

The Boy Scouts on a Submarine

Captain John Blaine

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by Captain John Blaine

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THE BOY SCOUTS ON A SUBMARINE

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By Captain John Blaine

CHAPTER I

THE UNEXPECTED VISITOR

A great barking of dogs broke the silence of the sleepy summer afternoon. Elinor Pomeroy laid down her knitting and slowly walked around the house. The barking of the three big dogs had been on a joyous tone. A young man was racing up the long front drive, the dogs leaping and bounding around him.

"Three rousing cheers, old dear," he cried. "Three cheers! I have won out!"

"Do you really mean it, Lester?" she cried. "Do you really mean that your invention is a success?"

"It certainly is, Elinor," he answered, a certain gravity coming into his face and manner. "I know now that it is all right. We have even tried it out, and I am sure of it."

Elinor took her excited brother by the arm and led him to the wide, swinging hammock.

"Begin at the beginning," she ordered gently. "I want to hear the whole thing."

"Well, then," he commenced obediently, "this morning, as soon as I got to the plant, I asked for a meeting with the bureau of management. Well, I went in and told them what I had done; how I happened on a partial combination when I was analyzing something for the office. I told them that I had worked it out further and further, and that finally I found what I was hunting for--a gas that was powerful enough to affect a large number of men and put them out temporarily, without injuring them after the effects wore off.

"Well, they listened, and when I told them my idea was to use it along the battle front instead of the ghastly deadly gases used by the Germans, they commenced to sit up and take notice. You see, sis, my invention is far reaching than anything yet known. It puts out thousands of men with the contents of one grenade, and sinks them into such a deep sleep that they are absolutely helpless for hours. During this time, our men can occupy their positions, and send hundreds of trucks to the rear loaded with sleeping prisoners. When they come to, they are all right.

"They listened, all right, and then they commenced to ask questions. I offered to try it out right there, but they didn't seem to want to. Then Mr. Leffingwell spoke up. You know what a good sport he is. He said, 'Well, fellows, there may be a lot to this. I have a couple of hundred cows out Marcellus way, and I'm going to sacrifice them to my country. Let's take the car, and

try this thing out if this young man has enough on hand for a man-sized bomb.'

"Some of the men said he was a fool to risk that herd. My own opinion was that he thought the stuff wouldn't work at all in the open. Anyway, we got into the cars, and went out to the dandiest farm you ever saw.

"We drove the cows all into one end of a big lot because there was no way to send the grenade with sufficient force to spread the gas; but I went as close as I dared, and threw with all my might. It struck a stone and broke and right quick a couple of cows close to the grenade sort of crumpled up and laid down, and some more, and then one on the outskirts of the group looked around and said, 'Dear me suz, it gets late early now!' and she put her head on her arm, and went sleepy sleepums--"

"It's too wonderful; too wonderful!" mused Elinor.

"Well, the best part is," said her brother, "that it is so simple and so cheap. That is, it is simple to combine."

"Where is the formula?" asked the business-like Elinor. "In a safe, I hope."

"No, not yet. The only formula in the world is here in my coat pocket." He patted the coat lying, on the hammock beside him.

"There!" cried Elinor. "Why, Lester, I call that awfully careless! I do truly think you ought to put it in a safe!"

"That's all right," said Lester, leaning back and playing with one of the dogs. "I have it in my head anyhow. Come on, hon; I'm dead tired. Let's forget about it for a little while; let's go see how the grapes are ripening."

An hour later a well-grown boy came rapidly along the road and turned in the lower drive which led directly to the carriage. Putting his wheel on its rack, he hustled into the kitchen where Elinor, prettier than ever in her long blue apron, her face softly flushed from the fire, stood dishing up a delicious supper.

"You are late, small boy," she cried. "Get your hands washed, and go call Lester. I think I left him about an hour ago, and he has been as still as a mouse ever since. He has something fine to tell you."

She turned to the old woman who was helping her, and Wugs, whistling loudly, went through the house and slammed the screen door as he reached the porch. Elinor went on serving the supper.

Mr. Pomeroy, her father, was away on one of the long trips he was accustomed to make. He was a breeder of fine cattle, and bought and sold continually. His wife was dead, and Elinor was all in all to the man who was lonely even when surrounded by his three fine children. Elinor was thinking of the dear little mother who had passed away, and wishing that she could be with them at a time when Lester was to know the greatest pride of his life.

Supper was on, and she stood by the table thinking tenderly. Then she frowned. She was conscious of the racket Colonel, the big collie was making in his run. It occurred to her that the dog had been raving for an hour past, but she had been so intent on supper that she had laid the uproar to Lester who loved to play with the bunch and get them excited.

She stepped toward the window to speak to Colonel, when she heard a shout from Wugs. The shout wavered, and turned to a wild, high scream of horror. Elinor stood motionless. Then shriek after shriek split the air, and the girl sped to the front door, dashed it open, snapping on the porch light as she passed the switch in the hall. She gained the steps in her mad rush and paused. Wugs's agonized voice guided her down to the side of the wide veranda. She dashed to his side and looked down where he was kneeling.

Poor, poor Elinor! Her brother--her darling Lester--lay there limp and distorted, and from an ugly wound on his forehead the blood oozed slowly. Beside him, her head on his breast, his Beatrice, his special pet. She was dead; but with her last strength she had crept to the side of her beloved master she tried to defend.

Wugs looked up, his eyes wild with terror.

"He's dead! He's dead! Les is dead!" he kept saying.

Elinor knelt, put her ear on his heart, then sprang to her feet.

"Be a man, John," she, said quietly. "Les is living. We will have to work fast to save him."

After that it was all a terrible 'nightmare'. Men came, and tender, strong hands lifted the unconscious burden and gently laid it on the bed where the little mother had lain so long before she had passed away into rest. Other hands, just as gentle, carried the dead body of little Beatrice around to the garage where, while decently washing the blood from her poor battered little head, they found a piece of rough, dark cloth clenched in the dog's set jaws.

And the nightmare went on while some one telegraphed to Mr. Pomeroy, and the doctors behind closed doors worked over Lester. Nurses slipped silently into the house; detectives appeared, roped the curious people out of the grounds, and raked the place for clues. It was then that Elinor had a thought. She called the chief of police, and took him into the library, shutting the door.

"Lester was always teasing me, Chief, because I was so afraid of spies, but we may as well consider anything now. My brother had just perfected the most wonderful invention--a war device; and the board of directors at the works tried it out this afternoon. The formula was in Lester's coat pocket--the only formula there is. I know it was there, because I told him I thought it was a careless way to carry it. He laughed at the idea of any one around here getting hold of it, and said anyway the formula was in his head.

"I have looked in his coat pockets, all of them.

"The formula is gone."

"That's it, is it?" gritted the detective. "I am sure you are right, Miss Pomeroy. We have a reason for the deed now, and one clew to act on." He opened his hand and showed her the piece of cloth that poor little Beatrice had torn from the intruder's garment.

"Did you ever see anything like this before?" he asked. "That is an unusual pattern. You have a lot of extra help here just now. Did you ever notice a coat or a cap like this?"

Elinor shook her head. "Never," she said.

"Well, don't you fret, Miss Pomeroy. We'll have to find that coat. The man who wears it has the formula. And it won't take long to run down a man who owns a giddy plaid like that. If your brother could only speak, he could help a lot."

"Is he no better?" asked the girl fearfully.

"It's a pretty bad affair, I'm afraid," said the Chief regretfully. "He'll pull through all right after a while, I think, but the doctors say there is a piece of bone pressing on the brain; and they may have to operate. In the meantime, we can't wait. You see this business of the formula puts things on a different basis. I will have to get the government secret service men here as soon as I possibly can. It is a national affair now. Keep cool, Miss Pomeroy, and don't talk to any one. I'm going now, but I will leave a half-dozen men on the place. Don't talk; don't let your brother talk. Who is the old woman crying in the sitting room?"

"It is Aunt Ann," Elinor explained. "She is really no relation. Her husband used to work here, and after he was killed she stayed on and took care of things for mother. Then when mother died, why, of course she stayed. She is all alone in the world. She has or had a son, but he disappeared a good while ago. He was a very bad boy. The last she heard from him he was in South America. We think he is dead. Poor Aunt Ann! She loves Lester as though he were her own child. I think she would die for him."

"She is all right then," mused the detective. "Well, I'll get along, Miss Pomeroy. Just keep cool."

Elinor followed him to the door and stood leaning against the big porch pillar as the detective crunched briskly down the gravel path. A group of men came hurrying up to meet him, and Elinor listened eagerly.

"We got him, Chief!" she heard a voice say triumphantly. "Walking along the road bold as brass."

"Why shouldn't I?" an angry tone answered. "The street is public. Ain't I got a right to go long it? What you pinchin' me

for, anyhow? I ain't full and it ain't vagrancy to walk along the road to Manlius. You leave me go!"

"Put him in the car," said the Chief. "And look here, young fellow. I'll search you later; look here. Here is something for you to chew on for a while. Hold the flash, Dennis. Look here, you! See that piece of cloth? It just fits the torn place in your collar. She nearly got you, didn't she, before you managed to beat her brains out?"

Elinor heard a subdued struggle as the police loaded the prisoner into the car. She rushed into the house to tell Aunt Ann that the man had been caught. Wugs with a couple of smaller scouts came up. Wugs followed his sister into the house, and the two other boys sat down on the steps where they would not miss anything going on.

Philip and Benjamin Potter, known to their intimate friends as Pork and Beans Potter, were twins painfully alike in thought, word and deed as well as size and looks. They sat side by side. Each boy leaned his right elbow on his right knee and supported his chin on his hand.

"Funny 'bout that coat," said Beans. "Did you see it?"

"Yes," said Porky. "I was lookin' all the time. You mean about there bein' two just alike. Kind o'queer, loud pattern. And funny buttons. You know that man in the road was right under the big light, so we seen it plain, didn't we?"

"Sure!" said Beany. He shifted elbows, and in a minute Porky did the same. "But the man we passed in the road didn't look like the murderer, did he? Kind of square built. Looked worse than the real one, I thought."

"I thought so too," agreed Porky. "But they got the real one all right on account of the tear in the collar."

"Yes, of course," agreed Beany. "But suppose they was pals. Think we ought to tell?"

"Naw!" decided Porky. "They bought 'em at the same store like as not. Don't butt in with foolishness. Le's go home and tell mom an pop."

CHAPTER II

OFF TO SEE THE COLONEL

A week went by. In the jail a sullen prisoner, always swearing his innocence, lay awaiting the outcome of Lester's injury, while day after day he lay tossing on his bed, delirious, or deep in a stupor from which it was difficult to rouse him.

The police were satisfied that they had the man who had struck down Lester, and had killed the dog, but doubts were creeping into Wugs' mind. He himself had interviewed the prisoner, not telling him who he was. The man would say nothing, but Wugs came off with the feeling that there was something queer afoot.

"It's the wrong man," his brain kept telling him over and over; and when he told the police that, and heard their shouts of laughter, the words kept repeating themselves over and over, "The wrong man!"

There was a Boy Scout meeting one night, and Wugs went. After the usual business was over, gathering them around him in a close group, Wugs went over the story of his brother's great invention, its try-out on the herd of cows, his home-coming, and the terrible ending to his triumphant day. Then in a still lower tone, as though he feared the very walls might turn traitor, he told them of his feeling that the man waiting trial for the attack on poor Lester was not the spy who had taken the formula.

"That's the thing to find out," said Wugs. "The Police are dead sure they have the right fellow, but I'll never believe it until I find that paper. You see, he didn't have a chance to mail it unless he had a confederate waiting outside to take it away. That's what we have got to find out."

"Why, 'course he had a what-you-call-it!" the Potter twins broke in.

"Slow down! Slow down!" begged Wugs. "Gee, how do you suppose anybody can tell what you say when you both talk at once? Let's have Porky; you claim to be the oldest."

"See how it was," said Porky, with a free field, leering at his disgusted brother. "'Me 'n' Beany'd been swimmin'. We went down to the old water hole where the springboard is, and some cloze was sitting the bank. We saw a man in the water, an' we watched him. Say, he could swim, he could! He could just live in the water. Well, we took off our cloze by-en-by, and went in, and pretty soon he come out. He never noticed us any more'n if we wasn't there; only he come out a good ways from us and walked back where was his things, without lookin' our way. But we seen him; his lip was twisted sort of funny, and made him look like a grin. We'll, he dressed like a streak, and stalked off; and Beany whispered, 'Where did you get that coat?' but seems we didn't like to yell it right at him. He had a funny look. So we swam and by-en-by we come away too."

"You forgot what we found," reminded Beany. "When we came where his cloze had been we found two papers. One was just a plain paper in a plain envelope, and the other was a card written all up, something about admit bearer to all parts of fairgrounds. I suppose he is going to show something at the fair next week. Anyhow he'll have to get another, because Porky lost it out the hole in his pants pocket goin' home. And the other paper--"

"Wait till you get to it, can't you?" said the other twin, glaring fiercely at himself, or so it seemed to the boys watching. "We ain't come to that. But we seen the coat all

right. Well, we got on our wheels and started home."

"I had the paper in my pocket," interrupted Beany.

"Yes," said Porky simply. "Beany's pants was new. We come along through the village, and up just before you get to your first driveway, Wugs, my handle bars come loose, and we had to get off and fix 'em. And Beany looks up, and he says, 'Gosh! Here's another striped coat! And ain't it on a pirate!'"

"I looked and, sure 'nuff, there come along another coat just like the one over to the swimmin' hole but if that feller was bad, this one was worse. He had a big black mustache and he looked at us like he'd like to eat us.

"When he went by," Beany says, "Well, I bet he is a pirate all right!"

"So we went on home. And after supper when we come to your house, Wugs, why, you know about that, and there was another coat like the others being arre'sted. Then we went back; and mother wanted us to write it all to Uncle Jake. And the lamp made Beany's head hot, and he took the funny thin paper we found over to the swimmin' hole and made a sort of shade of it. And when we had our letter done, Beany went to take down the shade and, honest to gosh, boys, it was all written on! Wouldn't that frost you? I s'pose you think we're lyin'; but it's true. All writin' on two sides!"

