PEE-WEE HARRIS TURNS DETECTIVE

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DISMAYED, PEE-WEE GLANCED ABOUT HIM.

PEE-WEE HARRIS TURNS DETECTIVE

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

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CHAPTER I
LEFTY LEIGHTON

Almost from the very day the Hulberts had moved to Bridgeboro, Lefferts Leighton, their nephew, had made sensational progress in scouting. He had been discovered and introduced to the troop by a master propagandist, the redoubtable Pee-Wee Harris, who took much credit for his pupil's achievement, and honored him with his especial care. So it may be said that Lefty, as they soon came to call him, became a scout under the most encouraging auspices.

Scarcely had the big moving van pulled away from the bungalow directly opposite the Harris home when Pee-Wee arose from the porch steps and proceeded at once against the lonely and defenseless boy whose labors he had been watching.

Pee-Wee's mother had explicitly ordered him not to present himself to their new neighbors during the turmoil and preoccupation incidental to carrying in furniture, and he had, perforce, contemplated these interesting activities from the vantage point of his own veranda.

Once, to be sure, he had been tempted to violate the parental injunction by going across to examine what appeared to be a saddle with a pair of stirrups dangling from it, which the strange boy was about to carry into the house. But he resisted this and other temptations until the van moved away and the strange boy was left quite alone, picking up odds and ends of papers and packing. In lifting a scrap of burlap he appeared to wave it slightly at Pee-Wee. It was just a little gesture of pleasantry bespeaking the completion of his task. But Pee-Wee promptly accepted it as a salute. And that is how Lefty Leighton got into scouting.

"I bet I was in that house before you," said Pee-Wee. It was his custom to begin an acquaintance with a kind of challenge. Though preeminently social, he was not always graceful. But he was always quite himself, and the keynote of altercation and boastfulness which he lost no time in striking, was characteristic of him. "I was in it even before it was built; I walked on the beams of it," he said.

"If you were in it before it was a house, then you weren't in the house before I was," said the strange boy. "You were in it when it was going to be a house."

"Do you call that an argument?" roared Pee-Wee.

The strange boy, who was tall and slender and good looking, smiled broadly, and shrugged his shoulders. He seemed amused at Pee-Wee.

"And I bet I know where you moved from, too," Pee-Wee said. "I bet I know because I saw it on the van; you moved from Melrose? Is that your father that went into the house?"

"My uncle."

"Have you got any brothers and sisters?"

"That's asking questions," said the boy amusedly, yet not without a certain adroit reticence.

"Do you live with your aunt and uncle?"

"Looks that way."

Unabashed as Pee-Wee usually was, something deterred him from asking this boy if his parents were dead. Instead, he sought light on another important matter.

"What was that, a saddle, that you took in the house?"

"Uh huh," said the boy, diverted by Pee-Wee's catechism. "Looks that way."

"Have you got a horse?"

"Not so you'd notice it."

"What are you going to do with it?"

"Put it in the attic."

"I bet somebody in your house rode horseback."

The Leighton boy seemed highly amused at this masterly instance of deduction. He fell back on his favorite answer, "Looks that way."

Apparently he was tired after his strenuous labors for he sat down on the lowest step of the unpretentious bungalow and glanced about him at the beautiful, quiet, shaded street in which this new home of his seemed somewhat out of place. With the handle end of a broom he reached out and picked up an empty pasteboard box, the last remaining bit of litter, and twirled it idly on the upright stick. "Guess that's about all," he said.

Pee-Wee had a good look at him then, for the boy seemed whimsically preoccupied with this momentary pastime and did not look at his new acquaintance. He had brown wavy hair with a rebellious lock that was always falling down over his forehead. His eyes were so brown that their color had been noted even by Pee-Wee who was ordinarily not observant in such matters. He had very white teeth of astonishing beauty and regularity. He was lithe and slender of build, and his shoulders were so straight that this item of his physique was conspicuously noticeable. But most notable of all was the trick he had of pushing the lock of hair up over his forehead as often as it fell down. He seemed never to weary of doing this. His skin was of almost mulatto hue which of course set off his white teeth when he smiled.

And his smile was very humorous and winsome; he seemed to smile on the sly, as one might say.

Pee-Wee was conscious of a certain obvious distinctiveness about this boy, a kind of quiet assurance, which gave pause to his own customary challenging familiarity. As a rule boys were either squelched by Pee-Wee, or else rose in towering rebellion against him. But this boy did neither. He twirled the box on the broom handle and rested. Pee-Wee's presence seemed altogether of secondary importance to him, even when the diminutive hero of Bridgeboro sat down beside him. The boy was coatless and his sleeves were rolled up, and Pee-Wee, who took little note of teeth and eyes and hair and the effect of their combination, did take note of one physical quality which a boy is not likely to overlook.

"I bet you got a good muscle," he said.

"If you lost all the bets you make, you'd go to the poor house," the other observed.

"Let's see it," Pee-Wee said.

The Leighton boy dutifully and slowly bent his brown arm, looking sideways at Pee-Wee with a funny smile, as if to inquire whether the requested demonstration were satisfactory.

"Geeeee whiz!" said Pee-Wee. "I bet you can run, too; hey?"

"If anybody's after me I can."

"Do you want to be friends with me?"

"Who'll stop me?"

"Do you want to join the scouts?"

"Sure, why not?"

This seemed a rather casual acceptance of a tremendous invitation. He did not even cease twirling the box.

But Pee-Wee would stagger him with a knockout blow. "You have to raise your right hand and hold down two fingers and give your word of honor to some things."

The Leighton boy dutifully laid down the broom and raised his right hand, wrestling with the trick of bending down two fingers.

"Not now!" Pee-Wee fairly shouted. "You don't do it now. You do it when you join—in meeting."

"Oh," said the Leighton boy.

"So do you want to join? You have to be serious about it. Do you?"

"Sure, why not?"

"You got to be loyal to them."

"Will they be loyal to me?"

"Yes, only you're not interested. That shows you don't know anything about it, asking if they'll be loyal to you. Gee whiz, that's their middle

name."

"It's a good middle name," said the Leighton boy.

"Do you want to go with me to meeting to-morrow night?"

"Sure, if I don't have to help around here. I'll try anything once."

He resumed twirling the pasteboard box on the stick. Pee-Wee looked at him, puzzled.

The next evening Lefferts Leighton went to scout meeting with Pee-Wee and did not seem to be the least perturbed about it. Rather, indeed, did the scouts seem a little subdued by reason of his presence. They told each other that Pee-Wee had "picked a winner." It seemed a joke. Lefferts did not join that night. He was quiet and seemed only mildly interested. But Mr. Ellsworth talked with him and gave him a Handbook. The following Friday night he was on hand to take the oath. He had all the tenderfoot requirements down pat, and more to boot.

But a funny thing happened when he came to take the oath. The use of the right hand is so customary in all forms of ceremonial procedure that it never occurred to Mr. Ellsworth to specify this to the new member. And Lefferts Leighton raised his left hand.

"The right hand," Mr. Ellsworth laughed. "I guess you're left-handed, eh?"

"Always was," said Lefferts, smilingly correcting his mistake. "Guess it runs in my family."

"Well, you've got the thumb and little finger business O. K.," said Artie Van Arlen, his patrol leader. "And it isn't everyone who does that."

"You seem to see pretty well from where you're standing," Lefferts said. "Is that all?" he asked turning to Mr. Ellsworth.

"That's all—short and sweet," said the genial scoutmaster.

"I'll say the laws if you want me to."

"No, you can just obey them," laughed Mr. Ellsworth. "Actions speak louder than words."

"Words speak good and loud, too," shouted Pee-Wee. "You got to be able to squawk like a Raven if you're in the Raven Patrol. I'll show you."

That is how Lefferts Leighton, the new boy in Bridgeboro, became a scout of the Raven Patrol in the First Bridgeboro Troop. And that is how he came by his nickname of Lefty.

CHAPTER II
PEE-WEE IS LOYAL

Lefty Leighton was lucky to get into the First Bridgeboro Troop and, from all indications, the troop was lucky to get him as a member. Of the three patrols, now comprising the troop, Ravens, Silver Foxes and Elks, the Raven unit was the one to make the scoop. It had for sometime been lacking two members. Punkin Odell had moved away to disport in pastures new—and Charlie Bulton had gone off to boarding school.

One of the vacancies had been promptly filled by the only original Pee-Wee Harris; he not only filled it, but he overflowed it. His own patrol, the Chipmunks, had evaporated after a stormy career under its despotic leader. But you will be glad to note from the accompanying list that Tasca and Bruno Liventi, Pee-Wee's greatest discovery, were retained under the Elks' banner. Lefty Leighton stepped easily and somewhat nonchalantly into the other vacancy in the Ravens.

Since the scouts of this splendid troop are more or less known to friends of Pee-Wee and Roy, it may be well to set forth here the membership as it stood during the time of the memorable episodes in which Lefty Leighton was involved.

RAVENS
Artie Van Arlen, P. L.
Doc Carson
Grove Bronson
Forrest Bronson
Pee-Wee Harris
Wigley (Wig-Wag) Weigand
Elmer Sawyer
Lefferts Leighton

SILVER FOXES
Roy Blakeley, P. L.
Westy Martin
Dorry Benton
Huntley Manners
Will Dawson
Townsend Ripley
Warde Hollister
Stubby Piper

ELKS
Connover Bennett, P. L.
Victor Norris
Ben Maxwell
Alfred (Skinny) McCord
Bert McAlpin
Bruno Liventi
Tasca Liventi
Bob (Trailer) Hilman

From the very start Lefty's progress was so rapid as to be sensational. The only requirement that he balked at was the one which made it necessary for him to wait a month before claiming his second class badge. He was ready in two weeks. And what he did he appeared to do with easy mastery. He chafed a trifle at the first aid business, for he preferred to be on the go. But he filled every item of these requirements with a kind of cheerful contempt. You have seen a skillful ball player idly raise one arm and leisurely, half interestedly, catch a ball. That was the way that Lefty met the first aid tests. Instead of making a choice of the three signal codes, he learned them all. He tracked a dog half a mile in nineteen minutes. "What am I supposed to do with the other six minutes?" he nonchalantly asked.

He had scout-pace down to perfection, and did a mile in nine minutes. This allowed him three minutes to pause and memorize the contents in the window of YE RIVERSIDE GIFT SHOPPE. This was quite superfluous since he had taken care of test four by his tracking. He gave them good measure. Another boy might have selected the window of a real estate office with about two objects in it. They do such things and get away with them.

He grouped six, seven and eight by chopping wood with a hatchet, starting a fire with one match (he was privileged to use two) and cooking meat and potatoes in the open without utensils. He didn't seem to understand why they required such things of him, but he did them. He said he did not like housework. He had a quiet, whimsical way about him which amused everybody; he was immensely likable. He had a way of making some of the tests appear ridiculous, which tickled Mr. Ellsworth.

There was one little thing which occurred in connection with his one minute scrutiny of the shop window (a part of test four) which some of his comrades had occasion to recall later. He had enumerated a couple of dozen articles such as book-ends, pictures, objects of brass, etc., the usual miscellaneous junk of a gift shop. He had not been required to do this since he had fulfilled the alternate requirement of that test. That he should do it seemed characteristic of him. But that he should fool his comrades seemed incredible.

Yet that, apparently, was what he did. For when a couple of members of the Elk Patrol, Vic Norris and Bob Hilman, happened to pass the shop later that same day they saw an entirely different display from the one described by Lefty. It was the custom in the troop (save in matters of most vital importance) to repose a good deal of confidence in the word of any aspirant in the performance of his tests and the winning of his honors. And usually, indeed, achievement is self-evident. Where checking up was necessary, these matters were attended to with tactful discretion.

These good scouts did not go to Lefty with their discovery, nor even to the Ravens. But they told Mr. Ellsworth who screwed up his mouth and looked puzzled.

"Well," he finally said, "he didn't have to do that stunt, anyway."

"Then why did he make believe he did?" Vic Norris queried.

Mr. Ellsworth added a thoughtful frown to his pursed lips. "Well, I guess we won't think about it," he said.

But somebody thought about it, and shouted about it, and that was Pee-Wee Harris. He overheard this little colloquy which occurred just outside the troop room after Friday night meeting, and paused to listen in accordance with his rule never to miss anything.

“That shows how much you don’t know,” he said, “how you think you’re so smart being detectives and everything. Don’t they clean out windows a lot of times and change everything? Geeeeee whiz!” It was a *gee whiz* which rang with loyalty.

“There you are,” said Mr. Ellsworth, glad to see a way out of his little dilemma. “You fellows aren’t as smart as you think you are. It takes Scout Harris to tell us where we’re at.”

“You think because you got an Eagle Scout in your patrol that you’re so big and important,” said Pee-Wee. “Even you haven’t got a feller that finished up his first tests in two weeks. Even you haven’t got one that did a mile in nine minutes.”

He was always on the warpath and his thundering partisanship was well known—and hugely enjoyed. So the little matter ended in a laugh. No one ever went to the gift shop to verify his theory by the two aged spinsters who presided there. No one wished to think ill of Lefty, and so the matter rested.

CHAPTER III
PEE-WEE'S WORRY

The Ravens believed they had found a winner. They visioned an Eagle Scout in their patrol; an easy victor in the camping season's contests. Undoubtedly the Ravens would gather in the Waring Endowment Medal. Pee-Wee went a little farther than this; he saw them all going out to the Yellowstone, proud sojourners, and guests of their Martha Henway Prize member.

"Even he might go with Commander Byrd next time, to the South Pole or somewhere," he predicted. "And you're not going to put anybody in his place while he's gone either."

"If he'll win the canoe race for us up at camp, I'll be satisfied," said Artie Van Arlen, the patrol's leader. "He's sure a bear at swinging a paddle."

"And I'm the one that invented him, I mean discovered him," Pee-Wee proclaimed. "I'm the one that lives across the street from him."

Artie was Lefty's patrol leader, but Pee-Wee was his manager and publicity agent. He was always as boastful about his favorites as he was about himself, and that is saying a great deal.

"It was funny to see him frying eggs and hunters' stew, though," Grove Bronson said. "The eggs ran all over."

"If they ran as well as he does there's no kick," said Artie. "Anyway, no scout ever got a free trip around the world for frying eggs. His pancakes weren't so bad, only I had to laugh at the funny way he flopped them."

"They were all right because I ate eleven of them," Pee-Wee shouted.

"His hoe-cake was terrible—cooking with intent to kill," said Forrest Bronson, Grove's brother. "That's what he called it himself."

"How about stalking?" Artie asked.

"Now you're talking," said Grove. "He even reached and caught a robin. He makes about as much noise as a graveyard."

"He doesn't make any noise at all," said Pee-Wee. "I stalked, and I know all about noises, and he doesn't make any at all. He can even pick up a fish."

"Only he can't fry it," said Artie. "Well, he's down to seven all except five. I don't know how we're going to hold him for five weeks.

"He's got his work cut out for him yet with the rest of these tests," said Forrest. "Boy, but it was fine how he did those fifty yards across the river—*and back*! Can you beat that?"

"Why didn't he do five if he's down to seven?" Grove asked.

"Search me," said Artie. "He has his own system."

This talk occurred up at the Bronson place where several of the Ravens sprawled about while Forrest mowed the lawn. On such occasions Lefty was seldom with them. He had certainly become a part of the troop life, he was sociable and friendly, with a quaint way of not taking himself too seriously, which everyone liked. But at these haphazard gatherings at offtimes he was seldom among them. The scouts had discovered, or at least they sensed, that his uncle was a strict man, something of a task master, and required much service from his nephew at home.

Their casual talk was prompted by Lefty's progress with his first class tests. He had, as they recalled, swum one hundred yards instead of fifty; he had made a round trip. He had his two dollars earned and in the bank. It was, in fact, five instead of two. The neighbor whose garden he had spaded up insisted on giving him five. "I couldn't help it," he said. "Will five do?"

Within a week after this talk by his approving and proud comrades, he had met every requirement down to the last—except five. There seemed no particular reason why he had omitted this. It was the kind of requirement a scout would naturally fulfill at his own convenience. It was not a test given him by and in the presence of others. A boy takes a hike when the spirit moves him. And requirement five, if the candidate so elects, is a hike. Here it is:

> Make a round trip alone (or with another scout) to a point at least seven miles away (fourteen miles in all) going on foot, or rowing boat, and write a satisfactory account of the trip, and things observed.

Whatever the reason, up to the very day before the Friday night scout meeting when Lefty was to take his first class badge, he had not bothered about this requirement. A certain happy-go-lucky irregularity was characteristic of this boy of easy achievement. But Pee-Wee Harris was worried.

If I am to tell you of the altogether astonishing sequel of that memorable scout meeting, I must approach the shocking event somewhat in detail. On Thursday afternoon Pee-Wee went across to the Hulbert bungalow where Lefty was sweeping off the front walk. He was always working about the place, sweeping or even washing windows, and doing such work as Pee-Wee had seldom seen boys do. But then the beautiful home of Doctor Harris was an establishment with maids, a chauffeur and a manservant. Lefty paused and playfully held out the broom to prevent Pee-Wee from coming too close. Then, in honor of his caller, he sat down on one of the steps and tried to balance the broom on his knee.

“Scout-pace,” said he; “sweep a little, sit down a little.”

To the redoubtable scout from across the way this did not seem a proper attitude for a boy who was about to be elevated to the first class.

“Do you know you’re going to get your first-class badge to-morrow night?” he proclaimed rather than asked, in his most portentous tone.

“So I hear,” said Lefty.

“Do you know you didn’t do test five yet?”

“That’s so, I didn’t.”

“Are you going to?” Pee-Wee thundered. “Gee whiz, you don’t ever seem to worry.”

“I let you do that for me,” said Lefty.

“You won’t get it if you don’t do that test, I’ll tell you that,” said Pee-Wee. “The troop goes by strict rules.”

Lefty tousled Pee-Wee’s curly hair. “Did I ever flop?” he asked.

“No, you didn’t flop, but kind of you don’t get excited about anything.”

“I let you do that too.”

“Kind of you don’t seem to take any interest,” said Pee-Wee.

That, however crudely expressed by Pee-Wee, was what any boy might have thought. Lefty had a way of sauntering leisurely into fields of glory. Everything that he did seemed to be done incidentally. Perhaps it was just his easy assurance. Actions speak louder than words, though Pee-Wee often demonstrated the contrary. But it must be admitted that Lefty had never shown any concern, or even enthusiasm, in the matter of his progress. Perhaps it would be unfair to say he did not enter into the spirit of scouting. But it is true that he seemed to think of each requirement as a sort of a game to be won, and never as a step toward higher scouthood.

Probably the whole explanation lay in his downright, easy-going, unruffled prowess. He never had to key himself up to supreme effort, and so (to Pee-Wee above all) he appeared to lack fraternal enthusiasm. He ambled nonchalantly in the Holy of Holies. Then, besides, he had never exactly become the pal of these boys.

As they sat there together on the steps the postman came diagonally across the way in his zigzag progress up the beautiful Terrace Avenue and handed a letter to Lefty. Or rather he did not exactly hand it to him, for Lefty held out the broom as one passes a contribution plate, and the postman good-naturedly laid the letter on the broom.

“Well, how do you like Bridgeboro?” he asked.

“Not so bad,” said Lefty.

CHAPTER IV
WILL LEFTY PASS THE TEST?

"Are you going to do it?" Pee-Wee demanded. "If you don't do it it's a disgrace to the whole patrol. Even the Local Council is going to be there. So are you absolutely, positively, sure going to do it?"

"Why not?" said Lefty.

"Will you stop balancing that broom and say you're going to do it?"

Lefty ceased balancing the broom. "Yes, teacher," said he.

"You've only got to-morrow; suppose it should rain."

"Then I'll have to take an umbrella."

"You can't take a test hike with an umbrella!" Pee-Wee fairly howled, aghast.

"Well then, I'll go without one."

"Are you going to try for the Eagle after you get your badge?"

"Sure, that's pretty good, isn't it?"

"*The Eagle?* Sure, it's the *best*."

"The best is none too good," said Lefty, rather exasperatingly.

"Are you going to row or hike?"

"Hike, unless somebody gives me a boat between now and to-morrow. And if anybody did I wouldn't use it because I'd drop dead from shock."

It was just in this good-humored, flippant way that Lefty often spoke of his guardian's poverty. The boy was a cheerful philosopher in adversity.

"I thought I might stroll over to Little Valley," he said. "That seems to be just about seven miles on the map."

"You can get dandy hot dogs there before you start back," said Pee-Wee.

"I'll remember that."

"Will you let me go with you?"

"No, I won't let you go with me," Lefty laughed.

"Why not?"

"Well, just because."

"Do you call that a reason?"

"Well, because I think a feller hikes faster when he's alone. You might get on the track of a tiger or a grasshopper or something, and we'd end at the North Pole. Business is business."

This view seemed at least to bespeak a certain resoluteness of determination, and Pee-Wee did not denounce it. Besides, he had a stalking

engagement for the next day which, however, he would have been glad to break.

"Do you know the trail through Corrigan's Woods?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, I've been along through there almost to the village. It's a pretty straight trail."

"Some places you can hardly see it. Are you going to take a magnifying glass?"

Lefty laughed. "No, I'll manage to see it," he said.

"Why don't you ever go with fellers in the patrol anywhere?" Pee-Wee took occasion to ask.

"Why? Well, I don't know. Just haven't happened to, I guess."

Pee-Wee was by no means reassured. This proficient boy was altogether too casual. To a scout of Pee-Wee's stirring intensity, the idle balancing of a broom on the eve of glory was not a good omen.

"Is that the way you acted when you graduated from public school?" he asked. For Lefty, as might be supposed, had been an early graduate. He was already in High, or would be when the season opened and he enrolled in Bridgeboro.

