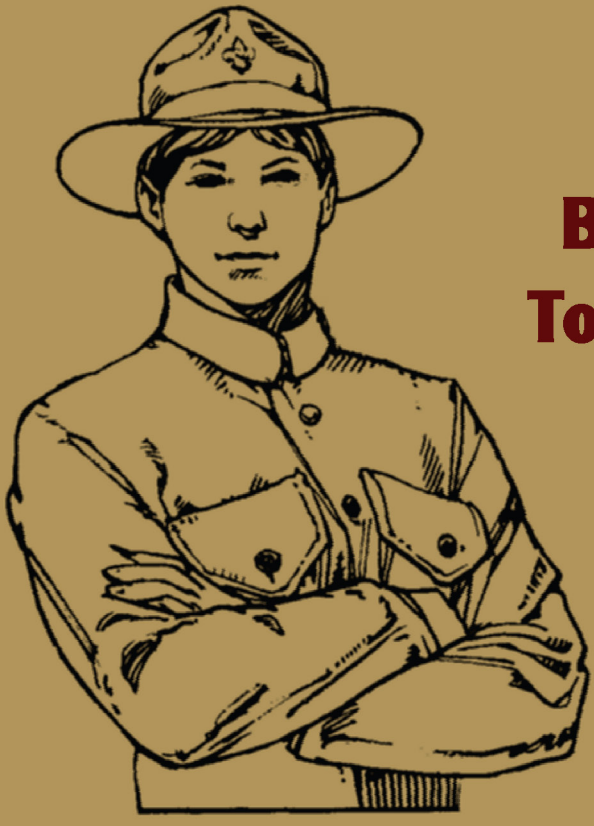
TOM SLADE BOY SCOUT



Book #1 in the Tom Slade Series

Adventures of the Bridgeboro Scouts

Percy Keese Fitzhugh

Tom Slade
Boy Scout

by Percy Keese Fitzhugh

#1 in the Tom Slade Series

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by Percy Keese Fitzhugh
Edited by Karen L. Black

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Foreword

When my son Dan was in Cub Scouts, I had the good fortune to stumble across early Scouting fiction, written just a few years after the Boy Scouts were founded. Like Scouting itself, it was fresh and exciting. I was captivated.

Percy Keese Fitzhugh wrote about Tom Slade, who could follow a trail or find a lost pin; Roy Blakeley, Tom's mentor in the troop and the madcap patrol leader of the Silver Foxes; Pee-wee Harris, the youngest but loudest and most enthusiastic of the troop, and others. (Pee-wee still has a comic strip in *Boys Life* magazine.) Fitzhugh wrote dozens of books about these Scouts, and every one of them is a delight.

Fitzhugh's characters seem unusually real and vivid. I learned later that they were modeled on real boys, many of whose real-life stunts also made their way into the books. The setting (Bridgeboro) was also modeled on a real place: Hackensack, New Jersey.

The early-Twentieth-Century setting is nostalgic while still being understandable to today's reader, and Fitzhugh always avoid melodrama and preachiness while getting the point across. Tom Slade learns just how much a Boy Scout can accomplish without actually landing in jail (except once, by mistake).

Karen Black, November 2008

About the Author

Percy Keese Fitzhugh was born September 7, 1896. His first known book, *The Goldenrod Story Book,* was published in 1906.

Tom Slade, Boy Scout was the novelization of the 1913 silent film, *The Making of a Scout*. The book was a big hit and a turning point for Fizhugh's career. He continued to write books about Tom's adventures in Scouting, in World War I, and afterwards.

Tom's friends also found plenty of adventures. In all, Fitzhugh published over sixty books starring these Scouts between 1915 and 1931. (We are hoping to publish all of them!)

Fitzhugh wrote the "Hal Keene" and "Skippy Dare" mystery series under the pseudonym Hugh Lloyd, but his "Bridgeboro Troop 1" books are his best known. He received fan letters for his most famous series up to his death in 1950.

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Contents

1

Sticks and Stones

It happened in Barrel Alley, and it was Tom Slade, as usual, who did it. Picking a barrel-stave out of the mud, he sidled up to Ching Wo's laundry, opened the door, beat the counter with a resounding clamor, called, "Ching, Ching, Chinaman!" and by way of a grand climax, hurled the dirty barrel-stave at a pile of spotless starched shirts, banged the door shut and ran.

Tom was "on the hook" this morning. In one particular (and in only one) Tom was like "Old John Temple," who owned the bank as well as Barrel Alley. Both took one day off a week. "Old John" never went down to the bank on Saturdays and Tom never went to school on Mondays. He began his school week on Tuesday; and the truant officer was just about as sure to cast his dreaded net in Barrel Alley on a Monday as old John Temple was sure to visit it on the first of the month—when the rents were due.

This first and imminent rock of peril passed, Tom lost no time in offering the opening number of his customary morning program, which was to play some prank on Ching Wo. But Ching Wo, often disturbed, like a true philosopher, and knowing it was Monday, picked out the soiled shirts, piled up the others, threw the muddy stave out and quietly resumed his ironing.

Up at the corner Tom emerged around John Temple's big granite bank building into the brighter spectacle of Main Street. Here he paused to adjust the single strand of suspender which he wore. The other half of this suspender belonged to his father; the two strands had originally formed a single pair and now, in their separate responsibilities, each did duty continuously, since neither Tom nor his father undressed when they went to bed.

His single strand of suspender replaced, Tom shuffled along down Main Street on his path of glory.

At the next corner was a coal-box. This he opened and helped himself to several chunks of coal. A little farther on he came to a trolley car standing still. Sidling up behind it, he grabbed the pole-rope, detaching the pulley from the wire.

The conductor emerged, shook his fist at the retreating boy and sent a few expletives after him. Tom then let fly one piece of coal after another at the rear platform of the car, keeping a single chunk for future use.

For, whenever Tom Slade got into a dispute (which was on an average of a dozen times a day), he invariably picked up a stone. Not that he expected always to throw it, though he often did, but because it illustrated his attitude of suspicion and menace toward the world in general, and toward other boys in particular.

So firmly rooted had the habit become that even indoors when his father threatened him (which was likewise on an average of a dozen times a day) he would reach cautiously down behind his legs, as if he expected to find a stone on the kitchen floor conveniently near at hand.

First and last, Tom had heard a good deal of unfavorable comment about his fancy for throwing stones. Mrs. Bennett, the settlement worker, had informed him that throwing stones was despicable, which went in one ear and out the other, because Tom did not know what "despicable" meant. The priest had told him that it was both wicked and cowardly; while the police had

gone straight to the heart of the matter by threatening to lock him up for it.

And yet, you know, it was not until Tom met young Mr. Ellsworth, scoutmaster, that he heard something on the subject which stuck in his mind. On this day of Tom's wild exploits, as he moved along a little further down the street he came to the fence which enclosed John Temple's vacant lot. It was covered with gaudy posters and with his remaining piece of coal he proceeded to embellish these.

He was so absorbed in his decorative enterprise that he did not notice the person who was standing quietly on the sidewalk watching him, until he was aware of a voice speaking very sociably.

"I don't think I should do that, my boy, if I were you."

