to get some fish.

Then Pee-wee began yelling:

I'm so hungry that I'm pale,
And I'd like to eat a whale.

Gee whiz, just as I told you, we were all crazy, especially Hervey Willetts; he was even crazier than I was and I was the craziest one there next to Bert and Warde and Garry. But one thing I'll say for Hervey, he knows every place for miles around Temple Camp, and he knows everybody too, farmers and all.

In about five minutes we came to the bridge that the turnpike goes over. That bridge is a drawbridge and the creek under it is wide and deep and you can catch fish there only for one thing and that is that there aren't any. There's a big lever to turn the bridge around with.

"Let's turn it around," Hervey said.

"We've had enough turning around," the kid shouted. "I'm not going to follow my leader any more till he starts eating fish."

"Oh very well," Hervey said, "I was just going to give you a free ride."

"A free seat is good enough for me," the kid said.

"I second the motion," Warde said.

“There isn’t going to be any motion,” I said, quoth I. “This is going to be a case of sitting still.”

“Follow your leader,” Hervey said.

“What are you going to do? Stand on your head on the railing?” I asked him.

He just vaulted up onto the railing of the bridge and we all did the same and sat there swinging our legs and waiting for the fishing boat and singing those rhymes and changing them around. Pretty soon we were all shouting:

Don’t fall in the creek for the water’s quite wet,
But think of the fish that we’re soon going to get;
Mm-m

CHAPTER XII

WE COLLECT TOLL

After about six weeks and ten years the fishing boat came chugging up the creek. Anyway it seemed as long as that before it came. The chugging of that engine sounded good.

“Now for the eats,” Garry said.

Hervey said, “They’ll have a lot of perch and some bass and maybe some soft-shell crabs.”

“Isn’t there anything in this creek?” the kid wanted to know.

“Nothing except water,” Hervey told him. “Anyway we haven’t got any fishline, have we? Thank goodness we’ve got some matches, we can start a fire.”

“We’ll fry them brown, hey?” Pee-wee said, all excited.

“Any color will suit me,” I told him.

“They won’t be any color at all when we get through with them,” Bert said.

By that time the boat was quite near and we could see a couple of baskets of fish in the cockpit, and there were two men. Oh boy, how I longed to eat them, I mean the fish. Pretty soon one of the men shouted for us to open the bridge, so they could pass.

I called, “Hey, mister, will you give us a couple of fish? We’re perched up here waiting for some perch.”

He laughed and said sure, but that we should open the bridge. Now the way to open that bridge was to walk around pushing a big iron handle like a crowbar only longer. It was kind of like a windlass. I guess one man could do it all right but it took three of us to get the bridge started. It wasn’t a very big bridge but I’m not saying anything about that because we’re not so big either except our appetites and maybe one reason we couldn’t push so well was because we were hungry.

Garry said, “I guess when the creek is nearly empty boats can go under this bridge all right.”

I said, “Don’t talk about being empty; I’m so full of emptiness it’s flowing over. Get your hands on this thing and push. If anything should go wrong now we’ll have to eat the Animal Cracker.”

So then we all started pushing the long iron handle—it was a lever, that’s what it was. All the while the boat was standing about twenty feet away from the bridge and one man was keeping her bow upstream with a big oar while the other man was kind of fumbling in one of the baskets picking out a nice big

fish. Pretty soon he held one up all wet and dripping and, oh boy, it looked good. I guess it was nearly a foot long. He shouted, "How will that one do?"

"Mm-m-mm!" I said. "Lead me to it."

"I know where there's an old piece of tin in the woods," Pee-wee said, all the while pushing the big lever for all he was worth; "a scout is observant."

"I could eat a sheet of galvanized iron," I told him. "A little salt and pepper and I could eat a piece of railroad track."

"I mean to cook the fish on," the kid said; "you're crazy. Don't you know how to fry a fish? I'm going to be the one to cook it because I've got the matches."

"Hang on to them," I said; "things are beginning to look better. Keep pushing; think of fried fish and keep pushing."

Pee-wee began thinking harder and pushing harder; I could just see him thinking. And with one hand he felt in his pocket to make sure the matches were all safe. He carries matches in a box like a cylinder that shaving soap comes in.

It was kind of hard getting the bridge started but once it was started it kept moving slowly around. The reason you can move a bridge around like that is because it's well balanced. But, gee whiz, I'm glad I'm not so well balanced because I wouldn't have so much fun. Underneath the floor of the bridge were rollers on a track that went around in a circle. So pretty soon we had turned the bridge so that it was lengthways to the creek instead of across the creek and there was a passageway on either side of it where boats could pass.

"Marooned on a desert drawbridge," Bert said.

"Poor, starving natives," I said.

Garry said, "It's like being on an island."

"A merry-go-round, you mean," Pee-wee said.

"Let's call it Merry-go-round Island," Hervey sang out.

Just then the boat came chugging very slowly along one side of the bridge and one of the men handed me the fish.

I said, "Many thanks and more of them, mister, you saved our lives."

"Don't let it slide out of your hands," he said; "look out, it's slippery."

"If you let it slip out of your hands you'll go in after it," Pee-wee shouted.

Believe me, I kept tight hold of that fish. It was a dandy fish, it was big enough for about six people to have all they wanted.

The man said, "That will keep you quiet for a while; be sure to scrape all the scales off and clean him out good."

"You leave that to us," I told him, "we're boy scouts. Cooking fish is our middle name. There's only one thing we do better than cooking fish and that is eating them. We can eat them till the cows come home and sometimes the cows stay out all night where we live. Believe me, I never had much use for

Henry Hudson in the history books, but I'm glad he discovered the Hudson River as well as the Hudson Boulevard."

"That's in Jersey City," Pee-wee shouted. "Do you think that's named after Henry Hudson?"

"It's named after the Hudson automobile," Garry said.

"Sure it is," I told him, "just the same as the Hudson River is named after the Hudson River Day Line; you learn that in the fourth grade; here, take this fish while I help turn the merry-go-round around, around, around. Then we'll eat."

The boat went chugging up the creek, the men laughing and waving their hands at us. Pee-wee sat down on the floor of the bridge hugging the fish as if it were his long lost brother. The rest of us started pushing the lever.

But, oh boy, it didn't push.

CHAPTER XIII

WE ARE MAROONED ON A DESERT ISLAND

“Come on and help,” I said to Pee-wee.

“Suppose the fish jumps off the bridge,” he said. “Do you think I’m going to take any chances?”

“The strength of an Animal Cracker doesn’t count for much,” Garry said.

“Look out the fish doesn’t jump in the creek with you,” I told Pee-wee.

Well, we pushed and pushed and pushed and braced our feet and kept pushing for dear life, but we couldn’t budge that lever. Pee-wee held the fish tight under one arm and helped us but it wasn’t any use. We just couldn’t budge the lever.

“We’re marooned for fair,” Bert said.

“Boy Scouts Starve on Merry-go-round Island,” I said. “That would be a good heading for a newspaper article.”

“Merry-go-standstill you mean,” Hervey began laughing. “What do we care? It’s all in the game. Come ahead, give her one more push; follow your leader.”

“Do you call starving a game?” the kid fairly yelled at him. I had to laugh, he looked so funny standing there with the fish under his arm.

We tried some more but—no use. “The merry-go-round has stalled,” I said. “We’ve got Robinson Crusoe tearing his hair with jealousy.”

“We’re on a desert island in earnest,” Bert said. He was the last to give up.

“Don’t talk about desert, it reminds me of dessert,” I said.

“I’m not so much in earnest either,” Hervey began laughing. “Come on, follow your leader.” Then he started to jump up on the railing.

I said, “It’s a very good joke; he, he, ho, ho, and a couple of ha ha’s! But how about lunch? We can’t start a fire on this bridge without burning it up and besides we haven’t got any kindling.”

“The only way we can get off the bridge is to burn it up,” Hervey said. “The boy scout stood on the burning bridge——”

“Eating fish by the peck,” I said. “This is a new kind of a desert island—1921 model. We made it ourselves. But what care we? We have food. We care naught, quoth I.”

“What good is the food?” Pee-wee screamed. “You broke the bridge, that’s what you did! And now we’ve got to go hungry.”

“Go?” I said. “What do you mean by ‘go’? You mean we’ve got to stay here hungry. Our skeletons will be found on Merry-go-round Island——”

“Following their leader,” Hervey said.

“Along with the skeleton of a faithful fish,” Bert said. “That’s what happens to young boys when they go around too much.”

“That’s what happens when any one goes around with this bunch,” the kid shouted. “You’re so crazy that it’s catching; even the sign posts and bridges go crazy. The next time I go on a funny-bone hike I won’t go at all, but if I do I’ll bring my lunch you can bet.”

“What’ll we do next?” Hervey wanted to know.

I said, “Let’s have a feast, let’s feast our eyes on the fish. I can just kind of hear him sizzling over the fire.”

“You can’t eat sizzles,” the kid said, very disgusted like.

I said, “No, but you can think of them. Let’s all think how fine the fish would taste if we could only cook him. Do you remember how we moved a lunch wagon by the power of our appetites? Maybe we can move the bridge that way.”

“You make me tired,” Pee-wee yelled. “If you hadn’t started this crazy—look at the chocolate bars you made us throw away.”

“I’d like to have a look at them,” I said.

We all perched up on the railing of the bridge, Pee-wee holding the fish under one arm for fear it might flop off the bridge. Safety first. Sitting the way we did we were all facing the shore. There were woods there and dandy places to build a fire. There were twigs and things all around.

I said, “It would be fine over there. We could just get that piece of tin Pee-wee was telling us about and gather up some of those nice dry twigs and start a little fire and let the tin get red hot and then lay the fish on it——”

“Shut up!” the kid shouted.

“Only the trouble is we’re marooned on a desert island,” I said. “Anyway there’s one thing I like and that is adventure. I was always crazy to starve on a desert island.”

“You don’t have to tell us you’re crazy,” Pee-wee said.

“We followed you back to the sign post,” I told him, “and you promised to cook us a fish. Let’s see you do it. A scout’s honor is to be trusted, he’s supposed to keep his word—scout law number forty-eleven.”

“How about diving?” Hervey asked. “It’s the only way to get into the water; there isn’t any way to climb down off this thing; the underneath part of it is way inside.”

“Where did you expect it to be? Up in the air?” I asked him. “The underneath part is usually underneath.”

“Not always,” Bert said.

“Well, anyway,” I said, “I’m not going to risk my life diving into water that I don’t know anything about. Suppose I should break my skull; what good

would a fish dinner be to me?”

“That’s a good argument,” Garry said.

“It’s a peach of an argument,” I told him.

“It’s what Pee-wee calls logic. Gee whiz, but I’m hungry.”

“Same here,” Bert said.

“Same here,” Garry said.

“Same here,” Hervey said.

“Same here,” Warde said.

“I’m as hungry as the whole five of you put together,” our young hero said. “I heard a story that a man can go forty days without food, but you can’t get me to swallow that.”

“It’s about the only thing that you wouldn’t swallow,” I told him. “I’m so hungry I’d swallow any argument I ever heard; I’d swallow any kind of a story, especially a fish story.”

“There you go again,” Bert said; “what’s the good of reminding us about it?”

“I’d swallow a serial story,” I told him; “any kind of cereal, oatmeal, cream of wheat, or anything.”

So we just sat there looking across the creek into the woods, and swinging our legs, but we were too hungry to sing.

“Let’s look for a sail on the horizon,” Hervey said. “That’s always the way people do when they’re starving on desert drawbridges. This would make a good movie play.”

“You mean a good standing still play,” I said; “the trouble with this hike is there isn’t any action in it.”

“You mean there isn’t any food in it,” Pee-wee piped up.

“Don’t you care,” I told him, “there’s a desert island. What more do you want? And we’ve got plenty of food only we can’t cook it. That’s better than being able to cook it and not having any. We should worry.”

CHAPTER XIV WE SEE A SAIL

Now after that last chapter are supposed to come about ten chapters where we don't do anything except just be hungry. But believe me, that's enough. We just sat there swinging our legs from the railing of that desert island, scanning the horizon for a sail.

I said, "I wonder if there's any treasure buried on this desert island. Maybe Captain Kidd secreted some Liberty Bonds here; maybe he hid some bars of gold."

"I wish he had left some bars of chocolate here," Warde said.

"Or some small change, chicken feed, or anything we could eat," Garry put in. "I'd be glad to eat a bale of hay or shredded wheat or a whisk-broom or anything else like that."

"They're just about getting ready to cook supper at Temple Camp now," Warde said; "Chocolate Drop^{*} is just about beginning to peel potatoes. Pretty soon he'll be stirring up batter for cookies. I think they're going to have strawberry jam and crullers to-night and—and cheese and—lemon pie. They'll be having baked beans to-night, too, on account of it being Saturday. Oh boy, I can just see that nice slice of brown pork on top——"

"Will you keep still!" Pee-wee screamed.

"Sure," said Hervey; "whatever it is, let's do it. If we're going to starve let's get some fun out of it. I bet I can beat anybody starving."

I said, "Pee-wee can beat you at that with both hands tied behind him, can't you, Kid? Once I read about some men who were going to freeze to death in an ice cream freezer or somewhere; maybe it was up at the North Pole. So they wrote a note and stuck it up on a pole, maybe they stuck it on the North Pole, and they told what had become of them and how they had died a terrible death so that the world may be able to know about it. So let's write a note and say that we starved here because we couldn't cook a fish and that we hope our parents will take a lesson from us and not go round so much when they grow up. I was always wild, I used to ride on a runaway clotheshorse when I was a kid."

"You're a kid now," our young hero shouted. "You think it's funny, don't you?"

"I know which is north and which is south," I said, very sarcastic, "and anyway, I stay awake while I'm turning around. Do you think Cruson Robsoe got mad just because he was on a desert island? All he had was a footprint in

the sand and we've got a fish—to look at. Isn't he pretty? I bet there's nice white meat inside of him, and a lot of bones. I wonder if he has a funny-bone? As long as we can't get away from here let's each tell our favorite dessert. I say let's die bravely, like boy scouts, hungry to the end."

All of a sudden, *good night*, Garry nearly fell off the railing; he was waving his hands and shouting, "A sail! A sail!"

"What kind of a sale?" Bert asked him. "A special sale or a cake sale or what? If it's a cake sale lead me to it."

Garry just kept shouting, "A sail! A sail! A sail on the horizon!"

"I don't see any horizon," I said. "Where is it?"

"Along there through the woods," he said. "A sail! A sail! We are shaved!"

"What are you shouting about?" I said. "That isn't a sail, it's a Ford car! Hurrah! Hurrah! And a couple of hips!"