"No, I stood on my head," said Lefty.

A short pause.

"You got to be there at eight o'clock," warned Pee-Wee. "You got to be back by supper time and you got to go fourteen miles.

"No, I go seven and come back seven," said Lefty.

"Do you want my field book to write in?"

"To write what in?"

"Don't you know you got to write a description of it—things you see?"

"No, I'll take my lunch in a paper bag, and I'll write on that."

"Do you want my bugle?"

"What for?"

"In case you get lost—maybe."

"Have a heart," Lefty laughed. "If I blew that it would scare everybody away."

"Have you got matches for a smudge signal, so we'll know when you get there?"

"Do I have to do that?"

"You don't *have* to."

"I'll bring back a hot dog to prove it."

Pee-Wee seemed measurably relieved. At least he launched forth into consideration of the glories presently to dot the path of this first class scout.

"Now you can go in for *all* the merit badges," he said. "You don't have to stick to five, like in the second class. What ones are you going to go for?

Artie wants you to go for Canoeing. He wants you to go for Hiking, too. If you get Pathfinding and Astronomy you can stay two weeks up at Temple Camp for nothing. If you get Cooking you can have two desserts all the rest of the season. That's the Chocolate Drop Award—he's the colored cook. I got that last summer. And do you know what Artie said? And he knows, too. He says you're the best paddler he ever saw; he says you got a dandy sweep. So I bet you'll have the canoe for our patrol in the races, hey?"

"Maybe, if I go up there."

"What do you mean, *if you go up there*?"

"Well, you never can tell."

Lefty's experience since he had been left an orphan had taught him the wisdom of never counting too much on anything.

CHAPTER V
A QUARRELSOME MAN

There was a scene of a customary sort in the brand new bungalow that evening. Lefty knew there would be a scene. As soon as he glanced at the imprint of the envelope the postman had left, he knew there would be a scene. The letter was from the Melrose Field Club of which Lefty's uncle had been the steward.

Neither Lefty nor his Aunt Laura knew exactly what the trouble had been between Mr. Hulbert and the Club. All they knew was what Mr. Hulbert had told them, and that was that the governing committee were "a lot of bull-headed, ignorant fools who could get somebody else to do a porter's work and good riddance to them." They did that; they got somebody else. And Mr. Hulbert, after a brief season of fruitless effort, succeeded in connecting with the paper mill in Bridgeboro.

He was a petty and contentious man, requiring his household to stand loyally behind him in all his bickerings and prejudices. He concerned himself too obtrusively with the goings and comings of his nephew and his groundless prejudices had cost Lefty more than one good friend. He had a prejudice against automobiles because he could not afford to keep one. He was even going to look into this scout business. And so forth and so on.

It was no credit to Mr. Hulbert that he gave a home to Lefty. He had owed a considerable amount of money to the boy's mother when she died. And there was a small trust fund which at least saved the nephew from being entirely dependent. A terrible occurrence in that household in the Melrose days had reduced Lefty's feeling for his uncle to that of dutiful submission. He never talked about these things.

The letter, somewhat late in arriving, announced that the Club's athletic games were to take place the next day, and, as usual, enclosed tickets for the affair. The Field Club had scorned to take notice of Mr. Hulbert's quarrel with it, and held out, as always, a cordial hand to his family.

"You're not going to go to that ruction," said Mr. Hulbert as he paused, in his shirt sleeves, to glance at the tickets and letter which lay on the dining table. "I don't want any argument about it. I'll have none of my folks mixing up with that crowd."

"I'm sure *I* have no intention of going," said his wife, rather dryly. "And I'm sure Lefferts hasn't. I'm sure I don't know how he'd get there. He certainly can't walk forty miles."

"And forty back," said Lefty, with just the faintest sly intent to make his uncle's mandate appear ridiculous.

"Well, I'm just saying what he's not to do, that's all," Mr. Hulbert snapped. "Nobody that lives under my roof is going to tag after that gang that played me a dirty trick. I don't want neither of you going to Melrose." That was a favorite expression of his, *under my roof*; it accompanied all his threats and bombast.

There was silence for a few minutes while Mrs. Hulbert read and Lefty glanced at his Handbook. Mr. Hulbert stood, an unattractive figure in his shirt sleeves, somewhat baffled by the anti-climax attending his despotic warning.

"What do you mean, he couldn't go?" he finally asked, contentiously. "He's got five dollars, hasn't he, for spading up those people's lawn?"

Lefty continued glancing at his Handbook. He was used to this sort of thing.

"You know he put it in the bank," said the boy's aunt. "He had to do that to join the scouts."

"I only had to put two in," said Lefty, never looking up. "But it was a five dollar bill and I put it all in."

"What's the idea, they're wanting money?" Mr. Hulbert snapped. "They're like the Red Cross and the Salvation Army, always wanting money."

"Now you're making yourself absurd," said his wife. "I suppose they want to encourage him to *save* money."

"Well, you keep away from that Melrose crowd while you're under my roof," said Mr. Hulbert, rather weakly. "That's all I'm telling you."

To which there was no answer. And there followed another pause. Mr. Hulbert seemed to feel that in some way he must justify himself. He had struck but had hit nothing.

"What about this scout stuff anyway?" he demanded. "Is that why you couldn't clean up the cellar to-day? Here we've been two months and it ain't done yet. I'm not going to have you fooling away your time on that river when you got work to do. Work's the best thing for anybody."

"It doesn't seem to have helped you much," said Mrs. Hulbert, intent on her reading.

Mr. Hulbert was very touchy about his own indifferent success in life. But he did not venture into the arena of caustic repartee with his wife. He took it out on the scouts.

"Well, I'm going to find out about this," he said.

"Everybody knows about them, if you mean the scouts," said Lefty. He rather dreaded his uncle's meddlesome habit. "Here's their book."

“I don’t want to see their book,” said his uncle. “I’m going around there with you next time and look ’em over. I want to know what it’s all about. It’s taking a lot of your time and I want to know what kind of notions it’s putting into your head. I’m not going to have any more crimes and law breaking laid at my door—not while you’re under my roof. I’m not so keen about this wild west stuff.”

At this, Mrs. Hulbert inverted her book, laid it in her lap, and gave her husband such a look of withering contempt that it seemed for the moment to quell him. Anyone might have seen this. But a close observer might also have seen the reason for it—or some part of the reason for it. Lefty’s hand trembled and his eyes were brimming.

“I thought that was never to be mentioned here,” said Mrs. Hulbert with scornful severity. Then turning to Lefty she said gently, “Try to forget it, dear.”

Mr. Hulbert looked uncomfortable and tried clumsily to square himself with the boy who seemed so cruelly wounded.

“Well, you’ve no objection to me going around and looking them over, have you?” he asked, conciliatingly.

“No,” stammered Lefty, trying to control his voice.

Nothing more was said about the past that night.

CHAPTER VI
THE BOYS' OPINIONS

It was a different sort of boy that went to bed in his little room that night, than Pee-Wee and the rest of them had known. And when he was almost ready to put out the light he was still sobbing pitifully, and did not cease until his aunt came in and comforted him, telling him to forget what his uncle had said. "It's all in the past," she said soothingly, as she sat on the bedside. "Go to sleep now, and don't think of it."

But he did think of it, whatever it was. It must have been a cruel thrust of his uncle's. And when he ceased to think of it—to forget the past as his aunt had said—he began thinking of other things. Here was the old meddlesome, womanish habit of that petty man obtruding again. Lefty had none of the pride a boy might feel in a father's visit to his son's theater of activity. The man had gone snooping to the public school to make sure the boy had not played "hooky." It was in no sense a school visit.

And now he was going snooping to scout meeting, probably only to cause embarrassment. Lefty did not want Mr. Ellsworth to meet him, nor the gentlemen of the Local Council either. There would be nothing, utterly nothing, of the genial parent's visit about it. Just the prying expedition of a busybody with the instinct of a sleuth. He hoped that the bantering Doctor Harris would not be there; Doctor Harris who kidded all the scouts and shamelessly encouraged their mirthful taunts of Pee-Wee. How he dreaded the next night! This boy who nonchalantly met difficulties and knew no fears, was beset with fear now; fear that this carping uncle would demand some sort of accounting from these scout officials. The poor boy even feared a scene. Well, at all events he was going to receive his first-class badge. He was not nervous about that; he was never nervous about matters except those in which his uncle was concerned.

He went to sleep never knowing that he was under a cloud—not a very dark cloud, but still a cloud—in the view of some of these scout comrades. Not with Pee-Wee, for that terrible scout stood in loyalty as firm as the Rock of Gibraltar. But the little matter of the shop window had not been forgotten.

And there was something else. That very day he had "backed out" of stalking with three of his patrol, saying that he had to work all day at home. Later in the day El Sawyer told Doc Carson that he had seen Lefty alighting from an incoming bus down near the station. "That's funny," Doc had said.

So it happened that on this eve of Lefty's elevation to the first class rank, while the harassed boy was listening to his uncle's tirade, several scouts of the troop were discussing him on their way home from the movies. And the different "squints" they had in regard to him were rather interesting.

"Gee, I can't make that guy out," said Bert McAlpin, one of the Elks. "He sure looks like a winner. But he's kind of funny; I mean never going around with us."

"He's got something better to do with himself than go round with the Elks," said Roy Blakeley. "The pleasure is his."

"No sooner said than stung," caroled Stubby Piper, another of the hilarious Silver Foxes.

"I guess he has to work around home a lot," said Artie Van Arlen, his patrol leader.

"Yes, but what's the use telling us he has to work when he goes somewhere?" one queried.

"Maybe he's afraid Pee-Wee would go with him," chimed Roy, in his usual gay manner.

The hero of the Ravens was not there to defend either himself or his neighbor.

It was Doc Carson, always fair and thoughtful, who said, "It makes you feel kind of shaky about everything he tells us. He sure can do things—he does 'em too easy."

"What do you mean?" Grove Bronson asked.

"Oh, I don't know," Doc answered with a note of reluctance. "I—oh, I guess I don't know what I do mean."

But it was clear what he had in mind. Lefty seemed to do things without any effort, and he reported these things with a kind of whimsical half interest. It was natural that boys who had found difficulty in doing these same things should be puzzled. Perhaps it was pardonable that one or another of them should at times have faint misgivings about stunts they had to take on faith. That was about what Doc Carson meant.

And Artie knew what he meant. "We saw him swim back across the river, didn't we?" he said, with a loyal note of challenge in his voice.

"Yes, but we didn't see him swim over," said El Sawyer.

"How did he get over?" asked Warde Hollister of the Silver Foxes.

"Keep out of it, keep out of it," said Roy gayly. "We have troubles of our own. Maybe he went over in a submarine. If you don't want him we'll drown Westy and take him in our patrol. You're jealous, you're jealous, you're jealous," he sang tantalizingly.

"Do you suppose he'd hike way up to the bridge and over just to flim-flam us, when all he had to do was fifty yards, anyway?" Artie asked. "He

did what the rule says, didn't he?"

"We're not talking about that," said Wig Weigand. "We're talking about whether he tells us straight or not."

"Well, don't do so much talking," said Roy in his usual irresponsible manner. "If Scout Harris of the Raving Ravens was here you wouldn't dare ____"

"Believe me, a feller can get away with a lot if he wants to," said Bob Hilman of the Elks. "Scoutmasters, Local Councils, I don't care what. When it comes to the gold medal, maybe it's different. But on class tests you can get away with murder if you try—and merit badges, too. It doesn't pay and there's no stunt in it, but you can do it. I'm not saying Lefty's doing it. If he came in all excited and out of breath, everybody'd sit up and take notice. I wish I could climb up to first class as easy as he did."

"Yes, but how about the stuff in the store window," Wig said. This little matter had somehow got out into the open, and they took account of it.

"I've seen them change that stuff a dozen times," said Doc Carson.

"And that's that," said Roy in gay half interest.

"Well I wish I hadn't seen him getting out of the bus," said El Sawyer; "after what he said about working around home all day."

"Forget it, he was sweeping off the sidewalk when I went through Terrace Avenue this afternoon," said Ben Maxwell of the Elks, as he left them at the corner. "So long, see you to-morrow night."

"All right, but there's something funny about him," Grove Bronson said, as they walked along. "I don't know what it is."

"There's something funny about us, too," said Roy.

"I don't mean it that way," said Grove.

"So long—to-morrow night," sang Roy, as he and Will Dawson cut out to go up Blakeley's Hill. The matter was certainly not affecting his buoyant spirits.

"Do you notice how Lefty never talks about where he used to live?" Stubby Piper asked. "Maybe he was in some kind of a——"

"Oh rats!" said Ben Maxwell. "Look at Charlie Ganlon, he licked every feller in the town he came from. Bunk! Golly I'm glad there's one doesn't talk that way. Mostly you hear big things what a feller did in another town."

"That's true too," said Artie.

"But I admit there's something funny about him," Ben said, "I'm blamed if I know what it is. Anyway he can swim—*gosh*, he can swim! And paddle."

"But I wish he'd come right out and be on the square with us," said Artie earnestly. "What's the reason he wouldn't go stalking?"

“Search me,” said Doc. “I hope to goodness he doesn’t forget to come to-morrow night.”

“Leave that to Pee-Wee,” said Artie.

And there you are. You can form an estimate of how they felt about him better than I can tell you. It must be confessed that he had shown no great enthusiasm about scouting. Yet, on the other hand, he had shown a kind of leisurely power of achievement which had astonished them. Perhaps enthusiasm is not natural to one who achieves without effort. It was this lack of strenuous effort together with these one or two little dubious instances of apparent untruthfulness, that caused them to think about him, and talk about him.

Moreover, he had not sought them out at off times; had not drifted among them. But he had not missed a meeting. And when he was among them, they found him captivating. On the whole it may be said that their faith in him had not been shaken. Mr. Ellsworth did not appear to be worrying about him. The Ravens still counted on the honors they believed he would bring to the patrol up at camp. They raved about his paddling. They were just the least trifle uncomfortable in his presence. It was strange, but they had an odd feeling that his easy way of riding over waves—tests and such—was almost a slur on scouting. These things were made to be mastered, not to be nonchalantly belittled.

Perhaps, after all, that was why some of them had a faint misgiving that he had not in fact done all he had been credited with doing. Still they certainly intended to feature him, if he would let them. They were about to give him his first class badge and they were satisfied he had earned it. If he were lacking in any particular it had not been in a way to make him ineligible. He was still a winner. The unpleasant things, they tried not to think about.

And then came the shocking climax.

CHAPTER VII
BURGLARS?

Mr. Hulbert was the typical busybody and was forever looking for trouble. His suspicions kept him always on the move. He thought the worst about everybody and everything. He was what is sometimes called a Calamity Jane. If he smelled smoke he thought the house was on fire. If the wind rattled the doors he thought a sneak thief was trying to get in. If a tramp paused to rest on the curbstone he telephoned the police.

He was always hearing burglars. Double locking doors and windows was his favorite indoor sport. Yet, indeed, there was no reason to think that a burglar would wish to visit his premises. For the Hulbert home was a humble, bare place, containing little more than the cold requirements of life.

On that Thursday night, the night before the memorable scout meeting, he was sure he heard burglars. It was near midnight and he sat alone in the little living room reading his newspaper. He paused and listened. To do him justice, there *was* a sound. It was such a sound as one might make in stealthily crawling in or out of a window. He heard a muffled knocking as of a foot accidentally encountering woodwork; at least it might have been that. He certainly heard the sound of a window being cautiously raised or lowered.

He was not a courageous man and his first impulse was to make a noise so that the intruder would be warned and frightened off. So he rattled his newspaper and coughed. There was no responding sound of precipitate flight. He went through into the kitchen, rather nervously, pulled on the light, and looked about. He tried the back door and inspected the one window. All was as it should be. He even inspected the trick ironing board which sometimes joggled and occasionally slipped down, standing like a coffin in the room.

Then he got an old lantern and walked rather timorously around outside the house. All the rooms of this tawdry little brand new bungalow were on one floor and there appeared to be nothing wrong anywhere, except that his nephew's window was wide open which was unusual. At least it was usually the upper sash that was left open, but now it was the lower. All was quiet within, but by the light of his lantern he could see a dirty smear on the clapboards below the sill.

Suddenly a thought came to him; naturally enough, too, in view of something which had happened in the past. He hurried around into the

house, opened his nephew's door, and pushed the light button. There was Lefty wide awake in bed, and evidently under the stress of great excitement.

"What's this? another elopement?" his uncle demanded crisply. "I thought we had enough of that kind of doings. What are you up to, anyway?"

"I'm not up to anything," said Lefty. But still he was clearly agitated.

Mr. Hulbert glanced suspiciously around the room but there was not one single evidence to bear out his apprehensions. If Lefty had planned to run away, he must have reconsidered his intent, re-entered the room, and undressed before his uncle arrived on the scene. Mr. Hulbert abandoned this theory. But he did use the occasion to utter a well worn threat.

"You know what it means if you go," he said.

"I didn't go," said Lefty.

"You got scared and came back?"

"I don't get scared," the boy said.

"You were out somewheres, huh?"

"No, I wasn't out."

"Where's your shoes?"

"They're in the closet."

Without the slightest delicacy about checking up the boy's veracity Mr. Hulbert hauled the shoes out of the closet and scrutinized them. They contained no painty mark or scratch—no sign of having scraped the woodwork outside.

"How did that smear get outside?" Mr. Hulbert demanded.

"I didn't know there was one there," said Lefty.

"Well, then, there must have been some burglars around here," said the man, puzzled.

"I haven't seen one in here," said Lefty, with that faint suggestion of ridicule which always stopped short of impudence and invariably irritated his uncle.

"You haven't *seen* one. Well!"

"And I'd like to go to sleep now. I'm going to be up to-morrow night."

"Well, if you were out with any of those youngsters, I'll know about it to-morrow night because I'm going to that shebang to look them over."

"WELL, IF YOU WERE OUT WITH ANY OF THOSE YOUNGSTERS, I'LL KNOW ABOUT IT TO-MORROW."

Not one word did he have to say about the badge which he must have known was to be handed his nephew the following night. To be sure, he had not heard Lefty talk about it, for Lefty seemed always to regard such things

as incidental. But he had heard Lefty's aunt talk about it, and question the boy about it. Though, to be sure, Lefty had not had much to tell her.

That night had been a high spot in the troublous life of the Hulbert household. It was a long while before Lefty finally fell asleep; he lay awake, troubled and thoughtful. He still had a fourteen mile hike staring him in the face. But it may be doubted whether he thought very much about that.

CHAPTER VIII
MYSTERY

It was characteristic of Mr. Hulbert that his meddling and sleuthing never got him anywhere. A better method might have exposed the facts of the case. For something *had* happened that night.

When the lord and master of the new bungalow withdrew to his apartment after what can hardly be called a triumphant evening, his wife asked him what all the rumpus had been about.

"First I thought it was a burglar, then I thought the boy" (he always referred to Lefty as *the boy*) "was running away. Guess not, though. He might have been out."

"Ridiculous," said Aunt Laura.

"Well, I told him what it would mean if he ever tried running away. I gave him a reminder——"

"I don't care to hear any mention of the past," said the lady, tartly. "You are going to keep your promise about that—especially when Lefferts is present. Now let that end it. Is he going to sleep?"

"I'm going around with him to look over those people to-morrow night," said Mr. Hulbert, as he pulled off his necktie. "I'm going to see what it's all about."

"So you said."

"And I don't want you to be giving him any money to go to Melrose. Did he get a bank book? Did he give it to you to keep?"

"He certainly did not. It's about his only possession; I mean he shall enjoy the pride of keeping it. I think he has to go on a hike to-morrow, something in the way of preparation."

"How about cleaning up the cellar?"

"I think that can wait."

It did wait, and Lefty had a day off; Aunt Laura saw to that. In the morning before he started out she asked him if he wanted a lunch to take along and he said no, which seemed strange; for a hike to Little Valley and back was pretty nearly an all day affair.

"I'll get a couple of hot dogs," he said.

"I think that's a pretty long walk to require you to take," said Aunt Laura.

"You'd better not let Pee-Wee Harris hear you call it a walk," said Lefty. "It's a hike. You'd never get anywhere in scouting, Aunt. And it isn't a *lunch*

either, it's a *snack*. You've got to get these things right."

"Well, whatever you call it, that little Harris boy certainly doesn't stint himself," she said. "He's forever eating."

"He's my political boss," said Lefty, pausing on the door-step to tighten his shoe laces. "He ate eleven of my scout pancakes. I think he'd eat stove lids if you put syrup on them."

"I think it would be nice if you had a scout suit," she said, rather wistfully. "You've worn that old gray suit for two years."

"It's all right," he said.

She laid her arm about him and kissed him good-bye, and, by her action, seemed to beseech him not to worry about things that had been said the night before—nor about other things unmentioned. He turned and waved to her as he went down the street past the beautiful, spacious lawns of Terrace Avenue residences, among which the little wood and brick bungalow seemed a false note indeed. The birds were making a great chorus in the trees as he went along and Sam, Doctor Harris' chauffeur, who was coming along the street, greeted him cheerily, with his broad negro smile.

Lefty hurried then, for he was afraid that Sam would tell Pee-Wee and that that irrepressible sponsor of his would come running after him. In his heart he liked Pee-Wee better than any of the scouts, but he wanted to be alone this day.

No one saw him again until he came in just before supper time. He entered the house with his customary aimless air, graceful with a touch of nonchalance. There was nothing of the weary but triumphant hero about him. He might have just come in from a stroll around the block. He sat down at the table in the living room and began to write.

When his aunt asked him about his day he said, "Pretty good. Please don't bother me now, Aunt, I'm writing my autobiography."