Tom paused (in the middle of a most unwholesome sentence) and saw a young gentleman, perhaps twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old, looking pleasantly at him. He was extremely well-dressed in a natty blue serge suit, and to Tom his appearance was little less than gorgeous.

The boy's first impulse was, of course, to run, and he made a start as if to do so. Then, fearing perhaps that there was not a clear get-away, he stooped for a stone.

"What are you going to do with that?" asked the young gentleman, smiling.

"Nartin."

"You weren't going to throw it at me, I hope, while I am standing three feet from you."

Tom was a little nonplussed. "I wouldn't t'row no stone standin' near yer," he grumbled.

"Good," said the young man; "you have some ideas about sporting, haven't you? Though, of course, you're no sport—or you wouldn't have picked up a stone at all."

Now this was great news to Tom. He knew he was no gentleman; Mrs. Bennett had told him that. He knew he was a hoodlum; the trolley conductors had told him that. He knew that he was lazy and shiftless and unkempt and a number of other things, for the world at large had made no bones of telling him so; but never, never for one moment had he supposed that he was no sport. He had always believed that to hit a person with a stone and "get away with it" represented the very top-notch of fun, and sporting proficiency.

So he looked at this young man as if he thought that he had inadvertently turned the world upside down.

"Give me that piece of coal, my boy, and let's see if we can't mark out that last word."

"Yer'll get yer hand all dirty with coal," said Tom, hardly knowing what else to say.

"Well, a dirty hand isn't as bad as a filthy word; besides, I'm rooting in the dirt with my hands all summer, anyway," said the young man, as he marked out Tom's handiwork. "There," he added, handing back the coal, "that's not so bad now; guess neither one of us is much of an artist, hey? See that scratch?" he went on, exhibiting his hand to Tom. "I got that shinning up a tree. Come on, let's beat it; first thing you know a cop will be here."

Tom hardly knew what to think of this strange, sumptuously-attired creature whose hands were rooting in the dirt all summer, and who got a scratch (which he proudly exhibited) from shinning up a tree; who said "beat it" when he meant "go away," and who called a policeman a "cop."

Tom rather liked the way this strange man talked, though it was not without a tinge of suspicion that he accompanied him along the street, casting furtive glances at his luxurious attire, wondering how such as he could climb a tree.

"You couldn't shin up no tree," he presently ventured.

"Oh, couldn't I, though?" laughed his companion. "I've shinned up more trees than you've got fingers and toes."

"When you was a kid?"

"I'm a kid now, and don't you forget it. And I'll give you a tip, too. Grind up some bark in your hands—it works fine."

They walked on silently for a little way; an ill-assorted pair they must have seemed to a passer-by, the boy hitching up his suspender as often as it slid from his shoulder in his shuffling effort to keep up with the alert stride of his companion.

"Trouble with stone-throwing is that there isn't any skill in it. You know what Buck Edwards said, don't you? He said he'd have learned to pitch much easier if it hadn't been for throwing stones when he was a kid. He used to be a regular fiend at it, and when he came to passing curves he couldn't make his first finger behave. You think Buck can beat that pitcher the Prep. boys have got?"

"Dem High School guys is all right."

"Well, Buck's a good pitcher. I don't suppose I've thrown a stone in ten years. But I bet I could practice for ten minutes and beat you out. You smoke, don't you?"

"N-no—ye-er, I do sometimes."

"Just caught the truth by the tail that time, didn't you?" the young man laughed. "Well, a kid can't aim steady if he smokes: that's one sure thing."

Tom was seized with a strange desire to strengthen his companion's side of the case. The poor boy had few enough arguments, goodness knows, in defense of his own habits, and his information was meager enough. Yet the one little thing which he seemed to remember about the other side of stone-throwing he now contributed willingly.

"It's bad too if you ever land a guy one in the temple."

"Well, I don't know; I don't think there's so much in that, though there may be. I landed a guy one in the temple with a

stick last summer—accident, of course, and I thought it would kill him, but it didn't."

Tom was surprised and fascinated by the stranger's frankness.

"But a fellow that throws stones is no sport, that's sure, and you can mark that up in your brain if you happen to have a lump of coal handy."

"I chucked that coal—honest."

"Good."

It had been Tom's intention to go down through Chester Street and steal an apple from Schmitt's Grocery, but instead he accompanied his new friend until that mysterious person turned to enter a house.

"Guess we didn't swap names, did we?" the stranger said, holding out his hand.

It was the first time that Tom Slade had grasped anyone's hand in many a day.

"Tom—Tom Slade," he said, hitching up his suspender.

"So? Mine's Ellsworth. Come up to the Library building and see us some Friday night—the boys, I mean."

"Oh, are you the boss of them regiment fellers?"

"Not exactly the boss; scouts we call ourselves."

"What's a scout? A soldier, like?"

"No, a scout's a fellow that does stunts and things."

"I betcher *you* kin do a few."

"I bet I can!" laughed Mr. Ellsworth; "you said it! I've got some of those boys guessing." Which was the plain truth.

"Drop in some Friday night and see us; don't forget now."

Tom watched him as he ascended the steps of a neighboring porch. He had a strange fascination for the boy, and it was not till the door closed behind him that Tom's steady gaze was averted. Then he shuffled off down the street.

2

"Hats Off"

Tom Slade awoke at about eleven o'clock, swung his legs to the floor, yawned, rubbed his eyes, felt blindly for his tattered shoes and sniffed the air.

Something was wrong, that was sure. Tom sniffed again. Something had undoubtedly happened. The old familiar odor which had dwelt in the Slade apartment all winter, the stuffy smell of bed clothes and dirty matting, of kerosene and smoke and fried potatoes and salt-fish and empty beer bottles, had given place to something new. Tom sniffed again.

Then, all of a sudden, his waking senses became aware of his father seated in his usual greasy chair, sideways to the window.

And the window was open!

The stove-lifter which had been used to pry it up lay on the sill, and the spring air, gracious and democratic, was pouring in amid the squalor just as it was pouring in through the wide-swung cathedral windows of John Temple's home up in Grantley Square.

"Yer opened the winder, didn' yer?" said Tom.

"Never you mind what I done," replied his father.

"Ain't it after six?"

"Never you mind what 'tis; get yer cap and beat it up to Barney's for a pint."

"Ain't we goin' to have no eats?"

"No, we ain't goin' to have no eats. You tell Barney to give you a cup of coffee; tell 'im I said so."

"Aw, he wouldn't give me no pint without the money."

"He wouldn't, wouldn't he? I'll *pint* you!"

"I ain't goin' to graft on him no more."

"Get me a dime off Tony then and stop in Billy's comin' back and tell him I got the cramps again and can't work."

"He'll gimme the laugh."

"I'll give you the other kind of a laugh if you don't beat it. I left you sleep till eleven o'clock—"

"You didn' leave me sleep," said Tom. "Yer only woke up yerself half an hour ago."

"Yer call me a liar, will you?" roared Bill Slade, rising.

Tom took his usual strategic position on the opposite side of the table, and as his father moved ominously around it, kept the full width of it between them. When he reached a point nearest the sink he grabbed a dented pail from there and darted out and down the stairs.