* The darky cook at Temple Camp.

CHAPTER XV

WE FORM A RESOLVE

We all started shouting, "We are shaved! We are shaved! A Fraud car! A Fraud car on the horizon!" I guess the driver of that Ford car thought we were crazy.

"I hope he'll stop before he runs into the creek," Warde said.

The car was coming along the turnpike at the rate of about a half a million miles a year and I shouted, "Hey, mister, whoever you are, please stop before you get here; it was raining last night and the water is wet."

"Stop your fooling," the kid said.

I said, "Do you think I want that car to come plunging into the creek? Suppose that driver is blind."

"She's coming under full sail," Garry said.

"Hurrah!" they all shouted.

"She's missing in one cylinder," Bert said. Then we all started shouting, "Saved! At last we are saved!"

Just then, *good night*, that Ford car turned off into a side road and we couldn't see it any more.

"Now you see what you get for fooling," the kid shot at me. "If we had shouted 'help' all together as loud as we could he'd have come straight along. You think it's fun being imprisoned here with nothing to eat; you make me tired. Maybe you don't know that not much traffic comes along this old turnpike; that's why they don't have any bridge-tender here."

"They have tenderfoot bridge-tenders," I said.

"Maybe no one else will come along all night," Pee-wee said, "and then what are we going to do? Suppose a wagon or an auto should come along after dark and we didn't see it coming; it would plunge to death and then I hope you'd be satisfied."

"That's right," Warde said, kind of serious, "we haven't even got a lantern to swing. How could we warn anybody?"

"We can't even shout if we don't get something to eat," the kid said.

"Sure," Bert said, "we'll be so weak we won't even be able to lift our voices."

"We're in a desperate predicament," Pee-wee said, very dark and serious like. I guess he got those words out of the movies.

"Maybe we could tie a note to the fish and throw him in the water," I said. "When someone catches him they'll find out we're in distress."

“No you don’t,” the kid yelled, hanging onto the fish while I tried to take it away from him.

“If we could only send up a signal,” Warde said. “It’s all very well joking but if it gets dark it will be mighty bad with this bridge open and no one standing guard at the ends of the road.”

“There’ll be a tragedy,” the kid said.

Gee whiz, when I heard Warde speak that way I realized that it might be pretty dangerous there after dark. And I was a little scared about it because it seemed that no one came along that road very much and maybe it would be night before anyone came.

I said, “Well, if it gets toward night and no one comes either way I’ll take a chance and dive and swim to shore. One of you fellows will have to dive and swim to the other shore too.”

“I’ll do that,” Hervey sang out.

“But we’ll wait till it’s necessary,” I said.

Now maybe you think that because we are scouts we should have been able to get to shore easily enough, and if it were only a case of swimming that fish wouldn’t have anything on us. But we couldn’t get from that bridge into the water except by diving and diving is dangerous when you don’t know the water you’re diving into. Especially near a bridge it’s dangerous because there are apt to be piles sticking up under the surface of the water. So that’s why we have a rule never to dive unless we know about the place where we’re diving. But, gee whiz, if it’s a case of an auto plunging into the water or taking a chance myself, I’ll take the chance every time. And I know that Hervey Willetts would dive into the Hudson River from the top of the Woolworth Building if anybody dared him to do it.

“Anyway, let’s not lose our morale,” I said. “We’re here because we’re here. Scouts are supposed to be resourceful; let’s sit up on the railing again and think.”

“As soon as the sun goes down I’m going to dive,” Hervey said. “Do you see that big maple tree in the woods? As soon as I can’t count the leaves on that top branch any more I’m going to dive. I don’t know how deep it is or what’s under the water, but I’m going to stand guard down the road a ways. What do you say?”

“Are you asking me?” I asked him.

“I sure am,” he said; “you’re the only patrol leader here.”

I just said, “Well, if you want to know what I’m going to do I’ll tell you. I never broke up a game yet. I’m going to follow my leader wherever he goes. I’m going to take care of the other side of the road. I’m not going to ask where I’m headed for nobody knows. And I’m not going to weaken or flunk or suggest or oppose. And I’m not going to start to ask questions, or hint or

propose. There are some scouts here that are not so stuck on this crazy game. But, believe me, it's more of a game than I thought it was. You were the one that started it. No people are going to lose their lives on account of us. I'm going to follow my leader wherever he goes. So now you know."

"Do you call me a quitter?" Pee-wee shouted in my face.

"Look out for the fish," I said.

"I don't care anything about the fish," he yelled. "I'm not hungry. I'm in this funny-bone hike and I'll follow Hervey Willetts if he—if he—if he—stands on his head on top of a bonfire—I will. So there!"

"He wouldn't do such a thing, don't worry," I said. "He couldn't keep still long enough. Pick up the fish before he flops off the desert island. Safety first, that's our motto. Hey, Hervey?"

"That's us," Hervey said. "Let's tell some riddles."

CHAPTER XVI WE ARE SAVED

So then we all sat on the railing of the desert island and sang *Follow your leader*, and Pee-wee joined in good and loud. He kept the fish under his arm. When it comes to a showdown Pee-wee is loyal. He can even be loyal to a fish.

Maybe we sat there for as much as an hour and Hervey was telling us about all the crazy things you can do on a Follow your leader hike. All of a sudden Garry shouted, "A sail! A sail! Another sail on the horizon!"

"Is it the same horizon?" I asked him.

"It's a red sail," he said.

"It's a red cow, you mean," I told him.

"We are saved!" they all started yelling again. "A cow! A cow! A red cow with white spots! She is coming to our rescue!"

"Maybe she'll give us some malted milk," Hervey said.

Oh boy, I had to laugh. There, away way down the road a cow was coming along, waddling from one side to the other and as she came nearer we could see how she was swishing her tail.

"She's making about ten knots an hour," Garry said; "she's coming straight for us. She is bringing milk to the starving castaways. Watch and see if she turns into that side road."

"She has passed it!" Bert yelled. "She is coming straight for us under full sail. Hold the fish up as a signal of distress. She is a hero, I mean a shero."

It looked awful funny to see that old cow lumbering along, and every time she stopped to eat a leaf or something we thought she was going to turn into a side lane.

"There's a little girl right behind her," Bert said. "She's carrying a big whip; she's driving the cow."

That little girl was about half as big as Pee-wee. She had on a big sunbonnet and a kind of a gingham apron and she came hiking along behind the cow with that great big whip over her shoulder. She looked awful little.

"Do you think I want to be rescued by her?" the kid shouted.

"I'd let a mosquito rescue me, I'm so hungry," I said.

Pretty soon the little girl and the cow were right at the end of the road where the end of the bridge belonged. The cow didn't seem surprised but the little girl did. The cow just started to eat grass as if she didn't care whether she got across or not.

"Road closed on account of a desert island," Bert called.

“You have to take a detour around through the Panama Canal,” Garry shouted. “Don’t be frightened, we won’t hurt you.”

I said, “Hey, little girl, would you be kind enough to go to the nearest house and tell the people that some boy scouts are starving on this bridge on account of it being open?”

“Why don’t you close it,” she asked us kind of just a little bit scared and surprised.

“Because it doesn’t work,” I said. “See, we’ll show you. It’s on a strike.”

So then we all started pushing the big lever and she began to laugh.

“Do you think it’s a joke?” Pee-wee shouted at her.

“You’rrre dunces,” she said, rolling her r’s awful funny. “Do you think you can push it arraound like a ttreadmill churrn?”

“I don’t know what a treadmill churn is,” I told her, “because I’ve never been marooned on one——”

“Don’t you even know how to make butterr?” she said.

“We know how to eat it,” I said, “and that’s enough.”

“You’rrre trying to turrrn it raound,” she called. “It daon’t go all the way raound, it goes *back*. Lift that plug in the floorr and put the leverr in therre and then push; it’ll go back the same way. It only goes half-way and back—Mr. Smarrty.”

“*G-o-o-d night!*” I said. “I thought it was a merry-go-round.”

“Did you think you werrre ter th’ caounty fairr?” she asked us.

She just stood there staring at us as if she thought we were escaped lunatics from Luna Park.

I said, “Pardon us, but we never studied drawing so we don’t know anything about drawbridges. Do you mean this thing in the floor that looks like the head of a bolt?”

“Right therre at yourr feet,” she said.

On the floor about three feet from the lever was a kind of a round iron plate that looked like the top of a big bolt. It was just a kind of a plug and it lifted out. All we had to do was to haul the lever out and put it in there and push. There was a kind of reverse gear that made the bridge go back. And all the while we had been pushing and pushing and trying to make that pesky old bridge keep going around like a merry-go-round. But that wasn’t the way it worked. The end of it that belonged at the north had to go back to the north; the bridge only went half-way around.

It wasn’t hard closing it again when we got it started. It moved back very slowly until the ends of it fitted the ends of the road. The little girl just stood there kind of disgusted with us. Pee-wee didn’t say a word.

As soon as the way was open the cow started across, the little girl after her. She looked back two or three times as if she didn’t know what to make of us.

Once the cow looked back, kind of puzzled like; that's the way it seemed to me.

CHAPTER XVII

WE COOK THE DUCK

“Rescued by a brave, heroic little girl,” I said, as we went tramping off into the road.

“Let’s be sure that we’re headed in the right direction,” Warde said. “After what happened I don’t trust myself at all. Is this the end of the bridge we got on at, or is it the other end?”

“It’s one end or the other,” I said.

“One end’s as good as the other if not better,” Hervey said. “Come on, follow your leader——”

“Have a heart,” I said; “wait a minute. Let me collect my senses. *That’s* north and *that’s* south, and the Hudson is over that way—east. This creek flows into the Hudson. All right, we’re supposed to go in the opposite direction from the direction that little girl is taking. We’re on the right end of the bridge.”

“Right,” Warde said.

“That means that the piece of tin that Pee-wee saw is across the bridge,” Bert said.

“I’ll go back and hunt for it,” said Pee-wee. “Here, hold the fish.”

“At last we’re going to have something to eat,” I said; “I’m so hungry I could eat the piece of tin and all.”

“You’re not going to tell them at camp that we were saved by a little girl, are you?” Pee-wee wanted to know.

“Yes, and I’m going to tell them that a cow laughed at us,” I said. “Hurry up, go and hunt up that piece of tin; I’m starving.”

You see how it was, we were at the north end of the bridge and our way was north. I’m telling you because everything was so mixed up on that crazy hike that maybe you don’t know where you’re at. This is chapter Seventeen and it’s called, “We Cook the Duck” but you can’t always go by names. Don’t get worried, if you lose your way just follow me.

After that terrible adventure the principal thing about us was that we were hungry; we were a kind of a walking famine. I don’t know if that fish shrunk, but anyway it didn’t look as big as it had looked before. I guess it was because our appetites were bigger.

Pee-wee started back across the bridge to hunt for the piece of tin he had seen in the woods, and the rest of us began gathering twigs and pieces of wood for a fire. Oh boy, but that fish looked good! He was dead by that time but he

was good and fresh just the same. We ran a forked stick through his gills and hung him in the water where it was cool and sat around waiting for Pee-wee. We had everything all ready to start the fire.

Pretty soon along came our young hero with the piece of tin, tiptoeing across the bridge, very excited and mysterious.

I said, "What's the matter now? Are we supposed to follow your lead when you do that? Wait till we have something to eat first."

"Don't talk about anything to eat," he whispered; "we're going to have a feast, we're going to have a banquet, we're going to have roast duck. Shh! Here, take this tin. Look over there in the marshes. See? Almost under the end of the bridge? Do you see that streak of white? Shh! That's a duck. He's caught in the branches of that—shh!"

We all tiptoed very softly about half-way across the bridge and leaned way over the railing at the place that he pointed out to us under the other end. There was an old fallen tree there and some of its branches were sticking out of the water. In among them was a duck. I guessed he must have been caught there. It seemed as if he didn't see us or hear us, so I thought he must be caught there in some way because ducks are so suspicious.

"Mm-mmm!" I said. "I can just taste him."

"Looks good to me," Garry said.

"Talk low," said Bert.

"Go back and wait, I'm going to get him," the kid said. "I was the one to discover him."

"I don't care who gets him as long as I can eat him," I said.

"We'll roast him, hey?" the kid whispered. "Go back and wait."

"Look out you don't scare him away," Warde said; "even if he's caught there he might break loose. Go easy and stalk him."

"You leave it to me," the kid said. "You go back and have everything ready. Maybe you think just because Roy and Hervey can lead us in a lot of crazy stunts that they're the only scouts here. But you have to thank me for roast duck, so you see?"

"You're so smart you can even find a sign post——"

"Shh-h!" he said, starting off.

"If there's any cranberry sauce down there bring it along, too," I said.

He waved his hand behind him for us to keep still, and went tiptoeing back across the bridge. We went back to the place where we were going to make our fire. We could see him take off his khaki shirt (so he wouldn't get it wet, I suppose) and hang it over the railing of the bridge. Pretty soon we could see him down below, across the creek, crawling over that fallen tree.

Warde said, "This will be a big feather in Pee-wee's cap."

"It will be a big helping on my plate you mean," I said.

“What do you mean, plate?” Bert wanted to know.

“Look! What do you know about that? The little codger’s got him!” Garry shouted.

“Mm-rn!” I said. “We’ll fry the fish and eat him while we’re waiting for the duck to cook.”

“Let’s not bother with the fish,” I said: “Luck seems to be coming our way at last.

“Have you got him?” I shouted to Pee-wee as he climbed up over the railing at the other end of the bridge.

“Yop,” I heard him say.

“We’ll only have to clean the fish and scale him,” Warde said, “and it’ll be a nuisance. Let’s fry the duck instead. There’ll be plenty for all hands because that’s a good big one. Fish only makes you thirsty, anyway. I’m not so crazy about fish—not when there’s duck. Mmm!”

“We should worry about the fish,” I said, and I went over to the water and threw the fish into the water, stick and all. “He only brought us bad luck anyway,” I said.

“Sure,” Garry said; “give me duck any day. Look at the size of that one, will you?”

“I think it’s a goose,” Bert said.

“I think it’s a swan,” Hervey said.

“It’ll be much easier to eat a duck without any plates or knives or forks,” I said; “we should worry about fish. We can just take the duck’s legs and wings and—oh boy—we can just pick them dry.”

“Hurry up with the duck,” Hervey called to Pee-wee; “we’re not going to bother about the fish. Come on, we’re hungry.”

By that time Pee-wee was about half-way across the bridge. “It’s a decoy duck,” he panted out; “it’s—it’s—just made of wood——”

“What?” I shouted.