She knew that he had some sort of a report to write, so she left him alone. Also, at supper, she saw that he was preoccupied and did not press him for particulars about his day. Mr. Hulbert came in late for the meal, as he usually did, for the paper mill kept him till six o'clock. So Lefty had to wait for his uncle, which he did, dutifully and patiently. He had hoped that Mr. Hulbert would be too tired to go but no such luck was vouchsafed him.

At a little before eight o'clock on a night long to be remembered, the two started off together. Mr. Hulbert was always shabby, but on this occasion he had put on a white collar with a scarf studiously arranged, and to Lefty he looked very strange and funny in this sartorial departure from his customary flannel shirt and vestless suit.

CHAPTER IX
DISGRACE

The First Bridgeboro Troop met in the small assembly room of the Merchants' Club which that public spirited organization had placed at the disposal of the scouts. Ordinarily the chairs, which were disposed in rows to seat an audience, were folded and stacked at one side. But on this momentous evening they had been set up in expectation of a considerable assemblage. Lefty was glad of that, for his uncle would be simply one of an audience and would probably not make himself obtrusive.

The apparent formality of the occasion had a cheering effect on Lefty. As for himself, no boy that ever lived was more free of self-consciousness. It made no difference to him whether three people or three hundred were looking at him. But he was somewhat puzzled by the gala arrangements. He sat down with his uncle in the front row and soon his uproarious sponsor, Pee-Wee Harris, joined him.

That redoubtable champion and scoutmaker was resplendent in all the brave appurtenances of the scout regalia. He wore conspicuously every article that could be worn; to look at him was like running over the advertising section of the Handbook, except for his terrific scowl; no manufacturer could fashion and distribute such a scowl as that. But at all events the seductive manufacturer appeared to have amply supplied him with jackknife, compass, belt-axe, bugle, water-tight match container and even a tiny saucepan which performed a series of chimes in conjunction with the belt-axe in time with Pee-Wee's martial stride. From a shoe lace, anchored somewhere in the neighborhood of his heroic breast, dangled a note book.

"I'm going to stay here with you right to the end," he said, as if Lefty were soon to be summoned to execution. "Did you go seven miles and back?"

"Looks that way," said Lefty.

To do Mr. Hulbert justice, he perceived at once that he had come to the wrong place, or at least that he had come for the wrong purpose. Of course, all this preparation was not in honor of Lefty. Other troops were present and high honors were to be awarded. Two scouts, Trailer Hilman of the Elks, and a member of the East Bridgeboro Troop were to be given Eagle badges. A gentleman nationally known in scouting was to deliver an address. The meeting was to be used, also, to start a county-wide drive for members. It

was no rough-and-tumble affair. Mr. Hulbert saw all about him men who were evidently men of standing. He saw a few ladies, too. He saw the mayor of the town. He felt out of place and thoroughly uncomfortable and it served him right. He would do no checking up on these "youngsters." He would remain modestly in the background. He was ill at ease, and we shall have to accept that as his punishment.

Before an audience of a hundred people or so, Lefty saw Bob, or Trailer Hilman, become an Eagle Scout, never dreaming what part Trailer Hilman was to play in his young life. With his scout colleagues (they could hardly be called comrades) sitting all about him in the front rows, he saw a scout from a one-patrol troop, over the river, awarded the gold medal for life-saving.

"How would you like to get *that*?" Pee-Wee whispered.

"Not so bad," said Lefty, which was by no means satisfactory to Pee-Wee.

"Will you be scared when you go up there?"

"On the platform? No, why?"

After the scout of the East End Troop had been awarded his Eagle badge amid the vociferous acclamation of his comrades, the gentleman from headquarters delivered an address. Then there was some real entertainment, skillful demonstrations of first aid, etc. And best of all, those dark eyed Italian brothers, Bruno and Tasca Liventi (whom you will remember), roused the echoes in that little hall with stirring music on their gorgeous marimba.[1]

"I'm the one that got them into the troop," whispered Pee-Wee.

If any of the audience had expected to be bored at this purely scout affair they had occasion to revise their misgivings as these two boys, standing behind their instrument, bedizened with velvet and gold, crossed and recrossed their hands in lightning-like movements, dragging their little wooden hammers back and forth across the rows of keys in a clamorous maze of trills and variations. For an encore they played the *Old Lake Trail* (as perhaps you have heard them play it before) and there was not a still foot in the room. Dusky sons of theatrical parents, they were at home with their tinseled instrument, and at home upon the stage. And Signor Liventi, of the white and silver accordion, was there to hear them.

So seductive and arousing were the melodies of these talented brothers, that one of several girls who sat behind Pee-Wee leaned forward and whispered, "Do you know if there's going to be dancing afterwards?"

"That's all you came for," answered the champion of the primitive life. "You didn't come to see scouts at all."

And then Mr. Ellsworth came forward on the platform, holding a paper. Everybody knew him and liked him, and showed it. After the entertainment a few people had left, and it was to the scouts and a sprinkling of others that he spoke, "We have one or two troop matters to attend to and then the Liventi brothers, highest salaried artists in the First Bridgeboro outfit, are at your service for dancing or anything else you wish. I'm glad to see some of the High School crowd have favored us with their presence. We are glad the young ladies are not afraid of us because of our wild and primitive character. Stick around a little while and we'll show you an Indian war dance. (Laughter) And we'll give you some scout-made crullers and lemonade.

"Now there are two scouts to be passed up into the second class field; let's get that over with. Stubby Piper, come up here and get your badge—you just about made it on signaling. Otherwise O.K. Get busy now in the second class and let's hear from you. Alfred McCord, come up here and don't be chesty because you've got a new Eagle in your patrol. Loosen your belt, you look like a bolster. Here, take this and keep up the good work. Now I guess that's all for the second class. Four merit badges will be handed out next Friday, three of them in the Silver Fox Patrol; you Elks and Ravens ought to be ashamed of yourselves. And the Silver Foxes crazy at that."

"Now he's going to call you," whispered Pee-Wee excitedly.

He did. "Lefferts Leighton, stand up and give the folks a look at you—come right up here and don't stumble over the marimba. That's right. Here's the boy that's going to put new life into the Ravens. Through the second class tests and the first class tests he had us on the run keeping with him—but his cooking is terrible, simply *terrible*. (Laughter) The Ravens are expecting him to pull the canoe race prize for them. If he gets it away from that Rhode Island crowd he'll be a winner. Don't be bashful, Lefty, we always do this."

"I'm not bashful," smiled Lefty, standing close by his scoutmaster on the platform.

Indeed, he did not seem bashful as he waited in that leisurely, half nonchalant way of his, unconsciously holding the upright pole of the troop emblem with one hand. He made an engaging picture.

"Now, I have a paper written by this scout," said Mr. Ellsworth, "and I'm not going to read it because I don't want to start a noise like a school commencement exercise. But it gives a pretty good description of his requirement five hike to Little Valley and back, and what he didn't see must be invisible—cross trails, woodchuck holes, freakish trees, a swamp, a brook, goodness knows what all. He could even see a Silver Fox joke, this chap. (Laughter) He even saw Little Valley, insignificant as it is. (Laughter)

"I told him how he could get hot dogs there," shouted Pee-Wee.

"He can even see Pee-Wee, his sight is so good," said Roy.

I like to think of Roy's cheery banter just before the black cloud settled.

"Now my boy, you've astonished us all," said Mr. Ellsworth, rather more seriously. "I wish these scouts saw more of you. They talk of walking away with honors, but you've sauntered away with them. I don't think I ever handed out a badge with a better will. Here you are."

And then came the staggering climax. Just as Lefty stepped forward, easy and self-possessed, a scout of the Raven Patrol, Victor Norris, stood up. There was a faint smile on Lefty's face, as if all this fuss and bother rather amused him. But there was no disrespect in it toward his scoutmaster.

"Have I got a right to use a challenge like we always had?" Vic asked, nervously.

Lefty looked inquiringly toward him, then at Mr. Ellsworth. There was not a sound. Mr. Hulbert, interested in spite of himself, asked Pee-Wee what a *challenge* meant. But for once his diminutive neighbor was too intent to answer.

"You sure can," said Mr. Ellsworth, cheerfully but still surprised.

"Well, two of us don't see how he could have gone on that hike to-day," said Vic, clearly embarrassed, but speaking up bravely. "We've got to say so, that's the way I understand it. Because Dorry Benton and I saw him in the reading room of the Library in the morning, and he was there in the afternoon too."

He had performed his altogether unpleasant duty, and remained standing clumsily, not knowing whether to sit down or not. You might have heard a pin drop in the room.

"Oh, I guess you're mistaken," laughed the scoutmaster, but his laugh was a trifle forced. "How about it? You were supposed to have made this hike to-day, weren't you Lefty?" There was a fine touch of loyalty in the use of that name.

"That was the idea," said Lefty simply.

"Well, he couldn't have done that," said Dorry Benton, standing, "because he was in the Library most all day. And you needn't think it's any fun, Lefty, for me to stand up and say that."

"That's all right," said Lefty.

Now Mr. Ellsworth was clearly dumfounded, but he carried it off very neatly, "I guess you'll have to put it over on those two fellows, Lefty," he said. "I've got your write-up right here in my hand."

There was no answer. Ben Maxwell pulled Vic Norris down into his seat. There was a faint sound as of people stirring nervously. The scene was tense.

"How about it, Lefferts?" asked Mr. Ellsworth, hopefully.

"Just give me a minute to think," said Lefty.

That was enough. To all except himself it seemed a confession.

"To *think*!" said the scoutmaster, dismayed. "What do you mean?" he added severely.

Still Lefty did not give an answer. In the most embarrassing positions, facing shame, he was calm and thoughtful. Surely there was something wrong with this boy, Mr. Ellsworth thought. He was not only untruthful and a fraud, but coldly calculating in a predicament. He seemed morally blunted. With disgust, the scoutmaster put an end to it.

"Did you hike to Little Valley and back, on your number five requirement, to-day or not, sir?" he asked.

"Guess they must be right," said Lefty, "here's your badge."

With a show of anger and disgust such as he had never indulged before in all their acquaintance with him, Mr. Ellsworth tore up the paper which he held and threw the fragments on the floor. Then he turned on his heel and, with a look of contempt, strode off the platform.

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[1] See Pee-Wee Harris, Mayor for a Day.

CHAPTER X
THE NOTE

He managed to get away; how he did it he scarcely knew. The sounds of talk and of moving forms, were all like a jumble to him; hazy, far off. He found himself in the street. He had not even rejoined his uncle. Strangely, he thought least about his uncle. It never occurred to him that Mr. Hulbert would expect an accounting in this strange business. In his disgrace he was even conscious of a little feeling of satisfaction that this snooping guardian of his had found the scouts to be quite all right. At least he would have nothing to say on that score.

He was glad to be out in the fresh air. In a store window he saw that the time was ten minutes to eleven, and he hurried as if intent on some important errand. It was odd how this boy who had given up his first-class badge retained his habit of going scout-pace. Soon he glanced at a clock in another lighted store window, and took occasion to scrutinize a slip of paper which he took from the pocket of the old gray suit that had done long service. Then he hurried on again. It was evident that the purpose of his errand existed before his disgrace at the scout meeting. And, in truth, that shameful incident had served one good purpose; it had made it easy to get away from his uncle and avoid going straight home. For he had other matters in hand.

When he got into Main Street he cut out the walking intervals of scout-pace and ran with all his might. The thoroughfare was deserted, but a lonely motorist changing a tire paused to stare at the boy as he dashed by. At the unlighted railroad station he turned abruptly and followed the tracks through the darkness to a sort of shed some fifty yards up the line.

The shed overhung a platform on which were several baggage trucks, their movable pull handles standing upright. On one, someone had thrown a hat, which for a moment, startled Lefty; he thought it was a man standing in the darkness. Against a tiny building on the platform, was a large chest or bunker topped by a sloping lid.

Here Lefty paused and glanced about expectantly in the darkness. The place was quite deserted and very lonely. This was the freight station, scene of strenuous loading and unloading and rolling of trucks in certain hours of the day, but late at night a forlorn and dismal spot. Somehow Lefty felt less uneasy standing up than sitting down in such a place. So, after dangling his legs from the bunker for a few minutes, he jumped down and paced the

platform, now and then straining his eyes to look up the track to where the street crossed. There was nothing up there but a red lantern which hung on the upright gates. He seemed to be waiting but no one came.

He was thoroughly tired; seeing his wearied gait and his habit of lifting his foot and bending his knee one might readily have believed that he had hiked far on that fateful day. But no doubt the experience at scout meeting had strained the nerves of this boy of easy poise and produced an effect of weariness. At all events, he had run nearly all the way from the troop room and he seemed dog tired.

Scarcely had he sought rest for a second time on the bunker and afforded himself the refreshing delight of dangling his heavy shoes in the air, when he heard footsteps coming slowly along the platform, and presently he saw a tiny glint of brightness. “At last,” he said to himself. He was just about to call when he perceived that the approaching figure was a sauntering police officer swinging his club.

The cop was very unceremonious. “Well, what are you doing, hanging around here?” he demanded.

“Can’t you see I’m sitting down?” said Lefty. His weariness and recent disgrace were affecting his nerves and emboldened him to speak thus testily to the officer.

“Oh, you’re just sittin’ there, huh? Well, you get up and chase yourself outer here, sonny, and don’t let me tell yer again, see? Outer here with you now, quick. If you come back again, you’ll find me here and I’ll fetch you along and put you ter bed in the jug. Now beat it.”

“I haven’t come back once yet,” said Lefty, in that funny, logical way that was characteristic of him.

“No?” said the cop, with a kind of sneering irony. “So yer want ter give me an argument, huh? Didn’t I chase you away half an hour ago? Or maybe I was only dreamin’, huh? Come on now, beat it, and get home with yer.” Withal he was not unpleasant; his severity was somewhat geared down in consideration of Lefty’s youth. But he meant what he said. “Beat it,” he concluded, laconically.

“All right, but you didn’t chase me away before,” said Lefty.

“Beat it, sonny.”

So there was an end of it. But just as Lefty was about to jump down his hand encountered a bit of paper sticking out of a crack between two of the cover boards, and mechanically, rather than intentionally, he kept hold of it as he walked away, disgruntled and baffled. The cop sauntered about to give the impression that he intended remaining about the dark and deserted freight station.

When Lefty emerged out of the darkness into the dim light of Main Street he paused under a light and read what was scrawled on the paper:

> I haven't got enough money to ride to-morrow so have to start walking to-night. Sooner the better, I'm kind of shaky, guess you're right. Safety first. So long, she'll be back, see you then. Don't suppose you'll get this but I'm taking a chance.
>
> K.

The meaning seemed to be clear enough to Lefty. He tore the note up into small bits and scattered them as he hurried along. There was no place to go but home now, and he would have to face his uncle. But, oddly, that did not greatly trouble him.

He wondered what his Aunt Laura would say.

CHAPTER XI
OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

He seemed utterly fagged out and disheartened when he paused in the living room on reaching home. Perhaps this was well; his senses were so numbed with fatigue and the shame he had suffered that nothing Mr. Hulbert could say would much affect him. He cast a kind of despairing glance at his aunt as he threw down his hat and stood leaning against the shabby piano.

"Well, I suppose you heard," he said, half-heartedly.

"Yes, dear," his Aunt Laura answered, "and I think you've done hiking enough to win any badge. Goodness knows, you've hiked through the woods between here and Little Valley enough to cover fifty miles, I'm sure you have. I certainly think they ought to give you one of their medals. I don't see that it makes much difference when you go hiking."

He smiled wistfully at her blundering loyalty; she seemed not to see wherein lay his disgrace. "No, they were right," he said with a kind of half interest, "I'm out of it."

"Well, then, you'd better get busy and clean out the cellar," said Mr. Hulbert. "I don't see what your idea is hanging around the Public Library all day when there's a lot of work to be done here. Those scouts seem to be a good enough lot, but there's a lot of fol-de-rol about it. There wasn't any use telling them you took a hike if you didn't. And there wasn't any use chasing you off to walk a dozen miles or more, anyway, when there's plenty of ways of exercising right here. You sure you wasn't down Melrose with that gang?" He could not get this out of his head.

"Didn't you hear them say they saw me at the Library?" Lefty asked, dully.

"Well, you keep away from the Library when you got work to do here."

"I'm going to bed now, I'm tired," said Lefty. "Good night."

So there was an end of that. Neither his aunt nor his uncle had seemed to understand his dishonor. Perhaps that was natural enough in the case of the gentle lady who was all of a mother to him. But Lefty would have had a better respect for his uncle if that carping busybody of a man had taken more to heart the scene which he had witnessed. He had expected a tirade from his uncle because he had not waited for him at the hall. And it is lucky that this did not occur for it might have broken the taut strings of the boy's patience.

And that was the end of Lefty's little excursion into scouting. Mr. Ellsworth called after a day or two and wanted to see him, but the boy was

out somewhere, and the good scoutmaster decided to wait for a chance meeting when he could talk with him alone. He, at least, had not given Lefty up.

The next morning after that unhappy scout affair Lefty was sweeping the sidewalk, in front of the house, as if nothing had happened. And while he was at this accustomed task Pee-Wee emerged from the beautiful Harris home across the way and, studiously avoiding looking across, hurried along the street to join a couple of his comrades on a Saturday stalking ramble.

But the great soul of Pee-Wee faltered as he hastened on, and he stole a glance at his former hero. He paused and came awkwardly back, cutting a diagonal course across the street.

"You needn't think I'm mad," he said. "Even if the rest are, I'm not. You ain't mad at me, are you?"

"*You?* I'll say I'm not," said Lefty. "I'm not exactly mad at anybody; I'm mad at myself, I guess."

"Maybe even you might have had a reason," said Pee-Wee. "I mean why you didn't do your test hike."

But all the while Pee-Wee knew (who better than this scout of scouts?) that he had not touched the point of the matter at all. He knew it was not a matter of hiking or of not hiking, but of bluffing and lying. Yet he would twist his reasoning for a friend, bully little scout that he was. "Maybe you hiked through that way before, sometime maybe, and maybe you thought that would do."

"You make a noise like my aunt," said Lefty. And he couldn't resist reaching out and tousling his sturdy little champion's curly hair.

"*Geeeee whiz*, I know you can do harder things than that," said Pee-Wee.

"Right," said Lefty.

"Didn't you swim a hundred yards? *Gee whiz*, you gave them fifty for good measure. Even all Ben Maxwell can do is seventy and then they had to take him in the boat."

"I guess they don't believe that now, do they?" Lefty asked.

"I don't care what they believe," said Pee-Wee. "You're a winner and I won't let any feller say that you're not."

"You going stalking?" Lefty asked, noticing Pee-Wee's camera. He was always going stalking.

"Yes and I got to go, and you're not mad, are you?"

"At *you*? I'm not quite as bad as that," said Lefty. "And you can tell them I'm sorry I disgraced the patrol. I wouldn't have been much good in it anyway, I have a lot of work to do here. It was you that got me in. I went in because I liked *you*. As long as you're not sore it's all right. I suppose I've got a kink or something. I must have been a queer looking duck without any

scout suit. Everything's all right the way it worked out, I guess. I bet I hike twenty miles a week sweeping off this walk. Broom test, huh? I'm not sore I have to give up friends. I had a lot of friends down in Melrose where I used to live, and I had to give them all up."

"Why?" Pee-Wee asked.

"Why? Oh, just because my uncle had a scrap where he worked. I'm not kicking, I like it here. You better chase along, kid; I'm glad you came over and spoke to me."

"You didn't get put out," Pee-Wee said, defensively. "You can't say you got put out."

"Well, I don't have to take off my scout suit, anyway, do I?"

It was in just that humorously wistful way that he always alluded to his poverty.

"Anyway, so long, I'll see you later," said Pee-Wee.

Of course Lefty had not been put out of the scouts, but he had placed himself in a position where he could not stay in. He knew the law which applied to his case. He was better in action than in the academic part of scouting, but he knew the law. And he knew it fitted his case to a T.

> 1—A Scout's honor is to be trusted. If he were to violate his honor by telling a lie, or by cheating, or by not doing exactly a given task, when trusted on his honor, he may be directed to hand over his scout badge.

It seemed to have been devised for just his particular case. He could not go to another scout meeting. He hoped he would never come face to face with any of the members, though probably that was hoping too much. He could probably forget the whole sorry business if he never saw any of them. He hoped he would not see Mr. Ellsworth—he dreaded meeting Mr. Ellsworth. It cheered him to think that he and Pee-Wee would still be friends.

And meanwhile someone whom he thought very little about was getting on his trail. He had dreaded a kindly talk about his delinquency by the friendly scoutmaster. He might better have dreaded a certain pair of sharp eyes shadowed by a shock of overhanging tow hair. He might better have dreaded a little brass rimmed magnifying glass kept in the pocket of a certain young demon. If he had anything to be afraid of it was not the scoutmaster. It was *scouting*.

CHAPTER XII
AN EAGLE SCOUT

A couple of days after the events just recorded, there came up Terrace Avenue a hatless boy in scout uniform, whose thick mass of flaxen hair seemed a hat in itself. He had what is called a stolid countenance. He was tall, but by no means slim; though certainly he was not stout. He had a kind of masterful stride as if he realized that the street belonged to him as much as to anyone else; a little suggestion of a swagger. On close approach one would have noticed that his eyes were very blue.

He was amply bedecked with the symbols of scouting, though there was nothing bizarre about his appearance as in the case of Pee-Wee. The frying pan and the belt-axe he eschewed. But his right sleeve was a very firmament of merit badges, and upon his left breast pocket was embroidered the emblem of the Eagle Scout.