Up near Grantley Square was a fence which bore the sign, "Post No Bills." How this had managed to escape Tom hitherto was a mystery, but he now altered it, according to the classic hoodlum formula, so that it read, "Rost No Pills," and headed up through the square for Barney Galloway's saloon. Bill Slade had been reduced to long-distance intercourse in the matter of saloons for he had exhausted his credit in all the places near Barrel Alley.

In the spacious garden of John Temple's home a girl of twelve or thirteen years was bouncing a ball. This was Mary Temple, and what business "old" John Temple had with such a pretty and graceful little daughter, I am not qualified to explain.

"Chuck it out here," said Tom, "an' I'll ketch it in the can."

She retreated a few yards into the garden, then turned, and gave Tom a withering stare.

"Chuck it out here and I'll chuck it back—honest," called Tom.

The girl's dignity began to show signs of collapse. She wanted to have that ball thrown, and to catch it.

"Will you promise to toss it back?" she weakened.

"Sure."

"Word and honor?"

"Sure."

"Cross your heart?"

"Sure."

Still she hesitated, arm in air.

"Will you promise to throw it back?"

"Sure, hope to die. Chuck it."

"Get back a little," said she.

The ball went sailing over the paling, Tom caught it, gave a yell of triumph, beat a tattoo upon the can, and ran for all he was worth.

Outside the saloon Tom borrowed ten cents from Tony, the bootblack, on his father's behalf, and with this he purchased the beer.

Meanwhile, the bad turn which he had done had begun to sprout and by the time he reached home it had grown and spread to such proportions that Jack's beanstalk was a mere shrub compared with it. Nothing was farther from John Temple's thoughts that beautiful Saturday than to pay a visit to Barrel Alley. On the contrary, he was just putting on his new spring hat to go out to the Country Club for a turn at golf, when Mary came in crying that Tom Slade had stolen her ball.

Temple cared nothing about the ball, nor a great deal about Mary's tears, but the mention of Tom Slade reminded him that the first of the month was close at hand and that he had intended to "warn" Bill Slade with the usual threat of eviction. Bill had

never paid the rent in full after the second month of his residence in Barrel Alley. When he was working and Temple happened to come along at a propitious moment, Bill would give him two dollars or five dollars, as the case might be, but as to how the account actually stood he had not the slightest idea.

If Tom had not sent Mary Temple into the house crying her father would never have thought to go through Barrel Alley on his way out to the Country Club, but as it was, when Tom turned into the Alley from Main Street, he saw Mr. Temple's big limousine car standing in front of his own door.

If there was one thing in this world more than another dear to the heart of Tom Slade, it was a limousine car. Even an Italian organ grinder did not offer the mischievous possibilities of a limousine. He had a regular formula for the treatment of limousines which was as sure of success as a "cure all."

Placing his pail inside the doorway, he approached the chauffeur with a suspiciously friendly air which boded mischief. After a strategic word or two of cordiality, he grasped the siren horn, tooted it frantically, pulled the timer around, opened one of the doors, jumped in and out of the opposite door, leaving both open, and retreated as far as the corner, calling, "Yah-h-h-h-h!"

In a few minutes he returned very cautiously, sidled up to the house door, and took his belated way upstairs.

Tom placed his pail on the lower step of the stair leading up to the floor above his own, but did not enter the room whence emanated the stern voice of John Temple and the lying excuses of his father. He went down and out on the door step and sat on the railing, gazing at the chauffeur with an exasperating look of triumph.

"I wouldn't be no lousy Cho-fure," he began.

The chauffeur (who received twenty-five dollars a week) did not see the force of this remark.

"Runnin' over kids all the time—you lie, *yer did too*!"

The chauffeur looked straight ahead and uttered not a word.

"Yer'd be in jail if 'twasn't for old John paying graft to the cops!"

The chauffeur, who knew his place, made never a sign.

"Yer stinkin' thief! Yer don't do a thing but cop the car for joy-rides— didn' yer?"

At this the chauffeur stirred slightly.

"Yes, yer will!" yelled Tom, jumping down from the railing.

He had just picked up a stone, when the portly form of John Temple emerged from the door behind him.

"Put down that stone, sir, or I'll lock you up!" said he with the air of one who is accustomed to being obeyed.

"G-wan, he called me a liar!" shouted Tom.

"Well, that's just what you are," said John Temple, "and if certain people of this town spent less for canvas uniforms to put on their boys to make tramps out of them, we should be able, perhaps, to build an addition to the jail."

"Ya-ah, an' you'd be the first one to go into it!" Tom yelled, as Temple reached the step of his car.

"What's that?" said Temple, turning suddenly.

"That's *what!*" shouted Tom, letting fly the stone. It went straight to its mark, removing "old" John's spring hat as effectually as a gust of wind, and leaving it embedded in the mud below the car.

3

In Jail and Out Again

That night, when Tom Slade, all unaware of the tragedy which threatened his young life, shuffled into Billy's garage, he announced to his followers a plan which showed his master mind as leader of the gang.

"Hey," said he, "I heard Sissy Bennett's mother say she's goin' to have a s'prise party for him Friday night, and d'yer know what I'm goin' to do?"

"Tell him and spoil it for him?" ventured Joe Flynn.

"Na-a-h!"

"Tick-tack?" asked Slush Ryder.

"Na-ah, tick-tacks is out of date,"

"Cord to trip 'em up?"

"Guess again, guess again," said Tom, exultantly.

But as no one ventured any further guesses, he announced his plan forthwith.

"Don't say a word—don't say a word," he ejaculated. "I swiped two of them quarantine signs offen two doors, and I'm gon'er tack one up on Sissy's door Friday night! Can yer beat it?"

None of them could beat it, for it was an inspiration. To turn away Master Connover's young guests by this simple but effectual device was worthy of the leadership qualities of Tom Slade.

Having thus advertised the possibilities of the signs he took occasion to announce,

"I got another one, an' I'll sell it for a dime." But even though he marked it down to a nickel, none would buy, so he announced his intention of raffling it off.

Before the momentous evening of Connover's party arrived, however, something else happened which had a curious and indirect effect upon the carrying out of Tom's plan.

On Wednesday afternoon three men came down Barrel Alley armed with a paper for Bill Slade. It was full of "whereases" and "now, therefores" and other things which Bill did not comprehend, but he understood well enough the meaning of their errand.

The stone which Tom had thrown at John Temple had rebounded with terrific force!

One man would have been enough, goodness knows, to do the job in hand, for there were only six or seven pieces of furniture. They got in each other's way a good deal and spat tobacco juice, while poor helpless, inefficient Bill Slade stood by watching them.

From various windows and doors the neighbors watched them too, and some congratulated themselves that their own rents were paid, while others wondered what would become of poor Tom now.

This was the scene which greeted Tom as he came down Barrel Alley from school.

"What are they doin'?" he asked.

"Can't you see what they're a-doin'?" roared his father. "'Tain't them that's doin' it neither, it's *you—you done it!!* It's *you* took the roof from over my head, you and old John Temple!" Advancing menacingly, he poured forth a torrent of abuse at his wretched son.

"The two of yez done it! You with yer rocks and him with his dirty marshals and judges! I'll get the both of yez yet! You sneakin' rat!"