“What are you talking about?” Garry hollered at him.

“This is no time for joking,” Hervey said. “Hurry up.”

Pee-wee just came along with a kind of a shamefaced look, and I could see that the duck didn’t hang limp.

“It’s made of wood, it’s a decoy duck,” he said.

None of us spoke, we just looked at him.

“Here, take it and see for yourself,” he said to me.

I said, “Scout Harris, alias Raving Raven, alias Animal Cracker, you have done one good turn. You have brought your starving comrades a wooden duck just after they threw the fish into the creek. You have done your worst.”

“What are you talking about?” he yelled.

“It is true,” I told him; “the plot grows thicker. This is a funny-bone hike

and nothing happens right. Sit down and starve with us. Here, give me the wooden duck. If we should catch a pig on this hike it would turn out to be pig iron. If we caught a cow it would turn out to be a cowslip. Don't blame me, blame Hervey Willetts, he started it."



HERVEY WAS IN THE CREEK, SWIMMING FOR DEAR LIFE.

CHAPTER XVIII WE MEET A FRIEND

All of a sudden, *splash*, Hervey was in the creek, swimming for dear life. We all stood on the shore watching him.

“A marathon race with a fish,” Bert shouted.

“Follow your leader,” I yelled at Hervey.

“Leave it to me,” Hervey spluttered, “I’ll get him.”

Down the creek we could see a stick bobbing. Pretty soon Hervey caught up with it and grabbed it.

“Hurrah!” we all shouted.

“I tell you what let’s do,” Pee-wee said.

“Animal Cracker,” I said, “a boy scout is supposed to be polite. He’s not supposed to kill a brother scout. But if you make any suggestions or promise us any more eats you’re going to die a horrible death.”

“Was I to blame because it was made of wood?” he shouted at me.

“I’ve tasted tougher ducks than that,” Warde said.

“Let bygones be bygones,” Garry said. “Thank goodness we’ve got our fish back. It was a narrow escape.”

“I’d like to know——” the kid began.

“You don’t need to know, it’s all right,” I said.

“You’re so smart——” he started again.

“We’re so smart,” I told him, “that we——”

“Will you let me speak?” he screamed.

“No, what is it?” I said.

“My shirt fell in the water and we haven’t got any matches,” he said. “So what good is the fish? I’ve been trying to tell you that for five minutes.”

I didn’t say anything, I just lay down on the ground. The rest of them did the same. “Follow your leader,” Garry groaned.

“This is too much,” I said; “let me die in peace.”

“What’s the matter?” Hervey asked, climbing out of the water with the precious fish.

“Oh nothing,” I said, “except Pee-wee’s shirt fell in the water over at the other end of the bridge and we haven’t got any matches. Don’t worry, they’ll find our bodies here; lie down, it’s all over. Pee-wee wins.”

So there we all lay sprawled on the ground, the kid sitting up watching us.

“We did our best to eat and live,” I said, “but the West Shore Railroad and turntables and sign posts and drawbridges and wooden ducks were too much

for us. Come on, I'm going to die, follow your leader."

"There's a way to kindle a fire without a match," the kid said.

"Yes, and it sounds nice in the handbook too. But did you ever try it?" I asked him. "Don't talk to me. Tell my patrol that my last thoughts were of them. Tell Westy Martin he can have my dessert at dinner; tell him to think of me while he's eating."

All of a sudden somebody shouted, "A sail! A sail! A sail on the horizon!"

"Same old horizon," I said. "What kind of a sale is it now?"

All of a sudden up jumped Pee-wee. "Good turns are like chickens," he said.

"Don't talk about chickens," I told him; "have a heart."

"They come home to roast," he said.

"When we haven't any matches?" I said. "That's very kind of them. Can't you let me die in peace?"

"It's the Italian with the donkey," he said; "the donkey we pulled off the railroad track with the gas engine, and he's smoking a pipe——"

"Who? The donkey?" I asked him.

"The man," Pee-wee said; "so he must have matches. Hurrah!"

We all sat up at once and stared up the road. And, oh boy, as sure as you live, there was that old scissors-grinding wagon coming toward us, and the donkey should have been arrested for speeding, because he was going about two inches a year. Up on the seat sat our Italian friend, smoking a pipe.

"Hey, Tony!" I shouted. "Have you got any matches or sandwiches, or sawdust or spaghetti or old scissors or pieces of leather or rye bread or peanuts or steel nuts or pie or anything else we can eat? We're starving."

"Hey, boss, how you do?" he shouted. He was smiling all over.

CHAPTER XIX

WE EAT

That man had a lot of lunch, pickles and bologna and a pail of spaghetti and bread and everything, and there was only one thing that we didn't like about it, and that was that he had already eaten it about an hour before. So it didn't do us much good. It only made us hungrier when he told us about it. He said, "Badda luck, hey, Boss? Spagett, ah, what d'you call it, *nice*. You lika, huh?"

Warde said, "We don't like spaghetti that's already passed into history."

"We don't like history, anyway," I said. "But have you got any matches?"

The man said, "Hey, sure, boss, plenty de match."

So he gave us some matches and about half a loaf of shiny looking bread that he had left from his own lunch and then he went along across the bridge. We asked him how business was and he said, "No biz."

After that we got our fire started and we cooked our fish on the tin that Pee-wee had found and, yum yum, but that lunch tasted good. Maybe if you were ever a starving mariner shipwrecked on a desert island, you'll know how that lunch tasted.

We were good and tired so we sprawled around in the woods near the creek and jollied each other, especially Pee-wee.

Warde said, "The next time anybody mentions a funny-bone hike to me _____"

"What do you know about funny-bone hikes?" Hervey shot back. "You've only seen the beginning of one. What we've been doing up to now is just a demonstration."

"Good night, have a heart," I said.

Hervey just lay there on his back with one leg up in the air, catching that crazy hat of his on his foot and trying to kick it back on his face—honest, that fellow's a scream. All the while he was singing:

The land is very funny,
And the water's very wet,
We've been everywhere,
But up in the air;
And we haven't done anything yet.

I said, "Sure, maybe if we're patient we'll have some mishaps. While there's life there's hope."

"Trust to Hervey," Bert said.

Pee-wee said, "I could do without the mishaps if I had some more food."

"When you're hungry you're supposed to eat a little at a time," I told him. "Don't you know when a man is starving they give him one spoonful of milk to begin with? You have to get used to eating."

"I'm used to it already," our young hero shouted.

Warde said, "You'd better look out; did you ever hear about the fish——"

"There isn't any more fish," I said.

"He was in a globe," Warde said, "and the man that owned him took a spoonful of water out of the globe each day until that fish gradually learned to live on dry land."

"What are you talking about?" Pee-wee screamed.

"I knew that fish personally," Warde said; "and one day the man took him out for a walk and the fish fell into a pond and was drowned."

"That's nothing," Hervey said. "I knew a snake that lived in the tropics where it was very hot and he came to New York on a visit, and he fell into a furnace and froze to death."

"Do you expect me to believe that?" Pee-wee yelled.

"Sure," Hervey said, "if I believe it you've got to believe it, because I'm your leader. From this time on we're going to play the game right, if I'm going to be leader."

"We have more fun doing things wrong," I said.

"Sure," he said, all the while kicking his hat; "the things may be wrong but we're supposed to do them right."

"Now I know you're crazy," Pee-wee said.

"Are you all willing to play the game right?" Hervey wanted to know.

"Anything you say," I told him; "we're prepared for the worst."

"You needn't think I'm going without supper and breakfast," the kid said.

Hervey just lay there on his back putting his hat onto his foot and trying to kick it onto his head.

"Are we supposed to do that?" I asked him.

He said, "This is intermission, this is lunch hour. But when I jump up and say, 'Scrhlmxmi'——"

"What?" Pee-wee yelled.

"It's a Greek word, it means 'we should worry,'" I said.

Hervey said, "I'll tell you how it is if you want to play the game right. You're supposed to follow your leader in *everything*. If he laughs, you must laugh; if he keeps still, you must keep still; if he has a headache, you must have a headache."

"Do you think I'm going to have a headache just to please you?" Pee-wee shouted in his face. "How about toothaches, and—and—appendicitis—and——"

“Follow your leader,” Hervey said.

“Yes, and where will we be at supper-time?” the kid wanted to know.

“There’s another verse that goes with that game,” Hervey said. Then he began singing all the while trying to balance a stick on his nose while he was lying on the ground. Gee whiz, I had to laugh, he looked so funny. This was the song:

On a funny-bone hike you don’t get in a rut,
The best kind of leader is one that’s a nut;
Just keep your feet moving and keep your mouth shut,
And the shortest way home is to take a long cut.
 And go north,
 And go south;
 And go east,
 And go west;
The wrong way to get there is always the best.

CHAPTER XX

WE MAKE A PROMISE

After we were all rested, all of a sudden Hervey jumped up and started off, the rest of us after him singing *Follow your leader wherever he goes*. For a while he kept singing and we all kept singing. Sometimes he would go zigzag on the road and we all did the same. For a little way he held one of his legs in his hand and hopped till he fell on the ground and the rest of us fell all over him. He did all kinds of crazy things and whatever he said we said it after him. Pretty soon he turned off the turnpike into another road.

“The wrong way to get there is always the best,” he said.

“The wrong way to get there is always the best,” I said.

All of us said the same sentence. Gee whiz, it sounded crazy.

Pretty soon we met a farmer and Hervey he said, “Hey, mister, can you tell us the wrong way to the scout camp?”

I said, “Hey, mister, can you tell us the wrong way to the scout camp?”

Bert said, “Hey, mister, can you tell us the wrong way to the scout camp?”

The others said the same and the man looked at us as if he thought we were lunatics.

“You’re going the wrong way now,” he said.

“Thanks very much,” Hervey said, and off he started again.

“Maybe he’s mistaken, maybe it’s the right way and we’re going all wrong,” I said. “Suppose he misdirected us and we get somewhere?”

Bert said, “Trust to Hervey, we won’t get anywhere. He knows where he’s not going.”

“Sure, he has a fine sense of misdirection,” Garry said.

“We’ll end in Maine,” Pee-wee said, “that’s where all the maniacs belong. The nearer we get to Temple Camp the farther off it is.”

“We’ve been everywhere,
But up in the air;
And we haven’t done anything yet.”

Warde began singing.

All of a sudden Hervey turned around and looked very severe and held his finger to his mouth.

“Silence,” I said; “Play the game. Can’t you keep still? If you can’t keep still, keep quiet.”

So then we followed him not saying a word. It was fine to hear Pee-wee not talking.

Pretty soon we came to a place that I knew. They call it New Corners. It isn't exactly new, it's kind of slightly used. It's a village. There's a sign that says New Corners; that's so you'll know it's there. It's about as big as New York only smaller.

Hervey turned around and said, "Let's buy some gumdrops. Intermission; you can all talk."

We had about fourteen cents altogether and we bought some gumdrops in the post office and divided them. There was a big pole outside the barber shop that looked like a peppermint stick and we wished that we could eat that. When we started off again, Hervey held his hat out on the end of a stick (he always carries a stick that fellow does) and threw a gumdrop into his hat.

"Follow your leader," he said.

I threw a gumdrop into my hat the same way, and he said, "No, you don't, you're supposed to follow your leader. Each one throw a gumdrop into my hat."

Oh boy, you should have seen our young Animal Cracker go up in the air. He yelled, "What do you think I am?"

"Play the game!" Hervey shouted. "You're charged with insubordination."

"I don't care what kind of a nation I'm charged with," Pee-wee shouted. "If you throw it into your hat that means I have to throw it into my hat. Do you think I'm throwing away gumdrops? I'll follow my leader, but——"

Just then Hervey threw a gumdrop into Pee-wee's hat.

"Maybe you're right after all," the kid said; "you know the rules about the game——"

"Now listen," Hervey said. "Who's got a watch that's right?"

"I've got a watch that's right," I said, "and it's the only thing here that is right."

"That's because it goes around and around just like we do," Hervey said; "it never gets anywhere but it keeps going. You can depend on a compass because it always points one way, but a watch keeps changing, you can't depend on it. One minute it says one thing and another minute it says another thing. That's what I don't like about a watch."

"A watch would have to go some to keep up with you," I said.

"You couldn't carry a watch," Pee-wee said, "because it would fall out of your pocket. You're upside down half the time."

"You're more like a speedometer," I said. "What do you want my watch for?"

"Can't you guess?" he said.

"What do you want his watch for?" Pee-wee shouted, his mouth all the while full of gumdrops.

"To find out what time it is," Hervey said.

"It's just exactly four o'clock," I told him.

"All hold up your hands," he said. "Have the watch hold up its hands too. We're going to play this game right."

He said, "Not one of us is going to speak another word till we see Temple Camp. When we see it I will be the first one to speak."

"I'll be the next," Pee-wee shouted.

Hervey said, "The first one to speak before I do agrees to stand in front of the bulletin board at camp to-morrow with a sign on him saying I AM A QUITTER AND A FLUNKER, and if I speak before I see Temple Camp I'll do the same. How about it? Do you agree?"

"Posilutely," I said. "Silence is my favorite outdoor sport."

"Put me down," Warde said; "I'm playing the game."

"I'll be just as if I were asleep," Garry said.

"I talk in my sleep," Pee-wee piped up.

"Not one word till we see Temple Camp," Hervey said; "how about it."

"I'll die for the cause," Bert said.

Hervey said, "All right then; *ready*——"

"Wait a minute," Pee-wee said. "Wait till I think if there's anything I want to say before I shut up."

"Say it and forever after hold your peace," I said.

"What's your last word?" Garry asked him.

"My last word is that I'm hungry," the kid shouted.

"All right, shut up, everybody," Hervey said, "and

"Don't ask where you're headed for nobody knows,
Just keep your eyes open and follow your nose;
Be careful, don't trip and go stubbing your toes,
But follow your leader wherever he goes."

After that you couldn't hear a sound.

CHAPTER XXI WE KEEP STILL

Now in this chapter not a single word is spoken. I bet you'll say, "Thank goodness for that." My sister said this will be the best chapter of the whole book because all of us keep still. I should worry about her. One thing, I'm glad on account of not having to use any quotation marks—I hate those things.

But anyway just because our tongues weren't going that doesn't mean our feet weren't going. And I'll tell you this much, something terrible is going to happen. Believe me, there are worse things than talking. Maybe it's all right to keep still, but it got us in a lot of trouble and I'm never going to keep still again as long as I live. Pee-wee says he isn't either. Hervey says it's actions that count, but words are all right—I like words.