"What did you do with it then?" demanded Wugs.

"We showed it to mom and she took it and put it in her pocket."

Wugs groaned.

"You see, Wugs, they's three of those coats and every one's worse than the other," finished Porky.

"We must find those men. Who is going over to patrol the fairgrounds this year beside me?" said Wugs.

"Me and Porky," said Beany proudly.

"What's the first thing to do?" asked Porky.

"Well, one of you fellows who are not detailed to the fair had better go over to the Troop D Farm where the Mounted Police are training, and see when I can see Colonel Handler."

"What you want of him?" asked a boy named Asa Downe.

"I want to tell him enough of this so he will fix it to let us Scouts go wherever we like. So the first thing in the morning, Asa, you trot over there, and find out when I can see the Colonel."

Asa started for the Troop D Farm as soon as he had finished a hasty breakfast the next morning. He had his part of the interview with Colonel Handler nicely and neatly rehearsed. He

had worked so hard over it that he said, "Thank you, Colonel," when his mother had passed the doughnuts at breakfast.

The more Asa thought of it, the more he thought it would be fine to take some one along with him; and when he saw ahead of him the two violently red wheels of the Potter twins, it was settled right there. He yelled, and they waited.

"Where you goin'!" he demanded.

"Over to the Troop D Farm," said Porky, hopping off his wheel to rest.

"What for? This is my job."

"Sure it is!" agreed Beany. "But we knew you'd want some one along for fear you forgot of the things you wanted to say, and we knew we always remember better than the other fellows. So we started out. We knew you'd be along."

"All right, you're on!" said Asa and they pedaled rapidly along the beautiful country road. When they reached the Farm, they found that the Colonel, who stayed at Syracuse with his family, had not yet arrived. The men were grooming the beautiful horses, rubbing up the bridles, and airing saddle blankets.

Porky and Beany and Asa, sitting on the stone wall at the side of the barn, watched and admired.

"That's what I'm goin' to be" whispered Porky.

"Sure!" agreed Beany. "Wonder how long it will take us to get that high?"

"Dunno," said Porky. "I outgrew two pairs of pants last year!"

"Here's the Colonel," said Asa as a big car was driven up and an officer stepped down.

"Wait! Wait!" said Asa, swallowing rapidly. "Let him get through talking first. You see, he has charge of all the country patrols, and 'course he wants to give them orders. Gee, how the spies must hate him!"

As though in answer, a long, low racing car rolled smoothly and silently up, and stopped in the road just opposite where the boys sat on the stone wall. On the little rise where stood the low, rambling farmhouse, the Colonel, with only a glance at the strangers, turned his back as though refusing to be interrupted, and went on with his orders.

In the car, one of the men half rose, leveled a revolver full at the Colonel's broad back, and fired. But almost before he could take his flashing aim, an unearthly screech volleyed from the Potter twins, and from Beany's good left hand a cobble whizzed through the air, and struck the assassin's shoulder. It destroyed his aim. The bullet went wild, and before he could recover, the Colonel had whirled. With a muttered curse the would-be intruder fired full at the boys, dropped to the bottom of the machine, and

the car shot forward with incredible speed.

Leaping from the veranda with the agility of a boy, the Colonel barked out a volley of sharp orders. Men came swarming from their quarters. A man hurried to the telephone. Horsemen dashed madly up the road. A slim, capable-looking racer slid from the garage, and the Colonel and a couple of aides came down where the boys still stood grouped beside the stone wall. Beany held a flattened bullet in his hand. It had struck beside him.

CHAPTER III

ON THE TRAIL

"If it hadn't been for you and your rock, young man, I would have been a dead man probably," said the Colonel solemnly. "I wish we had the car number."

"I got it," said Porky, easily. "They will change it, I suppose, but it is New York 237,814. And there's a patch on the right front tire, and the mud guard on that side has been bent and straightened, and the glass in the wind shield has a crack in one corner, and the staple on the tool box is broken."

"Oh, you know the car!" said the Colonel, eagerly. "Tell me that number again." He wrote rapidly, and called to his orderly. "Telephone that to Syracuse after you call Fayetteville," he said, and again turned to the boys, but almost before he could speak again, he was called to the 'phone himself. When he came out, he frowned.

"The car passed through the village about ten minutes ago," he said. "They were going fast, and headed over toward East Syracuse by way of the wide waters. I have sent the alarm out, and as soon as I finish with you boys, I will go myself. Now tell me in a word just why you boys came over."

Porky and Beany told him painstakingly.

"That's all right," said the Colonel. "You did right to come for a permit. You see, my men are going to police the fairgrounds, and on account of the large amount of government property scattered around over there we will have to be very strict. The day the fair opens, come to my tent, and I will give you a badge that will allow you to go wherever you like without question."

An orderly clattered up on a sweating horse.

"They have found the automobile, sir," said the gallant youth.

"Good!" cried the Colonel, rising.

"Yes, sir, it is lying in four feet of water at the edge of the

bluff where the road from the village winds round the curve half way to Manlius Center."

"And the men?" the Colonel enquired sharply.

"They must be pinned under the car, sir," said the soldier.

"We thought if you would detail Dennis and Harrison--they are crackerjack swimmers--they could soon see what is under there."

"Tell the men to go at once," said the Colonel. "I will follow."

The Colonel called his car, and with a nod indicated to the boys that they were to accompany him. The Colonel's orderly leaped into the front seat beside the driver and Asa, and on the back, seat, on either side of the big Colonel, sat the Potter twins looking so alike that it seemed a loss of time to look at one of them after you had seen the other, and feeling-well, they felt as important as you make 'em!

Arriving at the wide waters, they followed the Colonel and his men as they went down the gouged out place in the bank where the car had cut its way to the water, and looked at the smashed machine that lay almost out of sight. It was in such a position, however, that it was plain that no one could be concealed under it. The men had escaped.

A keen look of anger and surprise came into the Colonel's face.

"I imagine they have driven the car off the bank to put us off the scent," he said. "There is a life sentence for those men when we get them. They meant to kill me. I can't see the point in it; either." He walked back to his car and, entering it, was driven back to camp, stopping at the Potter house to drop the twins.

After the Colonel's car had disappeared round the bend leading to the village, a small, wiry, evil-looking figure slipped cautiously from the dense underbrush at the edge of the road away from the cliff. He brushed the dirt from his clothes and laughed.

"Can't see the point of it, can you? I suppose not, you old saphead! It takes the Wolf to plan things too deep for the likes of you." He laughed again, and with a glance in the direction of the village struck off over the hill into the fields beyond. He walked listlessly for half a mile, as though there was little need for haste, and any one watching him would have seen him finally lie down in a shady lane and, taking a small package from his pocket, open it and eat a sandwich. Then he drew his ragged hat over his piercing little eyes, and at once went to sleep. He slept for hours, scarcely shifting his position. When he finally stretched and sat up, the sun was going down. He looked at it, and came to his feet.

"A couple of hours more," he said to himself, and slowly sauntered back to the road and struck off toward Manlius Center.

Night was falling when three men, sitting silently in a bare, dusty, unfurnished room, looked up as a queer scratching sounded

on the outer door. They glanced at each other. "It is the Weasel, think you not?" said one, a tall man with a sear across his cheek. It was a mark that was scarcely noticeable unless he was angry; then it suddenly went white and stood out clearly across his brown skin.

A thick-set man at the table gathered up a greasy pack of cards. "Yes, it's the Weasel, all right," he said. "I'm glad he obeys orders. I told him not to show his face here before dark."

The third man did not speak. He sat in the best of the poor chairs, and was snowed under with newspapers. He had the look of an educated man, the jaw of a brute, the cold eye of a panther, almost golden in color, and the slender hands that held the printed sheet had the delicate, thin fingers of a thief.

"Door, Adolph!" he said abruptly. The thickset man rose, spilling his cards. The third man pierced him with a look. "Butter fingers!" he gritted, cursing softly in a foreign tongue. Adolph left the room and noiselessly went down a rickety flight of stairs. He returned in a moment, the Weasel following at his heels. The third man did not give him a glance. He sat looking at his beautiful, slender hands. No one spoke.

"Well, proceed!" cried the third man irritably. "Proceed! Proceed! Proceed! Himmel, you must be led step by step! Speak, idiot! How goes it?"

A look of hate flashed into the Weasel's lowered eyes and was gone. He raised them timidly.

"So far, so good, Excellency. I hung on behind the tonneau. No one noticed in that lazy village. I could hear the Colonel talking to the two small boys with him. He can't understand the attack, but he thinks the force he is building is being attacked through him on account of a gang of thieves who do not want to risk detection by his men. He thinks it has something to do with the fair. The Colonel has gone to police headquarters. The boys went home." The Weasel commenced to laugh silently.

The Wolf watched him. Then "Well?" he said again in his low, cutting voice.

The Weasel stopped. "Your pardon, Excellency. It is so amusing! That Colonel, he must be a man forty-five years old. He treated those small boys, those Boy Scouts, like equals. He talked it over with them as though they were men. He told them--"

"That will do," said the Wolf. "I don't want to hear any more."

And with those words, the Wolf, murderer and German spy, sealed his doom.

"Now come here," he said. "You, Adolph, you have done good work. That formula will mean victory for the Fatherland. Did I but dare, I would at once take it myself out of the country. But I have my orders. We must know all things about that concentration camp at the fairgrounds. Yes, you have done well, Adolph." The thick-set man smiled a queer, twisted smile with a crooked lip

that always seemed to grin.

The Wolf continued. "From now on our task grows more difficult. You, Weasel, will go to the aviation school at Ithaca. You already understand planes. Get their models; find out the methods of their management. Cripple all the machines you can. Report to me here when I call you. Send me a name and address that will reach you. And, remember, no drinking or flirtations, Weasel. Don't forget my long arm and heavy hand."

The Weasel shuddered. "No, Excellency," he said shortly.

The Wolf turned to the dark man with the scarred cheek, and pointed to his heavy, bristling mustache.

"That must come off," he said. "There is a job for you in the Administration Building where Colonel Bright has his office. You will clean," as the man scowled, "I know you hate it. Never mind! Care not! We are in trust. You must do all as I say. I am your superior officer."

"What do you do, Excellency?" asked the dark man with something of a sneer.

"I come to buy horses, Ledermaim, and my father and Colonel Bright's father, they were friends. I bring a letter from my father in Switzerland. Unfortunately the Colonel's father, he is dead; so I make acquaintance with his son. Do you see, Ledermann

and Adolph, and you too, Weasel, that I take for myself the hardest job? Now attend. Under no circumstances are you to speak to me. If it is necessary to communicate with me before the close of the fair you will wipe your faces with one of these drab handkerchiefs. Then you will come here, right here; no place nearer, and wait for me. I will keep all the papers instead of dividing them as before. You, Ledermann, have plans of all the plants of any size about here. Thanks." He filed the papers away. "Adolph, give me the fair ticket, and the envelope with the blank paper. It looks innocent enough, doesn't it? All white paper; no writing. Yet there is news indeed on that good, innocent, little sheet if one knows how to make it tell. I'll take them, Adolph."

He waited with a slim hand stretched across the table, while Adolph plunged a hand into an inside pocket with a grin, felt in another concealed pocket, and returned to the first with his face growing grave and pale.

The Wolf watched him with steely eyes, suspicion dawning in them.

"Too slow; too slow, Adolph!" he smiled.

Adolph looked up. "It is not here! It is gone! Some one has stolen it!" he stammered.

The Wolf snarled. "Oh, no, good Adolph!" he said silkily. "Look again."

Adolph, with fingers that shook, turned his pockets out one by

one, then looked into the Wolf's yellow eyes with a gaze pleading yet sullen. "They are gone," he said huskily.

With a flashing motion the Wolf reached across the table and clutched Adolph by the throat. In a steel grip that he struggled hopelessly to loosen he was helpless as a child. Brutally the Wolf bore him back to the wall, where he beat his head savagely against the door frame. A look of savage glee shone on the Wolf's smooth countenance.

Ledermann leaped across the floor and seized the Wolf's arm.

"Off!" cried the murderer, and with his hand dealt Ledermann a stinging blow in the face. He fell back. Behind the overturned table, the Weasel sat looking at the floor. It was nothing to him what they did. He shrugged his thin shoulders.

Suddenly the Wolf stopped and let Adolph slip to the floor, where he lay unconscious.

The Wolf kicked him. "I won't kill you, you swine!" he said. "You have got to find that paper. Then I'll see about it. Pick him up, somebody. I can't trust myself to touch him. Lost that paper--of course it is written in invisible ink; but suppose some blundering fool should get it near a fire?"

"They won't," said Ledermann as he worked over Adolph. "These stupid country people, what would they know about invisible ink? It may never be found at all. It may even now be trodden in the dust."

"Let us hope," said the Wolf. "Adolph shall retrace his steps inch by inch until the paper is found, even so much as a tiny scrap of it, so that I may know where it is."

"He will find it in the dust," repeated Ledermann and threw water over Adolph, while the Weasel stood up and tightened his belt. Then the Wolf counted out to him the money needed for his short journey to Ithaca. The counting was interrupted with directions and threats. The Weasel drew a long breath of relief when he was finally dismissed, and was allowed to slip out into the night, where he turned toward Syracuse. Ledermann still worked over the unconscious man.

The Wolf called at headquarters and was pleasantly received, with the formula that was to overthrow the world lying in his pocket. Days went by, and Monday came, and flags flew, and bands played, and crowds gathered, and the New York State Fair opened at last.

The Wolf went unmolested; indeed he was an honored guest. Quite safe he was for just one whole day. Tuesday morning, as he drove in his fine car, splendidly dressed, his yellow eyes half hidden behind smoked glasses, a couple of Boy Scouts came out of Colonel Bright's office as he stopped his car at the steps. Porky and Beany stopped and stared.

"Out of the way!" said the Wolf, as he approached the door.

Porky and Beany stepped obediently aside. For a long time they

stared at the door through which he had disappeared.