He would have struck Tom to the ground if Mrs. O'Connor, a mournful figure in shoddy black, had not crossed the street and forced her way between them.

"'Twas *you* done it, Bill Slade, and not him, and don't you lay yer hand on him—mind that! 'Twas you an' your whiskey bottle done it, you lazy loafer, an' the street is well rid of you. Don't you raise your hand agin me, Bill Slade—I'm not afraid of the likes of you. I tell you 'twas *you* sent the poor boy's mother to her grave—you and your whiskey bottle!"

"I—I—ain't scared of him!" said Tom.

"You stay right here now and don't be foolish, and me an' you'll go over an' have a cup of coffee."

Just then one of the men emerged bearing in one arm the portrait of the late Mrs. Slade and in the other hand Bill Slade's battered but trusty beer can. The portrait he laid face up on the table and set the can on it.

Perhaps it is expecting too much to assume that a city marshal would have any sense of the fitness of things, but it was an unfortunate moment to make such a mistake. As Mrs. O'Connor lifted the pail a dirty ring remained on the face of the portrait.

"D'yer see what yer done?" shrieked Tom, rushing at the marshal. "D'yer see what yer done?"

There was no stopping him. With a stream of profanity he rushed at the offending marshal, grabbing him by the neck, and the man's head shook and swayed as if it were in the grip of a mad dog.

It was in vain that poor Mrs. O'Connor attempted to intercede, catching hold of the infuriated boy and calling,

"Oh, Tommy, for the dear Lord's sake, stop and listen to me!"

Tom did not even hear.

The marshal, his face red and his eyes staring, went down into the mud of Barrel Alley and the savage, merciless pounding of his face could be heard across the way.

While the other marshals pulled Tom off his half-conscious victim, the younger contingent came down the street escorting a sauntering blue-coat, who swung his club leisurely and seemed quite master of the situation.

"He kilt him, he kilt him!" called little Sadie McCarren.

Tom, his scraggly hair matted, his face streaming, his chest heaving, and his ragged clothing bespattered, stood hoisting up his suspender, safe in the custody of the other two marshals.

"Take this here young devil around to the station," said one of the men, "for assault and battery and interferin' with an officer of the law in the performance of his duty."

"Come along, Tom," said the policeman; "in trouble again, eh?"

"Can't yer leave him go just this time?" pleaded Mrs. O'Connor. "He ain't himself at all—yer kin see it."

"Take him in," said the rising victim, "for interferin' with an officer of the law in the performance of duty."

"Where's his folks?" the policeman asked, not unkindly.

It was then the crowd discovered that Bill Slade had disappeared.

"I'll have to take you along," said the officer.

Tom said never a word. He had played his part in the proceedings, and he was through.

"Couldn't yer leave him come over just till I make him a cup of coffee?" Mrs. O'Connor begged.

"They'll give him his dinner at the station, ma'am," the policeman answered.

Mrs. O'Connor stood there choking as Tom was led up the street, the full juvenile force of Barrel Alley thronging after him.

"Wouldn't yer leave me pull my strap up?" he asked the policeman.

The officer released his arm, taking him by the neck instead, and the last that Mrs. O'Connor saw Tom was hauling his one rebellious strand of suspender up into place.

"Poor lad, I don't know what'll become of him now," said Mrs. O'Connor, pausing on her doorstep to speak with a neighbor.

"And them things over there an' night comin' on," said her companion. "I wisht that alarm clock was took away—seems as if 'twas laughin' at the whole thing—like."

"'Tain't only his bein' arrested," said Mrs. O'Connor, "but there ain't no hope for him at all, as I kin see. There's no one can influence him."

In Court, the next morning, the judge ruled out all reference to the disfigurement of Mrs. Slade's portrait as being "incompetent and irrelevant," and when the "assault and battery" could not be made to seem "an act done in self-defense and by reason of the imminent peril of the accused," Tom was taken to the "jug" to spend the balance of the day and to ponder on the discovery that a "guy" has no right to "slam" a marshal just because he sets a dirty beer can on his mother's picture.

His first enterprise after his liberation was a flank move on Schmitt's Grocery where he stole a couple of apples and a banana, which latter he ate going along the street. These were his only luncheon. The banana skin he threw on the pavement.

In a few moments he heard footsteps behind him and, turning, saw a small boy coming along dangling the peel he had dropped. The boy was a jaunty little fellow, wearing a natty spring suit. It was, in fact, "Pee-wee" Harris, Tenderfoot, who was just starting out to cover Provision 5 of the Second Class Scout requirements, for he was going to be a Second Class Scout before camping-time, or know the reason why.

"You drop that?" he asked pleasantly.

"Ye-re, you kin have it," said Tom cynically.

"Thanks," said Pee-wee, and the banana peel went sailing over the fence into Temple's lot.

"First thing you know somebody'd get a free ride on that thing," said Pee-wee.

"Ye-re?" said Tom sneeringly.

"And if anybody got anything free near John Temple's property—"

"There's where yer said it, kiddo," said Tom, approvingly.

"So long," said Pee-wee, and went gaily on, walking a little, then running a little, then walking again, until Tom thought he must be crazy. Happening just at that minute to finish one of his apples (or rather one of Schmitt's apples) he let fly the core straight for the back of Pee-wee's head.

Then a most extraordinary thing, happened. Without so much as turning round, Pee-wee raised his hand, caught the core, threw it over into the lot, and then, turning, laughed, "Thanks, good shot!"

Tom had always supposed that the back of a person's head was a safe target, and he could not comprehend the instinct which was so alert and highly-tuned that it could work entirely independent of the eyes. But this was merely one of Pee-wee's specialties, and his amazing progress from Tenderfoot to Star Scout is a story all by itself.

Tom hoisted himself onto the board fence and attacked the other apple. Just then along came "Sweet Caporal" demanding the core.

"Gimme it and I'll put yer wise to sup'm."

Tom made the speculation.

"Wop Joe's around the corner with his pushcart; what d'you say we give him the spill?"

They were presently joined by "Slats" Corbett, and the "Two Aces," Jim and Jake Mattenberg, and shortly thereafter Wop Joe's little candy stand was carried by assault.

The gum-drops and chocolate bars which did not find their way into the pockets of the storming host, were strewn about the street, the whistle of the peanut-roaster was broken off and Tom went scooting down the street tooting it vigorously.

This affair scattered the gang for the time, and presently Tom and "Sweet Caporal" found themselves together. They got an empty bottle from an ash wagon, broke it and distributed the pieces along Broad Street, which they selected as a sort of "mine area" for the embarrassment of auto traffic.

Tom then shuffled into the Public Library, ostensibly to read, but in fact to decorate the books according to his own theories of art, and was ejected because he giggled and scuffed his feet and interfered with the readers.

It would not be edifying to follow Tom's shuffling footsteps that afternoon, nor to enumerate the catalogue of unseemly phrase and vicious mischief which filled the balance of the day. He wound up his career of glory by one of the most contemptible things which he had ever done. He went up at dusk and tacked his quarantine sign to the outer gate of the Bennett place.

"Gee, I hope they're all home," he said.