Now I don't know whether Hervey knew where he was going or not. That fellow knows all the country for miles around Temple Camp. He made believe he was lost. He says no matter where you are you can't really get lost because you're some place and if you just keep going you'll come to some place else and he says anyway one place is as good as another. So even if you're home maybe you're lost.

Anyway he kept going along that country road that branched off from the turnpike. It was uphill and pretty soon we came to Old Corners only there wasn't anything left of it except an old church. I guess the rest of the village must have rolled down the hill and started up in another place.

Gee whiz, I like it up there on the hill but you never can tell what a village will do when it gets started. I was just going to say that maybe it was on a funny-bone hike only I happened to remember about keeping still. It was nice and quiet up on that hill—no wonder.

Up there were three or four old houses with nobody living in them and they were falling to pieces. The church was ramshackle, I guess it was good and old. There was grass growing between the wooden steps and there was moss all around on the stone step. All the windows were broken and there was a great big spider-web across one window. There were old shingles on the ground too, that had blown off the roof. There were initials cut in the railing of the steps. There was an old ladder standing up against the steeple.

"L-l-l——" Pee-wee started to say, and just caught himself in time.

Hervey walked straight for the ladder and up he went, with the rest of us after him. The steeple wasn't so high but it was pretty high. The ladder stood against a little window maybe half-way up. Hervey crawled in through the

window and so did the rest of us. He kept looking back holding his finger to his mouth; he looked awful funny.

In there was a kind of a little gallery around the edge and you could look down in through the middle. It smelled like dried wood in there; it smelled kind of like an attic. It was terribly hot. I saw something hanging that I thought was an old dried rag and when I grabbed it, *swhh*, just like that it gave me a start, and I let go pretty quick because it was a bat. We threw it out through the opening. There were a couple more there but we didn't bother them. They looked just like rags that had been hung up wet and got dry hanging there—stiff like.



"I LET GO PRETTY QUICK BECAUSE IT WAS A BAT."

None of us said anything but just did what Hervey did as near as we could in a little, cramped place like that. We didn't lean on that old wooden railing

around the gallery—safety first. Down through that open space hung a rope; it went almost to the bottom. There was a floor down there; I guessed it was the vestibule of the old church.

Up above us it was quite light because there were openings on the four sides. There were a lot of beams braced all crisscross like, every which way and there was a big bell hanging from them. The rope hung down from above that bell.

We could look right up into the inside of the bell, and there was a big spider-web across it and a great big yellow spider there. The rope up there was frayed where it touched the edge of the bell when the bell swung. Hervey tried to reach out to the rope but the railing creaked and I pulled him back. If we could have talked it wouldn't have been so bad, but it seemed kind of spooky with no one saying anything.

There was a little ladder fastened tight against the side going up to that place above. I guess nobody ever went up there except maybe to fix the bell. Hervey started up. It was hard because the ladder was tight against the wall and we didn't have much foothold. But I wouldn't admit he could do anything that I couldn't do and I guess the other fellows felt the same about it.

There wasn't any place to sit or stand up there except the beams. It was kind of like being in a tree. We perched in them the best we could. The wood was awful dry and every time we touched it with our hands we got splinters. But one thing, we could see out all over the country; we could see hills and woods and trees and fields with stone walls that looked just like lines. It was pretty hard to keep from speaking. Away, way off I saw a kind of blue strip and I knew it was the Hudson River. I was just starting to say "Some bird's-eye view," but I caught myself in time.

Hervey was looking down out of one of the openings and he caught my arm and pointed. I looked down on the road. It was a crooked, rocky road, but it looked all even and nice from up there. You could see it away, way off just like a fresh place made with a plane, sort of.

Going along the road was an old hay wagon with oxen and a man with a great big straw hat driving them. On the wagon, sticking away out at both ends, was a ladder. I looked straight down below and the ladder was gone from against the steeple.

I was just starting to shout after the man when Hervey clapped his hand to my mouth and with his other hand he wrote the word QUITTER on the wooden sill and put a question-mark after it. By that time we were all crowding at the opening but none of us said a word. Hervey just pointed to what he had written and looked at us. None of us called after the man. There wasn't any sound at all except the beams creaking when we moved.

It was good and spooky up there, I know that.

CHAPTER XXII

WE HEAR A VOICE

Hervey just held up his finger to remind us, but anyway the man had gone too far to hear us.

All of a sudden Pee-wee set up a shout, "I see Temple Camp! I see Temple Camp!"

"Where?" I asked him, all excited.

"I can see the pavilion!" he shouted. "I can see the lake! Hey, mister, come back with the ladder!"

"I guess you're right," Hervey said; "that's the camp, all right."

"I discovered it! I discovered it!" Pee-wee yelled. "Hey, mister, come back with that ladder! I can see Temple Camp! Come back!"

But it wasn't any use; the man was too far away and the breeze was the other way, and there we were and we couldn't do anything.

"Why didn't you shout sooner?" Pee-wee wanted to know, all excited.

"You were the one to discover the camp," Hervey said.

"Why didn't you shout as soon as you saw the man?" he shot back.

"Because I made a solemn vow," Hervey said.

"Now we're up against it," the kid said.

"We're *up*, all right," said Warde. "Nobody can deny that."

"How are we going to get down?" Pee-wee wanted to know. "That's what you get for making solemn vows. Solemn vows are all right but they don't get you any supper. I can see the smoke going up from the cooking shack. Do you see it? Away, way off there?"

I could see it all right, and oh boy, it looked good. I could see just a little dab of blue, all sparkling, and I knew it was Black Lake. I could see a speck of brown and I knew it was the pavilion. It looked as if it might be about ten miles off. All around, no matter which way we looked, were woods and mountains.

"Some panorama," Warde said.

"You can't eat panoramas," the kid shouted.

"Sure you can," I told him. "Didn't you ever eat an orama? They fry them in pans; that's why they call them panoramas; they're fine."

"Yes, and we'll be marooned here all night too," he piped up. "There isn't anybody for miles around. A lot of good the view is going to do us. This is the loneliest place I ever saw, I bet it's haunted. I bet that's why everybody moved away."

Bert said, "I don't believe any ghosts would stay here, it's too lonely. Besides, where would they buy their groceries?"

"Ghosts don't eat," the kid said.

"I hope you'll never be a ghost then," I told him.

"We're lucky," Hervey said. "You ought to thank me for bringing you up here. We can see just where Temple Camp is. We don't have to depend on sign posts that change their minds and turntables that send us back to where we came from or anything. We can see Temple Camp with our own eyes. Now we know which way to go."

"Only we can't go there," I said.

He said, "That doesn't make any difference."

"Sure it doesn't," I said. "As long as we know where camp is we're not lost any more. We know where we're at. And when we get to a place where we know where we're at it's a good place to stay. Deny it if you dare. I'd rather be up here and see the camp and not be able to get there than to be able to get there if we knew where it was but not to know where it was."

"Do you call that logic?" Pee-wee yelled. "It makes it all the worse to see it."

"Well, look the other way then," I told him.

"There's only one place we haven't been to so far and that's under the ocean," he said.

"Don't get discouraged, leave it to Hervey, he'll take us there," I said. "There's a nice breeze up here. Watch out for an airplane, maybe we'll be rescued."

"Were you ever in a well?" Hervey asked us.

"No, is it much fun?" I said.

He said, "It's too slow, quicksand is better, it's quicker. I'd like to have a ride on a shooting star."

"Comets are pretty good," Garry said.

"I was never on one of those," I said.

Pee-wee said, "The night is coming on. What are we going to do? I'm all stiff from hanging onto this beam."

"Let's get down on the platform again," Hervey said. "Follow your leader."

He scrambled over to the ladder and went down and we all followed him to the gallery below. Looking out of the little window there we could see the sun going down; it was all big and red and it made the woods all red too away over to the west. That was where Temple Camp was. It began to seem kind of spooky in that steeple on account of the sun going down and everything being so quiet. The old, ramshackle houses below us, with their roofs falling in and their windows all broken made it seem even more lonesome where we were.

Gee whiz, the woods aren't lonesome, but places where people used to be are lonesome.

All of a sudden Garry said, "Listen—shh."

"It's just those timbers creaking above us," I said.

He said, "It sounded like a voice."

"Well if it's a voice up there where the bell is," Warde said, "it hasn't got any body to it. I can see all around up there; I can see inside the bell."

Pee-wee just stared at us, "What did I tell you?" he whispered. "Voices without bodies, those are the worst kind. I'm not going to stay up here after dark, I'm——"

"Shh—listen," Warde said.

"You mean away off there in the woods?" I said. "I hear that."

"No, not that," he said; "right above us. Listen. Hear it?"

"Kind of like murmuring?" I asked him.

"Right up there by the bell," he said.

We all stood stark still, listening. Maybe that bell was thirty or forty feet above us. Just as plain as could be I could hear a sort of murmuring up there. I can't tell you what it was like, but anyway it wasn't the timbers creaking or anything like that. It was like a voice. But nobody was up there. It was kind of like *H-l-l-l*.

Gee whiz, it gave me the shudders to listen to it.

CHAPTER XXIII

WE GO TO THE RESCUE

Oh boy, I have to admit I was scared. Even Hervey didn't start joking about it, but just listened. Away, way off somewhere I could hear something like a voice, but it wasn't that that we heard above us.

All of a sudden Hervey said, "I'm not going to hang around here any longer, you can bet. I don't like this place. I don't want to spend the night here. Come on, follow your leader, take a chance."

Before I had a chance to grab him he had reached out across the railing into the open space and got hold of the bell rope. It was beyond his reach so he had to sort of jump for it. I guess it was his jumping and his weight both that made the rope go down, but anyway it went down enough to rock the bell sideways.

It was the creaking that made me look up, and then I saw the bell standing that way. It didn't ring because there wasn't any tongue in it but just as plain as could be, I could hear a voice in that bell say, "*Help.*" It just sent a kind of a shudder through me to hear it. Then the bell swung down again because Hervey's weight on the rope wasn't enough to hold it up that way. In a few seconds I could hear Hervey dropping from the end of the rope to the ground down below, and calling, "Follow your leader wherever he goes."

But just the same none of us moved.

"Coming down?" he called. But we didn't answer him.

"What is it?" Bert asked in a whisper.

"You heard it," I said. "You know as much about it as I do. There's a spook here."

"The place is haunted," Pee-wee whispered, all excited.

"Let's go down," Garry said. "I'd rather take a chance on that rope than to stay up here. Listen."

We all listened but the voice above us didn't call again.

"It's a spirit in the bell, that's what it is," the kid said. "It's a voice without any body to it—in the bell."

None of us wanted to stay up there, I guess, but just the same none of us wanted to move. It just seemed as if we *couldn't* move.

Pretty soon Warde said, "Wait a minute, let me get hold of that rope."

He climbed over the old wooden railing and held on with one hand while he reached out with the other one. Then, all of a sudden, he was swinging on the rope and as sure as I live, just in that minute the voice above called, "Help."

We just stood there, all trembling. Pee-wee's eyes were starting out of his head.

All of a sudden I heard Warde call, "Wait till I get down and then come down after me. Don't be scared. There isn't anything in the bell, it's some one in the woods. The bell throws the voice down when it's pulled up sideways. It's a reflex echo, if you know what that is. Come ahead down one at a time. You should worry about spooks."

We didn't hear the voice every time one of us swung off on the rope. Maybe the voice away off didn't call just at the right time or maybe not all of us were heavy enough. But once or twice we heard it again. It sounded good and clear. Bert came down. He was the last one and he was the heaviest.

Now that's just the way it was—the way I told you. That's the nearest I ever came to a ghost in my life. When the bell swung up sideways it swung toward the west. Warde explained just how it was. So if you don't believe me you can ask him. There was a voice somewhere that we could hardly hear. But when the bell swung up it caught the voice *inside it* and when it swung down it threw the voice down; it kind of brought the voice down and dropped it out. And because the bell was hollow and made of metal it made the voice louder and stronger.

That's the only way I can tell you, but it's true and echoes like that are called reflex echoes, only I guess nobody heard of a reflex echo exactly like that before. In echoes like that you hear the echo when you can't really hear the voice. When that bell was hanging the sound waves (that's what you call them) struck the outside slanting part of the bell and were reflected *up*. But when the bell swung it caught the sound inside it and just sort of tumbled it out on us.

So if you ever go to Old Corners you'll see a sign on that old church that we put there and it says ECHO CHIMES. Then it tells you just exactly where to go in the woods in order to make an echo like the one that scared us so. Maybe you wonder how we found out just where to go in the woods. So that's what I'm going to tell you in the next chapter. Because it was a real voice away off somewhere in the woods that was calling for help. The funny part of it was that we heard the reflex echo but we didn't hear the voice. I bet you'll say I'm smart when you read all this but, gee whiz, I guess you'd call it reflex smartness because I got it all from Warde Hollister.

CHAPTER XXIV

WE DROP DEAD-ALMOST

We crossed the road and hit into the woods going straight west. We knew which way to go because it was when the bell swung up that we got the echo, and because it swung toward the setting sun.

Every little while one of us had to climb a tree to see where the sun was. Lucky for us Temple Camp was in that direction, and beside the sun we had the smoke from the cooking shack to guide us. We took turns climbing the trees.

We didn't play Follow Your Leader because our minds were on rescuing that person who was calling for help.

"I'm glad Temple Camp is in the same direction," Warde said, "because I'm good and hungry."

"I'm going to eat dinner and supper all in one when we get back," Pee-wee said.

"I could eat hardtack or upholstery tacks or carpet tacks or gilt-headed tacks, I'm so hungry," I said.

"I'd like to have—one—big—chunk—of chocolate cake," said Garry.

"I'd eat a cake of soap," I said.

Pee-wee kept trudging along, not saying much; he was thinking about supper, I suppose. He was in a better humor because he knew for sure we were headed for camp. Hervey kept going ahead of us and shinning up trees till he could see the smoke at camp. Every little while we all shouted together but no voice answered.

"The breeze is the other way," Warde said; "maybe he can hear us even though we can't hear him. Whoever it is he's probably lost and rattled. Let's shout to him to stay where he is. We don't want both parties moving around, it only doubles the work."

So we stopped and all crowded together so as to make our voices as much like one voice as we could and shouted "Stay—where—you—are— we're—coming."

We listened for a few seconds and then we could hear a voice, very thin and far off. It sounded like R-i-i-i. We guessed it meant "All right."

We cut through the woods faster after that and pretty soon we called and the voice answered, and so we didn't have to bother any more climbing trees. We were pretty tired and hungry but I guess we all felt good.

"They'll never believe all the adventures we had," Pee-wee panted,

“because we can’t prove them. The best way is always to bring back some proof, hey?”