This was Trailer Hilman, whose right name was Robert, or Bob, but these latter names were never used. There was nothing spectacular about this boy—nothing winning. He was as stolid and deliberate as Lefty was graceful and charming. He had done everything in proper order, and having done it he had entered it in a book. Heaven knows, he would have been glad to index and cross index his achievements if there had been the faintest suggestion of such a thing in the scout program. He left nothing undone. He had filled his requirements, one, two, three, following the Handbook. And he had checked them off. He always carried a lead pencil. He had gone in for the merit badges in the order of their listing. He was not the kind of eagle that is seen poising magnificently in the air. But he sat firm upon the craggy summit just the same. He was absolutely competent.

This boy came of German people. The other scouts sometimes made fun of him because he was so painstaking and systematic that he appeared not to get much fun out of scouting. But perhaps he had fun being painstaking and systematic. At all events he got there. Sometimes they called him Dutchy, but he had come to be better known as Trailer Hilman. He had been born on the other side and there was just the faintest suggestion of accent in his talk. It was nothing more than a certain quaintness of expression.

He looked all around the beautiful Harris place and then decided to go to the front door. He was told that Pee-Wee was around in back and he found that diminutive Raven sitting on the sloping doors which gave entrance to the cellar. His knees were drawn up with shoes planted firmly on the door to

prevent sliding. He was eating a banana. These cellar doors were the same in Pee-Wee's life as Edison's Laboratory is, in the life of the great inventor. It was here the hero thought up his "dandy schemes." He was often to be found squatted upon this homely throne, scowling and partaking of refreshment.

He was surprised to see Trailer Hilman, for indeed it was not often that any of the scouts paid Pee-Wee the tribute of a visit. They liked him immensely, and found much amusement in him. They were glad to have him go hiking with them. But they seldom sought him out. He was always asking if he might go with them and they usually said yes. It was not often that any of them went to the trouble of going up to see him, or to get him. This condition of things might have hurt Pee-Wee except that he was so much a "law unto himself," as the saying is, that he never thought about it. He was too preoccupied to see himself as a sort of joke in the troop.

"Hullo," said Trailer Hilman, bluntly.

"Hello," said Pee-Wee, "and you needn't ask me for a bite because that was the last bite I just took." He laid open the banana skin in proof of his statement.

"I got plenty to eat," said Trailer Hilman, which was no doubt true. He sat down beside Pee-Wee.

"You got it nice up here—lot of grass."

"I get fifty cents for cutting it," said Pee-Wee.

Followed a pause.

"How about this Lefty?" Hilman asked, coming right down to facts. "How about that crazy feller?"

"You needn't talk against him," said Pee-Wee, "because anyway I'm friends with him, I don't care what. Just because you got to be an Eagle you needn't think you can boss me about it, because I'm not in your patrol."

"Why don't he let you go with him that time, huh?"

"Because he didn't want to," Pee-Wee said defensively. "Does that prove anything? Geeee whiz! Everybody knows he didn't go so what's the use talking about it?"

Hilman shrugged his shoulders, "I don't know," he said. "You got to know and you got to be *sure* you know; yes? What makes him good and tired that night? Sitting in a Library? Och! What makes a burr sticking on his stocking? You get that in Libraries? I think these scouts come to meeting blindfold, huh?"

"You mean you like him?" Pee-Wee asked, his face brightening.

"Me? No, I like to find out facts. I come up and see you because he's in your patrol—he was, I mean. And I think you like him a lot, huh?"

"You bet I do and I'll tell anybody," said Pee-Wee.

Followed another pause.

"One thing I don't like," said Hilman. "This Mr. Ellsworth, how he acts that night. *Och!*"

"You mean how he got mad?"

"Got mad—no! Everybody get mad, and get glad again. This is nothing. How he tears up the paper. That I would like to see, that paper. If we have the paper then we have the truth. Maybe he told a lie; he didn't write any lie."

"You're crazy!" Pee-Wee shouted. "You mean to say he'd get up in front of a whole lot of people and say he didn't take a test hike when he *did* take it?"

"I think he's got a reason."

"They saw him in the Library, that's the reason," said Pee-Wee.

"Well, wherever he go, he got his hands scratched with briers, and he got a burr sticking on his stocking, and he got a piece of swamp grass stuck in the lace of his shoe, and he was good and tired. Now what kind of a lie do you call that, how he backs down in front of those fellers? Library, *och!*"

"They saw him there," Pee-Wee persisted.

"And they're good scouts, you got to admit that."

"Sure, for seeing. A lot they didn't see, too; huh?"

"Anyway, I'm glad you like Lefty," Pee-Wee said. "Because I'm going to stick to him; no matter what, I'm going to stick to him. Now I can see you like him too.

"I like to find out things. You want to go hiking with me to-morrow? Me and you, just."

It was not often that a boy who had risen to the honor of Eagle Scout sought out Pee-Wee as a hiking companion.

"Sure I will," he said. "Geeee whiz, you can bet I will. Only don't forget. Lots of fellers ask me to go with them and then they forget."

"I don't forget," said Trailer Hilman.

"Where shall we hike to?" Pee-Wee asked, all enthusiasm.

"We see what we can find out," said Trailer Hilman.

CHAPTER XIII
ON THE TRAIL

If Trailer Hilman went in for good turns (and it was certainly a kindly impulse that sent him up to Pee-Wee's) it would have gratified his stolid temperament if he could have known with what pride and joyous expectancy this little scout awaited his coming the next day. He was sitting on the hall settee counting the minutes, when he heard a step on the porch.

But it was not Trailer Hilman, it was Lefty. It was a half hour too soon for Trailer Hilman; he had mentioned ten o'clock, and when Trailer Hilman said ten o'clock he meant exactly that. A grown person might have perceived that Lefty looked wearied and troubled, but of course Pee-Wee did not notice this.

"I came over to say good-bye," said Lefty; "I'm going away."

"What do you mean, you're going away?"

"I'm kind of sick and tired of hearing about living under my uncle's roof," said Lefty, with still a faint vestige of his humorous squint. "I'm going to change roofs."

"Do you mean you're running away?" Pee-Wee asked, somewhat terrified.

"Well—kind of—yes and no. I'm going to take a one-way hike; this is going to be a real one."

To Pee-Wee the thought of a boy having trouble at home and planning to run away seemed something tremendous. He looked at Lefty as one looks at a curiosity.

"*Geeeee whiz*," was all he could say. "Don't they know it?"

"Well, I guess my aunt doesn't believe it. My uncle's always making threats about making me get out. Maybe he doesn't mean it but" (his voice failed him and he conquered a little tremor before proceeding) "but—but *I* mean it. I'm going on the four-thirty to-day. He bawled me out and called me a dirty liar last night. Of course everybody's got a right to call me a liar and a bluffer, but I can't listen to it all the time in the house. I thought he was through talking about the scout meeting. I've got money enough to get to New York and then I'm going to hike to my grandfather's. I guess he'll take me in. He lives up in New York State. I just came over to say so long to you and I'm sorry I disgraced your patrol."

Through his wearied look there emerged a winning smile (the kind Pee-Wee was sure to inspire) and he reached out and pushed a hand through Pee-

Wee's curly hair. "Don't look so sober," he laughed. "Snap out of it."

"I bet you'll be sorry," Pee-Wee said darkly. He could not conceive such an enterprise as this contemplated by his friend and neighbor. "And I'll bet you'll be scared, too. I bet you won't really do it."

"I don't blame you for thinking that," said Lefty. "Anyway, so long. Maybe I'll see you again sometime."

Pee-Wee was too astonished, and too fearful, to do justice to a last good-bye. His hand fell to his side, after he had shaken that proffered by his friend, and he stood on the porch gaping as Lefty sauntered back across the street. And in a little while the sturdy tread of Trailer Hilman could be heard in the street. He came along with a certain invincible manner; not as if he were going on a pleasant hike, but as if he meant business.

"We hike to Little Valley," said he.

Notwithstanding Pee-Wee's loquacious habit, something deterred him from talking to Hilman about Lefty's troubles and intentions. He certainly did not mistrust Hilman, but there was something so diabolically efficient about him that Pee-Wee felt a little afraid of him. If he told him all about Lefty, Hilman might take the matter in hand and interfere. Pee-Wee was aghast at Lefty's leaving home, but he would not upset his friend's plans.

Hilman was a stolid boy and not given to idle talk, and it must be confessed that he and Pee-Wee made an ill-assorted pair. They made their way to the edge of the town and across the fields to where the woods began. Here was a stone wall beyond which was an unbroken woodland all the way to Little Valley. There was a trail but it did not run direct; roughly speaking, it described an arc. By this clearly defined route the distance was about nine miles to the village; by following it one might avoid a marshy area and of course be certain of coming out at the right spot. It was a popular hike for the number five requirement in the first class test, and most boys had no objection to the two extra miles. Unless one is a pretty good woodsman the longer way is perhaps the shorter way after all.

But it was evident to Hilman that no one had been along this curving trail for a couple of weeks or so. After following it for perhaps half a mile he paused, disgusted.

"We go back," he said.

In his heart Pee-Wee did not believe that Lefty had made this requirement hike at all. The burr and the wisp of grass and the boy's scratched hands were interesting and showed Hilman's keenness of observation. But they really proved nothing. Certainly they meant nothing at all against the assertion of two eye witnesses that they had seen Lefty in the Public Library. Those two boys were good scouts and there was no question of their honesty. So, alas, Lefty's seeming tired meant nothing, except that

Hilman had pretty acute eyes. The Eagle Scout's theory was too fantastic for credence; there was nothing to it. Burrs and wisps of grass and apparent fatigue were not evidence; not even to Pee-Wee's loyal heart.

"That crazy feller had a compass, yes?" Hilman asked, as they retraced their steps.

Pee-Wee didn't know.

"We find out," said Hilman.

"He wasn't here at all," Pee-Wee said. "Do you think I don't believe Vic Norris? Gee whiz, he's in your patrol. Don't you believe him?"

"Facts I believe," was all the answer he got.

They trudged back to the stone wall, where Hilman took a compass out of his pocket. "East," he said; "I looked at the map. Now we'll see—just for fun."

He picked out a tree some hundred feet ahead, evidently in a direct line with his compass needle. Within this restricted space, he proceeded slowly, scrutinizing everything.

"Gee, you look at everything, don't you?" Pee-Wee asked.

"Sure, but I find nothing. Anyway, I'll tell you something else I see." He paused, leaning against the tree, and seeming not in the least discouraged. "Did you see how that crazy feller looked quick at the man when they said about the Library? Och, he was scared, that boy! Come, we start up again now—east."

"If we're going to go this way we'll be all day getting to Little Valley," Pee-Wee said.

"Sure, we got all day."

"Anyway, what's the use? Lefty's going away. You needn't think I don't like him, but anyway I believe Vic Norris."

"Sure, nice boy, Vic," said Hilman.

Their progress from this point was slow and subject to continual interruptions. Hilman was exasperatingly deliberate. He would find due east by the compass, then pick out a tree in direct line with it, and proceed to that tree, scrutinizing everything along his path and for a few yards to right and left of it. It was slow, tedious work; it was certainly not a hike. He found nothing and Pee-Wee became impatient.

"Are you going to go on a hike?" he asked.

"Sure, pretty soon we get started," Hilman said, good humoredly. "If he didn't go one way he went another."

"He didn't go at all," said Pee-Wee.

"Maybe that too," said Hilman. "But somebody was laying a straight east course. Somebody stood a compass on the stone wall, on the little flat rock on top—right where I stood mine. Somebody laid that flat stone on top

and stuck a stick under the corner of it to make it stand even. Well, why would they want to make it stand even? Now you give me one good reason, huh?"

"To stand a compass on it?" Pee-Wee asked, somewhat abashed.

"*Och*, some day maybe you'll be a scout."

"Now you see why I hunt for other signs along here? That Mr. Ellsworth —och! I would like to see that description paper." He shook his head ruefully. "But he's a nice man, Mr. Ellsworth," he added, with a funny note of condescension.

"Now we got something," Trailer presently said, with as much elation as he ever showed; "see here."

It was nothing but a broken twig hanging loose from a mass of brush. But somebody had passed through there.

"And burrs too—see? Now! What have you got to say?"

Another checking up by the needle carried them to a small area that was comparatively open. Here was a large willow tree, Hilman's temporary beacon. Upon the trunk was chalked a diagonal white line. It was crossways with the trunk, heavy at one end and petering out at the other as if someone had hastily scratched it there in passing.

"Anybody might have marked that," said Pee-Wee.

"Anybody that was left-handed, yes," said Hilman. "Look—on the ground. You see these footprints? They point east—yes? And the tree is on the left—yes? Now why don't this person mark on this other tree—on the right? He holds his chalk in his left hand and blazes landmarks as he goes along—so he can come back straight. Never before did I see blaze marks on the left of a trail. If he made it with his right hand he'd have to reach over—across. No! Come on, we got started now. We get hot dogs in Little Valley."

CHAPTER XIV
FACTS

The compass was no longer required. What with footprints and blazed trees they followed the clearly marked route of a predecessor through these woods, though Pee-Wee could not bring himself to believe that it was Lefty who had gone there. He could not rid his mind of the picture of his friend backing shamefully down, when confronted by the scouts who had seen him in the Bridgeboro Library.

And he thought of that other occasion when Lefty had begged off from accompanying his comrades with an excuse that he must work at home, and had later been seen alighting from a bus. No, it would take more than the sheer efficiency of Trailer Hilman to dislodge these facts.

And Pee-Wee had the solution of the matter now. It was funny how these forest signs which seemed to point one way had the effect of turning Pee-Wee to a quite different conclusion. Lefty had never really cared about being in the scouts; he had been lukewarm from the start. Just in the nick of time it had occurred to him to confess his duplicity and be done with it. That was what Pee-Wee thought. There was, perhaps, some slight ground for this theory.

And meanwhile Trailer Hilman went about his business as disinterestedly as a bloodhound on the trail. All he ever said about Lefty or anyone else was, "Yes, nice boy." Clearly this Eagle Scout loved facts for their own sweet sake. To the logical mind of Trailer Hilman if there was a trail to the moon that would prove that somebody had gone there, notwithstanding that the moon is uninhabited.

"Anyway, one thing," Pee-Wee said, as he trudged along beside his preoccupied companion, "I got to admit you're a dandy scout; I got to admit you see things. I bet the troop don't know; you as well as I do. Gee whiz, you see everything there is."

"I see one thing, you know what?"

"No, what?"

"I see you like this crazy feller Lefty—huh?"

"I'll say I do," Pee-Wee said. "Why do you call him crazy?"

"Och, crazy boy!" was all the answer he got.

Then there was a little pause while Hilman checked up between two rather widely separated chalk marks. "You know how he do tests? Five, four, seven, two—*crazy*. We get at the bottom yet, you see."

"Just the same you can't know absolutely, positively sure, cross your heart, that he was here."

Hilman shrugged his shoulders. "Signs, signs, signs; sometime you come to a fact. Sometime you don't. When we get sure, then we are sure.... Anyway we have a good practice, huh? Girls they like this Lefty; that's a bad sign. If a girl like a thing it's no good." This observation had indeed carried him to dizzy heights. "Me they wouldn't like."

"A lot of girls like me," Pee-Wee shouted, "and do you say I'm no good?"

"Me, I'm no good for liking," said Hilman.

"You mean fellers don't like you?"

"Sure—but not so much. I wouldn't know how to be a hero. That's what they like—heroes."

"Everybody likes you—and you bet *I* do," enthused Pee-Wee. "Geeee whiz, I like you a lot. Do you think you could get to be an Eagle Scout without being a winner?"

"You get to be an Eagle winning badges, not fellers," said Hilman. "You win fellers—you and Blakeley; I win badges. It's all right."

For a few minutes Pee-Wee followed silently, watching the sturdy figure that preceded him, pausing when Hilman paused to examine something along this route which was undefined save by blazing and occasional footprints. He knew well enough what Hilman meant. He could not have put it into words, but he knew. There was nothing picturesque about Hilman, no banter and gayety; only downright competency. He had all the honor he deserved, and that was much. The Elk Patrol was proud of its Eagle Scout. But there was nothing about him to captivate and his comrades were not drawn to him. This stolid boy who knew so much, knew that. He knew wherein he had not achieved, and could never achieve. What had sent him upon this quest? Pee-Wee was not accustomed to being sought out by Eagle Scouts.

"Do you know what Mr. Ellsworth says?" the little Raven asked. "He says you care more about facts than you do about scouts. Anyway did you hear me clap when you got your Eagle badge the other night? Did you hear somebody stamping his feet and calling like an Elk? That was me."

Hilman had indeed heard that weird outburst. "Well, maybe pretty soon I pay you back," he said.

"Anyway, one thing sure, I'm having a good time with you to-day," Pee-Wee said. "Lots of times my patrol don't come for me when they're going on a hike. Now even I can say an Eagle Scout came for me. When I go with Roy Blakeley and that bunch they're always kidding me and they act crazy."

"Nice boy, that Blakeley," said Hilman. "Now we get nearly to Little Valley and we didn't find something—only left-handed marks."

"Are you looking for something?" Pee-Wee asked, surprised.

"Sure, I'm looking for something. Didn't you see when that feller was on the platform, he reached in one pocket, then in another for something? How surprised he looked when he didn't have it? Well, he's got only one suit I ever saw him wear. So it wasn't in another suit. I think he lose it in the woods here. First he felt in his hip pocket; I think maybe it was a wallet or something. Anyway, it knocked him silly when he didn't have it."

"*Geeeeeeeee whiz!*" exclaimed Pee-Wee, in uncontrolled admiration. "The things you don't see!"

"Sure, and I go up to get my Eagle badge and none of you see I have two merit badges not sewed on yet. We have a blindfolded troop. Come now, we lose a lot of time."

Pee-Wee had never thought much about this heavy, stolid boy who had said but little in his comings and goings, as one after another he won merit badges until he was an Eagle. He had been so deliberate and businesslike about it all! Dutchy! He had always seemed like a scout apart in the troop. He had never done much fooling. He had no pals. If he could have known the thrill of admiration that Pee-Wee had for his sterling efficiency! There was no stain upon him as there was upon the winsome Lefty.

And he made good then and there—as he always did. For just as they emerged out of the woods there was a ramshackle fence bordering the road, where he paused and examined the ground with an exhaustive scrutiny. A grass-grown byway met this road at a right angle, and led away into the country, to Little Valley, a mile or so distant. Their journey was as good as accomplished.

Suddenly Hilman crawled out from beneath a bush with something in his hand. He seemed not in the least elated; only gratified that things fitted together. He was as calm as Pee-Wee was excited.

"*What is it, what is it?*" Pee-Wee demanded.

"It is a bank book—Lefferts Leighton—see? See here, something else, too. *Och*, he's got five dollars. Here, too, see this. You see I am lucky—a *snapshot*. That's more than I expect, a snapshot. Look, you know him—your friend?"

There was something about those last two words that reached Pee-Wee, and there was just the faintest hint of a tremor in his voice as he said, "You're just as much my friend as he is. Gee whiz, you are."

"No," said Hilman, simply.

"Yes you are."

"No," Hilman smiled. Then, "Look at the snapshot," he added.

"It's Lefty," said Pee-Wee.

The boy in the little snapshot photo sat on a horse, his hand holding the rein. The picture was small—it had been placed in the bank book—but it was very clear.

"Lefty?" Hilman asked.

"Suuuure it's Lefty," Pee-Wee exclaimed.

Then Hilman pushed Pee-Wee's face good humoredly, a kind of pleasantry that was unusual with him.

"You call yourself a scout—*observant*! Och, this is not Lefty," he said. "See, this boy is right handed—how he holds the rein. Mister Pee-Wee Harris, scout, and you don't know your own special friend. Now you got some scouting to do. Find the boy who sits on this horse and you have the boy that sits in the Public Library. Find the boy who sits on the horse and you have the boy that got off the bus before that. And then maybe you can find out why this crazy feller Lefty makes himself a liar for that boy. Now you got a chance to be a scout."

Pee-Wee gaped in utter amazement, first at the treasured photo, then at his companion. Hilman only smiled, "Now you got a chance; see what you do with it. I give you your friend without any disgrace—and another one for good measure. I hear this Blakeley say you always get two helpings.

"What do you mean?" Pee-Wee fairly gasped. Hilman reached around to his hip pocket and brought forth a brass rimmed magnifying glass. First he used it himself to verify his findings. "Good," he said; "now you look. Is that Lefty?"

In utter consternation, Pee-Wee said, "*Geeeee whiz!* No it isn't!"

"So. So now you got two things to do. I wash him clean for you; you catch him. Then you get this feller he likes so much, to carry his picture. Nice boy, that Lefty." He looked at a big cheap wrist watch he wore. "You got just one hour and thirty-two minutes to get to the Bridgeboro station for that four-thirty train——"

"How do you know he's going on the train?" Pee-Wee asked, in dismay.

"Never mind. You want to stand here talking? You get there because you *got* to get there. And you tell that crazy feller he don't go away while he has disgraced the troop. You show him the picture. If he say he was in the Public Library you tell him he lies. Then you be friends with him and he'll tell you everything because he likes you. This is best of all to have a friend—better than Eagle. Now *scoot*!"

But Pee-Wee did not "scoot." With brimming eyes he stood right where he was, looking straight at Trailer Hilman. "Do you—do you—say I'm not your friend?" he just managed to ask. "I—I *dare* you to say it. Do you say

you're not a *wonder*? Do you say you're not a hero? I *double dare* you to say I ain't pals with you! Geeeeeee whiz, but you're a scout!"

"Sure, now scoot."

"Where are *you* going?" Pee-Wee asked.

"Me? I go to Little Valley for hot dogs. Now you got to run so that fool of a Lefty will be proud how you're his friend. Scoot now."

"Will you be proud if I catch him—and will you let me go around with you?" Pee-Wee asked.