They were all at home and Mrs. Bennett, whom he hated, was busy with preparation and happy anticipations for her unsuspecting son. That the wretched plan did not succeed was due to no preparatory omission on the part of Tom, but because something happened which changed the whole face of things.

4

Camp Solitaire

Tom's visit to the Library reminded him that it was here "them regiment fellers" met, and since it was near the Bennett place he decided to loiter thereabout, partly for the ineffable pleasure of beholding the side-tracking of Connover's party, and partly in the hope of seeing Mr. Ellsworth again.

So he shuffled around a little before dark and did sentinel duty between the two places. He wanted something to eat very much indeed, and he surmised that such a sympathetic fellow as young Mr. Ellsworth would "give him the lend of a nickel" especially if he were tipped off in regard to the coming ball game.

Standing outside, Tom heard the uproarious laughter through the basement windows and wondered what it was all about. Strange that fellows could be enjoying themselves so thoroughly who were not up to some kind of mischief.

Presently, the basement door opened and the scouts began to come out. Tom loitered in the shadow across the way.

The first group paused on the sidewalk bent on finishing their discussion as to whether "whipping" was as good as splicing for two strands of rope. One boy insisted that splicing was the only way if you knew how to do it, but that you had to whittle a splicing needle.

"I wouldn't trust *my* weight on any double whipping," said another fellow. "The binding wouldn't stand salt water—not unless you tarred it."

"If *my* little snow-white hand is going to grab that loop, it'll be spliced," said the first speaker.

Another boy came out and said *he* could jump the gap without any rope at all; it was only seven feet, and what was the use of a rope anyway? Then someone said that Pee-wee would do it scout pace, and there was a great laugh. The group went on up the street.

Then out came the renowned Pee-wee himself in hot pursuit of them, running a little, walking a little, according to his habit.

Two more boys came out and one of them said it was going to rain to-morrow. Tom wondered how he knew. Then three or four more appeared and one said it would be a great stunt if they could work that on the Silver Foxes at midnight.

Tom didn't know what the Silver Foxes were (he knew there were no foxes in Bridgeboro), and he had no notion what "that" meant, but he liked the idea of doing it at midnight. He would like to be mixed up in something which was done at midnight himself.

But his trusty pal, Mr. Ellsworth, did not appear. Whether he was absent that evening, Tom never knew. The last ones to emerge from the Library basement, were a couple of boys who were talking about dots and dashes.

"You want to make your dot flares shorter," one said.

"Shall I tell you what I'm going to say?" the other asked.

"No, sure not, let me dope it out."

"Well, then, get on the job as soon as you reach home."

"All right, then I won't say good-night till later. So long."

"See you to-morrow."

How these two expected to say good night without seeing each other Tom could not imagine, but he thought it had some-

thing to do with "dot flares"; in any event, it was something very mysterious and was to be done that night. He rather liked the idea of it.

The two boys separated, one going up toward Blakeley's Hill and pausing to glance at the quarantine sign on the Bennett house as he passed. Tom was rather surprised that he noticed it since he seemed to be in a hurry, but he followed, resolved to "slam" the fellow if he took it down.

Then there came into his head the bright idea that if he followed this boy up the hill to an unfrequented spot he could hold him up for a nickel.

A little way up the hill the boy suddenly turned and stood waiting for him. Tom was hardly less than amazed at this for he had thought that his pursuit was not known. When they came face to face Tom saw that it was none other than the "half-baked galook" Roy Blakeley.

He wore the full Scout regalia which fitted him to perfection, and upon his left breast Tom could see a ribbon with something bright depending from it, which seemed to be in the shape of a bird. He had a trim figure and stood very straight, and about his neck was a loosely-knotted scarf of a silvery gray color, showing quite an expanse of bare throat. His sleeves were rolled up to his elbows, and on one wrist he wore a leather band.

"What are you following me for?" he asked.

"Who's follerin' yer?"

"You are."

"I ain't follerin' yer neither."

"Yes, you are."

"Yer mean to tell me I'm lyin'?" shouted Tom, advancing with a threatening air.

"Sure."

Tom's hulking form was within a few inches of Blakeley and he thrust forward his lowered head and held his clenched fist

conveniently ready at his side, but Roy did not budge. On the contrary, he seemed rather amused. He did not scare worth a cent.

"Yer want me to hand you one?"

"No, sure not."

"Well then, was I lyin'?"

"Surest thing you know."

There was a pause.

"Gimme a nickel and I'll leave you off," said Tom magnanimously.

The boy laughed and asked, "What do you want the nickel for?"

"For a cup of coffee."

Roy paused a minute, biting his lip ruminatively, frankly contemplating him.

"I can make you a better cup of coffee," said he, "than any lunch wagon juggler in this town. You're halfway up the hill now; come on up the rest of the way—just for a stunt. Ever up on the hill?"

Tom hesitated.

"Come on, you're not in a hurry to get home, are you? I'll give you some plum-duff I made and you can have a belt axe to chop it with if you want to. Come on, just for a stunt."

"Who's up there?"

"Just 'Yours sincerely.'"

"Yer live in the big house, don'cher?"

"Not for me; guess again. Nay, nay, my boy, *I* live in Camp Solitaire, with a ring round it. Anybody steps inside that ring gets his wrist slapped and two demerits. I let the house stay there on account of my mother and father and the cat. Don't you worry, you won't get within two hundred feet of the house. The house and I don't speak."

Tom, half suspicious but wanting a cup of coffee, shuffled along at Roy's side. The scout's offhand manner and rather whimsical way of talking took the wind out of his belligerence, and he allowed himself so far to soften toward this "rich guy" as to say,

"Me an' our house don't speak neither; we wuz chucked."

"Chucked?"

"Ye-re, put out. Old John Temple done it, but I'm hunk all right."

"When was that?"

"Couple of days ago."

He told the story of the eviction and his companion listened as they plodded up the hill.

"Well," said Roy, "I haven't slept indoors for two weeks, and I'm not going to for the next six weeks. And the best way to get hunk on a fellow that puts you out of a house is just to sleep outdoors. They can't put you out of there very well. Camp, and you've got the laugh on them!"

"Gee, I thought nobody but poor guys slept outdoors."

"It's the poor guys that sleep *indoors,*" said Roy.

"Don' the wind get on you?"

"Sure—gets all over you; it's fine."

"My father give *me* a raw hand-out, all right, and then some more."

"Well, there's no use fighting your pack."

"Yer what?"

"Your pack—as Dan Beard says."

"Who's he—one of your crowd?"

"You bet he is. 'Fighting your pack' is scrapping with your job—with what can't be helped—kind of. See?"

They walked along in silence, Tom's half-limping sideways gait in strange contrast with his companion's carriage, and soon entered the spacious grounds of the big old-fashioned house

which crowned the summit of Blakeley's Hill, one of the showplaces of the town.

"Can you jump that hedge?" said Roy, as he leaped over it. "This'll be your first sleep outdoors, won't it? If you wake up all of a sudden and hear a kind of growling don't get scared—it's only the trees."

Under a spacious elm, a couple of hundred feet from the house, was a little tent with a flag-pole near it.