“Did you expect us to bring back the turntable and the sign post and the drawbridge and a couple of West Shore trains?” I asked him.

“In my patrol you have to prove all tests,” he said.

“That’s easy,” I told him, “because no one in that patrol ever passes any tests. All they know how to pass is the eats. Some of them don’t even know enough to pass the time of day.”

“You think you’re so smart,” he said. “Which is better? Some crullers or a scout?”

“Is it a riddle?” I asked him. “Why is a raving raven like a cruller? Because he’s twisted. Ask me another. What’s that got to do with taking tests?”

“When you took Test Four for a second-class scout,” he said, “you tracked half a mile and took a scout with you. I went alone. I tracked half a mile to Johnson’s Bakery and bought ten cents’ worth of crullers for proof. A witness might lie but crullers don’t lie.”

“How many witnesses did you have in the paper bag when you got back?” Garry wanted to know.

“Every test I ever took I brought back the proof,” the kid said. “I don’t bother with witnesses, I don’t.”

I said, “Sure, when he had to tell the points of the compass he went and brought home the North Pole and the South Pole and the East Pole and the West Pole to prove it.”

“Silent witnesses are best, that’s what our patrol leader says,” the kid shouted. “That’s the way we have to do in our patrol.”

“Listen to who’s talking about silence,” I said. “Don’t make me laugh. We should have brought the reflex echo home with us to prove we were up in that steeple.”

“Maybe we’ll take the original voice home with us, that’s better, hey?” Warde said.

That reminded us to call again, and that time the voice answered good and plain.

“Sit down and take it easy, we’re coming,” Garry shouted.

Pretty soon we could see a brown hat in among the trees.

“It’s a scout,” Bert said.

“He must be a tenderfoot to be lost five or six miles from camp,” Hervey said. “All he had to do was to climb a tree.”

“I know who he is!” Pee-wee started shouting; “it’s Willie Cook. He’s the new member of my patrol. He comes from East Bridgeboro.”

“You ought to tie a cow-bell around his neck the next time you let him roam around in the woods,” Bert said.

I said, "Sure. Why don't you make him play in the backyard? Safety first. He's a raving Raven, all right; he's lost and he can *prove* it."

"He isn't trusting to witnesses," Bert said; "he's lost and he knows it."

I said, "That's one thing I like about the raving Ravens; they're always sure of themselves. When one of them gets lost he knows it."

"You make me tired!" Pee-wee yelled. "He's a tenderfoot. He's going to be the best scout in my patrol——"

"That's easy," I said. "Maybe he isn't the best scout in camp, I'm not saying, but he's the best scout that's lost in the woods. A scout is thorough. He's some scout all right; when he gets lost he gets good and lost." Then I shouted, "What's the matter, Kid? Lost, strayed or stolen?"

The poor kid just stared at us and smiled as if he thought we had saved his life.

"I'm—I'm mixed up," he said; "I started and I came back to the same place and I don't know where I am. Are you—did you come from camp?"

I said, "No, we're on our way there. Calm down, you're all right. The camp is about six miles west. What are you doing here, anyway?"

"I'm—I'm doing a—a test," he said.

Hervey Willetts just rolled on the ground and screamed. All the rest of us started to laugh except Pee-wee.

"These fellows are crazy," the kid said; "don't you mind them."

"I've—I've got to cook some food," the little fellow said, all kind of confused.

"What? Where?" I shouted.

"Lead us to it!" Bert yelled.

"What do you mean—*food*?" Garry said.

"I—I come first!" Pee-wee shouted, all excited. "He's in my patrol! Where's the food?"

"I've got to cook it and take it home for a proof," the kid said.

Just then we all fell on the ground. I guess he thought we were dead.

CHAPTER XXV

WE PROVE IT

When I recovered from winning the laughing badge I said, “What’s the idea, Kiddo? Did you think you could win the forestry badge by being lost in the forest?”

“Don’t listen to him, he’s crazy,” Pee-wee shouted at Willie Cook.

I said, “The next thing you’ll be trying to win the electricity badge by being struck by lightning.” Our young tenderfoot hero, Scout Cook, said, “If I can do Tests Five and Eight I’ll be a second-class scout. It’s all right if you give them good measure, isn’t it?”

I said, “Sure, but I wouldn’t give them a whole world tour for a two mile hike in these days of the high cost of hiking. Test Five says you must hike a mile and back. You must have hiked about a dozen miles. What are you going to do now?”

“Are you sure I’m a mile away from camp?” he asked me.

“Positively guaranteed,” I told him. “You’ll find out before you get back.”

“I’m going to do two tests at once,” he said.

“Boy, but you’re reckless,” Garry said. “What’s the other test?”

He said, “It’s Test Eight. I’ve got to cook this meat and these potatoes. See? And I’m going to put my initials on a tree to prove I hiked this far, and I’m going to take the food back to prove I cooked it. Because you have to prove things, don’t you?”

“Ask Scout Harris,” I said; “he’s in your patrol. He knows all about laws and food and everything.”

Gee whiz, I knew those two tests well enough—Five and Eight. One says a scout must go a mile—scout pace he’s supposed to go. The other says he must cook a quarter of a pound of meat and two potatoes without any cooking utensils. That kid had about a dozen potatoes and a couple of pounds or so of meat, ready to cook.

“Where did you get all this?” I asked him.

“I bought them at a butcher’s in Berryville and if I cook them and take them back will I be a second-class scout?”

“Positively guaranteed,” I told him. “The more you take back the more of a scout you’ll be. Ask Scout Harris.”

“They’re all crazy,” Pee-wee told him; “don’t pay any attention to them. We’ll cook the things and eat them. You’re supposed to be generous, you’re supposed to help a fellow scout. Anyway, all you need to take back is a quarter

of a pound of meat and two potatoes, but you don't even need to take that much because I'll testify that you cooked them. All these fellows will testify."

"Yes, but you said they're all crazy," Willie Cook piped up.

"A—eh—a crazy fellow can testify, can't he?" Pee-wee shouted. "Anyway if I testify it's enough; everybody at Temple Camp knows me. Unwrap the bundle and let's cook the stuff; we haven't had anything but one fish and a bite of chocolate each since breakfast——"

"Two bites," Garry said; "and don't forget the roast duck."

Oh boy! Laugh? I just stood there shaking. There stood poor little Willie Cook holding his greasy bundle behind him and backing away so Pee-wee couldn't grab it.

"Are you going to be generous and help a fellow scout or not?" he was shouting. "Don't you know a scout is supposed to save life? You get—a—a gold medal for that. We haven't had anything to eat——"

"Except roast duck," I said.

"Will you keep still!" he yelled.

Willie Cook just looked at me, kind of scared, and he said, "I'm going to do what this fellow says because he's a patrol leader. I heard a scout at camp say so."

"Bully for you, Kid," I said; "you just follow me and you can't go right! Can he, Hervey?"

"Except by accident," Hervey said.

"Sure, and we don't have that kind of accidents," I told the kid. "You're right. Proof is more important than appetites. Isn't it, Garry?"

"Will you stop your crazy nonsense and let's cook the food?" Pee-wee screamed. "You all make me tired! Here's a lot of food—All he needs to take back, anyway, is about one potato and a little piece of meat——"

The little fellow looked at Pee-wee and then he looked at me as if he didn't know what to do.

I said, "If he had only hiked one mile it would have been all right to go back with one potato, but he's been roaming all over the woods, miles and miles, and so he needs to take back more proof; he needs all the proof he has. He's a good Raven. Come on, Kid, cook the things and put your initials here and then we'll all go back to camp and show them the stuff. When the raving Ravens see those nice brown potatoes and that meat cooked just as if you were the chef of the Waldorf Castoria they'll hand you the second-class badge. Won't they, Scout Harris?"

"Do you think it's smart getting him all mixed up?" Pee-wee just yelled. "You think you're funny with all your crazy nonsense. Don't you know Law Three says a scout must be prepared at all times to save life, and don't you know we're nearly starving? Do you think I'm going to funny-bone hike all

around the Catskill Mountains just to please you and never eat anything? I'm not going to go another step till I have something to eat, I can tell you that!"

"The handbook——" I began saying.

"Do you think I can eat the handbook?" he shrieked at me. "You and your crazy talk! Come on, let's get a fire started. I'll see that he gets his badge all right. You leave it to me."

"Just the same as you got us a roast duck," I said.

"Do you deny that you're hungry?" he yelled.

"I admit it," I said, "but duty calls——"

Just then the poor little tenderfoot handed me his precious bundle; I guess he thought it would be in safer keeping. And in about two seconds the whole six of us were scrambling for it. And in about a half a minute we had a fire started.

I said, "Kiddo, proof is all right, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Pee-wee is right and I'm wrong as he usually is. If the testimony of five scouts and a half isn't enough to prove what you did all the meat in the Chicago stock markets wouldn't do it. Don't worry, leave it to us; you'll get the second-class badge all right. Testifying on merit and class tests is our middle name. There's only one thing we do better than that, and that is eat. And we're ready to give you the PROOF, hey, Hervey?"

"That's us," Hervey said. "I just thought up a new way to get lost on the way back. If we don't look out we'll bunk into Temple Camp." That poor little tenderfoot looked from one to the other of us as if he thought we sure were crazy. I guess he was right. We should worry.

CHAPTER XXVI

WE SEE A HOUSE

So then Willie Cook cooked his meat and potatoes and as long as he was a tenderfoot and didn't know much about scouting we showed him how scouts eat. We let him keep one potato and about an ounce of meat to take back to camp for evidence to show to the raving Ravens. After that we felt pretty good so we sprawled around and rested a while.

Scout Cook said, "Are you going straight back to camp?"

"Not straight," Hervey said, "but we're on our way there. If it's where it was this morning, we're going to go to it. I suppose it was there when you left, wasn't it?"

"It's usually there," Bert said.

"Don't pay any attention to them," Pee-wee said to his new member; "they've been acting like that all day. They've been going around and around and around like a chicken with its head off. Hervey Willetts and Roy Blakeley are the worst of the lot."

"Sure, we're each worse than the other if not more so," I said. "The question is, where do we go from here?"

"We go straight west to Temple Camp," Pee-wee shouted; "we're not going to, what d'you call it, deviate."

"Call it whatever you want, I don't care," I said.

"And we're going to go pretty soon, too," the kid said; "we're going to go while the column of smoke from the cooking shack is still going up. We can't see the sun any more; we haven't got anything to follow but the smoke."

"Wrong the first time," I said. "We've got Hervey Willetts to follow. I'd rather follow him than the sun; the sun always goes to the same place; he goes every which way. There's no pep to the sun. Is there, Scout Cook?"

I guess the poor little kid thought we were a pack of lunatics. He didn't know what to say.

"What time did you leave camp?" I asked him.

He said, "About one o'clock; just after the bus came with a lot of new scouts. There's a big troop coming to-night and Uncle Jeb has got to send them to Bear Mountain Camp because there aren't any more tents or cabins to put them in. I'd rather stay at Temple Camp, wouldn't you?"

"The only place I like to stay at is nowhere," Hervey said; "and I don't care to stay very long even there. Why didn't the bunch in Administration Shack let that troop know before they started, I wonder?"

“The troop sent a telegram,” Willie Cook said.

“What do you say we hike to Bear Mountain to-night?” Hervey said.

“Are there bears there?” Willie wanted to know.

I said, “No, they call it Bear Mountain because all the scouts go round in their bare feet up there. Give me Temple Camp every time; there’s only one thing I don’t like about it, and that is going home from it.”

“If you like it so much it’s a wonder you don’t go there,” Pee-wee shouted. “You’ve been going there all day and none of us are there yet. Pretty soon the smoke will die down and then what? You know yourself you can’t trust signboards or anything up here. We know that column of smoke is in the west because that’s where the sun went down and we know that Temple Camp is the only place that sends up a big column of smoke like that. Are you going to stop your nonsense and follow it or not?”

“We don’t need the smoke,” Warde said. “See that roof right in line with the smoke? All we have to do is to follow the roof——”

“We’ll climb over it,” Hervey said.

“Let the smoke die down. What do we care?” Garry said. “The roof won’t die down; that’s a sure beacon.”

All of a sudden Hervey jumped up. “Follow your leader,” he said.

So off we started with little Willie Cook coming along behind and trying to keep up with us while we sang:

Don’t ask where you’re headed for nobody knows,
Just keep your eyes open and follow your nose;
Be careful, don’t trip and go stubbing your toes,
But follow your leader wherever he goes.

CHAPTER XXVII

WE LOSE OUR BEARINGS

The kid shouted, “Are you going straight to camp or not? Are there going to be any more detours?”

“Not exactly detours,” Hervey said; “just a few small scallops to vary the monotony. We’re on our way home. We’re following the smoke and we’re headed straight for the cooking shack; follow your leader. The way I figure it out we ought to land on the stove.”

“We ought to land in the zink,” Garry said.

“The zink would do just as well, follow your leader,” Hervey said. “I’m aiming straight for the dishpan full of cookies. Have courage, follow your leader wherever he goes, don’t weaken or flunk or suggest or oppose——”

Gee whiz, I can’t tell you of all the crazy things that fellow did, singing all the while. He swung into trees and went round and round them till we were all dizzy and didn’t know what we were singing. He kept going in and out around two trees till he had us all staggering and singing:

Don’t ask where you’re opposed,
But follow your nose wherever supposed;
N’ snows n’ suppose wherever goes.

“Wait a minute!” I shouted. “Where’s that roof? I don’t see it.”

“It’s still there,” Hervey said. “Don’t start to whrrrever yr leader suppose in the toes when it starts to suppose.”

“Be careful don’t stub and go flunking your nose,” Pee-wee shouted.

“N’ flow—flow—yr—flunked—wrvr—goes,” poor little Willie Cook sang.

“Have a heart,” I said.

“Do you see the roof?” Garry asked.

I just sank down to the ground. “I see forty-eleven roofs and eighty-nine col-ol-ol-ums of smoke—oke,” I told him.

“We’re get—tet—ing there,” Hervey said.

We all just sprawled on the ground for about ten minutes, dead to the world.

“Sure, we’re nearly there,” I said.

After a little while Scout Harris sat up and set up a howl.

“What’s the matter now?” I asked him.

“The smoke! The smoke!” he shouted. “It isn’t in line with the roof any more! Look!”

I sat up and looked.

“Temple Camp has moved away or something,” he yelled.

I said, “That’s very funny, the smoke must be blowing.”

“You’re crazy,” he said, all excited. “You can see the chimney even, and the roof isn’t in line with it!”

I said, “All right, don’t call me crazy, call the smoke crazy. I didn’t do it, did I?”