"It's him!" said Beany at last. "He drove the car when the other man shot at the Colonel."

"Yes, it's him," repeated Porky. "His ears ain't mates."

"I know," said Beany. "What we goin' to do?"

"Keep still and say nuthin'. If you ain't eleven foot tall, nobody believes you. I found that out. And I got a hunch that guy has the formula."

"What makes you think that?" asked Beany. "I got it too; but I don't believe it."

"Dunno," said Beany. "Don't you know how you feel it back of your neck when anybody looks in the window? I know it just like that. An' we got to do this job all alone. I don't like his looks neither. Awful smooth' but' murderin'. Are you game, Porky, to land him ourselves?"

"Sure!" said Porky. "Ain't I alwus? What comes first?"

"Le's think," said Beany.

CHAPTER IV

REVELATIONS AT THE FLOWER-HOUSE

You would not have thought they were thinking at all as they sat on the broad brick steps, holding their chins in their right hands, left hands twisting their puttee lacers. They talked occasionally but not of the yellow-eyed man who was even then laughing and talking to the Colonel.

They came out a few minutes later, and "Captain DuChassis," as the Colonel called him, ran lightly down and drove off toward the clubhouse. The Colonel stood looking after him, and the two boys stood at attention beside him. He looked down and saw them presently.

"Boys, did you ever have a hunch?" he said.

"Yes, Sir!" they said together.

"Silly things--hunches; very silly! Never let a hunch spoil what seems to be a very good friendship, or change your opinion of a man."

Porky looked quickly up.

"I got the same hunch, Colonel," he said.

"Same man," added Beany.

"Eh, what's this?" demanded the Colonel.

The boys were silent; and while the officer continued his puzzled study of the two faces, the long racer swept again to the steps, and Captain DuChassis stepped out and handed down a lovely girl. She was in a riding habit, and she ran lightly up to the Colonel and kissed his tanned cheek. "Well, daddy," she cried, "we are going to take a ride together, Captain and I!"

She looked at the young man beside her and smiled. He was resplendent in riding clothes and returned her smile tenderly. They stood talking with the Colonel while they waited for their horses.

"How does everything go, daddy? Have you heard anything from Elinor Pomeroy?" She turned, "Elinor is a school friend of mine," she explained. "She is in dreadful trouble. Her brother invented a gas that will absolutely whip Germany, and he was attacked the very night that the gas was tried out, and frightfully hurt, and the formula taken away from him. Of course, it wouldn't matter if he could tell some one, but he never will. I heard to-day that he is conscious now, but the past is a perfect blank. Isn't that too dreadful? I wish I knew where that paper is, I'd like to be the one to get it."

"Would you, Miss Carol?" asked Captain DuChassis. He smiled and tapped his swagger stick lightly on his boot top. "Perhaps you are near it now.

"No such luck! she sighed.

"There will be luck for some one in it perhaps," said the Colonel. "Mr. Leffingwell has just offered a splendid prize to any Boy Scout who finds the formula. He offers an education to the lucky lad. Two years of prep school, and four years of college."

"He is a what you call it safety-first man, is he not?" laughed the Captain. "Is he pro-German? It looks it, setting such a task for children." He turned to the young lady. "Shall we mount? Here are the horses."

After the Colonel had watched them canter away, he turned once more to speak to the boys. They were gone. Sadly they had faded away around the corner, and drifted over to the cow stables, where they sat miserably down on a bale of hay.

"What we goin' to do?" asked Beany miserably. "That's the limit!" agreed Porky. "Here we got it all planned. We got to find that formula, nobody else has the chance we have, and now we've spotted one of our men. We will find that formula when we pull in the bunch that tried to shoot Colonel Handler. They are all mixed up somehow, you'll find. All right, we find that formula, because we got to do it for our country; and what do they do to us? What does Mr. Leffingwell do to us?" Porky's voice rose to a wail. "What does he do?" he asked again. "He goes and sticks an education on us! A college education!"

"Is Mr. Leffingwell going to pick our college?" asked Beany.

"You bet he won't pick mine!" said Porky, loftily. "Cause there ain't goin' to be no such animal!"

"Well, I dunno," mused the other twin. "We got to find that formula. See, the more people we tell, the more it gums the works. It sounds cheeky, but we work better alone: me and you. Le's go look around while we think. I can think better when I'm lookin' at things.

"Me too," said Porky.

They drifted over to the bandstand where the crowd was thickest and the noise loudest and, wriggling through the press, approached an ice cream stand. To reach the counter, Porky stooped and jammed his thin figure between two men.

They paid no attention to him.

"Where is the Wolf?" asked one.

"Riding with the Colonel's daughter," the other laughed. "Trust the Wolf!"

"As far as you can see him," said the other. "I have news," said the shorter man. "Meet me in the flower-house to-night at eight o'clock sharp."

Porky was afraid to look up for fear they would take notice of him. He drummed on the counter, and called loudly for a cone. The men moved away. Porky looked cautiously after them. For a second, he thought of telling his brother to follow them, but remembered in time that they looked exactly alike. He moved over beside Beany, who was biting scallops off the edges of his cone: he had not heard.

"Come here!" Porky said briefly. He handed his cone to a small child and walked rapidly past the Hospital, around the drive leading to the beautiful new horse stables and, cutting across the race-track, threw himself down in the center of the grassy ring where the saddle horses were shown. For acres around stretched open space.

Beany, used to his brother, lay flat in the grass and tipped his hat over his tanned face.

"Go on now. Get it off your chest!" he demanded.

"Want to know what they call the guy that's riding with Miss Bright?"

"DuChassis--Captain," said Beany.

"He's called the 'Wolf,'" said Porky. Even alone as they were, he lowered his tone.

Beany sat suddenly erect. "What?" he said.

"You heard me," said his brother. He rapidly repeated the conversation he had overheard.

"Where is the flower-house?" asked Beany.

"It must be the greenhouse," he said. "I think I have seen the shorter one of those men helping the head gardener."

"I tell you what! It's your turn now, because I heard them plan this. So you go camp at the flower-house by-en-by, and I will keep watch around the gates to see if they change their minds and go out."

"What good will that be?" said his brother. "You didn't see either of their faces."

"No, but I saw their pants," said Porky. "I can look at all the legs, can't I? But they won't be there. I will watch to make sure; but they will be right where they said, over by the flower-house. See, they don't use any science. All they do is get in a crowd, or back up against a good high wall, and tell each other their real names. If we bring this across, I've a mind for us to be detectives."

"There's the college education," Beany reminded him.

"Well," said Porky, "I suppose detectives ought to know a little something. Come on back, I want a sandwich. I have lived on hot dogs now for two days. Notice how small they are getting? The dog part, I mean."

As they rounded the grandstand, a heavy automobile truck backed up to something covered with a tarpaulin. The boys darted into the crowd. They demanded explanations of anybody who would answer. A boy spoke, up.

"Ridin' horse ran away," he said. "Saw it 'myself. Girl ridin' it."

Porky and Beany gasped. "Was she killed?" they cried.

"Didn't hurt her at all," said the strange boy rather regretfully, it seemed. "But the feller with her, he chased her an' his horse caught up, and the feller grabbed her bridle, and her horse 'swerved, and he was pulled offen his horse, and his horse come right bing into the bandstand, and broke his neck."

"My gosh!" said the twins. "Where did they take the man? Was he hurt much?"

The boy looked curiously at the pair. "Say, do you always say the same thing like that? You ain't the same boy, are you? Feller went over to the Hospital."

"Hurt much?" said the boys.

"There you go again! Why, he limped, and I'll bet he's lame to-morrow but I guess he ain't in a dyin' condition."

The boys watched while the unfortunate young horse was loaded on the truck, then turned toward the hospital.

"What you got?" said Beany, "A sore throat?"

"I say not," cried his brother. "That's a symptom of scarlet fever. They would jug us in the detention ward. I'm goin' to have a splittin' headache."

"That's scarlet fever too," said his brother.

"Pick somethin' a boy's apt to have."

"Hot dogs then," said Beany. "I got an awful pain."

A delightful, dimply nurse met them at the Hospital. She heard their tale of woe sympathetically, and the boys, with a wisdom beyond their years, beamed back at her.

"I will fix you something that won't spoil all the rest of your day," she said; and quickly stirred something in a glass that looked suspiciously like ginger and tasted like red pepper.

They were still talking, "stallin' along" as Porky said afterwards, when a group of people came out of the inner office. Colonel Bright led the way, his daughter on his arm.

"Yes, indeed," he was saying to the doctor, "she will be all right now. It was a wonderfully narrow escape for both of them. Do all you can for Captain DuChassis. I'm sorry you won't let me take him home with me to-night. We are really very comfortably fixed in Syracuse."

"Well, that's lucky," sighed Porky. "We know where he is for a few hours anyhow. Now there won't be any murderin' done while we find out just what's what."

"People are beginnin' to thin out. What time is it? Just five? Great Scott! We better be on our way. Where will we meet?"

"Let's stay in the Mounted Police Camp tonight. Colonel Handler, told us we could, and this is official business all right."

Beany reached the greenhouses and amused himself by talking with Mr. O'Neill, the head gardener. Porky lounged against the gate, and watched the tired sightseers drag out. By six they were all gone, and Porky felt that he could go back and sit down awhile. It occurred to him to get a close look at a wonderful piece of Mr. O'Neill's work that stood in the center of the beautiful lawn facing the central gateway.

The floral piece was a little house, about the size of a large dog house, all made of growing plants. The sides were green, and the roof was lovely shades of red foliage plants. They were all clipped short and smooth, and it was the prettiest thing imaginable. There was even a door with broad hinges, looking as though it would really open, and the little windows were glass. Porky had always thought that the inside must be of solid earth;

but when he walked close, and stooped to look in he was surprised to find it a real little wooden house with wooden wall and floor, and over that a steel lattice work where the plants were rooted in moss and earth. He pushed against the door, and it fell in. He had trouble in getting it up, and was afraid some of the guards would happen along, so he crawled inside. It was softly warm from the hot sun that had beat on the plants and earth all day, and after he had propped the door it, he leaned against the wall. And immediately what did Porky Potter do but fall asleep.

The sun went down and the dusty panes of glass in the little house reflected the glancing lights of official automobiles that swept along the smooth drives. Far away on the hill the bugles sounded taps. Some one leaned against the little house, and Porky woke with a start. A man's shoulders bulked against one of the little windows as he lowered himself to the soft grass and leaned against the house.

Some one chuckled.

"Sit down," said a deep, coarse voice. "This is safe as a desert."

"What's inside this ornament?" asked another.

"Nothing and no one. It is not made for anything to get into. It is all show, my Adolph, all show--like the Countess that our friend the Wolf loves so back there in Berlin. I wonder what she would think could she see him here?"

"She will never see him here or there if I can help it," growled the other man. "I do not forget this bandaged neck, or this sore head of mine." He laughed a laugh that chilled Porky. "Watch, Ledermann, watch! I'll not destroy him while he is busy on the Emperor's business. But some day, some day, Ledermann--"

"Never mind", said Ledermann. "Let that all go for now. What have you to, tell me? First?"

"First, where is the Wolf to-night?" asked Adolph. "That's what always worries me most. He will rise at my side in a minute, I know."

"Not to-night," said Ledermann. "For once he will not be here. He was thrown from his horse to-day, and is in the Hospital. I think he is honestly hurt, because he cannot use his foot, and when I made an excuse and worked my way in, he whispered, 'Not before Thursday.'"

"That will be day after to-morrow," said Adolph. "And we meet him then, I take it, in the usual place?"

"Yes," said Ledermann shortly.

Porky listened breathlessly to know where the place was. But there was silence. Adolph's great shoulder pressed against the little windowpane, and a corner broke out and tinkled down.

"Be careful!" scolded Ledermann. "You don't want to break this

pretty toy. Come now, and tell me all you have done."

"Not so much," said Adolph, "except I have talked to all the young recruits. I tell you I have made war something so horrible that they will sleep restless from now on. I have planted dread and sorrow on many a heart. I have some plans I found on the Colonel's table when I was fixing his electric light. I memorized them and later wrote them down. Here they are."

"It is too bad you did not memorized the letter of instructions you lost," said Ledermann. "At home you would be shot for that, you know."

"Of course," agreed Adolph. "However, I think the paper is safely lost, at all events. It has come to me where I lost it. It was the day I got the formula from that silly young inventor. It was very hot; and I found a wonderful secluded place, and went swimming. Ah, Ledermann, how I love the water! I must have lost that paper out of my pocket. I know I did. I went back but there was no paper there, but I found my pocket knife close to the water's edge, so the paper and ticket must have fallen in the water. What was it anyhow to the finder but a plain, clean piece of paper? No harm, no harm, Ledermann!"

"Here is something the Wolf told me to give you," said Ledermann. "You are to use it whenever you can. Watch the bakery."

Adolph took something in his hand.

"The usual thing!" he asked.

"Yes," said Ledermann. "Poison."

Porky, scarcely breathing, listened with all his ears. And then a terrible thing happened. Porky sneezed!

CHAPTER V

ALL BECAUSE OF A SNEEZE

Loudly, earnestly Porky Sneezed. It was so sudden, so unexpected that he could not control or disguise it. It came out, seemingly filling the little plant house. To Porky it sounded like a large gun going off. It was followed by an instant of deepest silence while Porky crouched in his corner and wondered what next. Like an inspiration the thought came to him as the two men, quick as cats, leaped for the door and shoved it in. Ledermann had a flashlight in his hand, and he swept the little room, making an exclamation as he found what he sought and feared. In the corner he saw a little boy curled up asleep.

Adolph seized the boy's foot and jerked it roughly. With a start he awoke, muttering, "What's the matter?"

"Come out here!" cried Ledermann, as Adolph hauled the boy out of the door.

"What's the matter?" cried Porky. "I ain't doin' any harm! I was tired, and went in there, and I must have gone to sleep. How'd you know I was there? Are you police?"

"Yes, that's it!" said Ledermann. "You've guessed it. We are policemen."