"That's where Old Glory hangs out, but she goes to bed at sunset. That's what gives her such rosy cheeks. We'll hoist her up and give her the salute in the morning."

Near the tent was a small fire place of stones, with a rough bench by it and a chair fashioned from a grocery box. Before the entrance stood two poles and on a rough board across these were painted the words, CAMP SOLITAIRE, as Tom saw by the light of the lantern which Roy held up for a moment.

The tent was furnished with a cot, blankets, mosquito-netting, several books on a little shelf, and magazines strewn about with BOYS' LIFE on their covers. On the central upright was a little shelf with a reflector for the lantern, and close to the pole a rickety steamer chair with a cushion or two. The place looked very inviting.

"Now this out here," said Roy, "is my signal pedestal. You know Westy Martin, don't you? He's patrol leader, and he and I are trying out the Morse code; you'll see me hand him one tonight. We're trying it by searchlight first, then, later we'll get down to the real fire works. He lives out on the Hillside Road a little way."

The signal pedestal was a little tower with a platform on top reached by a ladder.

"Doesn't need to be very high, you see, because you can throw a searchlight way up, but we use it daytimes for flag work. Here's the searchlight," Roy added, unwrapping it from a piece of

canvas. "Belongs on the touring car, but I use it. I let my father use it on the car sometimes—if he's good.

"Now for the coffee. Sit right down on that parlor chair, but don't lean too far back. Like it strong? No? Right you are. Wait a minute, the lantern's smoking. Never thought what you were up against to-night, did you? You're kidnapped and don't know it. By the time we're through the eats Westy'll be home and we'll say good-night to him.

"Can you beat that valley for signaling? Westy's nearly as high up as we are. Now for the fire and then the plum-duff. Don't be afraid of it—you can only die once. Wish I had some raisin pudding, but my mother turned me down on raisins to-day."

He sat down on the ground near Tom, scaled his hat into the tent, drew his knees up, and breathed a long, exaggerated sigh of fatigue after his few minutes' exertion.

"Let's see, what was I going to ask you? Oh, yes; how'd you get hunk on John Temple?"

"Put a quarantine sign on Sissy Bennett's house."

"What?"

"Sure; didn't yer see it?"

"What for?"

"He's a rich guy, ain't he?"

Roy looked at him, puzzled.

"There's a gang comin' over from Hillside to s'prise him to-night."

"In a car?"

"Ye-re. An' I put the sign up for to sidetrack 'em."

"You did?"

In the glare of the glowing fire Roy looked straight at Tom. "How will that—what good—" he began; then paused and continued to look curiously at him with the same concentrated gaze with which he would have studied a trail by night. But that was

not for long. A light came into his eyes. Hurriedly he took out his watch and looked at it.

"Nine o'clock," he said, thoughtfully; "they must have started back."

He rose, all the disgust gone from his face, and slapped Tom on the shoulder.

"Ain't he a rich guy?" explained Tom.

"Never mind that," said Roy. "I'm glad you told me—I'm going to show you something as sure as you're a foot high! You and I are going to have the time of our lives to-night, and *don't you forget it!*"

5

Connover's Party

"Quick, now, hand me the light and look out you don't trip on the wires. If they once get past Westy's house—g-o-o-d-*night!* Just inside the garage door there you'll see a switch—turn it on. Here, take the lantern. If Westy don't get this right, we'll kill him."

Tom, with but the haziest idea of what was to be done, followed directions. It evidently had something to do with the mysterious "dot flares" and with his own mean act. These excited nocturnal activities had a certain charm, and if it wasn't mischief Roy was up to it had at least all the attractive qualities of mischief.

"You'll see a book just inside the tent—paper covered—hand me that too, and come up yourself. Look out for the wires," cautioned Roy.

He opened the Scout Handbook to about the middle and laid it flat on the tower rail.

"That's the Morse Code," said he, "easy as eating ice cream when you once get the hang of it. I know it by heart but I'm going to let you read them to me so as to be sure. Better be sure than be sorry—hey? I hope they don't speed that auto till we get through with them."

"Can he answer?" ventured Tom.

"No, they haven't got a car at Westy's and no searchlight. He brings me the message all writ, wrot, wrote out, in the morning. They've got a dandy team there, though. Cracky, I'd rather have a pair of horses than an auto any day, wouldn't you? Now be patient, Conny dear, and we'll see what we can do for you."

"It's a long, long way to Tip—Hillside. Do you s'pose Westy's home yet? Oh yes, sure, he must be. Well, here we go—take the lantern and read off the ones I ask for and get them right or I'll—make you eat another plate of plum-duff! Feeding with intent to kill, hey?"

Tom couldn't help laughing; Roy's phrases had a way of popping out like a Jack-in-the-Box.

He had a small makeshift wooden bracket which stood on a grocery box on the tower platform, and in this the auto searchlight swung.

"Wait a second now till I give him 'Attention' and then we're off. Guess you must have seen this light from downtown, hey?"

"Ye-re, I wondered what 'twas."

"Well, here's where you find out."

There was a little click as he turned the switch, and then a long straight column of misty light shot up into the darkness, bisecting the heavens. Far over to the west it swung, then far to the east, while Tom watched it, fascinated. Then he heard the click of the switch again and darkness reigned, save for the myriad stars.

It was the first time in his life that Tom had ever been charged with a real responsibility, and he waited nervously.

"That meant, 'Get ready,'" said Roy. "We'll give him time to sharpen his pencil. Do you pull much of a stroke with Machelsa, the Indian spirit? She smiles a smile at me once in a while, and if you want her to see you through any kind of a stunt you just rub your cheek with one hand while you pat your forehead with the other; try it."

"Can't do it, eh?" he laughed. "That's one of Mr. Ellsworth's stunts; he got us all started on that. You'd think the whole troop was crazy."

"I know him," said Tom.

"He's the worst of the lot," said Roy. "Well, off we go, let's have S—call them dots and lines; some say 'dashes' but lines is quicker if you're working fast."

"T'ree dots," said Tom.

Three sudden flashes shot up into the sky, quickly, one after another.

"Now T."

"Line," said Tom.

The switch clicked, and the long misty column rose again, remaining for several seconds.

"Now O."

"T'ree lines," said Tom, getting excited.

"Now P—and be careful—it's a big one."

"I'm on the job," said Tom, becoming more enthusiastic as he became more sure of himself. "Dot—line—line—dot."

The letter was printed on the open page of the heavens and down in Barrel Alley two of the O'Connor boys sitting on the rickety railing watched the lights and wondered what they meant.

So, across the intervening valley to Westy's home, the message was sent. The khaki-clad boy, with rolled-up sleeves, whose brown hand held the little porcelain switch, was master of the night and of the distance, and the other watched him admiringly.

Down at the Western Union office in Bridgeboro, the operator sauntered out in his shirtsleeves and smilingly watched the distant writing, which he understood.

Stop all autos send car with
young folks back to Bennett's
sure not practice serious.

"Good-night," said Roy, and two fanlike swings of the misty column told that it was over. "If they haven't passed Westy's yet, we win. Shake, Tom," he added, gaily, "You did fine—you're a fiend at it! Wouldn't you rather be here than at Conny's party—-honest?"