"First you be a scout," said Trailer Hilman. "Not like these fellers that didn't even take a good look. *Now*—one, two, three, *go*!"

He went, oh how he went! But after a few yards he spent precious time to pause and glance back at the figure that had climbed over the fence and was hiking along the grass-grown byway to Little Valley—after hot dogs. A lonely, thick-set figure, moving with a funny, swaggering stride. He seemed to symbolize his detachment from all his scout comrades. He planted each foot heavily upon the ground with a kind of clumsy assurance. There was a suggestion of dead certainty about him. His unconquered mat of flaxen hair shone in the sunlight.

He was not the kind of eagle that is seen poised magnificently in air. But to the elated spirit of Pee-Wee Harris, he stood firm and glorified on the craggy summit, alone as an eagle ought to be, far, far above all the turmoil and pomp and circumstance of everyday scouting.

CHAPTER XV
CAUGHT

It is funny, when you come to think of it, that Pee-Wee had to turn upon his steps just as he was approaching the hot dog zone. But for once in his life he never thought of these delights. He was not even aware of being hungry.

But one thought did flash into his mind as he ran with all his might and main. He recalled how, even before he had made acquaintance with Lefty, he had seen his new neighbor carry a saddle into the house. And he recalled how Lefty had "sidestepped" the question of who had used it. Pee-Wee wondered what sort of a mystery this was, of which Hilman had found the key. Well, at all events, if Lefty had indeed won his first class badge, he should have it. He would not be permitted to run away with a smirch on his name.

Pee-Wee ran like mad. He had two incentives; to intercept Lefty and to make good with Trailer Hilman. He was resolved he would not fail. He followed the blazed route back, but the marks were far apart in places and often he had to depend on remembered, or half remembered, signs. He forgot the good custom of going scout-pace and soon he was panting like a dog and had a cruel stitch in his side. Always impulsive, he had never learned the art of favoring himself while running.

He was frantic; he ran like a demon. He tripped on an exposed root, arose and rushed on, his leg cut and bleeding. The stitch in his side troubled him and he had to pause and lose a few precious minutes till the stabbing pain subsided. He passed a great rock and remembered Hilman saying that this was about midway between Bridgeboro and Little Valley. On, on, on, he ran, stumbling sometimes from sheer exhaustion. He remembered Hilman's words, "You will be a scout." Yes, he would be a scout if he dropped in his tracks.

But he would not drop in his tracks. If Hilman could dissipate Lefty's disgrace by his sheer powers of observation he, Pee-Wee, would intercept him in his flight and know the explanation of all this strange business. At least Lefty would not go away with the stigma of fraud and falsehood upon him. In his frantic race with time Pee-Wee did not puzzle his brain about the solution of Lefty's unaccountable conduct. "*If he says he didn't take his hike you tell him he lies.*" Those were the words of Trailer Hilman, and Pee-Wee had absolute faith in Trailer Hilman.

At last he was ascending a little knoll on which stood a great elm tree. He stumbled and staggered up the slope. He might have encircled this but he believed that from the tree he could see Bridgeboro. Oh, if he only had his watch with him! But after all, what purpose would it serve? He would either make it or he wouldn't make it, watch or no watch. He did not know how long he had been running; he thought it was more than an hour. Four-thirty, that was the train time—*four-thirty*. Oh, he would make it. He could not conceive of not making it.

Perhaps climbing the tree would rest him. A queer way of resting, to be sure, but it would be a relief from running. And if he saw the town, perhaps he could follow a shorter route and save time. A perilous business, this deserting a blazed trail; he might get lost. But he thought that if he could only see the town—just *see it*—he could go faster. Moreover, he would cut off a considerable part of the town, perhaps, and make a bee-line to the railroad station. Perhaps he could see it from the tree.

Climbing trees was Pee-Wee's middle name. It may be questioned whether the time was well spent, but he wanted to see the town and follow a direct line from this spot. He paused a moment at the foot of the tree, and listened aghast to the shrill shriek of a locomotive. Was it....

No it couldn't be; it couldn't be more than four o'clock at the latest; probably not that. What train was it? Maybe just a freight. He tried to recall the trains on the time-table; there were none between the one-fifty-seven and the four-thirty. Going the other way there was the—the—there was one at about three. He was puzzled, and fearful. Oh, how he wished he had his watch!

Like a monkey he shinnied up the tree, and climbed, up, up, up among the laden branches. A cluster of leaves brushed his face and he tore the small branch away and threw it down. His clothes were torn, his face was scratched, his hat had gone to the ground. He stood upon a stout limb, steadying himself by a limb above. His heart was pounding in his breast.

Far off lay the town of Bridgeboro, in full view. How clearly shone the river, winding like a ribbon around the edge of the town, with the hills beyond! How tiny looked the bridge! And there was something that gladdened his thumping heart. A little object was moving up the stream, sending up a column of smoke which blew away in the air. "Now I know, now I know," he panted aloud. "It's—it's the tug. It isn't four o'clock yet—because—because—the tide turns at—at—three-fifty. That shows—shows—I have some observations." He never forgot to praise himself.

What he meant was that the tug always came up on the tide to tow down the lumber barges. It always started back before the ebb started. This little swimmer and canoeist knew the tide time; it served him as a watch. With the

tug going upstream it could not yet be four o'clock; more likely it was about three-forty-five, perhaps even earlier. He would tell Hilman about this. "*Geeeeeee whiz*, I got time enough," he panted. Moreover he could see the station, tiny and indistinct, but distinguishable by the thin glittering tracks and the open space about the building.

For just a moment he was shocked by the sight of smoke rising from that quarter. Then, almost instantly, he knew it for the smoke emerging from the huge brick tower of the paper mill. That was where Lefty's uncle worked. Everything was all right, there would be time enough if he ran. And he saw that he could save a little distance by leaving the blazed route and cutting straight for the station. Surely he could not go wrong now; the woods were thinner and the land higher.

Pee-Wee was a true scout; he abounded in resources. If there were no one at hand to praise him, he praised himself. "That shows how I'm observant about tugs," he said, as he slid down. "Even I can find out what time it is." He did not charge it against himself that he had forgotten his watch, which a scout should not do. "Now I'll get there all right," he said, as he descended. His clothing was almost in shreds and he had a long scratch across his chubby face.

So excited and elated was he that he let go the trunk some six or eight feet from the ground, in the spell of his customary delusion that he was taller than he really was. For this redoubtable little scout, who saw so many things, had never taken a good look at himself. Hence he went sprawling to the ground and braced an arm against the leafy earth to aid him in arising. Instantly he heard a metallic snap and was aware of excruciating pain in his left wrist. He pulled his throbbing hand out of a mass of deep leaves and heard the clanking of a chain. Pressing into his cut wrist were the cruel jaws of a steel trap. He had evidently set his hand upon the little plate between these powerful curving bands when they lay open and apart, waiting for some unwary creature of the woods to step into its doom.

CHAPTER XVI
LAW SIX

His hand was limp and streaming with blood; his lower arm throbbed with excruciating pain. He scrambled to his feet only to find that the chain would not permit of his standing upright. It was fastened to the tree by a huge staple driven into the base of the trunk. He was not only a captive, but he was suffering. He was in exactly the same predicament as a raccoon or a fox would have been in, if either had laid a foot upon that horrible device.

For a few moments he quite lost his morale; he cried in quick spasmodic sobs; the crying which is caused by pain intensified by fear. His fatigue and nervous excitement made him an easy victim of panic. The sight of flowing blood which he had no means of staying produced a mild hysteria expressed in jerky breaths and little outcries of terror. An animal would have borne its fate in silence.

Then he got hold of himself. But he could not stay the flow of blood with those steel jaws pressing into his wrist. Those snapping bands must have closed with tremendous power. And they were rusty, which aroused even in this panicky victim the fear of infection. In his fright and agitation he forgot for the moment the one means of escape, and tugged at the chain with his free hand in a vain effort to pull out the staple. Then he jerked the chain in the hope of breaking it. Such efforts were quite futile and bespoke his panic state. But at least he had conquered his hysteria.

Perhaps it was the blood covering the whole trap which deterred him from seeing the one obvious thing to do. But presently he realized that he had one advantage over the wretched animal thus caught. He could open the trap. Trembling with weakness, and with every nerve tingling, he laid the trap on a rock and pressed the loop spring with his foot. He felt instant relief. But still those steel jaws stuck to his throbbing and wounded wrist, perhaps because of the congealed blood. He had only to part them with his right hand, however, and he was free.

He wriggled his injured wrist; it was not broken. He wiped away the blood with his handkerchief and saw that the flow was from a cruel cut. He could see it for only a second for instantly it was again hidden in the spreading, red stream. But he knew what to do. Pulling off his patrol scarf he tore a strip from it and tied the ends together. It was hard to work with one hand, but he managed it. He laid this strip of scarf around his wrist above the cut and drew it tight by the winding motion of the stick. He was familiar

with the uses of the tourniquet. Immediately the flow of blood diminished. He then managed clumsily, to wind the rest of his scarf about the wound.

He felt weak and giddy. His knees ached with a different kind of pain than that occasioned by his strenuous running. His fingers tingled. But he was ready to proceed upon his way. In the joy of his deliverance from that frightful trap his thoughts turned quickly to his errand, and he started to run. After the turmoil in his brain he hardly knew in which direction to proceed. But presently he got his bearings and started running. He did not know how long he had been delayed; perhaps fifteen minutes. It is hard to compute time in such a predicament; anguish may make a minute seem like a day. He was weak and uncertain on his feet, and once he stumbled, but he ran on, on, on....

He ran for dear life.

Suddenly he stopped as if he had forgotten something. And I think here we have Pee-Wee Harris at his very best. Back in Little Valley was the Eagle Scout whose approval he was to win. On his way to the railroad station in Bridgeboro, maybe, was the fugitive whom he was to intercept—for that boy's honor, and the honor of the troop. And Pee-Wee knew he had barely time enough now. And he had no strength to waste in extra steps.

But he ran straight back to the tree where he had fallen. He laid that bloodstained trap upon a rock, and with his right hand he picked up the largest stone that he could find. Then, with a fine show of wrathful determination, he dashed it down upon that cruel little engine of torture, and smashed it. An airship falling out of the clouds could not have been more utterly destroyed. At the end of its chain it lay, flat and bent, broken in a dozen places. Never again would it snap its jaws in the quiet woodland. Neither in the hunting season nor out of it (and this was out of season) would it shed the blood of any innocent and lowly creature in that creature's own domain. Never again would those cruel curving bands of steel hold fast a suffering little creature of the forest. Rendered utterly useless by this sturdy little scout, it lay at the end of its chain; it was not worth being thus securely held.

"That's the end of that," said Pee-Wee. He was nothing if not thorough.

CHAPTER XVII
THE END OF THE RACE

And now he was on his way again, running like mad. His wound throbbed, and occasionally drops of blood trickled from the reddened bandage. But he did not care. He ran pell-mell, in a very frenzy. Of course he had to find relief from this with scout-pace, but he begrudged every second of the time lost in the walking intervals. He soon increased these to a slower pace of running. Then he abandoned these comparatively restful periods altogether. He renounced the cautious rule of more haste less speed, and dashed on utterly without self-control. His frantic speed increased the throbbing in his wrist, and he held it high, with its clumsy tourniquet, to ease the pain. His head, too, was pounding. If he fell he would stay down.

But he did not fall. He reeled and staggered and leaned for a few seconds against a tree. But he did not fall. Or rather it might be said that he fell forward, but always got his foot down in time to save himself. His momentum kept him up. Soon he went dashing out of the woods and across green fields. He felt encouraged and hopeful in the open. A fence, another field, then the ragged edge of town, then Outskirt Alley, then—yes, he would cut into Main Street. No, he would cut into River Lane and *then* to Main Street. Then down to the station—straight down to the station....

A strange apparition to be seen in Main Street, this hatless boy scout in shreds, with a scratched face and a bloody bandage with a stick poking out of it! A lot *he* cared!

He did not know whether to climb over the fence or crawl under it; which could he do quicker? He thought of this as he approached it, running with all his might and main. In a few moments he was over it. And there beyond the next field was the back of Lawson's furniture store. He was indeed in the town. Suppose some meddlesome cop should stop him; they did those things, cops. Well, he would dodge him or wriggle free. He had not a second to waste.

Like a fiend pursued he dashed through Outskirt Alley and a little hoodlum there threw an apple core at him. But he neither heard nor saw. He tripped on a piece of chicken wire and came as near as he ever did in his life to supplanting his favorite *gee-whiz* with a more pungent phrase.

At last he was in Main Street. Three blocks more; two long ones, one short one. Then! He thought he heard a bell, but he could not trust to his sight or hearing now. His head was ringing; perhaps there was no bell. He

stumbled, reeled, dashed, along the astonished thoroughfare, breathless, panting, utterly possessed. He saw nothing. He stumbled on a curb, got his balance and sped on.

He was there. If he had alighted from an airship he could hardly have been less conscious of the stores and gaping pedestrians he had passed. All he knew was, *he was there*. He had talked with Hilman, run through woods, climbed a tree, been caught in a trap, crossed fields, entered streets, and he was there. His head pounded like a trip-hammer, but he was there. *He was there.*

Not a soul was about the station. Far up the platform a porter was pushing a hand car containing a couple of trunks. He could not bring himself to go in and ask the ticket agent about the train. He knew it had not yet passed, but he could not bring himself to ask. So he waited a few moments. He gave the tourniquet a couple of turns, for the bandage was saturated. He pulled his sleeve down over it so it would not show.

He realized that this waiting was just weakness; the fear of hearing what he could not bear to hear. How silly to ask when he *knew* he was in time! He perceived the absurdity of such false comfort. How silly not to go into the station and look at the clock! Why it might be only four-fifteen or four-twenty.

He stepped into the waiting room, all nerves, and in a perfect panic of suspense. He looked away from the clock. Foolish! Then he looked *at* it.

Exactly four-thirty, perhaps a little nearer four thirty-one.

He walked over to the window and tremblingly asked the man about the train.

“The four-thirty? Sure, she’s gone,” said the man.

“Look—look at the clock,” Pee-Wee stammered; he was cold with nervous excitement. “It says——”

The man looked, not at the clock, but at his watch. “Sure, she’s gone four minutes,” he said.

A cold chill seized Pee-Wee. The man’s answer was staggering, he could not believe it. “I—I mean the—the four-thirty—down,” he almost sobbed.

“Yop, that’s it,” said the man.

CHAPTER XVIII
DISILLUSIONED

He had failed. If he had not gone back and smashed the trap he would have been in time. He had failed by about three minutes. He had not been late for the train; he did not think of it in that way. He had *failed*. Failed in a duty. To this splendid little scout this seemed nothing less than disgrace. One is not supposed to fail.

Wearily he made his way into a side street and up toward Terrace Avenue. He knew now how utterly fagged out he was; he was ready to drop. His knees ached, his wrist throbbed, his head was swimming. He had borne these things gladly while buoyed up by hope. But now a dull sense of defeat overcame him, and he staggered along, a pitiable figure. It was not often that the irrepressible Pee-Wee Harris fell into such a despairing mood.

Lefty had gone away with a smirch upon his name. Why? And now the trouble, whatever it was, could not be righted. And what would Trailer Hilman, that stolid model of efficiency—what would he think of this "flop?" He who seemed to be on the point of saving "that crazy Lefty" from himself. And he, Pee-Wee, had spoiled it all. He went along the street heavy hearted, kicking a stone before him. He would lose the respect of Trailer Hilman.

He liked Trailer Hilman. Not in the same way that he liked Lefty. There was nothing captivating about Hilman. But he believed in this Eagle Scout; there was something inspiringly dependable about him. He was absolutely trustworthy, not only in the matter of character, but in the matter of ability. Perhaps he did not give Hilman full credit for the generous impulse which had impelled him to suggest their hike. One thing, he would always stand up for Hilman....

These were his thoughts as he dragged himself wearily homeward. Suddenly another thought occurred to him. If Hilman saw him just as he was then, exhausted and injured from his mighty effort, perhaps he would be lenient—perhaps he would understand. Perhaps he would see that the messenger he had trusted had done his level best. He knew Hilman to be practical and exacting, and perhaps a trifle hard; he was different from the other boys. Still he thought this new friend would be tolerant of his failure. Impulsive and excitable as Pee-Wee was, he could not wait till he saw Hilman at the next scout meeting.

He made up his mind that he would report to Hilman right away. His belief that he owed this comrade of the day an accounting is proof enough of

the effect Hilman had produced on him. It was something akin to hero-worship. So he resolved that this model of quiet efficiency should see just how it was. Perhaps he would be affected by the cause of Pee-Wee's failure, his going back and smashing that cruel trap. Pee-Wee had a kind of a "hunch" that Hilman was not strong on sympathy and sentiment, but surely he would understand. "If he calls me down, gee whiz, I deserve it," Pee-Wee muttered to himself.

He knew about where Hilman lived, and he knew that he could have returned by the bus long ere this time. What he did not know was that Trailer Hilman scorned busses. So instead of going home he turned into Crosby Place and thence across Bridgeboro's unsightly ash dump to the unpretentious street that bordered it; this was Harrison Avenue. He went into a cigar store and found the address in the 'phone book: Adolf Hilman, butter and eggs, 5273 Harrison Avenue. He had not known the business of "Dutchy's" father, nor was he familiar with this bare and rather sparsely populated thoroughfare. It was ill paved and consisted of a series of vacant lots, alternating with shabby stores and old-fashioned dwellings.

The Hilman house was about two blocks beyond the ash and refuse field. It was big and rambling and had probably once been a farmhouse. There were extensive grounds to the rear of it, on which were a barn and long, low chicken houses. There seemed to be hundreds of white hens.

Considering the aspect of the neighborhood and the immediate surroundings, even Pee-Wee was astonished to find himself admitted to a room of stern plainness and immaculate neatness, with shiny oilcloth on the floor, and a huge stove of glossy black and gleaming nickel.

"Is Trailer—Bob—home?" Pee-Wee asked, of the white-aproned woman who admitted him.

"He didn't got back yet," she said. "You one of these scout boys?"

Pee-Wee asked if he might wait, and upon the lady's cordial acquiescence, he asked if he might look around outside.

"Sure, all over," she said, "but maybe he don't come till night. Always he goes getting badges. Och, all the time I sew them on. You got these too? Now he got an Eagle. Sure, you look all around. In the barn you see incubators—chicks, three thousand. Maybe he come soon. You got a cut—*mm*, that's too bad."

Pee-Wee strolled about the chicken farm and into the barn. He loved to see things. Elephants could not drag him from the scene of a prostrate horse or a man painting a sign. He was the original ambulance chaser. He gazed spellbound at the multitude of chicks crowded in a queer heated apparatus. But he did not linger here. For in a small space partitioned off, in a corner,

which had once been a harness room, he discovered Trailer Hilman's sanctum.

It was a cozy little place, and as he looked about it Pee-Wee felt better acquainted with that boy who had so suddenly come into his life. For Trailer Hilman had not been exactly conspicuous in the troop life, save for his achievements. He was one of those boys who works alone. He seemed to have no lighter side; no banter and gayety.

But the things which Pee-Wee saw about him spoke eloquently of an interest in scouting. Here was a bird house deftly wrought. Here was a weather-vane in process of making. On a work bench was a shoe with an extra sole nailed on the wrong way around so that the wearer's prints would make it appear that he was traveling in the opposite direction from that in which he was really going; a novel device for the trail, though seemingly he had discarded it. There were a pair of climbing spikes firmly mounted in parts of an old harness.

What interested Pee-Wee not the least was a home-made push cart half full of paper bags which, on venturing a peep inside one, he found to contain sassafras roots. A crudely printed sign evidenced their utility. *Five cents a package*, it said. Evidently Trailer Hilman earned some of the money which bought his scouting equipment. None of the scouts had ever suspected this.

Tacked on the door was something that attracted Pee-Wee's attention. This was the dried skin of the largest snake he had ever seen. He thought it could not have been captured in that region. But what presently caught his interest and aroused him to consternation was an innocent enough looking back number of a farming magazine, very much the worse for wear. It lay on the floor beside the bench, soiled and torn. On its cover were scrawled in blue pencil the initials R. H. "Robert Hilman," said Pee-Wee.

What prompted Pee-Wee to pick up this old magazine he did not know; probably he had no better purpose than to lay it on the bench. A leaf in the advertising section was creased over cornerwise, and on the full page advertisement which this called attention to were penciled notes, evidently pertaining to the printed matter. Pee-Wee read the ad with interest, then dismay:

BOYS, ATTENTION!

Do you want to make extra money? Do you know there is money lying around on your farm—in the woods and along the streams? Money that you have never even looked for! Do you know that the

ENTERPRISE FUR COMPANY

will pay you

FIVE DOLLARS FOR EVERY RACCOON SKIN
YOU SEND IT?

ONE DOLLAR FOR EVERY SKUNK SKIN YOU
SEND IT?

ONE DOLLAR FOR EVERY *FOUR* MUSKRAT
SKINS YOU SEND IT?

ONE DOLLAR FOR EVERY *THREE* SQUIRREL
SKINS YOU SEND IT?

Start making money, without cost or effort. Set your traps for your fur-bearing animals. Be a real trapper. Daniel Boone was a trapper, and many another hardy pioneer. Send your skins to us parcel post and YOU WILL HAVE YOUR MONEY BY RETURN MAIL.

Send for our free booklet for young trappers.

PIN MONEY IN THE WOODS

We will also send you free of charge our pamphlet that every boy should have and read, about the way to skin fur-bearing animals. Sign the subjoined coupon with your name and address and send it to us TO-DAY.