"Where's your uniforms?" he asked then. "You ain't policemen. What you doin' here yourself? You can't arrest me for just goin' to sleep in this dinky little dog house. Gee, I might have slept all night! Guess I'll go along. Pop and Mom'll fix me for bein' so late." He started to rise, but Ledermann pushed him back.

"Not so fast, not so fast, young fellow!" he said slowly. "I would like to find out, if possible, just how much asleep you were. You see we don't think you would listen to anything that was not intended for your ears, but we want you to tell us if you did hear any little thing. By mistake, of course."

"Wasting time!" grunted Adolph. "Let me tickle him with my little toy here. Safety first, as these people always say."

"Be quiet!" ordered Ledermann. "And you too, young fellow! If you try to scream, we will kill you."

"Aw, quit your kiddn'!" said Porky cheekily. "What would I want to yell for? I don't want to get arrested any more than I am. I want to go home! tell you, how could I hear anything when I was asleep? I want to go home! What's it to me what you talk about?" He sniffed, and drew his cuff across his eyes.

"Let me have him," said Adolph. "Let me go outside the gates with him."

"No," said Porky, using his cuff again. "I ain't goin' with nobody. I know how to get home. I don't have to have somebody take me." He tried to wiggle away, but felt Adolph's clutch close like an iron vise.

"There, there," said Ledermann quietly, as he nudged Adolph under cover of the darkness. "All we want to know is how much you heard. It is nothing to me what you do after that. You see my friend here does not mean what he says, but--well, I may as well tell you how it is." He turned the flashlight on the boy's face and held it there, watching him like a hawk while he talked. "My friend has invented something that will prove to be a very wonderful thing for everybody in the world, and he is very anxious that it shall be kept a secret until he is ready to put it on the market. Now you are a smart boy, and I will give you one guess to see if you can tell me what we were talking about. Tell me what you think he has invented."

Porky thought a moment with a deep frown on his face.

"It's a patent medicine he has invented," he ventured finally.

"That's a good guess," said Ledermann. "Such a good guess that I think you must have heard some of our talk."

"I didn't, honest," said Porky. "Couldn't you see I was asleep? What do you suppose I care about your old patent medicine? So long as you ain't policemen, let me go. I want to go home!"

"You shall go," said Ledermann, scowling in the direction of Adolph, "but I am afraid you might follow us and find out about the medicine. If you stay right here for a while, why, we will go away, and you will never know to whom you have been talking in this pitch dark. So we will just get you to do that much for us. And if you tell any one how you came to be here, or what we have said to you, we will come back and kill you and kill all your people!"

He hissed the awful threat in the boy's ear, and shutting off the flashlight, he took a cord from his pocket, and wound it tightly around the boy's wrists and ankles, tying it in a peculiar knot. Then with a handkerchief he gagged him.

"Now," he said to Porky, "you can get that cord off and the gag out, but you are going to sleep for a little while." He took a little pill from his pocket and forced it far back in Porky's mouth. "We will sit outside and watch you a while," said the spy. He laid the boy down on the floor of the house, propped the door in place, and all was silent. In the house, Porky, lying flat on his back, was trying frantically to work the pill out between his lips before it dissolved. He rolled it forward in his cheek, and turned on his face and blew hard.

The pill rolled out on the floor. Porky went limp. Sweat poured down his face as he closed his eyes and pretended to be asleep. There was absolute silence outside but Porky fancied he could hear the breathing of the watchers. It seemed hours and hours before he heard the door move, and knew the flashlight was directed on him. Then he heard a grunt of satisfaction and soft footsteps padding over the close grass told him that at last the two villains were gone.

Porky did not dare to stir, however, and lay thinking out his next move. He felt that for a little while he was safe. His one concern was for his brother, who had been watching over the greenhouses on the other side of the race-track. It occurred to him that Beany would be waiting for him there. He decided that for a while at least he would not report the affair to Colonel Bright. He wanted to find his brother. But he did not dare leave the toy house, so he lay listening to every sound and working in the dark with the most extraordinary knot that Ledermann had tied in the cord cutting into his ankles.

Beany, who had walked rapidly over to the place allocated for him, had waited in vain for something to turn up, and long after the time set for the meeting had commenced watching for his brother. Something, he felt sure, had happened in some other part of the grounds. He was strangely uneasy. A great desire to find Porky came over him. He walked down the road, leading from the great upper camp, and stood looking in every direction. watching for his brother.

As he looked, a familiar car swept past him and stopped. It was the Colonel's car, and Colonel Bright himself leaned out and beckoned him. Beany ran to the machine and saluted.

"Hop in, hop in!" said the Colonel. "I don't know which one you are but I want to talk to you. Go on, Sergeant," and the car leaped forward.

"You or your brother said something about a hunch. Never mind which one, I'll bet you both think alike. Now I want to know all about it. What's that hunch all about?"

Beany was silent.

"Come on, I'm listening," he said, urging the boy to words.

Beany looked up into the strong, rugged face and studied the keen, kind, twinkling eyes that made the Colonel the best loved man in the American army, then leaned close to the Colonel, and told him of the two men at the ice-cream stand, and then, going back, he told of their recognition of the captain as the man who had driven the car at the Troop D Farm. The Colonel listened, even forgetting to smoke, and a frown deepened on his face.

"Where is your brother now?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Beany. "At the green house waitin' for me, I suppose."

"Would he go home, or back to the Police Camp?"

"No, sir, we always wait for each other," explained Beany.

"Well, we are in town now," said the Colonel, "and soon as I do an errand downtown you may take me to your house, and then the Sergeant will run you back to the Camp. If you find your brother, telephone me. I don't need to tell you to keep silent. Don't forget what a big thing you're doing, my boy, and also what a great reward if you find the formula. Think of it, a college education! And I will see to it that you will each have one."

"Yes, sir," said Beany thickly. "I keep a-thinkin' about the college education."

"That's right," said the Colonel heartily. "That's right! Just think what a fine thing to earn. The chance to have four years, in fact, to have six years good hard study in a good school and college. Think of the fellows that would jump at a chance like that!"

"Yes, sir," said Beany, and added earnestly, "I wish they had it to jump at. Here is your corner." He skipped out of the car, and when the colonel went in to the big office building, Beany stood on the curb and looked around him. Beany was tired and dirty and pale through the grime. He had had no supper. He was low, very low in his mind. All that talk about college again. Hang it! He had clean forgotten that hanging over him, and had been enjoying all this spy hunting for its own sake.

The more he thought of that college education, the more he glared. He groaned, and turned just in time to face a couple of men who were hurrying across the sidewalk. They glanced at him, stopped short, and the smaller man went dead white.

"Look, Ledermann!" he cried in a choking voice. "It's the same! What did you give him?" He screamed suddenly, his face worked, and grew purple. Then down he went frothing in such a terrible convulsion that Beany bolted into the Colonel's car, frightened out of his wits. A crowd gathered, and at once ambulance was summoned, and policemen were taking the names of people who had happened to be near; but no one thought of taking anything at all from the Boy Scout who sat so still beside the Colonel's driver.

When the ambulance had clattered away with its gong ringing noisily, the Sergeant turned to Beany.

"Well, you did for him all right!" he said.

"What did I do?" demanded Beany.

"That's all right," said the Sergeant. "I have my eyes all right, all right. You tell the Colonel or I will. Those bums give you a look, and threw a fit. Both of 'em. I saw their eyes stick out a yard. They acted like you was a ghost. You do look pretty pale, at that! Well, I bet you've done for one of them. I never saw a harder fit in my life. You certainly gave him some scare."

"I never saw him before," Beany said over and over. When the Colonel came out, the Sergeant gave him a glare, and he repeated the incident as they drove toward the Colonel's house. The Colonel said he would telephone to the hospital, as the man would no doubt come out all right.

Beany said good-night to the Colonel and slipped back in the seat beside the Sergeant.

"Funny about that fellow," said the soldier. "Did you hear what he said? He said, 'What did you give him?' Looks queer to me. Looks like he thought you were the ghost of somebody they had just killed. Must be you looked like somebody--" the man stopped, and stared at Beany for a startled second.

"Where's your twin?" he asked suddenly.

Beany went cold. A thousand frightful thoughts and possibilities surged up in his mind. Where was Porky?

He turned and struck the Sergeant a sharp blow on the arm.

"Drive fast!" he demanded, and settling low in his seat, watched the road drive at their car and disappear under it, as the Sergeant, eager as, claimed the privilege of the Colonel's car and leaped past everything on the boulevard.

"Where will you go?" cried the Sergeant in his ear.

"Here by the gate first," said Beany, leaping out of the car.

The Sergeant stopped his engine. "I'll go with you," he said kindly.

It seemed a hopeless task. They did not know where to look, but first tried all the seats around the bandstand and the settees on the great porches behind the pillars of the Administration and Fine Arts Building.

Then they drove the car over to the greenhouse, but all was quiet and deserted there. At the suggestion of the Sergeant, they went to the Hospital but no boy had been brought in. Once more they approached the gate, and again they left the car, And looked silently about in the darkness.

Beany was trembling with fear; fear for the brother whom he loved.

He placed his fingers to his lips and gave a shrill, clear whistle. Three times he repeated the call that sounded like some night bird's song.

Then, as they listened, it was repeated. It was a muffled sound, yet close. Once more Beany gave the signal, this time with a leaping heart, and the answer came clear and keen, as though a lid had been taken off.

Beany ran in the direction of the sound. As he passed the flower-house, Porky hailed him.

"Hey!" he said. "Got a knife?"

Guided by Porky's voice, Beany and the Sergeant raced across the grass.

"Here I am!" said Porky, cocky as you please. "Say, I wish you could see this knot! I have worked about all night over it, and it gets tighter and tighter."

The Sergeant whipped out a knife and cut the cord.

"Who tied you up?" he asked.

"A couple of fellows," said Porky, stamping the feeling into his feet and ankles. "Couldn't see who they were."

"You can see one of them any time now, I'll bet," said the Sergeant. "Your brother here did for him in the neatest way you ever saw." He repeated the meeting on Salina Street, while Porky walked up and down the drive between the Sergeant and his brother.

"Yes, sir, he keeled right over and gosh, how he did flop around! It was a fit all right. I bet he died, too, because he went limp all at once. He acted like he'd seen a ghost. He yelled, 'What did you give him?' to the other fellow. What did he call him?" he asked Beany. "I heard him call some name."

Porky's elbow went sharply into Beany's ribs.

"Didn't catch it," said he, obeying the warning for silence.

CHAPTER VI

ORDERS FROM THE COLONEL

Over in the Hospital, the dimply nurse laid compresses on the swollen ankle of Captain DuChassis. She found her patient wakeful, and worn with pain. The leg was badly wrenched, it seemed. The dimply nurse talked pleasantly with her distinguished guest, and to amuse him told him a small joke. It was an amusing little joke to her. A boy had dropped in during the afternoon, and had asked for the Captain. He seemed most anxious to know just how he was getting along; and when she had told him that he could not leave the Hospital for another day, the boy had said, "I wish I could help take care of the Captain. Say, nurse, what have you done with his boots?"

"My boots?" said the Captain blankly. "My boots?"

"Wasn't it funny?" said the nurse. "I suppose he is so crazy over you, boy-like, that he wanted to see your tall boots. Don't you suppose so?"

"Probably," said the Captain. He put a hand over the side of the bed, and felt to see if his boots were there. Then he grew so quiet that the nurse slipped softly away, thinking him asleep.

When she had gone he did a strange thing. He took those boots, dusty as they were and, placing them under the pillow, went to sleep. But in the morning, although the nurse came in very early, the boots were under the bed.

"If he comes in this morning, send him up here, won't you?" he begged. "It would amuse me so; and I don't want to get up until afternoon. I would be so charmed to meet that funny little boy. My boots! How droll!"

About ten o'clock two boys strolled into the office and passed the nurses' sitting-room. The dimply nurse seized on one of them.

"I am so glad you have come!" she said.

"Captain DuChassis wants to see you. I told him how you came in and asked for him yesterday."

She went on. "I can't go up for another hour; so you can both go up and amuse him. I am sure he will tell you wonderful things about the other side. Through the office and upstairs, boys."

She shooped them out and Beany and Asa stopped outside the door and consulted.

Asa was a good boy but about as progressive as a potato, and something the color of a peeled one. No amount of sun tanned him. It made his eye-lashes whiter if anything, and his lips paler.

"Were you here at all yesterday?" demanded Beany.

"Oh, yes," said Asa. "Twice."

"Well, then, listen here. I want you should go up there, and when he says are you the boy who was here yesterday, you say yes, and don't say anything else if you can help it. See?"

"Oh, yes," said Asa, who did not see at all, but who did not let that bother lot that bother him in the least.

"Mind!" said Beany sternly. "I don't want him to know about me or Porky at all. There are reasons; Scout reasons, Asa, so you mind out. Got that through your nut?"

"Oh, yes," said Asa, blinking his white lashes.

"You ain't afraid of him, are you?" asked Beany, remembering the Wolf's keen eye.

"Oh, no," said Asa.

When Asa came down in a few minutes, he seemed rather upset--for Asa. He blinked rapidly, and there was something so worried in his open smile that Beany felt conscience-stricken to think he had sent him on such an errand. He rose, and they walked rapidly away, for Asa seemed to be thinking deeply.

When they reached the seats around the bandstand, deserted so early in the morning, Beany sat down.

"Well, let's have it," he demanded.

"That's a funny guy," said Asa, twirling his Scout hat rapidly in his pale bands. "I did just what you said. I went in, and I said, 'Morning!' at all. He just looked at me until I felt like I wasn't there at all; and he smiled softer than anything I ever see except, some one--I can't think who it was. Well, I did what you said, and he said--"

"What did you do that I said?" said Beany anxiously.

"Why, nothing," said Asa. "Just stood; and he said, 'Come here, boy,' and I went closer and he said, 'So you were here yesterday,' and I said, 'Oh, yes.' And then he says, 'Well, what do you think of a Swiss Captain's uniform--pretty fine, eh?' I says, 'Oh, yes,' and he says, 'Specially the boots?' and gimlets his eyes right into me. I wanted to say I'd never seen no Swiss Captain's boots, but I remembered what you told me, so I looked back at him and didn't say anything. And then he laughed and said, 'All that scare for nothing! My boy, you are a refreshing

draught. Thank you for coming. I am so glad to know just what you are like that I will tell you a great truth. Remember it. It is this: all women are fools."