"*Would I?*"

"Now we'll rustle down the hill and see the bunch come back—if they do. Oh, cracky, don't you hope they do?"

"*Do I?*" said Tom.

"Like the Duke of Yorkshire, hey? Ever hear of him? Up the hill and down again. We'll bring the sign up for a souvenir, what do you say?"

"Mebbe it oughter go back where it come from," said Tom, slowly.

"Guess you're right."

"Ever go scout's pace?" said Roy.

"What's that?"

"Fifty running—fifty walking. Try it and you'll use no other. Come on! The kind of pace you've always wanted," said Roy, jogging along. "Beware of substitutes."

It was just about the time when Roy was showing Tom his camp that a big touring car rolled silently up to the outer gate of the Bennett place. (The house stood well back from the road.) The car was crowded with young people of both sexes, and it was evident from their expressions of surprise and disappointment that they saw the yellow sign on the gate.

There were a few moments of debate; some one suggested tooting the horn, but another thought that might disturb the patient; one proposed going to the house door and inquiring, while still another thought it would be wiser not to. Some one said something about 'phoning in the morning; a girl remarked that the last time she saw Connover he had a headache and looked pale, and indeed Connover's general weakness, together

with the epidemic which prevailed in Bridgeboro, made the appearance of the sign perfectly plausible.

The upshot was that the auto rolled away and turned into the Hillside Turnpike. Scarcely had it gone out of sight when a patch of light flickered across the lawn, the shade was drawn from a window and the figure of Mrs. Bennett appeared, peering out anxiously.

Ten minutes out of Bridgeboro, as the big car silently rolled upon the Hillside Turnpike, one of its disappointed occupants (a girl) called, "Oh, see the searchlight!"

"Oh, look," said another.

The long, misty column was swinging across the heavens.

"Now you see it, now you don't," laughed one of the fellows, as Tom's utterance of "Dot," sent a sudden shaft of light into the sky and out again as quickly.

"Where is it, do you suppose?" asked one of the girls.

"Does it mean anything?" asked another.

It meant nothing to them, for there was not a scout in the car. And yet a mile or two farther along the dark road there hung a lantern on an upright stick, directly in their path, and scrawled upon a board below it was the word, "Stop."

Out of the darkness stepped a figure in a white sweater (for the night was growing cold) and a large-brimmed brown felt hat. One of his arms was braced akimbo on his hip, the other hand he laid on the wind shield of the throbbing auto.

"Excuse me, did you come from Bennett's in Bridgeboro?"

"Yes, we did," said a musical voice.

"Then you'd better turn and go back; there's a message here which says so."

"Back to Bennett's? Really?"

"I'll read it to you," said the boy in the white sweater.

He held a slip of yellow paper down in front of one of the acetylene headlights, and read,

"Stop all autos, send car with young folks back to Bennett's, sure." (He did not read the last three words on the paper.)

"Did you *ever* in *all* your *life* know anything so perfectly extraordinary?" said a girl.

"You can turn better right up there," said Westy. He was a quiet, uncommunicative lad.

The sign was gone from the Bennetts' gate when the car returned, and the two boys standing in the shadow across the way, saw the party go up the drive and disappear into the house; there was still plenty of time for the festive program.

They never knew what was said on the subject of the sign and the mysterious telegram.

They kept it up at Bennetts' till long after midnight. They played "Think of a Number," and "Button, button, who's got the button?" and wore tissue-paper caps which came out of tinseled snappers, and had ice cream and lady-fingers and macaroons and chicken salad.

When Connover went to bed, exhausted but happy, Mrs. Bennett tripped softly in to say good-night to him and to see that he had plenty of fresh air by "opening the window a little at the top."

"Isn't it much better, dearie," she said, seating herself for a moment on the edge of the bed, "to find your pleasure right here than to be tramping over the country and building bonfires, and getting your clothing all filled with smoke from smudge signals, or whatever they call them, and catching your death of cold playing with searchlights, like that Blakeley boy up on the hill? It's just a foolish, senseless piece of business, taking a boy's thoughts away from home, and no good can ever come of it."

6

Hitting the Bull's Eye

What did Tom Slade do after the best night's sleep he ever had? He went to Mrs. O'Connor's, where he knew he was welcome, and washed his face and hands. More than that, he attended to his lessons in school that day, to the teacher's astonishment. And why? Because he knew it was right? Not much! But because he was anxious not to be kept in that afternoon for he wanted to go down and peek through the fence of Temple's lot, to see if there were any more wonders performed; to try to get a squint at Mr. Ellsworth and Westy.

In short, Tom Slade had the Scout bug; he could not escape it now. He had thrown it off once before, but that was a milder dose. As luck would have it, that very afternoon he had an amusing sidelight on the scouting business which gave him his first knowledge of the "good turn" idea, and a fresh glimpse of the character of Roy Blakeley.

Inside Temple's lot the full troop was holding forth in archery practice and Tom peered through a knothole and later ventured to a better view-point on top of the fence.

When any sort of game or contest is going on it is absolutely necessary to the boy beholder that he pick some favorite whom he hopes to see win, and Tom lost no time in singling Roy out as the object of his preference.

It was not a bad choice. As Roy stood sideways to the target, his feet firmly planted, one bared brown arm extended horizontally and holding the gracefully curving bow, and the other, bent but still horizontal, holding the arrow in the straining cord, he made an attractive picture.

"Here's where I take the pupil out of the Bull's-eye," he said, and the arrow flew entirely free of the target.

"No sooner said than stung!" shouted Pee-wee Harris.

"Oh, look who's going to try,—mother, mother, pin a rose on me!" shouted another boy.

"Mother, mother, turn the hose on me," called another.

"Stand from behind in case the arrow goes backwards!"

"I bet he hits that fellow on the fence!"

Tom could not help laughing as Mr. Ellsworth, with unruffled confidence, stepped in place.

"Oi—oi—oi—here's where Hiawatha turns over in his grave!"

It surprised Tom quite a little that they did not seem to stand at all in awe of the scoutmaster. One boy began ostentatiously passing his hat around.

"For the benefit of Sitting Bull Ellsworth," said he, "highest salaried artist in Temple's lot—positively last appearance this side of the Rockies!"

But "Sitting Bull" Ellsworth had the laugh on them all. Straight inside the first ring went his arrow, and he stepped aside and gave an exceedingly funny wink at Tom on the fence.

Tom changed his favorite.

Presently Roy sauntered over to the fence and spoke to him. "Regular shark at it, isn't he?"

"Which one is Westy?" Tom asked.

"Westy? That fellow right over there with the freckles. If you get up close you can see the Big Dipper on his left cheek. He's got Orion under his ear too."

"O'Brien?"

"No, Orion—it's a bunch of stars. Oh, he's a regular walking firmament."

Tom stared at Westy. It seemed odd that the invisible being who had caught that message out of the darkness and turned the car back, should be right here, hobnobbing with other mortals.

"Come over here, Westy," shouted Roy, "I want Tom Slade to see your freck—well, I'll be—if this one hasn't shifted way over to the other side. Westy's our chart of the heavens. This is the fellow that helped send you the message last night, Westy. He ate two plates of plum-duff and he lives to tell the tale."