The coupon had been torn from this shameful bit of advertising. Dismayed, Pee-Wee glanced about expecting to see, perhaps, the booklets to which the ad referred. But they were not lying about anywhere. It seemed indeed, that one young “trapper” had been caught by this horrible snare set for the decent youth of the country. And that young Daniel Boone was none other than Trailer Hilman, the Eagle Scout.

CHAPTER XIX
A TRAGIC END

Pee-Wee was utterly dumfounded. His astonishment set his fatigue at naught. He turned his tourniquet once, to tighten the bandage over that cruel cut—the cut which had been inflicted by the mangling jaws of a steel trap. This action made the bandage feel tighter and more comfortable.

Trailer Hilman. The Eagle Scout. The boy who had evidently proved the innocence of Lefty Leighton. He set traps—had set that very one, probably—and caught these creatures of the streams and woodland. He caused their furry little legs to be twisted and mangled and cut open. He made these denizens of the forest wait, wait, wait, in uncomplaining agony, till he came and got them. Pee-Wee felt as if it were Trailer Hilman who had opened that gash upon his wrist. To be engaged in this brutal business was bad enough at any time; out of the gaming season it was criminal.

Pee-Wee felt somewhat as he had felt when Lefty stood challenged and disgraced by two of his comrades. He did not linger in the place; he made his way out to the street and cut up across the ash field, feeling thoroughly disheartened. Assuredly he was having bad luck with his heroes. Well, at all events, he would render no accounting to Hilman. He would try to forget these sorry matters and go stalking by himself after he had rested. He still had his scouting. Scouts might "flop" but he still had scouting. "Geeeee whiz, I'll go by myself after this," he grumbled as he trudged along. "I won't bother with fellers—not new fellers. Even I like Roy Blakeley better, geee whiz! You can bet I wouldn't be an Eagle—*no siree*—not if I had to get money that way. Now I got to blame him that I got cut. Just wait till I see him—just wait."

He did not have to wait long, for up the street his companion of the day came swaggering with that dominant stride as if he owned the earth. And Pee-Wee's angry resolve somewhat subsided. There was something about Hilman which suggested that he was always sure of himself.

"You didn't get him, huh?" he asked bluntly.

"I missed it by about two minutes," said Pee-Wee. "If I hadn't got my hand caught in a trap in the woods I'd have been on time. Anyway I went back and smashed the trap. It was right where I climbed up a tree to get a short cut. Anyway I wouldn't leave that trap for anything to get hurt like I did—you can bet I wouldn't."

Hilman ignored these references and looked at the bandaged wrist. “Och, that’s bad, huh,” he said.

“My father will fix it up,” said Pee-Wee. “It doesn’t hurt now. Gee-whiz it bled a lot.”

“Sure you got bad luck,” said Hilman, with just a touch of genuine feeling. “You got tired, too. You got to get a new suit. Never mind, he come back, that crazy feller. I tell you he wouldn’t lie and there’s enough. You got to keep liking him. But you wouldn’t save time climbing up trees. Going back it’s easy; if you want a short cut to the station, turn off your blazed trail at the brook where it crosses in the woods. That goes straight through and runs under the tracks. Don’t you know where that little bridge is, already? Never mind, you got more sense running than he’s got running away. What I’m telling you, too, don’t trust piles of leaves under trees because they wouldn’t blow there in piles. Now I go home and eat.”

Pee-Wee had been on the point of asking him point blank about his interest in traps, but he just didn’t. Perhaps he was a little afraid, Hilman was so downright superior to him in scouting. One would think twice before challenging him about anything. Nor had he seemed to lack feeling utterly. No, he was not unkind; just stolid and undemonstrative. Would he be cruel? For the sake of his scouting would he be brutal?

He had certainly been more tolerant of Pee-Wee’s failure than that weary little scout had dared to hope. Of course it never occurred to Pee-Wee that Hilman had been good humored about it because he, Pee-Wee, was small and amusing. He did not know that he was either small or amusing. He did not know why everybody liked him. Still he had seen that magazine ad. And what did it mean? Well, it just meant that this master scout, this marvel of efficiency and achievement, had a hard streak in him. People cut up little animals for science. To earn money for his scouting Hilman did these things. Well, perhaps that was his business. Anyway, he was a bully scout, thought Pee-Wee.

And so he took a short cut across the unsightly refuse field where powdery gray Italians with powdery gray wagons were dumping the refuse and ashes from a thousand homes and raising great clouds of gray dust. He came into Crosby Place and so into the cheerier atmosphere of Terrace Avenue. He had about five blocks to walk.

He was just beginning to realize how glad he was to get home, when he noticed a group of people standing outside the Hulbert bungalow. Most of them were girls and boys, but there were several grown people. Instantly the thought came to Pee-Wee that something had happened about Lefty; he had probably been caught and brought home. Mr. Hulbert was just the sort of man who would do this with much publicity. Poor Lefty! Then suddenly it

occurred to Pee-Wee that Lefty's uncle would not have been home at the train time.

He was just going across the way to make inquiry of these loiterers when his mother appeared on the porch of his own home and beckoned to him.

"Where have you been and what on earth is the matter?" she asked. "What have you done to your hand? You're in shreds—and such dirt! Where have you been all day?"

"What's the matter about Lefty, did they catch him?" he asked.

"Catch him? No, what do you mean?" his mother asked, already engaged upon the hopeless task of brushing him off. "I don't want you to go over there and stand gaping, Walter. Mr. Hulbert was killed at the mills this afternoon; he met with an accident and they've just brought him home. Do come in the house now and let your father see your wrist. What did you mean about *catching* Lefty?"

"I don't—I thought—maybe he ran away," Pee-Wee stammered, still loyal in keeping confidence about his friend's intent. "Are you sure he—that he's over there?"

"Yes, he came out on the steps a few minutes ago," said Mrs. Harris, "but you mustn't bother him now. It's a *dreadful* thing. I do wish those people would cease gaping and go away."

Pee-Wee looked across. Tragedy and death were things quite unknown to him. That garish little bungalow had a strange fascination to him because of this mysterious something that reposed there. He would have liked to go across the way and stare with the others. The little Hulbert abode had all the interest of a haunted house. And Lefty was there inside of it.

But presently this impression passed and he thought of something he would say to Lefty when he saw him. It would seem funny to come face to face with a boy whose uncle had been brought home killed. But he thought of the words of Trailer Hilman; Hilman who was always right, and always positive. "*If he say he didn't take this hike, you tell him he lies.*" Pee-Wee would not hesitate a moment to say that, so sure was he of the infallibility of Trailer Hilman. No matter what he found out, no matter what cruel business Hilman was engaged in, he instinctively trusted this swaggering, stolid, sure-footed and sure-minded Eagle Scout.

He felt to make sure that the precious bankbook and snapshot were safe in his pocket.

CHAPTER XX
THE BOY ON THE PICTURE

It was a few days before Pee-Wee saw Lefty to speak with him. He had seen him emerge from that little house with drawn window shades; he had seen him coming up the street with a package. Once Lefty had waved his hand to him. But they had not met.

And meanwhile in his own home he heard some of the talk, based on rumors, about Mr. Hulbert's tragic end. It was said that he had been acting as a spy for the mill management, to learn something among the workers about an expected strike. It seemed likely, for he was ever on the alert to eke out his small income by every sort of odd job. And some of these odd jobs had been of a rather dubious nature.

At all events, he paid dearly for his spying activities, for he had stepped into a trap-door in some part of the building, where he was eavesdropping, and fell to the cellar. He had been trying to get the appointment as truant officer in Bridgeboro when his untimely end occurred, and that would have been an ideal post for him. He would have made a brilliant hooky sleuth.

And so this tragic business passed and one day Lefty strolled over and sat down with Pee-Wee on the porch. It seemed good to see him and talk with him.

"Anyway you didn't go away, did you?" Pee-Wee said. This was as close as he ventured to the subject of the uncle's death.

"Looks that way," said Lefty, with a rueful smile. "I forgot all about it till you spoke."

"I saw you last Tuesday but I wouldn't come over," said Pee-Wee.

"Why not?"

"I—I don't know. Westy Martin says he heard you're going to move."

"Guess not," said Lefty. "Guess I'll go to work though. I don't know what I can do; I'm pretty good with a broom." It seemed good to hear his wistful humor. He seemed more quiet and thoughtful than before. But he was the same Lefty. "How are the scouts?" he asked.

"They're all right and I wouldn't let any of them say anything against you."

"You're still the boss?"

There was no reason at all why Pee-Wee should not play the trump card that Hilman had given him. It was simply that he did not just know how to talk to a boy whose uncle had been killed. But indeed this was a very good

occasion, for this boy who had lately seen sudden death and sorrow in his home was not inclined to make much of anything else. He had no secrets now.

"Anyway now I know you took your first-class test hike, and you needn't deny it," said Pee-Wee. "And I know you didn't go in the Library at all. That shows you how scouts can find things out, how they got a lot of resources, and you went and left them. And you needn't say this is a picture of you because it isn't, and here's your bankbook too. So, now!"

"Where did you find it?" Lefty asked.

"First you got to tell me who the feller is—that's only fair."

"He's my brother," Lefty said. "His name is Kenneth."

"Was he in the Library?"

"Guess he was."

"Why did you admit it was you?"

"Why? Well, just because."

"Do you call that an argument?" Pee-Wee demanded.

"Oh, are we having an argument?" Lefty smiled.

"Go on, are you going to tell me about it?"

"Well, it seems I didn't get away with it, anyway; hey?"

"You bet you didn't," Pee-Wee boasted, and he straightway launched forth into a full account of his day with Trailer Hilman. He omitted nothing except what he had found in the harness room at the Hilman place. This he kept to himself. Lefty listened rather listlessly, though he seemed interested.

"That's the scout they call Dutchy?" he asked.

"He got his Eagle badge the same night you were there."

"Some scout," said Lefty. "Well, the two of you didn't spoil anything for me because it doesn't make any difference now. I had a reason, but I haven't got one any more. Do you want me to tell you?" he added.

"Sure I do, and will you come back in the scouts and get your first-class badge?"

Lefty did not answer. "Maybe I might, sometime," he said finally. "If I don't, I suppose you'll be on my trail. I lost a lead pencil the other day. I suppose you'll be bringing that back to me. You see I can't succeed in anything."

"What are you talking about!" Pee-Wee shouted at him. "You succeeded in *everything*."

"Well, I succeeded in keeping my brother out of trouble," Lefty said.

"Is he right handed?"

"Yes, but he's hot-headed. He's like you. Maybe that's why I like you, hey?" And he tousled Pee-Wee's hair in that way he had. "I saved him and you saved me, and there's no kick coming."

But there was someone still to be saved, though as they sat there, neither one of them dreamed of that.

CHAPTER XXI
THE STORY OF KENNETH

What there was to tell, Lefty told in his wistful, funny way; he seemed quite without anger or prejudice. Not one word did he say against his uncle. But it was clear that he had understood his uncle thoroughly. Perhaps what made him so winsome and attractive was that he never showed any jealousy or malice. He was quaintly philosophical for a boy.

"I guess my aunt and uncle got theirs when we were wished onto them," he said. "We picked out a cowboy for a father; we used to live on a ranch. That's how Ken got crazy about horses. After dad died, and then mom, we came east—the Gold-dust Twins. Aunt Laura sent for us."

"Are you twins?" Pee-Wee asked.

"I'll say we are! We couldn't tell each other apart.

"Vic Norris either!" shouted Pee-Wee.

"Well, when we lived in Melrose, Ken was always riding horseback. I'm not so stuck on it myself. But if he couldn't get anything better he'd ride a horse on a merry-go-round. He was always riding with the crowd at the Field Club where my uncle worked."

"Are you glad you moved here?" the irrepressible Pee-Wee asked.

"Sure," said Lefty indulgently; "we've moved four times altogether. Seeing the world, huh? Do you like to hear people's troubles? Well, Ken needed twelve dollars to pay at the riding academy for a horse he'd been riding. I guess he forgot to tell us at home till he had to have the money. They must have liked him at the academy."

"I bet he's like you, everybody likes you," enthused Pee-Wee.

"Well, he didn't get the money at home," said Lefty. "Then pretty soon he did a crazy thing——"

"Trailer Hilman calls *you* a crazy feller," Pee-Wee exclaimed.

"Guess he's right. Well, Ken borrowed a canoe belonging to a friend of his and paddled up the river in it. Only he forgot to tell the friend he was borrowing it. That wasn't so terrible, the fellow had given him permission before. Anyway he wasn't so good with a canoe as he was with a horse ——"

"Gee whiz, *you're* the one that can handle a canoe," Pee-Wee enthused. "And swim, too," he added.

"Well, anyway, Ken upset the canoe and busted it on a rock and so that was that. The trouble was the canoe should have been a horse. My uncle said

he stole the canoe and sold it to get money to pay the riding academy; I suppose he really thought so. We had a grand scene—one of the biggest we ever had. And the next day Ken was gone. My uncle said if he ever saw him again, or could get his hands on him, he'd send him to a reformatory. Ken went to our grandfather's for a while—that's where I was going to go—and then he got a job on a ship going to Porto Rico."

"Gee whiz, I'd like to go there," said Pee-Wee.

"Well, that's the way you do it," said Lefty.

"Didn't he come back?"

"Sure, when the ship came in he came here like a fool, in the middle of the night and stuck a flashlight all around outside my window. I got up and we talked together at the window. I told him he was crazy, but he said he wanted to see me before his ship sailed again. We were always pretty good pals. I said, 'You know there'll be trouble if you're caught here.' I told him I was——"

"*Now I know! Now I know!*" Pee-Wee fairly shouted. "*Now* I know who a couple of the troop saw getting out of the bus one day! They thought it was you after you lied to them about how you had to work at home. Now I'm going to tell 'em!"

Lefty smiled. "Do you want me to finish up? All right, I told him I was going to go on a scout test hike the next day and I was going to get my badge in the evening. I said I'd meet him about eleven o'clock that night down by the freight station. I know what the little devil wanted; he wanted me to go away with him."

"Are you glad you didn't do it?"

"I didn't even see him. But anyway I wouldn't have gone—not then—on account of my aunt. You know, I'm unlucky; look how I lost my bankbook and the picture——"

"Gee whiz, I'm glad you did, that's one sure thing," Pee-Wee exclaimed.

"If I had gone with him the ship would have sunk. That night my uncle took it into his head to go to scout meeting with me. *Some luck?* Now just suppose when those scouts stood up and said they saw me in the Library—just suppose I had said, 'That wasn't me, it was my long lost brother.'"

"*Geeeeee*," said Pee-Wee.

"With my uncle sitting right there," said Lefty. "Do you know what he would have done? He'd have had the cops out after Ken—*that night*. They'd have found him. This town isn't so big. Do you think I was going to take any chances of him being arrested and maybe sent away some place? Not so you'd notice it. So I just let them think I was the one in the Library. I can have plenty of fun taking a hike any time."

“Oh boy, when they hear that!” said Pee-Wee. “Don’t you think they’re going to hear about it from me?”

“They will if they’re not deaf,” said Lefty, quietly.

“And didn’t you see him after the meeting?” Pee-Wee asked.

“Nope. Now you see him, now you don’t, that was him all over,” said Lefty. “I guess he had to walk into the city and couldn’t wait for me. There was a cop around the freight station that night and he told me he had chased me away a half an hour before I got there—that was Ken. So you can tell how much we are alike.”

“You couldn’t fool Trailer Hilman,” Pee-Wee said, proudly.

“German efficiency,” said Lefty. “And I get my bankbook back too. This picture of Ken was taken down in Melrose. Do you remember asking me about a saddle I was carrying in the house the day we moved in? Well, that’s the same saddle he’s sitting on in the picture. I only told my aunt about all this the other day. What was the use of worrying her and making her feel bad? Ken will be out here again when the ship comes in and this time he’s coming in through the front door and he’s *going to stay*. So if you have any horses you better lock them up. He’d even take a clothes horse out of your kitchen and ride it. So now you know all about the famous Leighton brothers, Ken and Lef. I think he’s a pretty clever scout, that Hilman.”

For a few moments Pee-Wee was silent, trying to digest these extraordinary disclosures.

“Geeee whiz, am I going to see him?” he finally asked.

“Why not? He said he’d be back. Every time anybody comes up the street my aunt thinks it’s him. She has a fit every time the door bell rings. One thing, he’s going to take his turn sweeping the sidewalk.”

“We’ll get him in the scouts, hey?”

“’Fraid not—not if he sees you first.”

“You leave it to me,” said Pee-Wee. “I’m the one that found out you took your hike.”

“No, Trailer Hilman,” Lefty laughed.

“I’m the one that found Trailer Hilman,” Pee-Wee shouted.

He did not mention to Lefty what he had found in the harness room in the barn, on the Hilman farm. He did not tell him of the suspicion—nay, conviction—which was troubling him in his thoughts, of that master scout. He did not tell him of the bloody stain which besmirched the Eagle badge that Trailer Hilman wore.

CHAPTER XXII
PEE-WEE'S ENLISTMENT

Trailer Hilman was not to enjoy the glory of his splendid achievement. Not that he would have enjoyed it, for if ever there was a boy free of the love of fuss and applause, that boy was Dutchy. He was too practical to be touched by praise. He had always seemed to regard ceremony as something to be put up with in the winning and awarding of honors.

Moreover, it must be admitted that he was not a good mixer. He did not even witness Pee-Wee's thunderous and sensational presentation of Lefty at the next scout meeting. For he was not present; he was no longer a member of the troop. There was indeed a vacancy for Kenneth Leighton whenever that sprightly prodigal should return.

Several days before that memorable scout meeting, something happened which frightened Pee-Wee and started him thinking about a matter he had been trying to forget about. Doctor and Mrs. Harris, together with their daughter and Pee-Wee, were just finishing their dinner when the door bell rang and two strange men were admitted. Doctor Harris received them and presently called Pee-Wee into the parlor, where Mrs. Harris and Elsie soon followed.

"Walter," said the doctor, in his usual pleasant and off-hand way, "this is Mr. Small who is game warden in these parts, and this is Mr. Kennicott who owns the woods over to the west here. Do you happen to know anything about boys setting traps on Mr. Kennicott's land?"

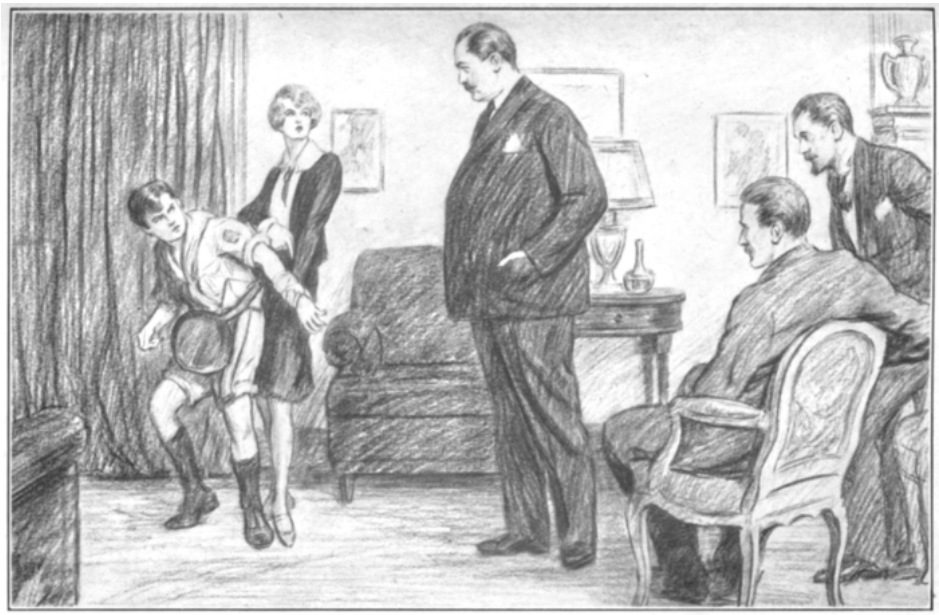
"He comes pretty near knowing that he was caught in one," said Elsie, a trifle tartly.

"Yes, that's just the point," said the game warden. "We knew that and we thought he might know something more about this business."

"You don't suppose he set a trap to catch himself, do you?" the girl responded.

"Now just a moment, Elsie," said the doctor, smiling. "Let these gentlemen tell us what the trouble is. We all know that Walter has voice enough to defend himself. How 'bout that, Walter?"

Pee-Wee was trembling, just a trifle.



PEE-WEE WAS TREMBLING, JUST A TRIFLE.

Mr. Kennicott spoke pleasantly, almost apologetically, “Why, it’s only this and we’re very sorry to trouble you. They’ve been setting raccoon traps in the woods—that is, somebody has—and of course Mr. Small is interested because this is not the season. He came to me and told me about this young man of yours getting mixed up with a trap and I’m mighty sorry. It’s a nasty business, these traps, don’t you think so?”

“I do indeed,” said Doctor Harris.

“It’s utter cruelty,” said his wife.

“All we want to say,” said the warden with every effort to be mild and friendly, “is that we want to discourage this sort of thing. It’s bad sport——”

“Oh, you needn’t tell me that,” concurred the doctor.

“No, certainly not,” agreed Mr. Small. “And all we want, Mr. Kennicott and I, is to have the cooperation of the scouts around these parts——”

“Just a moment,” said the doctor. “Do you suspect any of these boys?”

“N—no, we don’t,” said Mr. Small.

“Walter,” said his father briskly. “Do you know of any boys who are setting traps in Mr. Kennicott’s woods?”

“I don’t *know* of any,” said Pee-Wee, nervously. He was afraid they would take notice of his emphasized word, but they did not.

“Now, that isn’t exactly what we called about,” said Mr. Kennicott, a little uncomfortably. “We don’t know of any either. But there have been

traps set there. We learned about this accident and so we just stopped in, and I'll tell you why. This young gentleman knows, if anybody does, what a trap can do."