"Well, go on!" demanded Beany. "What did you say to that?"

"I remembered what you said," smiled Asa, "and I just said, 'Oh, yes.'"

Beany, in spite of his anxiety, howled until he fell off the bench.

"What did he say!" he asked as soon as he could speak.

"Why, he laughed too," said Asa, with a puzzled look, and he said, "Such wisdom in one so young!" Then I came out. Darned if I didn't think part of the time he was kiddin' me!"

"Well, I got to find Porky and go on guard at the Administration Building!" said Beany. "Where you going?"

"Over to the clubhouse," said Asa. "I wonder who he looks like when he smiles."

"Well, for cat's sake," cried Beany, "forget it; lose it; shake it! What do you care who he smiles like? Gee--" He turned and walked rapidly away. He had nearly reached the Administration Building when he heard Asa calling his name. Beany turned and waited while the other pounded up.

"I remembered," he said in a relieved tone. "Gee, for a while I couldn't think but now I can! He smiles just like our collie when he's goin' to bite the mailman. That's just who he smiles like!" He waved a hand and turned away, and commenced to retrace his steps.

Beany stood looking after him.

"Gosh!" he said feebly.

"Why Gosh, young man!" said a deep voice.

Beany whirled and saluted the Colonel.

"It's that Asa, sir," he said and proceeded to give an account of the past few hours.

"Where is your brother?" he asked when they had talked things over awhile.

"Coming right now," said Beany.

The Colonel glanced up. "Sure enough, here he is," he said. "Who is with him? Is that the boy you have been telling me about?"

"Yes, sir, that's Asa," laughed Beany.

"You boys come into my office," said the Colonel. He led the

way, spoke to the orderly, and closed the door.

"Now, boys," he said, "you are such little daredevils that you are not going to like the plan we have made at all. I have consulted with the police, and with Colonel Handler, and now I want to take you into our confidence. All the credit for discovering this particular group of spies belongs to you. We do not want to get you into any unnecessary harm, however, and it is wisest to have you keep entirely out of it. That seems poor pay, doesn't it, when you have done such good work? However, right is right, and you want to be good soldiers and take orders as such. We are going to raid the house where we know the gang will soon meet. We have located the place, and the men. The fellow you gave such a start last night, Beany, will not trouble us again. He never came out of that fit."

"My gosh!" said Beany. It gave him a queer feeling.

"No," said the Colonel, "he is done for. Now, boys, take a day off. Go home and see your mothers."

He played with the pen on his desk for a moment.

"Boys, I am going to tell you something. I am fifty-eight years old and I don't want you to forget what I tell you. Whatever you do, whatever gain, wherever you go, remember one thing. Don't neglect your mothers. No true man will. As long as you live, or as long as your mothers live, you will seem just little boys to them. They never think that you grow up. When you were little shavers, your mothers did for you more than any one else in the world would do. They did things that a father would do about once. Then he would be ready to give up his job. But your mothers went right on day after day, year after year, doing hard, thankless, disagreeable things. I bet you get this preached to you a lot, boys, but I want to say it to you, too. If you are away from them, write a letter, a real letter once each week. It is not much to do. Do it, boys! And don't forget the kisses. If you kiss your mother every time you come into the house or leave it, you will still have all you want for your sweethearts when you get 'em. Begin to-night when you go home. Will you?"

"Yes, sir," promised the Potter twins huskily.

No word came from Asa. The Colonel looked at him. "And you?" he said.

Asa swallowed convulsively. A tear glistened on the tip of his pale, thin nose. He nodded violently; then the words came.

"Oh, yes!" he said.

CHAPTER VII

HOME AGAIN

After all it was a sort of lark to be off duty and go bumming around the fairgrounds without a single thing to worry about except where the formula was. Certainly if the Wolf had it, it had gone off for a little airing, because as the boys came out of the Colonel's office they saw Captain DuChassis being driven out of the fairgrounds in an automobile. They could scarcely give chase, and they had been left out of the raid that was planned. So there was nothing for them to do but chase around and see things, and the sun was setting when the boys turned into the walk leading under the double row of fir trees, up to their house. Home, not seen for four days, looked good to the Potter twins. The dining room was lighted, and their father sat reading the evening paper. Mrs. Potter was "dishin' up." She made swift journeys to the kitchen, and returned each time with both hands full of steaming dishes. The boys took a look, and made a dash for the door.

The Colonel had talked wisely and well. Porky attacked his father from the rear, and strangled him in a bear's hug, knocking off his glasses.

Beany had his mother round the neck too, but not so roughly.

He kissed her hurriedly on the ear and then on the cheek and lips. Then he released her as Porky came bolting around the table. Mr. Potter, grinning with happiness, was feeling on the floor for his glasses; Mrs. Potter's eyes bright with joy.

"Why, how you do take on! Dear me suz!"

"Gee, but it's good to get home!" said the twins together. Porky went back and sat on the arm of his father's chair. Beany followed his mother into the kitchen. She had hurried out to wipe her eyes.

"Didn't think we'd be home, did you, mom?" asked Beany, pretending to look in the sugar bowl.

"I kind of plotted on it," said Mrs. Potter. "I felt like it was a good thing to be on the safe side." She opened a tin box, and drew forth a cake, a glorious large, dark, chocolate layer cake.

"Well, what's the news?" asked Porky presently at the table helping himself to more fried chicken and potatoes and parsnips and honey.

"Yes, what has happened?" echoed Beany, taking a portion of the chicken and potatoes, and parsnips, and adding mustard pickle, and preserved watermelon rind and jam. "Must be something has happened."

"Yes," said Pop Potter, smiling. "You bin away all of four days. Long enough for everybody round here to breathe easy for once!"

"Well, things does happen!" said Mrs. Potter. "I saw the Land boy the other day, and if he ain't drafted!"

"Yes, and what think she says?" Pop Potter exclaimed. "She says,

'So you're drafted? Well, well, ain't you sorry just for your own face, that you didn't enlist?'"

"Well, I so felt!" Mom Potter defended herself. "Dear me, suz, if you boys had to be drug--well, I dunno what I'd do!"

"Good for you, mom!" said Porky. "I knew you had the spunk. We will be in it somehow ruther, if they don't stick us in school."

"How's that?" asked Mr. Potter.

The boys proceeded to explain. Mom and Pop, Potter looked slyly at each other. "Education is a great thing," said Pop Potter, filling his pipe. "I must say--"

"Why, dear me suz!" said mom flutteringly. "School and college! Land sakes! You could both be ministers!"

"NO!" cried the twins, savagely attacking elderberry pie and the cake. "Don't you think it!"

"It's real respectable," said Pop Potter, winking at the boys when Mom Potter wasn't looking. "And think of all the church suppers durin' the course of the year!"

"No Potter's ever been in the pulpit," said Mom dreamily.

"Yes, there was," corrected pop, "I was there myself oncet. I grained it golden oak; and if I do say it, 'twas a neat job."

"My land, you know what I mean!" said mom, quite testily for her. "It's worth tryin' for, anyhow."

"Well, we'll hope for the best," said Beany.

"Pirates?" asked pop.

"No, detectives" said Porky. "But often are not certain. We maybe all right yet."

"I suppose they, will get the spies to-night," said Beany, "and when they get them, I hope they get the formula too. Say, how is Lester anyway?"

"He's come to himself," said mom, "but dear me suz! He don't know no more what's gone by. He knows his father and sister and Wugs, because they told him who they was; but he just has clean forgot such a thing as acids or gases or any of that. He don't care about anything but the cat.

"The cat?" said the boys.

"Yes, a young cat that plays with a string most all day; and he seems to think it's a great joke."

"Gee that's awful! I think we better start early enough to go over there a minute," said Porky sadly.

"Don't go yet awhile, boys," said Mrs. Potter, bustling round to

clear the table. The boys got up and helped her. "Pop and I have been reel lonesome without you."

"We will be home Saturday afternoon," said Beany. "And I do think we had better go pretty soon. I think we'd better take that paper over to Colonel Bright. Don't you think so, Porky?"

Porky put the paper in his breast pocket and buttoned the flap.

"We'll be home for good now, before you know it," said Beany. "Mr. Leffingwell says we are to return to his apartments to stay the rest of the nights. He has a swell place in town. So we are to go as far as Mr. Leffingwell's in the Colonel's car when he goes home. Some class to us, don't you say so, mom? Guess we'd better hike, folkses," he said. "Bye!"

The boys started for the door, then turned and gave Pop Potter another bear hug, and kissed their mother with a tenderness that seemed to deepen with every caress.

"Seems like it does 'em good to go off," said pop huskily.

"I won't say that," said mom loyally. "They was always the nicest boys I ever did see if they was mine; but they do seem sort of different. Sort of lovin'er, like they was when they was little. I can't say, Ben, that I ain't missed it. Seems real pleasant to have 'em let on how much they think. It makes me feel reel good. Dear me suz!" said Mrs. Potter simply. She took up her sewing and sat busily working. Once in awhile she hummed a little tune.

Pop Potter watched her slyly over his paper, but said nothing. The canary bird, however, hanging in Mrs. Potter's bedroom window where he was supposed to bask in the afternoon sun, could have told that Pop Potter awkwardly kissed Mom Potter good-night, something he had not done for years. And in the darkness Mom Potter was far too happy to sleep, and in the fullness of her joy lay there inventing cakes of such size and creaminess and lightness that the like was never seen.

Asa too had had his lesson. The barking collie had foretold his arrival, and when his mother and three sisters, each as pale and thin as himself, appeared in the door, he managed to kiss them all. It was such an amazing thing to have happen that a silence immediately fell, while two of the girls hastily wiped off their cheeks. A look of happiness dawned through the surprise on however, his mother's face, and she shyly kept her hand on Asa's knobby shoulder as he entered the house. Asa was the center of attraction at the supper table where he ran the Potter twins a close second in the amount he ate. The girls, perfectly silent, sat staring at him round-eyed; and his father, it larger edition of himself, listened or asked short questions.

When the Potter twins whistled outside, Asa shook hands solemnly with his father, and resolutely kissed the sisters and his mother good-night. When he was out of hearing, and the barking collie had returned to the doorstep, Mrs. Downe burst into sudden tears.

"What's up; what's up?" her husband demanded.

"Asy," she sobbed, "did you mind how he acted? It must be he's had a call. They's been a hoot owl outside three nights now. I do believe that's it! Asy's got a call from beyond!"

The three sisters began to cry.

"Puffickly ridiklus!" said Asa's father. "Purfickly ridiklus. That hoot owl ain't got no grudge 'gainst Asa. He's got some new Scout bee in his bunnit, I'll bet. Don't know but I like to see a boy make of his wimmin folks, at that. It never looks soft to me. Don't hurt no man."

He lifted the smallest girl to his knee. She looked frightened but after a moment cuddled up to her father, and tucked a warm little hand around his neck.

"Don't hurt no man," repeated Asa's father and held the little girl so closely that she fell happily asleep; while Asa's mother, working like a whirlwind, thought the night's work strangely light, with the warmth of her only son's kiss on her cheek.

Asa went cantering down the hill to meet the Potters, and together they strolled over to Wugs' house, that house of unhappiness where the brightest, happiest member of the household lay gazing at the sky or for hours playing with the kitten. He did not know the boys, but when Wugs told him who they were, he greeted them pleasantly enough.

It was very painful, and the boys slipped away as soon as they could and, followed by Wugs, went down to the edge of the lawn, and talked things over. Wugs could scarcely leave home at all. He wanted to enlist; he was nearly old enough, and now that Lester was sick, why, some one ought to help the country--some Pomeroy. The boys agreed. But his dad and Elinor needed him, too; so he supposed he would have to wait yet.

Porky, rolling around on the grass, felt the paper rustle in his pocket.

"Here, Asy," he said. "You ought to be in on this. I'm going to let you carry this paper. It is very important indeed."

Asa beamed, but as usual said nothing. It was fine to be in on things. It made him feel important. He patted his pocket, and sat straighter. The paper rustled, just as any paper would rustle. Asa, listening, heard no warning in the sound.

Finishing their talk, Porky decided that it was getting very late, and they boarded the next car passing. It was nearly empty, and the boys dozed all the way to town. In fact, they were so sleepy that the car had reached New York Central Station before they roused themselves. They had been carried two blocks too far.

"Well, we are here, anyway," said Beany, "and I'm going inside to get a stick of gum."

"That's a good stunt," said Porky.

They ran up the steps and entered the great waiting-room. Asa did not like gum, and, besides, Asa never liked to spend a penny. He stood looking about him in the middle of the space in front of the ticket office, while the twins went over to the penny-in-the-slot machine.

And then it happened--

Asa, turning from his inspection of the ticket window, gazed at a space over which hung a large sign "INFORMATION." A man who had been talking turned and started toward Asa.

It was the Wolf.

Now when the Wolf, on his way to the station to enquire about trains, had reached a certain dark corner just outside the city, he had stopped long enough to do something by the aid of a flashlight and a little packet. So when he walked into the station his face was changed. It was no longer long and lean and smooth. His cheeks stuck out, and a long, heavy mustache covered his mouth. But he could not hide his peculiar, slight limp, or the cruel yellow eyes; and when Asa saw those eyes he knew them. He tried to move; to slide out of the way. His one frantic desire was to escape unnoticed. But the wildness of the boy's stare caught the Wolf's eye. He looked at the boy carelessly, then attentively as he saw that the boy recognized him. He too recognized the boy as the one who had visited him in the hospital.

He acted instantly. He stepped forward, and dropped a steel-fingered hand on Asa's shoulder.

"One single word, and I'll kill you right here," muttered the Wolf, and Asa felt that it was no idle threat.

Asa did not need to be spoken to again. All the wickedness, all the blood-curdling threats that he had ever imagined, were in the Wolf's touch on his collar. He was like a rabbit that suddenly sees the white fangs of the hound close above him.