"I understand Roy kidnapped you," said Westy.

"It was fun all right," said Tom.

"Too bad his parents put him out, wasn't it?" said Westy.

"Did you ever taste any of his biscuits?" asked another fellow, who sauntered over. They formed a little group just below Tom.

"We've got two of them in the Troop Room we use for bullets," he continued.

"What do you think of Camp Solitaire?" Westy asked.

Tom knew well enough that they were making fun of each other, but he did not exactly know how to participate in this sort of "guying."

"'S all right," said he, rather weakly.

"What do you think of the Eiffel Tower?"

"'S all right."

"Did he show you the Indian moccasins Julia made for him?"

This precipitated a wrestling match and Tom Slade witnessed the slow but sure triumph of science, as one after another the last speaker's arms, legs, back, neck and finally his head, yielded to the invincible process of Roy's patient efforts until the victim lay prone upon the grass.

"Is Camp Solitaire all right?" Roy demanded, laughing.

"Sure," said the victim and sprang up, liberated.

Tom's interest in these pleasantries was interrupted by the voice of Mr. Ellsworth.

"Come over here and try your hand, my boy."

"Sure, go ahead," encouraged Westy, as the group separated for him to jump down.

"*I* couldn't hit it," hesitated Tom, abashed.

"Neither could he," retorted Roy, promptly.

"If you let him get away with the championship," said another boy, indicating the scoutmaster, "he'll have such a swelled head he won't speak to us for a month. Come ahead down and make a stab at it, just for a stunt. You couldn't do worse than Blakeley."

Everything was a "stunt" with the scouts.

Reluctantly, and smiling, half pleased and half ashamed, Tom let himself down into the field and went over to where the scoutmaster waited, bow and arrow in hand.

"A little more sideways, my boy," said Mr. Ellsworth; "turn this foot out a little; bend your fingers like this, see? Ah, that's it. Now pull it right back to your shoulder—one—two—three—" The arrow shot past the target, a full three yards shy of it, past the Ravens' patrol flag planted near by, and just grazed the portly form of Mr. John Temple, who came cat-a-cornered across the field from the gate.

A dead silence prevailed.

"I presume you have permission to use this property," demanded Mr. Temple in thundering tones.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Temple," said the scoutmaster.

"Good afternoon, sir. Will you be good enough to let me see your authority for the use of these grounds?" he demanded frigidly. "If I gave any such permission I cannot seem to recall it."

"I am afraid, Mr. Temple," said Mr. Ellsworth, "that we can show no written word on—"

"Ah, yes," said the bank president, conclusively, "and is it a part of your program to teach young boys to take and use what does not belong to them?"

The scoutmaster flushed slightly. "No, that is quite foreign to our program, Mr. Temple. Some weeks ago, happening to meet your secretary I asked him whether we might use this field for practice since it is in a central and convenient part of town, and he told me he believed there would be no objection. Perhaps I should have—"

"And you are under the impression that this field belongs to my secretary?" asked Mr. Temple, hotly. "If you have nothing better to do with yourself than to play leader to a crew of—"

Here Mr. Ellsworth interrupted him.

"We will leave the field at once, sir."

"When *I* was a young man," said Mr. Temple, with frosty condescension, "I had something more important to do with myself than to play Wild West with a pack of boys."

"There were more open fields in those days," said the scoutmaster, pleasantly.

"And perhaps that is why my wealth grows now."

"Very likely; and the movement which these boys represent," Mr. Ellsworth added with a suggestion of pride in his voice, "is growing quite as fast as any man's wealth."

"Indeed, sir! Do you know that this boy's father owes me money?" said Mr. Temple, coldly indicating Tom.

"Very likely."

"And that the boy is a hoodlum?"

Mr. Ellsworth bit his lip, hesitatingly. "Yes, I know that, Mr. Temple," he said.

"And a thief and a liar?"

"Don't run, Tom," whispered Roy.

"No, I *don't* know that. Suppose we talk apart, Mr. Temple."

"We will talk right here, and there'll be very little talking indeed. If you think I am a public target, sir, you are quite mistaken! You clear out of this lot and keep out of it, or you'll go to jail—the whole pack of you! A man is known by the company he keeps. If you choose to cast your lot with children—and hoodlums and rowdies—I could send that boy to jail if I wanted to," he broke off. "*You know* he's a vicious character and yet you—"

The Scoutmaster looked straight into the eyes of the enraged Temple, and there was a little prophetic ring in his voice as he answered.

"I'm afraid it would be hard to say at present just what he is, Mr. Temple. I was thinking just a few minutes ago, as I saw him dangling his legs up there, that he was on the fence in more ways than one. I suppose we can push him down on either side we choose."

"There's a right and wrong side to every fence, young man."

"There is indeed."

"As every good citizen should know; a public side and a private side."

"He has always been on the wrong side of the fence hitherto, Mr. Temple." Mr. Ellsworth held out his hand and instinctively Tom shuffled toward him and allowed the scoutmaster's arm to encircle his shoulder. Roy Blakeley elbowed his way among the others as if it were appropriate that he should be at Tom's side.

"I have no wish to interfere with this 'movement' or whatever you call it," said John Temple, sarcastically, "provided you keep off my property. If you don't do that I'll put the thumb-screws on and see what the law can do, and break up your 'movement' into the bargain!"

"The law is helpless, Mr. Temple," said Mr. Ellsworth. "Oh, it has failed utterly. I wish I could make you see that. As for breaking up the movement," he continued in quite a different tone, "that is all sheer bluster, if you'll allow me to say so."

"What!" roared John Temple.

"Neither you nor any other man can break up this movement."

"As long as there are jails—"

"As long as there are woods and fields. But I see there is no room for discussion. We will not trespass again, sir; Mr. Blakeley's hill is ours for the asking. But you might as well try to bully the sun as to talk about breaking up this movement, Mr. John Temple. It is like a dog barking at a train of cars."

"Do you know," said the capitalist, in a towering rage, "that this boy hurled a stone at me only a week ago?"

"I do not doubt it; and what are we going to do about it?"

"Do about it?" roared John Temple.

"Yes, do about it. The difference between you and me, Mr. Temple, is that you are thinking of what this boy did a week ago, and I am thinking of what *he is going to do tomorrow*."

The boys had the last word in this affair and it was blazoned forth with a commanding emphasis which shamed "old John's" most wrathful utterance. It was Roy Blakeley's idea, and it was exactly like him.

He invited the whole troop (Tom included) up to Camp Solitaire and there, before the sun was too low, they printed in blazing red upon a good-sized board the words:

TRESPASSING PROHIBITED
UNDER PENALTY OF THE LAW

When darkness had fallen this was erected upon two uprights projecting above the top of Temple's board fence.

"He'll be sure to see it," commented Roy, "and it's what he always needed."

When a carpenter arrived on the scene the next morning to put up such a sign, as per instructions, he went back and told John Temple that there was a very good one there already, and asked what was the use of another.

It was the kind of thing that Roy Blakeley was in the habit of doing—a good turn with a dash of pepper in it.

Bridgeboro Scout Bibliography

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6. *Pee-wee Harris, F.O.B. Bridgeboro,* 1923.
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