"I should think he does," said Elsie. "He knows they're *brutal*."

"Exactly, and he's going to help us to get rid of this sort of sport—if you call it sport."

"I don't," said Pee-Wee.

"All right, then," said Mr. Kennicott, slapping Pee-Wee fraternally on the shoulder but addressing the doctor, "he's the one to help us. He's going to be a kind of junior game warden, hey, Mr. Small? A sort of deputy. He and all his scout friends. There's nobody knows what a fire can do like one who has been burned. Those woods belong to the little animals as well as to the boys. These youngsters are welcome to hike there and camp there and fish there. But I don't want any traps on my land; don't want any boys getting mangled, or animals either. So now that he knows what it means, he's going to be on the lookout, eh?"

"Y—yes sir," said Pee-Wee.

"If you know of anybody setting traps in Mr. Kennicott's woods, you come right to me," said Mr. Small.

"Will you arrest them?" Pee-Wee asked.

"Well, we'll put a stop to it," Mr. Small laughed. "With the boy scouts to help us, we won't have to arrest anybody."

"We can kill snakes, can't we?" Pee-Wee asked.

"Yop, snakes, the more the better," the game official agreed.

Mr. Kennicott turned to Doctor and Mrs. Harris. "You see I want to keep the woods as a sort of play-ground, not a hunting ground. And I think it's better to say a word to the boys than start a rumpus. I was offered twenty-five thousand dollars last year for that strip of woods, but I wouldn't sell, because I want to keep faith with the scouts—the campers and hikers. And I want them to keep faith with me. Now I guess that's all Mr. Small, isn't it? And you won't take it amiss, our dropping in, Doctor?"

"No indeed, and I'm with you," said the doctor. "And let me tell you this. When you have this boy enlisted in your cause, you've as good as won the day, hey, Walter? He's not only a scout, he's six scouts. He could be game warden of South Africa."

So the little visit of these two men (made with a kindly purpose on the part of both) ended in a cordial laugh all round.

But Pee-Wee went up-stairs to his room that night much troubled, and thinking very hard. He felt that he had been just a little deceitful to his father, who always treated him so banteringly and fraternally. He had seen what a fine man Mr. Kennicott was. He and his comrades had often spoken

of “old man Kennicott’s woods.” *Old man* is a terrible phrase when used by a boy; it means grouchy, and crusty, and unrelenting, and all such.

Mr. Kennicott was not like that at all.

CHAPTER XXIII
RIGHT OR WRONG?

The next morning Pee-Wee was resolved to talk with his father about these matters, and tell him about the farm magazine he had seen at Hilman's. Perhaps the doctor would make light of this discovery. To be sure, there were the initials R. H. on the old periodical, and there was the marked ad. There was the snake's skin, too, indicating that Hilman was not a stranger to the kind of work mentioned in the ad. It all looked pretty bad but perhaps, after all, the doctor would see no significance in these things.

But when Pee-Wee went down-stairs to breakfast, he found that his father had gone off on an emergency call. And that was most unfortunate, for neither his mother nor his impulsive sister would be an acceptable adviser in such matters. He would not, he *could* not, carry this burden around with him all day. At first he thought of Lefty. Then he decided to go straight to Mr. Ellsworth, the troop's scoutmaster. He felt very contemptible.

Mr. Ellsworth was secretary of the Chamber of Commerce in Bridgeboro which was housed in its own building, a pretty rubble-stone affair, opposite the Municipal building. The scouts did not often bother Mr. Ellsworth here; in fact they had been requested not to. Therefore the scoutmaster looked a trifle puzzled when this little scout (he always wore his scout attire) entered the private office, hat in hand and a little hesitatingly.

"Do you mind if I ask you something?" Pee-Wee asked. It was characteristic of him to waive preliminaries. "Because I don't want to wait till Friday night. It's kind of about scouting; even about crimes maybe."

"Crimes!" laughed the scoutmaster. "Yes sir, sit right down, you're welcome. If the Chamber of Commerce can't give a little time to Bridgeboro's ex-boy mayor for a day, it's a pity. Haven't been murdering anybody, have you? How about Lefty? Are you going to bring him back Friday night?" Mr. Ellsworth knew all about the matter of Lefty, and of Hilman's achievement; all except what Pee-Wee now purposed to tell. "Bring him if you have to kill him."

"I wasn't going to tell about this," said Pee-Wee, "only last night Mr. Kennicott that owns the woods came to the house, and the game warden came with him. They were saying about how we shouldn't set traps in the woods for animals."

Mr. Ellsworth seemed interested. "Well, I should say not," said he. "Who's been doing that? Did they think it was necessary to come and tell

us?"

Pee-Wee hesitated, nervous and uncomfortable. "Do you—will you say I'm mean if I tell you something?" he asked.

Now Mr. Ellsworth was keenly curious. "Mean? No. What's the idea?"

"I wouldn't tell everybody," said Pee-Wee, trying to square himself with his own conscience. "Gee whiz, I wouldn't tell any fellers. But anyway in the place in Trailer Hilman's barn where he works and has all his stuff there's a magazine that's got an ad about trapping in it, and he's got it marked and everything, how you can get money selling furs. Even it's got his initials on, that magazine. I was going to ask him only I kinder don't like to. There's a snake skin there, too, but anyhow you can kill those if you want to. Anyway you got to admit he's a fine scout, gee whiz look at the things he can do."

It was amusing, this bungling attempt to be loyal in two directions at the same time. Mr. Ellsworth looked at the sturdy little scout rather quizzically, as if considering his answer.

"Humph," said he, thoughtfully.

"Do you think I'm mean to tell you?" Pee-Wee almost pleaded.

"No, I think you're right to tell me," said the scoutmaster kindly. He respected the spirit of loyalty for which Pee-Wee was known. "And I'm glad you came straight to me."

"Lots of people don't think it's wrong," said Pee-Wee. "Gee whiz, look at Daniel Boone and all those trappers. Even you said Trailer Hilman is a peach of a scout—you did."

"Yes I did; and we won't judge Daniel Boone and those others. I suppose they needed the game they caught pretty bad. But setting traps for animals is a pretty rotten business. A chap that does that isn't even a good sport because the animal doesn't get a run for his life. Shooting a rifle may show skill, if you want to put it on those grounds, but anybody with the instinct of a slaughter-house butcher can set a trap. Of course a boy who does it doesn't stop to think of those things. Did these men say anything about Bob Hilman."

"No they didn't, but they knew I got caught in a trap and kind of that's what reminded them, I guess."

"Humph," said Mr. Ellsworth, thoughtfully.

"Coming to you isn't exactly like telling on a feller, is it?"

"No, not at all, and don't you worry about it. You and I feel just the same; if Bob needs any help or advice we ought to give it to him. He's too good a scout to get on the wrong trail."

"Gee, he's an *Eagle*," enthused Pee-Wee. "Anyway I think he has to get money by earning it."

“Yes, I’ve suspected that; he’s industrious too. Now suppose you forget all about this little matter and leave it to me,” said Mr. Ellsworth, turning abruptly on Pee-Wee with a smile that seemed to belittle the whole business. “Don’t feel mean, and forget about it.”

But Pee-Wee was not reassured. “Are you going to see him?” he asked.

“Well, I might have a chat with him when nobody is around; scout meeting is no place. Don’t worry,” he laughed and standing, slapped Pee-Wee on the shoulder.

“Are you going to tell him I spoke to you?”

“N—no; I don’t see any need of that. You just leave it to me,” the scoutmaster said cheerily. “And meanwhile remember you’re the best scout that ever ate nineteen pancakes, and you can take that from me.”

“It was twenty-three,” said Pee-Wee. “You were thinking of crullers when you said nineteen.”

He felt somewhat reassured now; but still a little contemptible.

CHAPTER XXIV
STUBBORN DUTCHY

Mr. Ellsworth was assuredly a diplomat; the trouble was he did not have a diplomat to deal with. He had the most pigheaded and stubborn boy that ever required careful handling.

When the scoutmaster left his office that evening he drove up around the Hilman place and bought two dozen fresh eggs. "Well, you've got quite a farm here," he said to Mrs. Hilman. "Bob around anywhere?"

"Always he must be in the barn," the mother said.

That was fine. Mr. Ellsworth strolled out to the barn, carrying his two boxes of eggs—badge of an innocent purpose. He was very off-hand and casual; he even paused to look about at the hen-houses and splendid stock.

"Hello, Bob," said he, looking into the barn. "Well, well, all the comforts of home. This your den? I just bought out the place—see?"

"You didn't ever come up here before," said Hilman.

"Nope, that's right; I bet I've been in every scout's home but yours—I mean the troop, of course. So here's where you plan your merit badge campaigns that knock the boys silly, huh? May I sit on this bench?"

He glanced about and casually picked up the old farm journal. No one would have suspected that he took the slightest interest in it; he did not even open it. "Look here, Bob," he said, "this Leighton fellow is coming to meeting Friday night. Of course you know all about that business. Pee-Wee is broadcasting you as the great scout. You sure did a turn for Lefty. Now I want you to take an interest in him. He's a wonder, only I'm afraid he won't stay put. Kind of happy-go-lucky."

"He will make out good," said Hilman in his decided way, as if there could be no contradiction. "Pee-Wee, he will take care of him. He wouldn't like me so much to let me help him." This boy, who knew so much, knew that he could not win boys. There was something a little touching about his remark.

"Boys, attention, huh?" said Mr. Ellsworth, glancing casually at the ad. "What's all this?"

Hilman's stolid countenance did not show the least fear or interest as Mr. Ellsworth glanced over the page.

"*Well!*" exclaimed the scoutmaster, "that's nice kind of stuff! Raccoon skins, huh. And squirrels. I hope *you* don't go in for that kind of sport, Bob. I see your initials on this magazine. Trapping animals is a pretty mean,

rotten sort of business. I don't think I'd want to make any pin money *that* way. Hope *you're* not interested."

He must have got Hilman the wrong way, kindly and tactful man though he was.

"Did you ask Pee-Wee Harris that yet?" Hilman said angrily. "He got a lot to do with traps you can see. He got H for initial, too. Hollister got H, too. Did you ask them about mean, rotten business?" He showed a higher spirit than was usual with him, and his stolid countenance mantled slightly. Then he took another step and went too far. "Too I hope *you* are not interested in rotten business."

"That's very silly, Bob," said Mr. Ellsworth. "I gave you credit for more sense. If I picked up that magazine in Warde Hollister's room, I'd say the same thing to Warde Hollister."

"Maybe Warde Hollister would tell you to get out of his room, too."

This was not only pigheaded, but insolent, and Mr. Ellsworth showed annoyance. He also, perhaps, went too far. "Well, Bob," said he, rather crisply, "I think it's a pity if a scout—an Eagle Scout—and his scoutmaster can't talk about a matter, but since you fly up in the air about it, I might as well come right out and ask you a question which I have a right to ask you as your scoutmaster. Here's a periodical in your workshop, and it's got your initials on it——"

"Sure, you can prove that, huh?" Hilman asked angrily.

"Don't be foolish, my boy. Let me ask you point blank, do you catch animals in traps to get money?"

For a few moments Hilman glared at his scoutmaster. "That I don't answer," he said. "Now I ask *you* a question. This is what you come up here for, huh?" He was unquestionably smart and penetrating.

"Well, I think I won't answer that one," said Mr. Ellsworth.

"I answer it for you, yes," Hilman exploded. "And I don't have to answer my scoutmaster just because I don't have any; see? I got no more scouts or scoutmaster, so we don't have to talk any more. If you see it how I set traps, then all right, I set them. Now I get ready to set some more, so you will please go home."

Here was pigheaded Dutchy, indeed.

"Well, my boy, you'd better not set them in Mr. Kennicott's woods," said Mr. Ellsworth sharply. "I'm disappointed in you, Hilman. Only a couple of weeks ago I had the pleasure of handing you the Eagle badge. You've blustered and shown disrespect to your scoutmaster. Whether that was to cover up the fact or not, I don't know. All I know is that you haven't given me a straightforward answer to a civil question. So I shall have to fear that you've been raising a cloud of dust to hide the truth. If you won't deal with

me, you may have to deal with Mr. Small, the game warden. But I'm hoping that you'll think better all this, and I'll look for you at scout meeting Friday night. Good-bye, Bob."

CHAPTER XXV
A VACANCY FOR KENNETH

But Hilman was not at scout meeting on Friday night. He missed the ovation that was given to "that crazy feller" Lefty. It seemed a pity that this clever and discerning scout should have renounced the opportunity to witness the results of his solution of the mystery and misunderstanding concerning Lefty. When he did not appear at still another meeting, the scouts began to ask questions about him.

"I suppose he has his reasons," said Mr. Ellsworth, crisply. "I'm more interested in the scouts that attend than in one who sees fit not to attend. If he wants to see me, he knows where he can find me. What I'm anxious for now is for Lefty Leighton to pull down the Eagle badge. And when his twin brother gets through with his life on the rolling deep, I hope to see him here, too. It looks as if there'll be a place in the Elks for him. So now we won't ask any more questions because there are no merit badges for that."

There were no more questions, and as the scouts had never seen much of Trailer Hilman outside of scout activities, he dropped quite out of their lives. Mr. Ellsworth believed, of course, that Hilman had been setting traps, but he did nothing about it because he thought that he would be caught, and that the matter would take care of itself. He would not waste his time trying to keep a boy who defied him. Once or twice Pee-Wee, ever loyal, went up to the Hilman farm, but he never saw Trailer. He understood that the Eagle Scout was working somewhere.

And meanwhile, at the suggestion of his aunt, Lefty wrote the following letter, addressing it care of the steamer *Isle of Cuba*, to be delivered upon its arrival:

> Dear Ken:
>
> Aunt wants you to come here as soon as you get this. Uncle was killed in an accident at the mill. Aunt was all broken up but now she's feeling better. It seems funny around the house. He sure worked hard, that's one thing. Will tell you all about it when you get here. Be sure to come right away. That's all she talks about, you coming back. She's afraid you won't come. So beat it out here as soon as you land.
>
> Lef
>
> P.S.: You can come in through the front door this time.

After a little while it came to be an understood thing that the vacancy in the Elk Patrol was being held open for the mysterious and wandering twin brother of Lefty Leighton.

“And I’m the one that got him,” vociferated Pee-Wee, justifying his boast by a complicated masterpiece of reasoning. “Because I’m the one that was sitting on my cellar door when Trailer Hilman came up and anyway I’m the one that went over and got friends with Lefty the day he moved in and he was sweeping the sidewalk because anyway I’m the one that made him come to scout meeting and if I hadn’t done it he wouldn’t have any brother I mean we wouldn’t know he had any and I’m the one that came back and gave him the snapshot and the reason Trailer Hilman came up to see me was because I was friends with Lefty” (he came up for air) “and I saw the saddle his brother used to ride on—with my observation I saw it the first day he moved in. So the Ravens and the Elks they both got to thank me.”

“The Silver Foxes thank you too—for staying out of them,” said Roy Blakeley.

“I’m the one that got Kenneth Leighton,” Pee-Wee concluded vociferously.

“You haven’t got him yet,” said Lefty. “Now you see him, now you don’t, that’s his middle name.”

“Pee-Wee always gets everything double—twins,” said Roy. “He got the idea from two helpings of dessert. Also talking two words at a time to save language. He gets scouts by the pair.”

“If I ever go to an insane asylum I’ll get one for you too,” thundered Pee-Wee.

“If you ever go to an insane asylum they won’t let you out, the pleasure is ours,” said Roy gayly.

“Don’t you believe it, you can even get out of a trap,” said Warde Hollister.

“He was so small the trap thought he was a chipmunk,” said Roy.

“That shows how much humanity you haven’t got,” Pee-Wee said in his darkest tone.

“I used it all up,” said Roy. “How do you like to see Pee-Wee and me engaged in mortal comeback?” he asked Lefty, who was laughing happily. “Hey Lefty, why don’t you try for the Aviation badge, then you can fly up in the air every day like Pee-Wee.”

“There’s one good thing about Pee-Wee,” said Will Dawson, another of the Silver Foxes, “and that is, he’s not twins.”

“There should be just one less of him than there is,” said Roy; “then he’d be all right.”

On the whole Lefty thought he liked the scouts. Especially he liked the Silver Foxes, though he was discreet enough not to say so.

CHAPTER XXVI
DOWN AT THE PIER

Soon Trailer Hilman became a sort of legend in the troop. The heavy featured boy with the matty flaxen hair who had swaggered into scout meeting one night with Bert McAlpin and in a kind of dull way agreed to join the Elks, was almost forgotten. They occasionally spoke of his amazing proficiency, especially in trailing, and of how he had doggedly gone ahead winning one badge after another until he was an Eagle Scout. But scouts are too busy to be sentimental, and "Dutchy" was a thing of the past.

Mr. Ellsworth believed that the practical and thrifty strain in him was too strong to be sacrificed for an ideal, and that Bob, as he always called him, had after all cared more about earning money than about scouting. But if indeed he was carrying on his little business of selling the furs of small animals, at least he was clever enough not to be caught at it. He had always been a sort of odd number in the troop. The scouts had been ready enough to accord him full credit for his achievements. But still they had always looked on him as a boy apart. He had been more friendly with Pee-Wee than with any of the others, and Pee-Wee missed him keenly.

And so the time flew by, and this Eagle Scout who had saved the good name of Lefty Leighton, went about his own concerns and had much to do. He built a little stand on the road in front of his house and sold fresh eggs and apples. Occasionally he was to be seen driving his father's old nag around, selling vegetables from the ramshackle farm wagon. He had a fishing license and this he used to good purpose.

A lonely enough figure he must have seemed, sitting immovably for hours, out at the end of the Boat Club's pier, his legs dangling above the water, skillfully manipulating several lines. He could watch half a dozen of these at once, and seemed alert to their slightest movement. Passengers on the trains which crossed the bridge close by could see this solitary boy, sitting like a statue, keeping his patient vigil.

One afternoon, having finished his peddling rounds, he drove down to this familiar spot and tied his weary horse to one of the veranda posts of the boating club. It was a privilege they gladly allowed him, though the members were rather amused at the dogged patience which allowed anyone to catch fish in the Bridgeboro River. It was not a popular resort of anglers.

He made his lonely way to the end of the boating pier, baited and arranged his lines, and settled down to such an afternoon as few of his

former buoyant and restless colleagues could endure. But there was nothing restless about Hilman. He was as patient as destiny itself. Now and again some passer-by in a boat called and asked him if the fish were biting and invariably got the same answer, "Not so good."

Just a few yards distant at his left the railroad bridge crossed, paralleling the pier which extended thirty or forty feet into the river. Once or twice during his lonely vigil, the engineers of slow moving freight trains waved to him. Now and again the deafening clamor of a through express assailed his ears as it rushed across the bridge at lightning speed disdaining the unimportant Bridgeboro station just on the hither side of the stream. But most of the trains stopped here, and the last car or two remained on the bridge while passengers alighted from the front coaches at the station. This allowed time for children in the rear car windows to shout at the lone boy who for the most part disregarded their joyous banter.

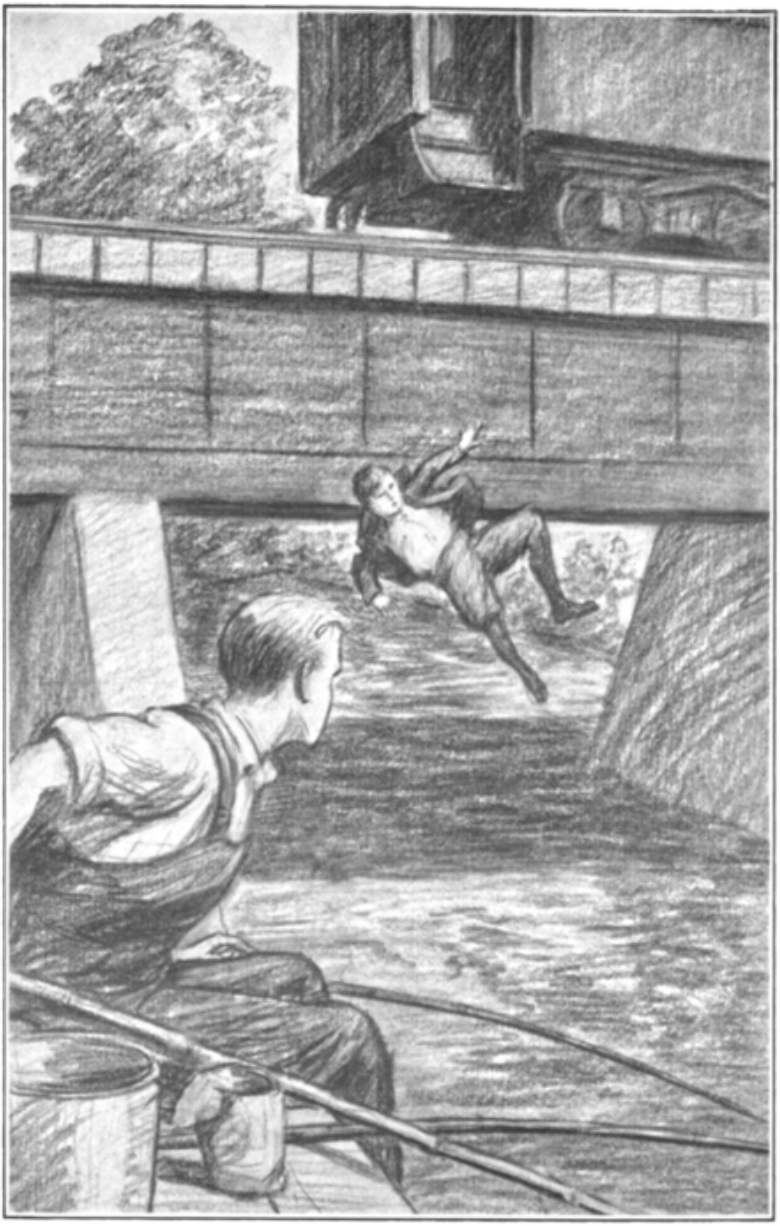
So the afternoon wore away and the trains came more frequently by reason of home coming commuters. Now and then Hilman pulled up a perch, and occasionally an eel which he threw back. The cool of evening began to be felt, and the descending sun flickered the water with shimmering brightness. The woods across the stream began to look somber. Still the lonely angler lingered.