“Just the same that’s mighty funny,” Warde said.

“Sure,” I said; “if it wasn’t funny it wouldn’t be here.”

“Don’t get rattled,” Hervey said, “we’re here; we’re just where we were. Don’t lose your morale.”

“I lost my potatoes,” Willie Cook piped up.

“Pee-wee’s eating one of them,” I said.

There sat Scout Harris, with black all around his mouth, munching a roasted potato and staring off to the west with eyes as big as saucers.

I have to admit it was funny. When we had first seen that roof it was between us and the smoke from camp, maybe half-way. It seemed as if it might be on the road at the western edge of the woods.

Across that road were more woods and in those farther woods was the camp. Now the smoke was rising to the *left* of the roof. It might have been partly on account of the smoke blowing and partly on account of our being dizzy, that’s what I thought.

So I said, “We should worry. I’ve been to Temple Camp every summer for several years and it’s always stayed in the same place. It’s not like we are. All we’ve lost are our bearings and one potato. That roof is in a bee-line with Temple Camp. When we get to the road where the house is I know the way to camp all right without any smoke beacons. There’s a trail through the farther woods. Let the smoke die. What do we care? The boy scouts will live forever. Let’s take a good rest and sort of get sobered up so we’re not seeing things and then let’s make a bee-line for that house. If Hervey will lead us to that house I’ll lead the party to camp from there.”

“Come on, follow your leader,” Hervey said. And with that he rolled over and laid his head on his arm. All the rest of us did the same and pretty soon we were fast asleep. No wonder.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WE ARE DEAD TO THE WORLD

Now in this chapter we are all asleep so nothing happens. If anything happened I don't know about it. Anyway I'm not to blame for what the landscape does. I never had any use for geography, anyway; I never trusted it. And I'll never trust it again as long as it lives.

So that's why this chapter is so short, because we're all asleep.

CHAPTER XXIX

WE WAKE UP

Now there's going to be something doing again because we woke up. While we were asleep the smoke from the cooking shack died. I guess they were all through cooking supper at camp. The sun had gone down too. The part of the sky where it had gone down was all bright—red kind of. So we knew that was the west.

The roof we had seen wasn't in line with it, but you can't exactly say a thing is in line with a bright part of the sky. The column of smoke had been right behind that little roof, maybe two miles from it, so we decided to use that roof for a beacon. That would take us to the road and from there I knew the trail through the other woods.

I have to admit we were all about ready to go home by then. We were all pretty tired after that crazy day. If they would have to send a new troop away on account of there not being accommodations, that would mean the bus would go down to Catskill again and I wanted to get to camp in time to send a letter home. I didn't like to think about a troop being sent away but it served them right for not writing beforehand. Every tent and every cabin was crowded that summer.

I said to Hervey, "If you want to be the leader all right, but from now on we're going straight for camp. I admit you're too much for the rest of us. You ought to live in a volcano or a cyclone or something like that. I'm good and tired. See if you can make a bee-line to that little roof and then we'll know we're going straight for camp."

"And when you get to camp stop there," Warde said.

"I hope he bunks into the pavilion, that'll be the only thing to stop him," Garry said.

"This time, it's positively guaranteed," Hervey said; "I'm going straight west till I bunk right into that house."

"Keep your eye on the roof," Bert said, "because that's the only way we can be *sure* we're going right."

"Ready, *go*" Hervey said.

That time we kept going straight ahead without any nonsense—right straight for that roof.

"I'd like to have a picture of our travels to-day," Warde said.

"It would look like the trail of a snake with blind staggers," I told him. "After to-day I'm going to have some sense."

“Not if you follow Hervey Willetts,” Warde said.

Hervey said, “I know a better game; it’s called the flip-flop sprint. Did you ever try the razzle-dazzle roam? You have to keep going east while you keep your west eye shut. The hole-in-the-ground hop is a good one too. When shall we try it?”

“We’ll try it day after yesterday,” I said; “think of the west and keep your eye on that roof.”

“Absolutely, positively,” Hervey said; “we couldn’t go wrong now if we tried.”

“Don’t try,” Pee-wee shouted.

“Be sure that the right way is always the best,” I said. “I don’t care what that song of yours says.”

Pretty soon we got to where the woods were not so thick and we could see the road ahead. We couldn’t exactly see it because it was sort of in a hollow but we could see the hollow, and by that time we could see the rest of the house, or most of it.

“We’ll cut right through the woods in back of it,” Warde said.

I said, “Thank goodness, we’ll be home in fifteen minutes.”

“Follow me and you can’t go wrong,” Hervey said. “I’m aiming straight for my place at the mess-board.”

“Don’t aim for mine,” Pee-wee shouted at him. Then Hervey began singing:

Some scouts prefer to hike around,
We don’t,
And cover miles and miles of ground,
we don’t.
And roam and roam and roam and roam,
And roam some more and roam and roam;
And never *never* go back home,
we don’t.

“Look!” Pee-wee yelled at the top of his voice. “The smoke! Look! It’s way off there!”

We all looked and *g-o-o-d night*, there was the column of smoke away, way to the north of us, and there, as sure as I’m sitting here writing, was that little house right straight ahead of us, about fifty yards off.

“The plot grows thicker!” I said, just leaning limp against a tree. “We’ve been going farther and farther away from camp all the time. Chocolate Drop must be burning up refuse. Where are we at, anyway?”

“The world is upside down!” Garry said.

“It’s inside out,” Bert shouted.

“That house right in front of us was in direct line with camp,” Warde said.

“The Catskill Mountains are crazy!” Pee-wee shouted. “Remember the way they did with Rip Van Winkle? Everything is crazy! Where are we at? The nearer we get the farther we go. This country is haunted.”

“Search me,” I said. “The sun must have set in the east, that’s the only way I can explain it. That house there was *in a bee-line with the camp when we started*. I’ll leave it to Hervey.”

“Don’t leave it to him,” Pee-wee shouted; “you’ll only make it worse. Do you think I want to land on the moon?”

CHAPTER XXX

WE FIGURE IT OUT

I said, "Let's sit down and think it over and figure it out by geometry; let's not get excited. Three things were in a bee-line, the cooking shack and the house and we ourselves. Deny it if you can. The smoke died and we hiked straight for the house. Didn't we? Now here we are almost at the house and the smoke is there again, and it's the same chimney and it's way out north of us and we've been hiking southwest. What's the answer?"

"It's all because Hervey Willetts is leading us," Pee-wee shouted. "If that fellow started to go across the street he'd end at—at—at South Africa—he would."

"Are we going to get lost again?" little Willie Cook piped up.

"Again?" I said. "Excuse me while I laugh. We've got the babes in the woods beaten twenty-eleven ways. I wish we had a compass."

"I wouldn't believe one if you had it," Pee-wee shouted.

"Let's hustle and follow the smoke while it's still going up," Warde said.

"It's dying down!" Pee-wee shouted.

"Let it die," I said. "I'm going to find out what happened. If the earth is off its axis we ought to know it."

"We'll have to hike to the North Pole," Hervey said.

"Oh sure, start off," I told him; "we'll follow you."

"I want to know how a bee-line got bent," Bert said.

"I never knew Temple Camp to do such a thing before as long as I've known it," I said. "I'm surprised at Temple Camp. I don't understand it. It's trying to escape us."

"We'll foil it yet," Hervey said. "When it comes to hide-and-seek that's my middle name. I intend to go to Temple Camp now just for spite. We'll each go in a different direction and surround it and close in on it. What do you say?"

"Suppose we start east again?" I said. "Maybe that'll take us there because Temple Camp is north. We'll make a flank move."

Pee-wee said, very dark and determined like, "I'm going to follow that chimney. The rest of you can go where you want to."

"First let's go to the house and get a drink of water," Warde said.

So then we went on till we came to the road, and *g-o-o-d night*, there we stood on the edge of the embankment, staring.

"*Well—what—do—you—know—about—that?*" one of the fellows just blurted out.

"I knew it all the time," I said; "that house is not to be trusted. I'll never trust another house as long as I live, I don't care if it's a Sunday School even. I wouldn't trust a public school."

The rest of them were laughing so hard they just couldn't speak. There in the road just below us was a great big wagon with a kind of a trestle on it. And on that wagon was a little house. There were four horses hitched to the wagon and a funny looking man was driving them. He wasn't driving them exactly because they were standing still. One of the wheels of the wagon was ditched alongside the road. That house had been pulled quite a long way south along the road while we were asleep. Take my advice and never use a house for a beacon.

I called, "Hey, mister, where are you going with the house?"

We all sat on the high bank and looked at it. The horses were straining and trying to pull the wagon out. The house was so wide it filled up the whole road.

"It's a portable garage," Warde said.

I said, "Hey, mister, is that a portable garage?" The man called back, "No, can't you see it's a load of hay?"

"No sooner said than stung," I said.

"Maybe you don't know we've been following that house," I said.

The man said, "Well, if you follow it you're not likely to get far."

Hervey said, "Oh we don't care, we'd just as soon be here as anywhere. It's all the same to us."

"We're glad you didn't get any farther with it," Warde said. "We've been trying to go west by following the roof of that thing while it was going south."

The man said, "I'm sorry if I led you astray. I seem to have reached the end of my journey."

"You're lucky," I said. "We've been going around and around like the mainspring of a watch all day."

The man said, kind of laughing, "You seem to be wound up."

"Sure, we go for eight days," Garry said. "What are you going to do with the garage?"

"Well, I'm going to sell it for a chicken-coop if you must know," the man said. "Pretty soon you'll know as much as I do, won't you?"

"Where did you come from?" Pee-wee shouted down.

"I came from Ireland," the man said.

"I mean to-day," Pee-wee called back.

The man said, "Oh, to-day I came from Gooseberry Centre."

"I don't blame you," Hervey said; "I was there the other day. If I were a garage I wouldn't stay there; not if I were a portable one."

"The land I had was sold over my head," the man said.

“You mean under your feet,” Pee-wee shouted.

The man just looked up kind of laughing and he said, “Well, since you seem to be so smart and clever maybe you can think of a way to get me out of this hole.”

“Sure we can,” Hervey said. “Where do you want to go?”

I called, “Just say where you want to go and he’ll take you somewhere else.”

“Anyway,” Pee-wee shouted, “do you claim that chickens are as important as boy scouts?” Gee whiz, I didn’t know what he was driving at.

CHAPTER XXXI

WE MAKE A BARGAIN

The man said, "I should have kept out of that rut; now I'm in a nice pickle."

"Don't you care," I said, "we've been getting into the wrong places all day and we're happy."

"Pickles aren't so bad," Pee-wee shouted; "I wouldn't mind being in a whole barrel of pickles. We'll help you out, only if you're not charging too much for that garage we'd like to buy it if you'll cart it to Temple Camp. We'll give you more than the chickens will give you. There's a troop up at camp that haven't got any accommodations and they'll be coming along in the jitney bus pretty soon. Hey, mister, will you sell us the garage? We'll give you fourteen cents deposit on it right now."

"Sure," I said, "you can take a mortgage for the rest; good idea. Pee-wee, you're a brick."

"It's an inspiration," Pee-wee said; "we'll wind our funny-bone hike up with a crazy good turn, hey? We'll furnish accommodations. Troops don't have to go to houses because the houses come to them. Everything is the other way round. While they're on their way back to Catskill Landing they'll meet a house and we'll put them in it and send them back to camp."

"Good idea," Hervey shouted; "accommodations delivered while you wait; take your house home with you. Let's all climb up on the top of it."

"Wait a minute," Warde said, "this man thinks we're crazy. Do you mean what you say? If you do I'll talk to him."

"We mean a good deal more than what we say," I said; "that's a good suggestion of Pee-wee's and I say let's follow it. No troop shall leave Temple Camp on account of a house. If they come along the road they shall not pass. We'll put them in the house and send them back. We defy everything and everybody. What do we care about the housing shortage?"

Warde said, "Well then, keep still a minute and let me talk to the man." He has a lot of sense, Warde has, I'm glad I'm not him.

He said, "Hey, mister, we're boy scouts and we belong at Temple Camp that's over there in the woods near Black Lake. This road goes around through Hink's Junction and around through Pine Hollow to the camp. We were going to take the short cut through the woods but we followed this house instead. So now we think we'd like to buy it and we'll take it to Temple Camp."

"We'll take turns carrying it," Garry said.

Warde said, "Will you keep still so he'll know we're in earnest?"

"It's a business proposition," Pee-wee said; "shut up and let Warde talk."

Then Warde said, just as if he really meant it, he said, "We'd like to buy this portable garage if you'll sell it to us and take it to Temple Camp. We'll get you out of the ditch all right when the jitney bus comes along. How much do you want for it?"

The man said he was carting it to Pine Hollow because a farmer there said he would buy it. But he said if we really meant that we wanted it he'd sell it for fifty dollars. He said we'd have to pay him ten dollars more for hauling because Temple Camp was farther than Pine Hollow.

"The house will have a good home as long as it lives," Bert said. "There are plenty of fresh milk and eggs and everything at Temple Camp." The man said he guessed there were plenty of fresh scouts there too, if the rest of them were like us. He said he didn't care much about the garage anyway and he was only taking it away because the land where he lived had been sold and nobody wanted it in Gooseberry Centre.

I said, "Maybe they don't know there are such things as automobiles."

So then we got serious and we told him that we'd like to have that garage at camp because when we went on hikes we always brought back souvenirs and anyway because there was a cabin shortage there. We told him that we'd take up a collection when we got there and that if we didn't get enough money that way we'd give a grand show and charge admission and that he could stay at camp till we gave him the money.

He said, "Will I have to go to the show?"

"Not unless you want to," I told him.

So then he began asking questions about Temple Camp and he said he liked scouts because they were lively and he didn't care who he sold the house to only he was afraid on account of it blocking up the road. He said he had more interest in scouts than in chickens because once a scout had done him a good turn, but he never knew a chicken to do a kind act.

So we made the bargain with him and he kept laughing all the time, and he said he'd like to go and see Temple Camp, only what was worrying him most was that he was blocking up the road.

"You leave that to us," Pee-wee said.

I said, "Don't worry about that; the road is as much to blame as the house is. If we can't get the house out of the way we'll get the road out of the way, but anyway we'll get the house to camp. All we have to do is to wait for the jitney bus to come along and we know Darby Curren and he'll pull you out all right. We used a gas engine to move a donkey to-day. I guess we ought to be able to move a house with one."

CHAPTER XXXII

WE BECOME BANDITS

That's always the way it is with Pee-wee. All of a sudden he springs a big idea. Mr. Ellsworth (he's our scoutmaster) says Pee-wee's good turns are planned on a large scale. They're masterpieces, that's what Mr. Ellsworth says. And this one I'm telling you about was especially good because it was kind of crazy.