He was dumb with fright. He gave his captor one quaking look, and obedient to the guiding hand, passed out the door into the street. It was filled with people. The Wolf sought the most crowded side and mingled with the throngs.

In the meantime Porky and Beany, having secured their much-wished-for gum, a hard task on account of a penny jamming in the slot, turned to join their friend.

"Where's old Asa? I bet he's having a fit," said Beany, chewing comfortably.

"Look! Look!" said Beany suddenly, grasping his brother by the arm. "There at the door!"

Porky looked. "That's Asa," he said. "Who's he going off with-- Beany, it's the Wolf!"

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE POWER OF THE WOLF

The Wolf, walking as though bent entirely on sightseeing, yet covering ground rapidly, led the way through the busiest part of the city, and into a quieter residential section, where he sat down on a bench just within a walled park. The Wolf was not conscious of his surroundings. He could only dwell on the fact that the boy at his side had recognized him, was following him. He did not doubt for an instant that the secret service had made use of this seemingly innocent and simple tool.

Asa sat silent under the Wolf's hand. He thought of his home. Little things occurred to him. Once he nearly giggled when he remembered how the collie played with the cat; and the Wolf, feeling his shoulders quiver, looked sharply at him. Asa thought of his father and the little dragged-out mother. He thought of the three thin, silent little sisters. They would miss him. He was so glad he had kissed them all that last night at home. It only went to prove what Colonel Bright had said. You were always glad afterwards. He was glad.

It was very dark as they walked slowly back to the entrance, the boys still stalking them. Outside the gate, the Wolf hesitated. As he looked, a small figure slipped from a shadow across the light, whistled a peculiar bar of music, and sidled up.

"Didn't expect to meet you here, Excellency," said the Weasel.

"What are you doing here?"

"Been working at the ammunition plants," said the little spy.

"Wish you'd give me some money. I'm stone broke. Hello," as he spied Asa. "Where did you pick this up?"

"I'm taking him to the house," said the Wolf.

"Better let me have him, Excellency. I'll drop him somewhere where he will be out of the way.

"I'll take care of that," said the Wolf, snarling and sinking his steel fingers in Asa's shoulder.

The Weasel looked at the man in disgust. "Well, let me have some money, Excellency."

"What for?" demanded his master.

"I have worked hard all day. I want to have a little fun with it. I have earned it.

"Not a cent!" rasped the Wolf. "I know you, drinking and gaming--not a cent! For asking you shall go out and earn your supper."

The Weasel whirled round at him. "You give me some money!" he whispered. In the excitement of the moment he seemed to lose his voice.

He seized the Wolf's arm. With an oath the Wolf flung him away. He staggered and went headlong. The shock seemed to infuriate him. He leaped silently at the Wolf. There was a sudden flash of steel, and the Weasel turned with a spring, whirled, and went down in a heap. The Wolf, almost before he touched the ground, tightened his grasp on Asa, and dodged back into the park. Rapidly, through paths that seemed familiar, he gained another entrance, and emerged on a quiet street. Down this street he hurried the exhausted boy, turned suddenly into a basement where it was pitch dark, and rapped on the door. It was a peculiar rap, and reminded Asa of telegraphy. In a moment the door swung open, they entered, the Wolf fastened the door behind him, and for the first time since he caught Asa, he let go of his shoulder. He struck a match and let the blaze shine in his face. There was a queer grunt in the darkness. Without speaking, the Wolf clutched the boy once more, and led him up three flights of carpeted stairs, and into a huge room lighted by a couple of candles. It was the Wolf's den.

He flung Asa into a big, ragged chair, and, throwing his goggles and hat on the table, sat down opposite Asa, and lighted a cigarette. Then, reaching under the table, he pulled out a big square box on rollers, and unlocked it with a key which he wore on his watch chain. He took out a bottle and glass. Pouring a full portion, he drained it at a gulp. Another and another glass he emptied. The fiery liquid went to his head. A new look came over his face.

"I've got you, haven't I," he demanded of the boy. "I've got you, and this time I'm going to keep you!" He took another drink.

"How did you come to suspect who I was, you, little fool?" he demanded. "The day you came to see me in the Hospital and stood there saying, 'Oh, yes,' to everything I said--who put you on my track, eh? Somebody was smart--thought I would never notice a small boy, eh? ho did it?"

"Nobuddy put me on anybuddy's track," said Asa. "I just happened around every time."

"Of course!" said the Wolf. "Of course! You just happened a round. Funny, as you Americans say. And the letter in your pocket--it happens that I lost that letter through the idiocy of one of my servants. You happened to find that also, of course. Where did you find it?"

Asa was silent. He determined not to tell.

"Now I want you to tell me the whole thing. If you tell me everything, I shall give you a great sum of money and let you go. Won't that be fine?"

He paused again, looking keenly at Asa.

"Come, come!" said the Wolf. "I do not like to be kept waiting. You saw what I did to the little man down the street. I stabbed him. I am not afraid to tell you. I shall not stab you. Oh, no! You are a nice boy; you are going to tell me all about everything. That little man is dead now, quite dead. You would not like to be like that, would you? Well, you are going to get a lot of money, and go free, so you can have a nice time spending it. Come," he said in a level, patient tone. "Speak!"

Asa's pale, terrified eyes were fixed on his tormentor, but still he was silent. The Wolf took a twenty-dollar gold piece from his pocket and laid it on the table before the boy.

"Twenty dollars in gold," he said. He took other pieces like it from his pocket and piled them up. "Wealth!" he almost whispered. "Did you ever have as much money as that?"

Asa shook his head.

The Wolf leaned confidentially forward.

"Now tell me all about everything," he said coaxingly. He studied Asa.

Asa studied him in return. Like a fascinated bird staring at a snake, he looked at the cold, glittering eyes, the browned face, the sear on the cheek. As he looked, the sear slowly turned white. It gave the effect of its springing out into plain sight.

He looked carefully all over the Wolf. It was as though he wanted to remember every little detail. The Wolf smiled.

"Curious about me, are you?" he said with a snarl, his smile fading away. "Well, if you won't speak, then I will have to talk. Now I want to know just who is tracking me, and just how much they think they know about me. And you are going to tell me everything."

Asa woke up. It felt to the tortured boy as though some cord in his heart or soul suddenly snapped and left him free. Asa, who had been always afraid to speak, was afraid no longer. Asa, who found speech difficult, spoke rapidly and violently.

"No, I ain't," he shrilled. "I ain't goin' to tell a word about nuthin'. And when I get out of here, I'm goin' to tell the first policeman I see about that little thin man you stuck the knife into. And I ain't afraid of you. Not a mite! I don't care what you do to me, I ain't goin' to tell!"

The scar stood out white as chalk.

"No?" said the Wolf. He took another drink, then with a sudden motion hurled Asa back in his chair and tied him there. Round and round the thin figure he twisted the rope, until Asa could not move a muscle. The Wolf propped the boy's feet up on a box, and took off his shoes. Asa watched him curiously. He remembered the wild Indian stories he had read. Was this going to be a trial by fire, he wondered. The Wolf lighted a huge cigar and smoked it until the end glowed red. Then he drew his

chair close to Asa's feet. He showed him the cigar.

"That would hurt on your bare feet, wouldn't?" he asked silkily. "So much pain--and all because you want to be stubborn! Well, I have taught stubborn boys--and men--many times many times! So you had better tell me who suspects the Wolf."

A sound at the door caused him to turn. Ledermann entered.

"What's this, Excellency?" asked Ledermann. "Whom have we here?"

"A stubborn little boy," said the Wolf. "A stubborn little boy, who is going to think better of his course of action in just a few minutes, and who is then going to tell me ever so many things that I want to know."

Asa stared at the Wolf's wicked eyes and shivered. The Wolf turned away.

"What news to-night, Ledermann?" he asked.

"Adolph is dead for one thing," said Ledermann coolly. "He had one of his convulsions on the street, and it finished him."

"We were about through with him," said the Wolf heartlessly. He dismissed the subject. "What else?" he demanded.

"I have all the papers," answered Ledermann. "And as I could not get here until dark, I took a room in a safe little hotel where I would be undisturbed, and I made the copy for you." He handed over a tiny square of paper.

The Wolf carefully unfolded it. Then he laughed gleefully. "Fine; fine, Ledermann! This finishes our work."

He crossed his leg over his knee, took a peculiar looking wrench from his pocket, fitted it round the heel of his shoe, and turned it. The other man caught his arm, and spoke rapidly in German.

"What possesses you, Excellency; are you mad? This boy--"

"Bah! What does it matter whether I finish him now or an hour later?" he asked. "We can't let him go. I was obliged to punish the Weasel to-night and he saw it. It seemed to affect him unpleasantly. These American children know nothing of the value of discipline. He is going to tell me all he knows before I finish. The little rat--think of him defying me!"

The heel came off. Asa looked curiously. It was hollow and was neatly packed with papers like the one in the Wolf's hand. The Wolf turned out the precious packets, and looked them over carefully. Ledermann looked from the Wolf intent on his papers, to Asa, bound in the chair. He looked at the Wolf again. He swayed a little; the drinks had gone to his head just enough to make him unsteady and reckless. He had not intended to take so much; the Wolf was always careful; but to-night--well, the day had been a hard one, and the end was so near. For months he had been under a terrific strain--Ledermann shook his head.

"See how I trust you," said the Wolf in English, looking up from his papers, "I know you will never, never tell. Oh no, that would be impossible! Isn't that a fine little place to hide things?" he chuckled, and replaced the packets, screwed the heel in place, and stamped his foot on the floor. Then he turned to his bottle.

Ledermann had placed it beyond his reach.

"Give me that!" he demanded violently.

Ledermann obeyed.

The Wolf turned to him.

"Now, Ledermann, no fooling here; turn in all your accounts. Destroy everything that could give a clue to us. Pack the bombs in the vault under the cellar floor. We may come back some day, when we land with our men on the shores of Long Island." He turned away. "Go and pack. We must be away from here before dawn."

Ledermann shrugged his shoulders, looked curiously at Asa, then turned and left the room.

The Wolf got up, threw a few things in a small suit-case, arranged some papers, took off his coat, and stood looking at Asa. Directly behind him, against the wall, was a large, old-fashioned wardrobe. Its dark, heavy, walnut doors threw the lean, muscular figure of the Wolf out as though carved in granite. He took a step toward the boy, and rolled up his sleeves.

"Now, young man, I'll attend to you," he said.

Hope died in Asa's heart.

CHAPTER IX

TIMELY AID

When the Wolf, holding fast to Asa's shoulder, slipped into the shadows of the Park, Beany raced across the asphalt drive and knelt beside the little Weasel. He lay a crumpled, limp heap, and at first Beany thought him dead. There was a faint flutter, however, as Beany felt his heart, and, turning him gently over, Beany opened his shirt and uncovered the vicious looking wound where the Wolf's dagger point had entered.

Across the square, an auto stopped, and a familiar figure jumped out and looked around. Beany joyfully recognized his friend the Sergeant. He knew that they were hidden by the gateway post so he whistled. Hen came running toward him.

"Who's this?" he demanded.

"One of them," said Beany. He looked anxiously at the Weasel's ashen face. "The Wolf stabbed him. We have got to get him to a hospital."

"I'll get the car," said Hen, and was off like a flash.

They lifted the Weasel into the car and laid him back on the cushions; the boys rolled up the rugs, and their coats to prop him up. Again he opened his eyes.

"Don't start," he said feebly. "I must tell you something."

He turned his head toward Beany. "I know you," he said. "What made you leave the Wolf and the little chap? I saw you tracking them. You ought to have kept right after them."

"That was my brother," explained Beany. "We look just alike." He kept a careful hand on the wound.

"Let's get to a hospital," said Hen.

"Don't you move!" commanded the Weasel. "If you want to save that kid, the one with the Wolf, you have about half an hour to do it in. Don't mind me. He has done for me. I knew he'd get me, but I will bite yet. Tell him that, will you? Tell him the Weasel has bitten; bitten to the bone. Lift me a little," he asked, then continued brokenly:

"The Wolf is head of a system of spies in America. They have headquarters in Mexico, St. Louis and 'Frisco, as well as here. The Wolf is the head; he is master of them all. I don't know who he is. Nobody knows. They all call him Excellency or the Wolf. He has a submarine-base laid out on the coast of Long Island. There is a powerful wireless station in the attic of the house where we meet. That's where he has gone with that kid. He'll kill that kid. I know him! He is all ready to leave the country. That's why he did for me. He wants to shut us all up before he leaves--I'll fix him--I told him I'd bite."

He stopped, and breathed heavily.

"I'm going to drive lickity-split for the hospital," said Hen in a low tone to Beany.

"Don't you stir!" commanded the weak voice. "When you get to the house, go around back, and through the yard to the next house. There is an outside iron fire-escape on it. Go up that to the level of the roof of the corner house. It is a story lower than the house that has the fire-escape. There is a trap door in the middle of the roof. Lift that, and climb down the ladder into the attic. The wireless is there. If there is a man there working the wireless, shoot him. He will shoot you if he can. Got a revolver?"

"No," said Beany.

"Yes," said Hen at the same time.

"There are some stairs going down from the attic," continued the Weasel, his voice very weak. "Don't go down that way. Look in the end of the attic close to the big chimney. There is a pile of doors and lumber there, and behind it is a narrow stair. Go down that. It opens into a wardrobe in the Wolf's own den. You will find him there with the kid, if he is still alive. Take the Wolf anyhow. Don't kill him. I want him to know that I bit--" his voice trailed off.

"Would hot coffee help any?" asked Hen. "I have a thermos bottle full; but it's under that seat he's on."

Together they gently lifted the body of the Weasel, and succeeded in getting hold of the bottle of hot coffee. Hen poured a steaming portion into the cup, and with difficulty they forced it between the Weasel's lips. He swallowed a little, and presently opened his eyes.