At last, out of the woodland across the stream he heard the shrill whistle of a locomotive, and he looked at his wrist watch—the same one he had used on his memorable hike with Pee-Wee. How strange and distant that time must have seemed to him! He had thought of that day, a high spot in his triumphant scouting record, when he had sent Pee-Wee hurrying away to meet the four-thirty. Glancing at his watch now he noted that the approaching train was the six-ten at Bridgeboro, and he resolved that as soon as it had passed he would gather up his lines and drive his old nag homeward.

On, on, on, it came; he could hear the engine puffing as it pulled away from East Bridgeboro station across the river. He could hear the bell ringing until it was drowned in the quick, shrill, blast of warning to the larger station of Bridgeboro. Out into the light it came across the stream thundering and rattling, and its boisterous clamor was suddenly changed to a metallic clanking as it came onto the steel bridge. The cars shunted noisily as the engine slowed down for the Bridgeboro stop, the smoking monster crossed, passed out of sight behind the station roof, and all but the last car had disappeared when the metallic tumult of the crossing ceased. This one car remained visible on the bridge. Upon its rear platform appeared a small human figure, though Hilman did not notice this.

Nor did he see that heedless passenger descend the car steps in the hurry to alight. He did not see how the passenger, suddenly realizing that there was no platform below, tried frantically but in vain to check his descent by grasping a rail, which, alas, it was too late to catch. Upon that narrow railroad bridge the side of the car, and the steps as well, had nothing beneath them but the water.

The first that Hilman knew of this terrible thing, caused by incautious haste, was when he heard a piercing scream and was aware of something struggling in the water.



HILMAN HEARD A PIERCING SCREAM.

CHAPTER XXVII
THE RESCUE

It was Trailer Hilman, scout—or former scout—who tore his shoes off, threw his coat upon the pier and sprang into the water. Upon the sleeve of another coat, once worn by Trailer Hilman, was the merit badge for swimming. And on that same sleeve (unseen by him for many a day) was one of the requisite badges of an Eagle Scout—the badge of life-saving.

The frantic figure in the water blindly clutched at his rescuer and gripped him by an arm, an act fraught with peril to himself. But his life was in the hands of a master. Hilman pulled him under water till he let go. If it were true that this matchless scout was heedless of suffering in others, he seemed indeed to bear out this dubious repute in handling the victim in this emergency. He put an end to his unavailing struggles by striking him in the face. Then he grabbed him by his streaming hair and, swimming with one hand, dragged him to the pier.

Then came the difficulty in getting him ashore. The train had gone thundering on its way; not a soul was about the lonely boat house. Somehow—he did not himself know how he did it—he got the limp body half upon the pier and steadied it there while by means of one arm he scrambled up himself.

"I'm—I'm all right," breathed the victim weakly. "I—who are you? Did you—see—I—I—stepped off the car? I'll—I'll be all right—just a minute...."

Hilman stared at him, as the victim tried to sit up, then fell flat again. "*Lefty!*" he said.

He was mistaken that time, it was Lefty's brother.

"Ken—Kenneth," began the boy weakly. "I—don't—I live—I don't live here."

"Och, now I know," said Hilman. "Such fools this whole family are. I didn't see your brother a long time or I would know. Twins wouldn't fool me. Crazy fools the both of you are. Right away you step off the car, huh? Never look! You got your mouth full of water, yes? What do you expect, walking into the river? Here, I clean out your ears. One is a fool going away, the other is a fool coming back. You got here now the first time?"

"I'm—I'm just getting here."

"Sure, you got to come splashing; it's good I fish, keep coughing, that's good. You are all right; if you wouldn't be all right I would know it."

Yes, it was the prodigal indeed; and he was all right—thanks to his rescuer. It was Kenneth off the ship—"in person." Even in his bedraggled state he was the living image of his brother. No looseness of observation was to be charged against the two scouts who had seen this blithesome globe trotter in the Public Library during his secret hasty visit to Bridgeboro. He was Lefty all over. And besides he wore (very much the worse for wear) an old gray suit exactly like the one worn by his brother. It is true that he was later to reveal certain sprightly characteristics that set him apart from any other living boy. But as Hilman saw him after his dramatic rescue he was as much like Lefty as one fence rail is like another.

"You got to join those scouts," said Hilman, as he helped the drenched and still excited victim to the old farm wagon; "they show you how to swim. Here, you put this blanket around you so you don't get chills. I take you home."

"It's on Terrace Avenue, I'll show you," said Kenneth.

"Already I was there," said Hilman. "You like to ride horses better than fall in the water, huh?"

"How do you know?" Kenneth asked.

"A lot I know."

"You know how to rescue a feller, I'll say that," said Kenneth, as they drove away. He presented a funny enough spectacle sitting beside Hilman wrapped up in the old blanket which had been folded on the board seat. "You landed me a good crack in the eye, but I'm not kicking. Is it black?"

"Sure, now they could tell you from your brother," said Hilman. "In the water I couldn't give you arguments to keep still."

"*Oh boy*, I'm not complaining," exclaimed Kenneth, already regaining the familiar manner he had with everyone. "Only if I ever save you from drowning I'll sock you one in the jaw. Believe me, I'm through with the water for good now. Nix on the briny deep; the dry land is good enough for me. Every time I go in the water I get into trouble—once I stove in a canoe. That's why I ran away from home—on account of an argument. I was down in Porto Rico; ever been there? Oh *bibbie*, but that's some place! I was in Cuba, too. I was going to Costa Rica on a ship taking some guns to a revolution, but they got wise to the captain. No sir, nix on the ocean wave. Give me a mustang every time. This is some pretty good old nag at that. Will you let me ride him, I've got a saddle if they didn't throw it away? The last time I was up this way was in the middle of the night—I reminded myself of a burglar. I was in Arizona when I was a kid. When you ride a pony out there lots of times it's a wrestling match. Any pony that wants a good scrap can have my name and address. Is this Terrace Avenue we're on now?"

“You don’t have any address,” said Hilman, looking curiously at him. “Cuba, Porto Rico, Arizona, och. This is Terrace Avenue and I hope you stay here.”

“Is there anything to do here?”

“Sure, start revolutions,” said Hilman. He came nearer to being amused than ever he had before. This blithesome vagabond entertained him rather more than Pee-Wee did.

“Well, I’m going to tie up with you anyway,” said Kenneth, at which portentous threat Hilman even smiled. “Anybody that saves my life! I got to hand it to you! And believe me, if I can ever slip you a favor I’ll be waiting at the gate. One thing, I’m going fishing with you. Did you ever catch alligators? Look here,” he said, raising his sleeve, “there’s where I got stung by a scorpion. Do you want to go fishing to-morrow?”

“I go on my route to East Village to-morrow.”

“I’ll go with you. Have you got two horses?”

“Even this you wouldn’t call a horse,” said Hilman.

“I’m your steady,” said Kenneth, jerking from one topic to another. He presented a funny contrast to Hilman. “Anybody cracks me in the eye under water, I’m going around with that guy. I sure got to hand it to you—I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for you. But you’d never reach me like that standing up on land. Do you know the upper cut—with your left?”

“No,” said Hilman.

“Do you know the double slam?”

“No.”

“I’ll go with you to-morrow. What are you doing Saturday?”

It is hardly to be wondered at that Mr. Hulbert had never been able to understand and manage this engaging spirit.

“Well, they told me to come in the front door, so here goes,” said Kenneth jumping down. “Oh, here’s your blanket, they might think I’m an Indian Chief. You’re sure one pip in the water. Well, so long. See you later.”

CHAPTER XXVIII
ON THE WAY TO HILMAN'S

Kenneth was as good as his word; indeed, it was no fault of his that he wasn't better. For he announced to his aunt and Lefty that he was going up to Hilman's that night. But this plan was effectually vetoed by the affectionate woman who was so glad to see him back. The tragedy of his departure had been a cruel blow to her. Her husband's misjudgment and unrelenting attitude had caused a sore spot in the household, which had never healed. The sprightly prodigal returned (or blew in, as he put it) just when she was recovering from the first shock of her bereavement, and she received him with a loving heart and open arms. She, if no one else, could tell these twins apart.

Early in the morning the restless Kenneth dragged his quieter brother up to the Hilman farm. He insisted on referring to Hilman as a discovery of his own, entirely disregarding Lefty's protests of a prolonged acquaintance.

"He's a pip," enthused Ken. "*Oooooh* boy, you ought to see that feller swim!" It may be observed that he himself had not really seen Hilman swim. But he was always prodigal in praise. "First thing I knew—kerflop—there I was lying on the float or whatever you call it. We're going fishing down there—want to come?"

"Yes, if you promise to come back," said Lefty.

"Pos-o-*lutely*," said Ken. "I'm going to stick to this town; this is a merry place all right." He had not seen the town which he so gayly flattered and knew nothing about it.

"I'll tell the mayor you said so," said Lefty.

"Got any fellers here?"

"A few."

"Got any hockey?"

"Some."

"Well, you were a lot of gumps letting that guy out of your troop. He can make 'em all look sick, I bet that's the reason. Saving lives—*boy!*"

"He's only saved one life, but I'll tell you something else he did," said Lefty. And he told him the whole story, which he had intended to tell the night before, but had been deterred by his aunt's ministrations to the rescued prodigal.

"Why didn't you tell me that last night?"

"You and Aunt didn't give me a chance."

"I want to see that Pee-Wee; is he a scout?"

"No, he's nineteen scouts; you'll see him—and hear him," said Lefty. Then turning around he added. "Speak of the devil——"

For Pee-Wee was running breathlessly to catch up with them.

"This is Ken," said Lefty.

"I knew it before you told me," shouted Pee-Wee. "Gee whiz, why didn't you stop for me? Where are you going?"

"We're going up to see a friend of Ken's," said Lefty.

"Who is it, because I know every feller in this town?" vociferated Pee-Wee.

"This is a big feller," said Ken.

"Do you think I don't know big fellers? Even fellers six feet I know them. Who is it? I bet it's not a feller because he doesn't know anybody in this town yet."

"Sure he does, he's been here several hours," said Lefty.

"Don't I know you?" Ken asked. "Do you claim you're nobody?"

"Do you call that an argument?" Pee-Wee shouted. "Even I saw your picture before you knew me. Are you going to join the scouts?"

"I may join one of them," said Kenneth.

"You can't join one of them, you got to join a lot of them," said Pee-Wee. "I'll get you in. Who are you going to see now—honest?"

"A feller that Ken knows."

"Cross your heart?"

"Yop."

"How did you get to know him?" Pee-Wee asked Ken.

"Oh, he just happened to save my life."

"*What?* He saved your life? What do you mean?"

The brothers kept him guessing until they were taking a short cut across the refuse field and then Pee-Wee began to suspect something. "You're not going to Hilman's?" he demanded.

"Sure, why not?" said Kenneth.

"You don't know *him*? Do you mean that feller saved your life?"

"Sure, tell him how, Ken," said Lefty.

So Kenneth told the story of his mishap, to Pee-Wee's utter consternation. "Geeeeeee whiz," was all he could say at first. But he presently bethought him and added. "I'm the one that was his pal; I'm the one he went around with."

"Well I'm going to be the one now," said Ken. "If you couldn't keep a feller like that in your gang or your troop or whatever you call it, you're a lot of dumb-bells. Couldn't you get a chain to hold him with? What's the matter, was he too strong for you? Many thanks about the scouts and I hope

they live happy forever after. But I've got a date with that feller to-morrow" (he probably thought he had) "and any time you want to find me I'll be with him."

Now Pee-Wee was clearly perplexed. Here was another triumph added to the matchless record of Trailer Hilman. It might mean the Gold Cross. But Pee-Wee could not, or he would not, tell these brothers of the reason for Hilman's withdrawal. That was a matter which no one knew about save himself and Mr. Ellsworth. He wanted to defend Hilman, and yet he wanted to defend the scouts against the aspersions of this reckless talker who was so ready to denounce and belittle them. He chose a middle course and stumbled. There was nothing subtle about Pee-Wee. He was splendid in lavish praise; he was terrible in denunciation. But his predicament now puzzled him.

"Nix," said Kenneth as they hiked across the unsightly field. "The chap that socked me in the eye is the scout for me—in or out. He's the guy that saved my little old life; hey, Lef? You can take your troop and throw it in the ash barrel; I'm too busy. We're going to ride horseback, that feller and I." He was singularly familiar and authoritative for one so new in town.

"Maybe there's a reason why he couldn't—didn't—stay in the scouts," Pee-Wee protested rather weakly. "Maybe he did something nobody knows anything about, how do I know. Maybe our scoutmaster knows."

This was sailing rather close to the wind, but the airy Kenneth paid no attention to the dark implication. "I'll show the whole bunch of them," he said. "When I meet a winner I know one; flypaper, that's my name, I stick."

"You ought to be good and sticky after being in the water," laughed his brother.

"That's all right, you leave it to me," said Ken.

"Do you know anything against the scouts?" Pee-Wee thundered.

"If he left them they're a bunch of yaps," said Ken. He had, at least, the scout virtue of loyalty.

Pee-Wee liked Hilman, but he was stanch for Mr. Ellsworth and the troop. "How do you know what maybe he did that he got out?" he repeated.

"He can do too much, that's the trouble," said Ken.

"I guess he never did anything so bad," said Lefty. "I know there was something, I could never find out what, but Hilman's not so bad."

"He saved your little brother," said Ken. "Go on home and read your—what was that book on the table?"

"The Handbook," said Lefty.

"I hear you fellers build fires; that would make good kindling," said Ken. "Go and tell it to that gink of a scoutmister or whatever you call him. Do you want to go fishing with us to-morrow, Lef?"

This was more than Pee-Wee could endure. The Handbook was his Bible. And as for Mr. Ellsworth, why, the words of Kenneth sounded like blasphemy. Before he realized what he was saying, he had said quite too much.

"Maybe he might have—might have kind of done something like maybe like catching animals in traps, and that's against the rule because even the game warden came to my house."

"He did not," said Kenneth, blithely.

"Do you know more than our scoutmaster?" thundered Pee-Wee.

"Maybe, how do I know," said Kenneth.

"How do you know he didn't?" Pee-Wee roared.

"Because he's a good sport," said Kenneth. "I can pick them every time."

"Do you call that proof?"

"Proof enough for me; I'm the flypaper kid."

"You mean you're the fly kid," said Lefty.

CHAPTER XXIX
THE BIG FOUR

They found Hilman in his sanctum—the harness room. It was characteristic of him that he seemed to have forgotten all about his deed of the day before. At least he showed no fraternal spirit toward Kenneth.

"You needn't tell me you saved this feller's life because I know it," proclaimed Pee-Wee. "And I know you got a date with him to-morrow" (which was more than Hilman knew) "and you needn't think I'm going to talk to you about being in the scouts any more because Mr. Ellsworth told me not to if I saw you and I'm not going to."

This highly tactful announcement did not appear to embarrass Hilman. "You got a new feller for the troop," said he. "That's good, you teach him to swim."

"If I want to learn you'll be the one to teach me," said Kenneth.

"The reason he doesn't swim is because he rides on horses that know how to swim," said Lefty, in his funny way.

This did not seem to trouble Kenneth who vaulted up onto the bench where Hilman was sitting, and the others did the same. So there they sat in a row, and you may pick out your hero if you care to.

"We're four of the Three Musketeers," said Lefty.

"Hey, Hil, aren't we going fishing to-morrow?" said Ken. He always coined his own nicknames. "Didn't you give me this black eye?" He seemed happier about his bruised eye than about his rescue.

"That ain't so black," said Hilman.

"Well, anyway, you caught one fish, didn't you? And believe you me, you're not going to get me off the hook. The right one was waiting for me, I'll say that. I'm going to bring my saddle up here to-morrow. Jiminy crinkums, this is some place for a rainy day——"

"To read," said Lefty.

"Nix on books," said Ken. They were not so much alike after all.

"You don't mind the Gold-dust Twins and the Animal Cracker coming up, do you?" asked Lefty. "You've got everything nice here, I'll say."

"I was here before anybody," said Pee-Wee.

"Got any bantams?" Ken asked, in his rapid-fire way. "They have some good scraps with those down in Havana."

"Nix, what you say, on that too," said Hilman. "We got better use than roosters tearing each other to pieces. Pretty soon I have pigeons here."

“Will you send one with a note to me?” Pee-Wee asked, evidently thinking that carrier pigeons could be sent in any direction.

“You got a lot of wood and wire around here; I’ll make a glider with you. Have you got any hills to jump off?”

“No, we jump off car platforms,” said Lefty.

There was no reference at all to the unpleasant subject of Hilman’s withdrawal from the scouts. But Kenneth Leighton was not the boy to sense a situation, and to be either discreet or delicate. He sat there dangling his legs from the bench and glancing all about him at the rustic but interesting apartment. “I see you’ve got a snake skin,” he said. “I know a feller caught a boa down in Panama. Oh *baby*, was he big!”

Suddenly this restless and observant youngster gave a whoop. In two seconds he was down off the bench, and waving in his hand the tell-tale farm journal which had caused so much trouble. Pee-Wee trembled for he feared some talk or disclosure might affect the heroic standing of Kenneth’s pal and hero.

“What do you know about this, Lef?” he exclaimed, excitedly. “Well—I’ll—be—*jiggered*! Hey Lef, look at this—*look*, R. H. Will you look and then drop dead! Where the dickens did you get this, Hil? It used to belong to my uncle; he marked ’em all so we wouldn’t swipe ’em. I bet it’s got an ad in it—wait till I see. *Suuure*, the old pin money stuff? Oooooh, bibbie! Fond recollections presented to view. Hey Hil, where did you get this?”

“I pick it up in the dump when I come across,” said Hilman, quite unmoved by Ken’s exuberance. “That’s where your uncle emptied a barrel when you first moved here. I pick it up because it’s a farm journal. What do I care about initials, if his are same like mine?”

Lefty was silent. Always loyal to his home, and particularly to his bereaved aunt, he did not like his brother’s flippant talk. Perhaps it was natural that he respected his unprofitable uncle’s memory more than his long absent brother did. It was Pee-Wee (with whom no one could compete in joyous uproar), who put an end to Kenneth’s reminiscences.

“Do you mean to tell me you didn’t set traps?” he fairly roared. “Do you mean to tell me you didn’t make the marks on that magazine? Do you mean to tell me you’re not the one that did it?”

“I just bring it home to look it over,” said Hilman.

“Then why didn’t you tell Mr. Ellsworth?” Pee-Wee demanded.

“Because he came up here to find out; he’s got a right to trust me; if I’m an Eagle Scout he’s got a right to trust me. What’s the good I should say it was Mr. Hulbert’s paper? Maybe because I like Lefty I wouldn’t say anything.”

“You’re some scout, Hilman,” said Lefty earnestly.

"Didn't I tell you all about him?" Kenneth shot back.

"I'm the one that knows all about him!" shouted Pee-Wee. "And now I'm going to tell Mr. Ellsworth and he's coming back in the Scouts because now I found out all about it, and I'm the one that ran after you coming up here, and all the time I said he was a peach of a scout and now he's coming back in his patrol and I'm going to be the one to make him, and I got a dandy inspiration of an idea—shut up till I get finished—how now there won't be any vacancy in the Elks, so I'm going to start a new patrol with Ken Leighton and name it the Ponies and Ken's going to be in it. Even he's going to be assistant patrol leader maybe."

"You better get a chain to hold him with," said Lefty.

"So will you come back?" Pee-Wee shouted at Hilman.

"I wouldn't get a chance to say no, the way you keep up talking," said Hilman.

"You *will*, you *will*, you *will*!" shouted Pee-Wee. "So that's three fellers I get into the troop because if one comes back it counts just the same, I'll leave it to Mr. Ellsworth. So now I get the Boardman award for getting three members and it's ten dollars and we're going to buy a tent, hey, Ken?"

"Go as far as you like with me," said Ken, blithely pitching the old farm journal through an open window. "If Hil goes in, I do. What do you say we all go fishing to-morrow? The big four!"

Yes, "the big four." There they were, the four of them, and you may decide for yourselves who is the hero of this narrative. But, anyway, Pee-Wee got the Boardman membership prize. So perhaps his illustrious name should stand at the head of this chronicle. He was a hero maker, or a hero getter, and no doubt that is better than being a hero.

This is not the place to set forth the interesting particulars touching the formation and intimate history of the astonishing Pony Patrol, which proved to be somewhat balky, and might better have been called the Bucking Bronchos. For these lively matters make a separate story, which you shall read in due order.

So we will not linger now to detail the taming of Kenneth, which indeed was never fully accomplished. For there were limits to even Pee-Wee's power. If he had a voice to command, Kenneth at least had legs sufficiently alert to get him out of hearing. And the pleasure was his, as Roy Blakeley would say.

Getting two new members and restoring an old one (who was an Eagle Scout into the bargain) was no doubt something of an achievement. Subduing the wandering and blitheful spirit of Kenneth Leighton was quite another matter.

THE END

[The end of *Pee-Wee Harris Turns Detective* by Percy Keese Fitzhugh]