Hervey said, "That's just what we want, a good climax for this funny-bone hike. We'll wind up in a blaze of glory."

"The end of a perfect day," Bert said.

The man said he guessed we must have had a lot of fun.

"We've got a lot left, too," I told him; "we've got enough to last a couple of weeks. We never knew when we started out how many dandy misfortunes there are. I bet we had more fun starving than anybody else ever did." Then I said; "Hey, mister, what's your name?"

He said his name was Goobenhoff but he wouldn't tell us his front name because we couldn't pronounce it.

I said, "Tell it to us without pronouncing it."

He said, "When you go on a hike it's good to have a destination."

Hervey said, "Sure it is, because then we know where not to go. We never start out without taking a destination with us."

After a little while the jitney bus came along from the other direction and we all set up a shout. Darby Curren was driving it and scouts were sticking their heads out of the windows. Gee whiz, maybe what we were going to do was crazy, but when I saw the faces of those fellows I said, "Crazy things are all right; as long as a thing is a good turn it doesn't matter."

Gee, I didn't blame the Camp Committee because they couldn't help the camp being crowded, and troops are supposed to fix it up about their cabins a long time ahead, but just the same it seemed funny as long as scouts are all brothers that those fellows should have to go to another camp, because *believe me*, there's only one place and that is Temple Camp. I guess you know yourselves what fun we have there.

I said to the fellows, "This funny-bone hike is going to end in something worth while or else the whole day is lost."

"Let it be lost," Hervey said; "there's a lot of fun being lost."

I said, "Pee-wee, this is your job, go to it." The kid stepped right out into the middle of the road, very brave and daring. All the while he was pulling up

his stocking; it was awful funny to see him. Mr. Goobenhoff just laughed and laughed. I guess he was having a lot of fun too.

Pee-wee held up his hand like a traffic cop and shouted, "Stop! In the name of the funny-bone hikers of the Boy Scouts of America, *stop!* Wait a second till I fix my garter."

Darby shouted, "Hello, Scout Harris; what's the matter with your face?"

"It's supposed to be invincible," the kid shouted. "Stop where you are!"

"Your mouth is all black," Darby said.

"I was eating a roasted potato," Pee-wee said. "Who have you got in that bus?"

"Is this a hold-up?" Darby wanted to know. "I haven't got anything with me but a cheese sandwich."

"Give it to me," the kid shouted.

"Give it to me," Garry said.

By that time Mr. Goobenhoff was laughing so hard he just shook, and Darby was laughing too. In a couple of seconds about seven or eight scouts came pell-mell out of the bus to see what all the fuss was about. There was a man with them, he was their scoutmaster, and he was smiling and looking kind of surprised.

I guess it must have seemed funny when they saw that garage and saw us standing there in the road. We were all kind of dirty and shabby after our adventures and Hervey Willetts had on that funny hat he always wears with holes cut in it and advertising buttons all over it. It was cocked away over on the side of his head and he was balancing a stick on his nose.

Pee-wee shouted at him, "Take that stick down. Don't you know how bandits act? You're supposed to look savage."

I gave one look at poor little Willie Cook trying to look savage, and then I doubled up. Pee-wee had black all around his mouth and he was swinging his belt-axe; he looked awful funny.

He stood right in front of the bus and shouted, "Who are you and why? We captured a portable garage! Do you think we can't capture a jitney bus? Nobody can pass this spot. We're here to do a good turn whether you want us to or not. We're wild and savage, we live on fish and milk chocolate and we were starving on a desert drawbridge. Hold up your hands and make the scout salute. To-night you sleep at Temple Camp. Has anybody got a piece of string? My garter's busted."

CHAPTER XXXIII

WE WIN

That scoutmaster said, kind of smiling, "We think we're scouts and we're glad to make you the salute. What can we do for you?"

"Where are you going?" Pee-wee shouted.

The man said, "Why, if you must know, we're going to catch a train for Bear Mountain. They're crowded up at the camp. We might have stayed till morning, but the sooner we're settled the better."

"You're settled already," Pee-wee shouted; "I settled you! We're the funny-bone bandits and we own the Catskill Mountains. Do you see this little house? It's a garage. It's going to Temple Camp and you're going back with it. You're going to bunk in it. We're going to pull it out of this ditch and take it to Temple Camp. That's the kind of good turns we do up here!"

The man said, "You're very kind but——"

"Don't talk about catching trains," I said. "We've been catching trains today and see what it's brought us to. Take my advice and don't get on a train. A portable garage is better. We used to be regular scouts like you, with uniforms and clean faces and everything, before we got on a railroad train. We belong at Temple Camp and we're going back there and so is this little shack and so are you."

The scoutmaster said, "You're very kind but——"

"There isn't any *but* about it," I told him. "If you think we're going to have anybody interfering with our good turns you're mistaken. You didn't know the woods were infested with wild scouts, did you? So now get out of the way while Darby Curren pulls us out of the ditch, and then do what we tell you. All you've seen so far are the tame scouts up at camp; we're the wild, outlaw scouts. This is Hervey Willetts, the human squirrel—I'm the nut. We run Temple Camp, don't worry, leave it to us. The road to Temple Camp is a one way street and don't you forget it! So get out of the way, you're blocking the traffic."

Gee whiz, I guess they didn't know what to think. The scoutmaster just looked around smiling, and all his little troop were staring and laughing. I could see they wanted to go back.

The scoutmaster said, "I hardly know what to think about this."

"Don't think about it," Pee-wee said, "just do it."

"Do the way we do," Hervey said; "don't go to the place you started out to go to; go the other way. Do the thing you didn't expect to do, then you'll have

more fun. That's what a funny-bone hike is. Get mixed up accidentally on purpose. Just keep going, any old way. One place is as good as another, only Temple Camp is better than all of them. Come ahead back, you just leave it to us. We'll get the truck out of the ditch and we'll start a parade to Temple Camp and I'll go first and tell them all about it. We had a lot of fun to-day just on account of a song. So now will you join a parade with us and follow your leader? Listen.

“Don't ask where you're headed for nobody knows,
Just keep your eyes open and follow your nose;
Be careful, don't trip and go stubbing your toes,
But follow your leader wherever he goes.”

Oh boy, you should have seen those fellows look at Hervey; they just stood there laughing and staring and kind of clustering around him. That's always the way it is, fellows fall for him right away.

“Are there any more verses to that song?” one of them wanted to know.

“Sure,” Hervey said, “we've been singing them all day, and we'd like to go marching into camp with this outfit singing them, too. We want the craziest part to come last.”

“Let's do it,” one of those fellows said.

“I want to go back,” said another.

The scoutmaster, he looked kind of as if he couldn't make up his mind.

Then Warde said, kind of sober like, “There isn't anything to prevent. They haven't got even a tent left at camp and that's the only reason they can't have you stay. Do you think we don't know what we're talking about when we say it would be all right? The camp people will say it was a good turn, so why should you prevent us from doing it? We'd like to end the day up with a good turn, because it's been a kind of a funny day and we've been away from camp ever since morning. It'll make a kind of a good ending if you'll only help us out.”

“The end of a crazy day,” I said.

The scoutmaster just said, “You don't forget your good turns when you're crazy, do you?”

“Crazy good turns,” I said. “What's the difference?”

“No difference,” the scoutmaster said.

“It's all a part of the game,” Warde said; “good turns and all. We jumble everything all up together.”

“That's a good way,” the scoutmaster said.

Gee, those scouts just kept looking at their scoutmaster, waiting, anxious like. And all the while Hervey, with his hat on the side of his head, sat straddling the peak of the garage, humming:

Don't start to go back if it freezes or snows,
Don't weaken or flunk or suggest or oppose;
Your job is to follow and not to suppose.

He said that last line good and loud.

Then, all of a sudden, that scoutmaster said, "Well, scouts, I wish everyone were crazy in the same way you are. If our job is to follow and not to suppose, lead on, and we'll follow. We'll take a chance and follow our leader——"

"That's me," said Hervey Willetts, and down he came, sliding off the slanting roof of the garage.

Oh boy, you should have seen those new scouts look at him.

CHAPTER XXXIV WE START THE PARADE

“Let’s form a parade with the garage for a float,” Bert shouted; “Hervey will lead the way, next will come the funny-bone division with all the veterans, next will come the portable garage with Willie Cook sitting on top, and behind that will march the new troop.”

“Only remember that the garage can’t climb up trees,” I said to Hervey.

“You leave it to me,” Hervey said.

“And Darby Curren and the scoutmaster and Mr. Goobenhoff can sit on the driver’s seat,” Warde said.

The scoutmaster said, “Well, as long as we’ve all joined hands in this doubtful enterprise and agreed to stand and fall together, we may as well know each other. My name is Warren and these scouts form the First Troop of Columbus. Columbus is proud of her scouts.”

“Columbus was a man,” Pee-wee shouted.

“He discovered Columbus Avenue,” I said. “He used to hang out in Columbus Circle near Central Park.”

“Don’t you believe him, he’s crazy,” Pee-wee shouted.

“You’re all wrong,” Garry piped up, “Columbus was named after Christopher Street, he was named after the Christopher Street Ferry. These fellows with me don’t know anything about history.”

“We make a specialty of geography,” I said.

“And law,” Pee-wee shouted. “I know a lot about laws. I know a fellow that lives in Columbus, his name is Smith. Did you ever hear of him? Once I passed Columbus.”

“Columbus was lucky,” I said.

“I had lunch there,” Pee-wee shouted.

“He has lunch everywhere,” I said. “Wherever he goes there’s a food shortage the next day.”

“Well what are we going to do?” Warde said. “Are we going to jolly Pee-wee or start a parade?”

“Answered in the affirmative,” I said.

By that time all those fellows were laughing and Darby Curren said to them, “These boys are the moving spirits of camp, they are; especially that Willetts youngster.”

“Sure, we always keep moving,” I said. “Every day is moving day with us. I hope you’ll like us when you don’t know us so well.”

“We like you already,” one of those Columbus scouts piped up.

“You mean you like lunatics?” Pee-wee shouted at them.

Mr. Warren said, “Oh yes, we like lunatics. Suppose we get started as long as we’re in for it. I’m a little anxious to know our fate. We’re trusting to you boys. I’ll feel a little shaky till——”

“That’s because you drink milk shakes,” Garry said. “Don’t you worry, you’re going to have a roof over your heads and everything will be all right.”

“It’s more fun on top of the roof,” Hervey said.

Mr. Warren said, “Are you scouts all one patrol?”

I said, “No, I’ll tell you how it is. We belong to different patrols but we go around together and they call us the Vagabond Patrol. We’re insane, but we’re harmless. See? My patrol is the Silver Fox Patrol and Warde, that’s this fellow, he’s in my patrol. Bert Winton is in a troop from out west and Pee-wee Harris is in the Raven Patrol; that’s in my troop, and this little fellow belongs in that patrol, too. He’s more to be pitied than blamed. That other fellow, Garry, he comes from down the Hudson and that fellow with a crazy hat, that’s Hervey Willetts, he belongs in a troop from somewhere or other, I should worry. He’s an Eagle Scout, that fellow is. Maybe you wouldn’t think so to look at him. He drinks nut sundaes and he doesn’t know what he’s doing. He’s the one that put the fun in funny-bone. He’s a regular Cook’s Tours in himself.”

Mr. Goobenhoff winked at Mr. Warren and they both winked at Darby Curren and then Mr. Goobenhoff said, “Well if I’m to get this garage off my hands we’d better be about it. How far is it to Temple Camp by the road?”

“We have to go all the way around Crampton’s Hollow,” I said, “but usually we don’t bother with roads because most of them go to places.”

So then we fixed a rope from the end of the shaft to the front of the jitney bus and Darby put his shift into reverse, and the four horses strained as the jitney backed up and pretty soon we were ready to start.

Gee whiz, if you want to go on down to Catskill Landing in that empty bus with Darby Curren, go ahead, I can’t stop you. But if you want to join the parade all right. I guess you know by this time that wherever we go something happens. It isn’t our fault, it’s the fault of the things. So then we started off along the road.

Some procession!

CHAPTER XXXV

WE END OUR HIKE

That was the long way around to Temple Camp, but we couldn't help it, because we had to follow the road.

"That's better than following a crazy leader," Pee-wee said.

Mr. Warren said, "The last turn is a good turn."

"Every kind of a turn is a good one," Hervey called back.

"They're all better than each other, only some are more so," I said. "We'll take you on some hikes all right. That's one things I like about Columbus, Ohio, he didn't turn back, not till he saw the Statue of Liberty."

"*Columbus saw the Statue of Liberty?*" Pee-wee screamed.

"Listen to the mocking bird," I said. "I never said he saw the Statue of Liberty; I said he didn't turn back till he saw it, and he never turned back, did he? That shows how much you know about botany."

"Jolly him some more," one of those Columbus scouts said, kind of bashful like.

"I can't now," I told him, "we're coming to Stillman's Hollow and we have to be very still there because the natives are all asleep. We have to go on tiptoe through the village. Shh!"

So then Hervey started going on tiptoe, holding one finger up to his mouth, awful funny. All of those Columbus scouts did the same and their scoutmaster laughed, but just the same he seemed kind of thoughtful like. I guess he wasn't sure how the management at camp would take it about his coming back, but it didn't bother us any, because we were bringing a shack back for that troop, and anyway we have Uncle Jeb (he's camp manager) eating out of our hands. Whatever we say at Temple Camp *goes*. I don't say where it goes to, but it *goes*.

We tiptoed through Main Street in Stillman's Hollow and some summer boarders stared at us and laughed and a lot of people on the porch of the post office laughed. I guess we must have looked pretty funny.

Pretty soon we came to the end of the village and Hervey said, "All right, you can all talk at once now."

"I'll all talk at once first," Pee-wee piped up; "I've got something to say."

"Begin at the end, then you won't have so far to go," I said.

"Let's dump the garage down near the road," he said, "then it'll be away from the main part of camp all by itself; it'll be kind of like an outpost."

"That would suit us to a T," Mr. Warren said.

“I thought of it,” Pee-wee shouted. “Then we can come up there and visit you. I’ll be up every day.”

“Have a heart,” I said. “Do you call that a good turn?”

Mr. Warren said, “If they’re kind enough to let us stay and camp in this odd little house you may be sure the funny-bone hikers will always be welcome.”

“You bet they will,” two or three of those fellows chimed in.

“Set us down anywhere you choose,” Mr. Warren said.