"Close call," he said with a faint smile. He hurried on:

"The Wolf has enough information written down, up there somewhere, to defeat America," he said. "I don't know where it is, but it must be somewhere, where he can put his hand right on it. Search everything! Try every piece of blank paper for sympathetic ink. There is a secret room in the cellar full of bombs. They are to be left there, stored, until America is invaded. If you could only work that wireless--messages are coming in all the time the last three days--"

"I can," said Beany.

"Then you will get some news sure. Do you speak German?"

"No," said Beany hopelessly.

"I do," said Hen.

"All right," said the Weasel feebly. "Remember, if he man is there, shoot to kill--shoot to kill!"

"I'd like to get the police," said Beany.

"They are sort of used to this."

"You will not save the kid," said the Weasel. "The Wolf will kill him at the first alarm. You can't make a sound. When you get down in the wardrobe, you will find a nail hole in the upper corner of the right hand door. I put that there, so I could watch the Wolf. I have meant to bite for a long while--" He trailed off, and nearly became unconscious. Then he gathered himself together. "Tell him I bit."

"Say!" said Hen suddenly. He put his face close to the drooping face of the Weasel. "Say, where's the house? You haven't told us where to go. We got to get a move on, I should say!"

"The house--the house," he said. "It's number,--it's corner of--it's number three hundred and one--"

"Gosh, this is awful!" said Hen. "Come, try to tell us! Three hundred and one--what?"

The Weasel made a mighty effort.

"Number three hundred and one--" His voice trailed off into silence.

"He's dead," said Beany.

"What shall we do?" said Hen. "He's not dead, but pretty close to it. We will have to get him to a hospital, and wait for him to give the street that house is on. That means the kid will be murdered before that time, I suppose. Gee, it's awful."

A taxi rounded the square, and stopped close to them. The driver got out.

"It's him!" said Hen. "I know that fellow." As the driver walked toward them, he recognized Hen.

"Hullo!" he said. "What's new?"

"Look here," said Hen. "We got to get this man to the hospital. A fellow came along and did for him."

"Great Scott!" said the driver, peering into the taxi, where the electric light shone on the huddled figure in Beany's arms.

A slight, boyish figure came running along the walk. It was Porky, out of breath, and excited.

"I thought you would have him safe in a hospital," he complained.

"He wouldn't let us," said Hen. "Say, I guess there's, no hope of saving that kid! This feller here told us all about everything, and how to get into the place and all, and then he fainted before he could tell where the house is."

"I know," said Porky. "I trailed them there. We will get this chap to a hospital, and get the police, and get the Wolf."

"Get nothing!" said Hen. He turned to the other driver. "Hop in here, and take this man to the nearest hospital. Say you picked him up in the park. They will arrest you probably, but we got something to do and it won't wait. That on! If they jug you, get word to Mr. Leffingwell."

Porky gave the address. Hen reached under the seat and from a hidden pocket brought out a small, wicked-looking revolver. "I will take your car," he said. He raced over, and started the engine. The boys followed, and tumbled in.

"Hi! Hi!" yelled Jim Morris, the taxicab driver. "What you doin'? You crazy! What do you want me to do?"

"Get that fellow into a doctor's hands quick as you can," said Hen.

"Then what?" demanded Jim. "You say tell Mr. Leffingwell. What am I to tell him? Of all the boneheads! What steer do I give him? Hey?"

"Bully for you!" said Porky, swinging out the door. "Tell Mr. Leffingwell we are on track of the Wolf. Remember the name. The Wolf. Don't say it to any one before you tell Mr. Leffingwell or you will be sorry for yourself. Ask him to get the secret service men, and call the police force and come to this address." He scribbled a street and number on a piece of paper.

"Say, why don't one of youse boys come and tell this yarn? I can see where I'm the goat!"

"Never mind!" cried Porky. "We'll be along some time or other, and bail you out."

Hen's mouth thinned down to a straight line as he started the car.

"Not too fast!" said Porky. "It is not far." He repeated the street and number. Hen made a quick turn and glided smoothly across a side street. Beany, looking behind, saw Jim Morris give a look after them, then start his car and dash off, the insensible figure of the Weasel swaying on the back seat.

He drove to the nearest hospital without the loss of a single moment's time. Round the monstrous building, with its spreading maze of pavilions, he went through a court, and stopped at a doorway which opened directly on a large elevator.

He pressed a button, and a white-clad attendant appeared.

"Drunk?" he asked.

"Stuck!" said Jim briefly.

"Stabbed?" asked the attendant.

"S what I said," retorted Jim, and almost before he could realize it, the unconscious Weasel, the attendant and himself were being smoothly carried to the emergency ward, far above.

The attendant motioned to Jim, and they went silently into an office where another man, also in white, sat at a desk, and took down in a big book the circumstances of the Weasel's arrival. He finished, then Jim saw him reach under the desk and press a button. Immediately the door opened, and a couple of heavily built men in plain blue uniforms entered. They read the entry in the big book, then looked searchingly at Jim.

"You are detained, Morris," said the taller of the two, "pending an examination into this affair." He took up the house telephone. Presently he turned. "The man is very badly hurt; perhaps dying. He is unconscious."

He nodded to Jim. "Come along," he said. "I'll have to keep you here awhile."

"That's all right," Jim said airily. "I wish I could send a telephone message. Don't see what harm there is in that."

"No, there's no harm in that," said the detective, "providing the person you wish to talk to is a decent sort."

"It's Leffingwell--Leffingwell who is Chairman of all the city committees," said Jim proudly. "Look up his number yourself."

The detective did so. Jim called and began speaking.

"Say, is this Mr. Leffingwell?" he asked. "No, I don't want no Timmons. I want Mr. Leffingwell."

Jim smiled wickedly into the receiver. "Well, say, young feller, I'm surprised you don't know me. This is J. P. Morgan speaking'. I want sell--Huh? Oh, y-y-yes, Sir. Why, yes, sir, Mr. Leffingwell. I thought I was talking to some fresh guy on the phone. Excuse me, Sir! Yes, sir! I have news for you. I'm here at the Park Hospital with a fare what got stabbed. No, sir, it's not a boy. He's a little thin man. I know where the boys is, and they want help. Yes, Sir! My car is right here, but I'm been' detained. Yes, sir, they won't let me go 'til the young feller gets better or croaks."

The detective cut in. "Does he want you to come there?"

"He sure does that!" said Jim.

The detective took the receiver. He told Mr. Leffingwell the circumstances.

He listened attentively. Then "Yes, sir," he said. "I will come right over with him."

CHAPTER X

BY WAY OF THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR

The boys will never know how long it took to drive to the street and number given them by the poor Weasel. Arriving at the corner where the old brown stone house stood looking the picture of desolation, with its closely boarded-up windows, its dusty steps and seedy doors, the boys passed down the side street and left the car in the shadow of the buildings there. They separated and hurried back to the house, one at a time. Slipping through the dense shadows in the weedy, cluttered-up back yard, a yard that had once been a trim garden with smooth paths and neat little hedges, as back yards were once in the olden days, they met under the iron fire-escape attached to the house next door. This building, much higher than the corner house, was used as a private sanitarium or hospital by one of the highest-priced specialists in the city. The fire-escape, therefore, was in

perfect condition, and safe as such a spidery stairway could be made, with strong rails and good treads.

Porky whispered a word of command, and noiselessly the boys ascended. The night was pitch dark, but their eyes growing accustomed to the gloom, they made their way without a stumble. Reaching the place where the lower building met the taller one, they found they could not get from the stairway to the other roof. There was nothing for it but to go on up the remaining story, cross the roof of the building and drop down to the lower level. They tiptoed over the flat, pebbled roof, clung to the eaves, and one by one made the long drop in safety, the only damage being scratched and bruised palms as they sprawled on the rough roofing.

A glass skylight was set in the middle of the roof. They hurried to it and Hen, with a quick twist, worked it loose, and tipped it noiselessly back on the roof.

"Take off your shoes!" he whispered.

They felt their way down the rough ladder that led from the skylight to the attic, and stood motionless, scarcely breathing in the dense darkness.

Hen, who had the flashlight, feared to press the button. There was not a sound, save a little sputter which they rightly laid to the wireless machine which the Weasel had told them about. In a moment, (it seemed years) Hen decided that they must have light, even at the risk of discovery, and his flashlight illumined the room in which they stood. Immediately Porky pointed to the big chimney, and the pile of lumber stacked beside it. He touched the others, and led the way. They went noiselessly across the uneven floor, and reaching the boards, found, as the Weasel had said, a narrow opening in the floor.

As the three neared the bottom of the ladder, a scream, muffled and choked but full of agony, sounded close to them. The boys recognized that thin, boyish tone, even in its torture. They felt their hair rise on their scalps as they listened.

Quickly turning in the narrow, breathless space in which they found themselves, they saw a little star of light pierce the pitch blackness. It was the little peek hole made in the panel by the Weasel. Porky put his eye to the place. One instant he looked, and drew back as Hen pressed close. In turn they peered through the tiny hole. They shuddered as they did so. Then Hen, with all the caution he could summon, pushed open the door, and stepped out, covering the Wolf with a wicked-looking muzzle. The bound and gagged boy in the chair saw the strange group which had so suddenly and so mysteriously appeared, but for a moment the Wolf, who was standing with his back toward the wardrobe, was unaware of their presence. He was laughing--a cold-blooded, curdling, low laugh as he stooped toward the boy's bare feet, his lighted cigar in his hand. Already those feet were marred by cruel burns along the tender soles.

As he stopped, he watched his victim's eyes for a sign of surrender.

"Give me the names!" he demanded in his low snarling, smooth voice. He watched his victim's eyes and in them, suddenly, he saw a strange flash of hope, of amazement. Asa was looking over the Wolf's shoulder.

Without the least suspicion of the truth, the Wolf straightened up, and lazily turned. What he saw wiped the sneering, malicious smile from his face.

Hen, his bulldog jaw set, held the revolver pointed straight at the traitorous heart.

"Hands up," barked Porky in a voice which seemed to come from some one else. He was not himself. The sight that had met his eyes, the bound figure, the blistered feet, the crouching Wolf with his low, fiendish laugh--it was all like a frightful electric shock to Porky, and in that horrible instant he came into his manhood. Behind him, at his shoulder, his twin brother went through the same agony of soul and he, too, felt a strange new thrill, an addition of courage and strength.

"Hands up!" said Porky again.

For a moment the sly eyes of the Wolf swept the room, then his hands were raised. He backed toward the table but a curt order from Hen, and he stood still.

"There's rope on that table," said Hen. "Get it and bind him."

Beany grabbed the rope, and bent to tie the ankles of the Wolf. Like a flash his hands came down, he seized the boy and clutching him in a vise-like grip, held him before him as a shield.

"Shoot if you like," he sneered, and backed rapidly toward the door. Hen followed, the useless pistol still pointed, but Beany's body covered the Wolf who, with the strength of ten, held Beany before him as he neared the door that would mean escape, and safety. He had almost reached it when a deafening noise sounded from below. There was the sound of a door being battered in, shots were fired, and shouts heard. For a second the Wolf faltered. For a second he was off his guard. In that second, Beany made a light, steel-muscled bound, swung his legs up and out, using the spy's breast as a brace, turned a somersault over his head, dropping to the floor behind him. It was so quick, so unexpected, that the Wolf could not keep his hold, and Beany dropped to the floor, crying, "Shoot!"

A revolver cracked, but it was in the Wolf's hand. Porky felt a sting as the bullet grazed his shoulder. Then Hen's weapon barked just once!

The revolver dropped from the Wolf's hand, a strange, blank look spread over his face, and he sank to his knees. Beany, flat on the floor behind him, jumped to his feet.

The door, which had been unlatched, swung violently open and for a second the face of Ledermann appeared, then flashed by as he saw the tableau, and dashed for the stairway to the attic and the

roof. A dozen policemen ran in, three of them following Ledermann, at Porky's direction, while the others snapped the cuffs on the two men at the table, and tenderly took the cruel gag from Asa's parched and bleeding mouth, and untied him. Beany rushed up into the attic after the men who were pursuing Ledermann and as he reached the place, the call of the wireless caught his attention. He answered the call, and commenced to take down a long message.

Below, Porky and Hen knelt by the Wolf and turned him over. He still breathed, and Hen fumbled through his pockets for another revolver. He found instead a long, keen knife which he threw aside. Then, with Porky, he fell to watching the closed eyes of the spy. They opened, and the Wolf looked from one to the other with cold, unrelenting hatred. He did not speak.

"Buck up!" said Hen suddenly. His voice shook with excitement. "Say, you don't want to croak yet. I got to tell you: the Weasel said to tell you that he had bit. Understand? He has bit. See?" Hen paused with a look of satisfaction.

The Wolf, who was bleeding fearfully, slowly closed his eyes.

"That ends him," said Hen solemnly. "Gosh!"

A detective felt the heart of the wounded man.

"He's alive," he said. "Send an ambulance call, somebody."

Another detective raced down the stairs, while those who remained commenced to search the room for hiding places.

"I know where he's got some stuff hidden," Asa said thickly. "Take off his shoe; the other one," and someone did so. "Get that iron thing on the table," Asa continued, "and get the heel off."

The Chief had it done in a moment and the tiny squares of paper fluttered to the floor. The Chief picked them carefully up, and put them in his pocketbook as a wild clanging down below announced the coming of the ambulance. A couple of doctors came up, three steps at a time, and examined the Wolf. A bandage soon stopped the flow of blood, and, still unconscious, he was carried down the stairs. A detective picked Asa up and prepared to follow, but that young man stiffened, the way a spunky boy sometimes does, and slid through the man's arms. As he came to his feet, he let out a howl of pain, and went to his knees. But he was speaking.

"Not with him!" he cried hoarsely. "Not with him! I won't go in the ambulance with the Wolf! He'll come to yet and kill somebody, and he'll blame me for the whole thing. I'd rather stay here."

"All right," said the Chief. "You need not go in the ambulance. I will carry you down to the police car, and we will take you right over to Mr. Leffingwell's."

He picked Asa up in his arms and carried him downstairs and into the first car. There was quite a procession of them when they

finally started, after leaving a heavy guard in the house, and very soon they pressed the button at Mr. Leffingwell's door, which was opened by Barton, the butler.