Hervey said, “You don’t have to spend much time in your shack. The Catskill Mountains are big enough for anybody.”

“Except you,” I said. “If you follow him,” I told those fellows, “you’ll land on the island of Yap.”

Hervey didn’t say anything, he just started singing, and going zigzag in the road; I guess maybe he was trying to make the horses do that, too. He sang the whole song, and before he was finished every fellow there was singing and imitating all his motions.

Gee whiz, I can just see him now, the way he reached up and grabbed branches and hopped on the stones and threw his hat up in the air and swung it on a stick and walked lame and with his eyes shut, never looking back at all just as if he didn’t care whether we were there or not. Reckless, kind of; you know how he is.

And even now when I’m home in Bridgeboro, whenever I get to humming that song I think of Hervey Willetts. Even my sister Marjorie hums it and Margaret Ellison caught it from her and her sister caught it from her and if it ever gets into the school, *good night*, they’ll have to close it up.

If you once get those crazy verses in your head, goodbye to history and geography, and physics and arithmetic. But I don’t know, kind of it doesn’t seem natural except when Hervey Willetts sings them. I don’t know where he ever got them nor all the other crazy stuff he knows.

There’s only one Temple Camp and there’s only one Hervey Willetts.

CHAPTER XXXVI WE DEMOBILIZE

I guess I don't have to tell you that it was all right about bringing those scouts back and a shack for them to bunk in. Uncle Jeb said he was only thankful that Hervey didn't bring back the West Shore trains and the drawbridge. He said he was thankful Hervey came back at all.

When he heard that all Hervey brought back was a new troop and a portable garage and all the rest of us safe and sound including the animated Animal Cracker, he said, "That thar kid is losing his pep, he daon't seem ter hev no gumption no more." Because usually Hervey brings back tramps and organ-grinders and all people like that. Once he brought back a fat man from a circus. So gee whiz, a portable garage was nothing for him.

Now I'll tell you what we did. We put that portable garage on the edge of camp, away up near the road. And we sold lemonade and scout tenderflops to auto parties until we made enough money to pay Mr. Goobenhoff. He said he wasn't in a hurry and he'd trust us. And that's where those Columbus scouts spent the rest of the summer and that's better than Bear Mountain, I don't care if all the bears hear me say so.

And one good thing, Pee-wee was up there most of the time so we had some peace down at camp, but we could often hear his voice.

The trustees wanted us to call the garage Good Turn Cabin, but we wouldn't do it because we wanted to call it Funny-bone Shack. And it's our shack, it belongs to the outlaws, or the vagabonds, or the funny-bone hikers, or whatever you want to call us—we don't care. And every summer we let some poor troop go up there and stay in it. And it's all on account of that crazy song.

So now I'm going to bed, because I'm going to play tennis to-morrow and I've got to mow the lawn early in the morning, because my sister's going to have a lawn party in the afternoon and she's going to have icing cake and I'm going to be there.

Now when you finish reading all this crazy stuff if it makes you so you can't get to sleep and you keep lying awake, just begin saying to yourself:

Don't ask where you're headed for nobody knows,
Just keep your eyes open and follow your nose;
Be careful, don't trip and go stubbing your toes,
But follow your leader wherever he goes.

Don't start to go back if it freezes or snows,
Don't weaken or flunk or suggest or oppose;
Your job is to follow and not to suppose,
And follow your leader wherever he goes.

Don't quit or complain at the stunts that he shows,
Don't ask to go home if it rains or it blows;
Don't start to ask questions, or hint, or propose,
But follow your leader wherever he goes!

And the first thing you know you'll wake up and find yourself fast asleep
and you can thank Hervey Willetts.

CHAPTER THE LAST

Now as long as that hike was so crazy, on account of us all being crazy, we decided that it was best to call our remodeled garage the "Good Turn Cabin."

In about four hours and forty-two minutes, those Columbus scouts were almost as crazy as we were, or rather are.

"Say, fellows, let's go over to the 'Good Turn,' and show the boys this wild country!" said I.

"Suits me," said Hervey.

"Let's serenade them," said Pee-wee.

"Sere what?" asked Westy.

"Oh you know what I mean," said Pee-wee.

"Is it a new kind of drink?" asked Warde.

By this time we had almost reached the campus of the "Good Turn."

I said, "Hello, there, everybody happy?"

"I'll say so," said a chorus of voices.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said I, "we're here——"

"Because we're here," finished the Columbus scouts.

"Right," said I. "We're here because we're here, but that's not all. Pee-wee wants to give you some serenade, or something like that."

"What kind of ade?" asked one of the boys. "If it's something like lemonade, you're welcome."

"You think you're so smart," said Pee-wee.

"Are you going to stand here like a couple of dunces, or are we going to show these boys what we know about this part of the mountains?"

"Pee-wee's right," said Warde. "Roy, do your bit."

"Ahemm," began I. "I have come, attended by my bodyguard, or faithful followers, to find out whether or not we may have the pleasure of your company at dinner to-day, we——"

"Oh shut up," said Pee-wee. "Gee, you haven't any brains at all. *I'll* tell them. We want to take you boys around and show you the woods and the lake, an' I know where there's a peachy bird's nest; I'll show it to you," said the good-natured little fellow.

"Pee-wee's right," said I.

"I'm sure we'd love to come, but some of the fellows are gone to the post office, so that leaves just a few of us left," said one of the boys.

"But *we'd*, be delighted to come," someone said.

It happened that this fellow came from Maine. That made him a special friend of Hervey and me, because he's a Maniac.

“All right, let’s go,” said I. And we did go.

“This is the place where we trailed that convict, isn’t it?” asked Westy.

“Wait till you see my little nest,” said Pee-wee.

“Your which?” asked the Maniac.

“Shh, we’re near it now,” said Pee-wee.

“Boys, hold your breath, don’t breathe or talk, we are now about to enter the land of mystery,” said I.

“There it is, in that bush that comes down low like. Don’t touch it though,” said Pee-wee.

“We wouldn’t harm a hair on its little head,” said the Maniac.

“That’s nothing,” said I. “Let me show you where the daisies grow. *Then* you’ll see something nice.”

“Are you going to take us to the land of nod?” the Maniac asked.

“Oh, you’re going to do more than nod,” I promised. “Wait ’til you get there! Just *wait*.”

“Let’s go up the hill,” suggested Westy.

“By the old haunted farm house?” asked Warde.

“Nothing doing,” said the Maniac. “I’m scared of such places. If you promise to take me by the hand and shield me from all danger, I might think it over. Otherwise, I’ll go home and finish my knitting!”

“We promise,” said Westy.

Now I’ll tell you all about this haunted farm, so that you won’t be frightened. In the first place, it’s not haunted at all. That is *I* don’t think so, but the people that lived there *did* think so, ’cause they moved out and left the farm just as it was. (When I get married I’m coming up here and start farming, there’s enough tools and things.)

“Gee, you can have lots of fun here,” said Pee-wee. “I like the apple trees and the big swing. You can see way over Overlook Mountain and Black Lake when you’re eating an apple.”

“What? Do you mean to tell me they have magic apples up here? That’s some record,” said the Maniac. “I know you can see stars, when you’re hit over the head or something like it, but seeing mountains and lakes when you’re eating an apple, beats anything I’ve *ever* heard.”

Westy said, “Didn’t you hear Roy say we’re about to enter the land of mystery? You should listen.”

“Sure,” I said, “if you eat enough apples you can look right through the Woolworth Building.”

“Swingin’ of course, oh you fellows know what I mean——” began poor Pee-wee.

“Sure we do,” said the Maniac. “You mean if you take an apple and a cup of hot water before retiring, you’ll never get a puncture.”

I wish you could have seen that yard. It was a dandy place for a picnic. The grass was so soft and green. Gee, it was a dandy farm.

“How can anyone ever accuse this place of being haunted?” asked the Maniac. “I think it’s a picture.”

“Let’s go up to the hay loft,” said Pee-wee. “I can see lots of hay through this big door.”

“Be careful, that’s all I’ve got to say,” said Westy.

“I suppose it’s all right for us to climb up, we’re not hurting anything, or breaking anything, what do you think, Roy?” asked Warde.

“I think it’s all right, we’re just having some fun, or honest pleasure, (oh what’s that saying again?) and I don’t think anyone’s mean enough to begrudge us our fun.”

“You’ve got a good line, Roy,” said Warde.

“Come on, we’re going to invade this barn, with you as our gallant leader,” said the Maniac.

“Who, me?” said I. “Let Pee-wee lead us. Why to-morrow the whole town will know about the brave scouts; when Mr. Oltiemer reads his paper, he will know how the brave scouts, or rather how the charge of the light brigade swept the country side, how it invaded the poor old defenseless barn, with brigadier-general Harris leading his brave regiment through all sorts of falls and somersaults!”

I wish you could of seen that kid. There he was, at the top of the ladder, ready to climb over to the loft, when *good night*, he stumbled.

“Going down, Pee-wee?” asked the Maniac.

“No stops ’til we reach the ground floor!” said Warde.

And with a soft thud, Pee-wee landed on the bottom of the barn, hay and straw fairly sprouting from him. He was a picture no artist could paint.

“Ooohh,” was about the only answer we could get from him.

“Why, Walter, don’t you know how to eat straw and hay?” asked one of the Columbus scouts.

“Ooohh,” Pee-wee said once more. “Why don’t you fellows try it? It’s great. Only it’s not so very great when your mouth is full of it and you can’t talk.”

“All rightie,” said I. “We’ll try anything once, we’re brave, we can face the ‘Perils of Pauline’ without flinching or moving a muscle of our mouths.”

“We ought to leave that up to Pee-wee. He can handle that situation better than any of us,” said Warde.

“Thank goodness we’re not on a funny-bone hike now,” said Westy. “Falling down hay lofts won’t even count as adventures, will they, Hervey?”

“Follow your leader, wherever he goes,” replied Hervey.

“Don’t, please have pity, if you start those verses again, we’ll all get crazy

again,” said I.

“That’s all right,” said the Maniac, “if it wasn’t for those verses, we wouldn’t be here to-day. I’ll stand up for those verses whenever I get a chance, so there.”

“Let’s climb the apple tree,” said Pee-wee.

“Do you want to eat again?” asked Warde.

“Yes, let’s go over there,” said the Maniac. “I want to see Broadway. You’re all right, Pee-wee, your eyes should be called an academy, because there are pupils there.”

“Say you’re pretty good for a new one, when you get back to Maine, you’ll go back as bad almost as Roy Blakeley,” said Pee-wee.

“Ah, you have given me hope, that I may be so clever!” said the Maniac.

“Clever?” said Pee-wee scornfully.

“Hey, you fellows, come on over and see what I have found.”

“What is it?” someone asked.

“That’s the joke, *what* is it?” I answered.

“It’s an old use to be buggy,” said Hervey.

“I should think it is buggy,” said I.

“Gee, we ought to have some fun with it,” said Westy.

“Let’s take it up to the hill, in back of the barn and ride down in it,” suggested Hervey.

“No sooner said than stung,” said I.

“Just make believe we didn’t have fun rolling up the hill with a use to be buggy, that was very buggy!”

“Roy, grab hold of this end,” said Hervey. “We’ll soon have her in high!”

I said, “Say, Hervey, would you like to steer this buggy buggy?”

“We didn’t have quite enough thrills on our hike,” said Warde, “so please take the wheel and let’s have it over with.”

“Wheel? Just try and find a wheel,” said Hervey. “You’d stand a better chance of taking the reins.”

“Taking the reins? I should worry as long as the rains don’t take us!” said I.

“Will you stop your fooling, Roy,” asked Warde, “and get started?”

It’s really a shame how they pick on poor little me.

Well, we finally got the thing all set ready to go.

“Say, Roy, we ought to have a speech in honor of the first ride with the Boy Scouts!” said the Maniac.

“Speech, speech,” cried several boys.

“Let’s sere—I mean christen it,” said Pee-wee.

“Yes,” said Hervey, “we must do this thing right and spare no expenses.”

“K. O.,” said I. “Here, cutie, run to the pump and fill up this bottle with the

best sparkling water there is; spare no expenses, as Hervey said.”

The poor bottle did the best it could, with a certain amount of pensive resignation, for it had undoubtedly seen better days.

“Let’s do it in a different way. Let’s all get in and just as soon as Roy is finished with the toast, (at which Pee-wee started) we’ll start off,” said Hervey.

We always did anything Hervey suggested because we knew that it would be crazy, so we didn’t hesitate this time.

“Hey, wait a minute,” yelled Pee-wee, “think I’m going to stand here and watch you go down?” Oh that kid, just as he said that, he gave a jump and hopped on the buggy. The jar was so great that the buggy buggy went buggy, and started off without even waiting for my speech.

Honestly, it seemed as though everyone was falling over each other, as the buggy went down and down. Upside down and inside out. Oh you should of seen it.

There sat Hervey and the Maniac, holding up the shaft, (at least what was left of it) and even then, as we bumped into a rock, the rest of it broke off. I had forgotten that I still held the water, until Pee-wee jumped up and threw the bottle from my hand.

“Say, do you think I look as though I need a cold shower? I’m not afraid of water, but when it comes to people spilling it right and left, I object,” said Warde.

“Gee, I only have a few drops left, a scout’s supposed not to waste anything, he——”

I didn’t get a chance to say any more, for just then we heard a long drawn moan, as though someone was in agony, and we were just in the center of the hill, and couldn’t stop, or it would never have happened. Another jolt, something like a turn in the Virginia Reel in Palisade Park, and we were good for scrambled eggs.

“W-w-what was that?” asked Pee-wee.

“Only one of the wheels came off,” said Hervey. “Long as we don’t get hurt, we should worry if the whole thing comes apart.”

I guess the buggy didn’t want to go without its wheel, for it headed towards a ditch, and each time the other wheels went around, it knocked us all over. Laugh, I thought I’d die.

“Gosh, if it would only stop,” said one of the boys, “I’d like to get my breath again. This is great, but every time I get it, another jolt t-t-takes it aw-w-way again.”

With a final bang, we hit the side of the hill, and went sprawling for the last time, gee, I was sorry.

While we were lying there, undecided whether to get up or not, Pee-wee saved the day.

“D-d-do you hear that?” fairly screamed Pee-wee. “Do you know what that is? If you don’t, *I* do, and I’m going to answer it——”

It was the mess call, even if it took Pee-wee to hear it first, we heard it now, and once more we dropped everything, for important things come first. And as usual, Hervey started it again.

“Come on, fall in line,” he said, and “Follow Your Leader.”

THE END

[The end of *Roy Blakeley’s Funny-bone Hike* by Percy Keese Fitzhugh]