"Ow! Bless my 'art!" said Barton, quite like a human being, and stepped back. It was Timmins who stepped forward; Timmins who took Asa and bore him into the living room where Colonel Bright, Mr. Leffingwell, John, his son, and Mr. and Mrs. Potter all rose to their feet, when Timmins walked in. Mr. Leffingwell would have another doctor; and while they waited five minutes for him (he was right in the building) Asa, suffering pretty badly, but not giving a sign of it, except for his twitching face, lay on the settee, with Timmins fixing his pillows some other way every second, and Barton off ordering a hot drink from the cook, who had taken a peek, and was crying out in the kitchen.

Nobody knew anything about what the boys had been through, but nobody asked a word; only Porky and Beany kissed their mother hard, and hugged their dad, and were pounded on the back by Mr. Leffingwell, who seemed to have a bad cold. When the doctor came, he ordered Asa straight to bed, and Timmins carried him off with the haughty Barton stalking in the rear, a glass of egg and milk in one hand and hot chocolate in the other.

CHAPTER XI

ORDERED OVER THERE

The Leffingwell cook had prepared a regular crackerjack--no, a Leffingwell dinner; and Mr. Leffingwell begged the boys to say little about their adventures until they had had something to eat. As they all sat down at the table, Porky and Beany looked back over the couple of centuries or so that had passed since breakfast, and decided that since they had not had time for anything at all since that remote period, it would be a good thing to sample a few of the good things urged upon them by Barton, the butler.

Presently, that is along about the third helping of everything there was, the boys commented to tell about their day's adventures. They had an attentive audience; an audience that forgot to eat or say "Dear me suz!" or smoke. And it seemed as though they wanted to hear everything over at least three times. And the boys were willing to tell.

Before the meal was finished, the doctor came quietly in. He had been to look at Asa and, finding him asleep under the effects of the quieting tablet he had given him, he came to report to Mr. Leffingwell that his young guest was doing well.

"It won't lame him permanently, will it?" asked Colonel Bright.

"No, no danger of that unless there should be some infection, and I am sure there will be nothing of the sort. I wonder, Mr.

Leffingwell, if it is possible to keep the boy here for a few days or a week? I hate to have him moved. Your man Timmins says he was talking about going to his home to-morrow.

"Well, I should say not!" exploded Mr. Leffingwell. "Where is Timmins anyhow!"

"Sitting beside Asa," said the doctor. "Shall I call him?"

He tiptoed back to the boy's room, and in a moment returned, followed by Timmins, who stood just inside the doorway and looked inquiringly at Mr. Leffingwell.

"What's this, Timmins, about Asa's going home to-morrow? You get those fool notions out of Asa's head, and, Timmins, we will appoint you head nurse for a while. The lad seems to like you."

Timmins smiled and bowed. "Yes, sir! Thank you, sir!" he said. And at that moment the ice-cream came in. That Leffingwell cook! The ice-cream was in the shape of little tents, with a silk flag sticking gayly out of the ridge pole of each.

The boys noted with satisfaction that the tents were good-sized. They gave their whole attention to the work in hand, and the others seemed secretly to agree to put aside the day's excitements for a space.

After dinner they followed Mr. Leffingwell to his den, where Mrs. Potter took out her knitting. She had a very large knitting bag, and it seemed full of balls of wool.

Colonel Bright noticed it. "Looks as though you were going into the knitting game wholesale."

Mrs. Potter smiled. "Not quite," she said. "I am making two complete sets for a couple of young men who are going into the service."

Porky felt of the soft, light yarn. "I say--that's pretty good of you, mom. Who are your lucky friends?"

"That reminds me of something," said the Colonel. "I know a couple of lads, about like Porky and Beany here, who have been crazy to go across. I have been watching them for some time, and have about made up my mind that they would be a real help to me over there, and not a hindrance. So I have been pulling wires, and making plans, and I think it looks as though I can take them with me. It's just about the job you boys were joking about wanting."

"No joke at all!" said Porky bitterly. "Oh, gee; now some one else has it!"

"Why, you don't mean that you really meant it?" said the Colonel. "I wish you had made it clear!"

"We couldn't have tried harder to make it clear unless we had hit you, Colonel," said Beany sadly.

"Well, that's too bad," said the Colonel. "These fellows are just about your age. Perhaps they seem older to me because they have had a lot of responsibility that has made them older. It's too bad."

"Never mind, Colonel," said Porky. "If the other fellows have fallen in luck, why, it's great for them. What, are you planning for them?"

"It's like this," said Colonel Bright, squinting up his eye as he puffed busily on his cigar.

"There's a lot of most important running around to do behind the lines in what is really a zone of safety: messages, and plans, and all that sort of thing, you understand, that have to be taken from one officer to another, and it seemed to me that it was better to have some one who knew that that was his whole job, and could give every minute to it, rather than depend on petty officers who were continually being ordered away. I thought it would save a lot of time and anxiety if I could have aides that were trained to just the service I required. So I reported the case to some of the big fellows in Washington, and they told me to go ahead. You see I've been in this army of ours so long that I suppose I have a sort of pull. Well, at any rate, that's how it is."

"And the fellows are going over with you?" asked Porky.

"It has the sort of look as though I was going with them, as it stands now. Of course orders are secret; but I would not be surprised if my men packed off in about a week. I have work in Washington, however, that may keep me there for another week at least, so I am to go over on a regular passenger boat, and the chaps I have spoken of will go with me."

"Gosh! What luck!" said Beany, looking at his brother. "Are they brothers?"

"They are related some way," said the Colonel, smoking at his cigar.

"Gosh! what luck!" said Porky, looking at Beany. "Always something to take the joy out of life!"

"You ought to be glad for 'em," said Mrs. Potter. "I declare, boys, I didn't know as there was a jealous hair in both your heads! How you do talk!"

"That's all right, mom," said Porky. "We are not jealous; only it was just exactly what we wanted to do, and it's a sort of jolt. Is that who the sweaters are for, mom?"

"Yes, I thought I might as well," said Mrs. Potter. She glanced at the Colonel. He was looking at his cigar. Mr. Leffingwell was staring at the ceiling. She glanced at Mr. Potter. His right eyelid quivered. "Yes," said Mrs. Potter, "Colonel Bright thought they might like to have them." She smiled at Porky and Beany--strange, soft, tender, sad, wonderful smile.

"Come, see if they are going to fit," she said.

Mr. Leffingwell blew his nose.

All the while that the preparations for the boys' journey went swiftly on, time, pain-filled and gloomy, dragged itself away in the two hospital rooms where the Wolf and the Weasel lay wounded. By carefully questioning his nurse, the Wolf, who was not so badly hurt as it was at first thought, found out that the Weasel was his next door neighbor. That question settled, the Wolf settled himself to the task of getting well. In a few days to the amazement of those attending him, he was able to sit up. They commenced leaving him alone for an hour or so at a time. Two days more, wrapped in a heavy bathrobe, he was lifted into a reclining chair, and allowed to look out of the window. How could the nurse guess that the moment she left, her helpless patient rose to his feet and falteringly at first, moved here and there about the room, stopping every moment or two to rest? When she returned she found him quietly seated, resting, as she had left him. He did indeed look tired and pale, so she hurried him back to bed. The next day and the next this was repeated. Then came his chance. His nurse was going to a lecture in the assembly room on the first floor. She would be gone a couple of hours.

She placed the Wolf in his chair by the window, looked at his bandages, set a bell beside him, and left a pile of magazines on the wide window sill at his elbow. Then, with repeated warnings to rest and not overdo, she left him.

As soon as he heard the last light pad-pad of the girl's rubber-heeled shoes, the Wolf stood up. He stood firmly. He tied the bathrobe about him and went to the door. There he waited, listening. All was quiet. He opened the door a little. As he did so, a nurse and a doctor came out of the Weasel's room, went slowly down the hall, and turned into a room at the corner. The Wolf listened more intently still, and went out into the hall. Between the room occupied by the Wolf and the one where the Weasel lay, there was a space. A table and a chair stood there. It was where the night nurse sat. On it was a writing tablet, pens, ink, and a couple of little bottles. One of them caught the eye of the Wolf. The blue color of the glass told him that it was a deadly poison even before he read the label. He put it in his pocket.

Then he gently turned the handle of the door, and went in. For a moment he thought the room was empty. The shade at the window was drawn closed. The Wolf swept the room with a swift glance then his eyes rested on the bed.

Ah! Did you start then, ever so slightly, you cruel killer, you merciless destroyer? What good now is the blue vial in your pocket? Of what use the clenched fist, and writhing, clutching fingers? You have come too late, Wolf; you have lost your poor too! Look and look and look again at that peaceful bed. See how straight the sheet is and how decently it is drawn up. Go over, Wolf, and draw it down and see what it covers! Hurry, Wolf, because you have but little time to remain undisturbed! Already the nurse and doctor have finished making their report; already a

narrow, white stretcher is being prepared.

For the last time in all your wicked life, black murder filled your heart, Wolf, but the Weasel has escaped you. The Wolf put the sheet back over the dead face of the Weasel and grating his teeth, stepped softly to the door. He slipped into the hall, but as he did so, he heard low voices, and instead of turning toward his own room, he went in the opposite direction where he saw a stairway. Unfortunately for him, the stairs led up instead of down. Slowly, silently, he climbed them; but not before he thought he heard a low exclamation from below. For some unforeseen reason the nurse and doctor had looked in the Wolf's room to see how he was getting on. The room of course was empty, and the Wolf knew a search would begin at once. How he cursed his fate that he was dressed only in his underwear and bathrobe! It would take a clever man indeed to escape in such garments. And escape he must. The Weasel was dead. He had killed him, and no one knew better than the Wolf that he would be made to pay the whole penalty. Adolph was dead, the Weasel was dead, Ledermann had jumped into the river to escape his pursuers and had drowned. And here was he, the Wolf, trapped-at bay. He slipped into the first door at hand. It was a large hall used for a gymnasium for the nurses. There were steps at the door. He looked about. There was not a place to hide. Hurrying to the window as fast as his feeble strength would permit, he raised the sash and looked out. There, outside the window, was a fire-escape. Without an instant's hesitation, he stepped out and placed his slippered foot on the narrow tread of the iron ladder. His head was swimming from weakness. He heard an exclamation from above and looked up.

For an instant he made out the faces of the nurse and doctor against the sky above him. Then the nurse disappeared, and the doctor stepped out on the sill. He was going to follow; the nurse had gone for help. There was one thing to do: hurry--hurry! Once more the Wolf looked up at his pursuer. He laughed his own sneering, cruel laugh. The ladder seemed to swing and sway dizzily. It was like being at the top of a tall mast in a heavy sea. He clutched the ladder. Then everything grew dark, guns boomed in his ears, his grasp loosened and the last long night and the last long silence wrapped him like a cloak.

The Weasel had bitten to the bone.

Crushed and mangled, they lifted the Wolf from the pavement five stories below, and taking him into the hospital once more for a little while, laid him in the chamber of death beside the stretcher where the Weasel rested with that new look in his face. But the nurse who had cared for the Weasel knew the manner of his going, and rolled his stretcher away across the room. She would not let him lie even in death beside the other.

The very next afternoon the telephone rang.

Mrs. Potter and Beany and Asa listened, while Porky said, "Yes, sir," a dozen times and "All right, sir," until Beany twitched with nervous excitement.

When he put up the receiver, everybody said, "Well?" at the same

time.

Porky went over and kissed his mother. It was real easy to do, those days. A fellow wanted to kiss his mother.

"Well?" said everybody again.

Timmins hovered in the doorway.

"To-morrow," said Porky with a sort of solemnity.

No one spoke. Then "What time?" said Beany.

"Six o'clock, morning," answered Porky.

"You know, mom, there's no chance of our getting hurt," said Beany.

"How you do talk!" said Mrs. Potter. She did not look up, however. She was finishing the second sweater, and gave it her whole attention.

"Naw!" said Porky. "Not a chance in the world! We will be home before you know it, with a lot of good stories to tell you. Perhaps we will bring you some loot. Wouldn't you like something to remember the War by?"

"Just you look out for yourselves," said Mrs. Potter. "I'd like a couple of boys sent home safe and sound. That's what I'd like to remember things by." She stabbed the needles through her knitting and, rising, left the room. The boys looked after her. Beany made a move to follow, but his brother pushed him back.

"Let her alone," he said. "She likes to be brave."

That evening passed like lightning, although all the traps had been ready for days. Gladdis, the cook, had baked them a wonderful fruit cake, and Mr. Leffingwell came home with four new comfort kits and a portable typewriter for each one--a little typewriter that would go in one end of a suit-case.

Everybody seemed more than happy, quite noisy, in fact. There was not a moment when anybody felt the least bit--the least bit--well, you know! That is, not a moment except just at bedtime. Then Mrs. Potter came into the boys' room, and gave them each a little, thin package. She just handed it to them and kissed them goodnight, and went out.

"Let's see what they are," said Porky. There were two little leather cases. Inside were Mom Potter's pretty, motherly dear face, and pop's splendid, homely countenance. Porky jerked out the light.

The following morning, Mr. Leffingwell's car, crowded with the whole family, was the first to arrive at the station. The Potter boys wandered restlessly about until Colonel Bright, followed by his wife and daughter and a Japanese house-man loaded with rugs and bags, came breezing in with a hearty greeting for everybody.

Mr. Leffingwell bustled about, tipping everybody he could find to tip. Timmins and the elevator boy took Asa out on the platform and sat him on a truck where he could see everybody the very last minute. And all at once it was the very last minute; and somehow everybody had shaken hands and had talked loudly, and the boys had kissed their mother--a kiss to be remembered, and had swung on board. The train started. The boys strained for one last look at their parents. They thought they smiled.

Asa turned to Timmins.

"Gee, the light hurts a feller's eyes," he said.

CHAPTER XII

SUNDAY AT SEA

It seemed to the boys as though they could never tire of the novelty and charm of the open sea. By Sunday they had explored the perfect little ship Firefly from stem to stern. They had made friends with every man on board and were in the way of accumulating a strange assortment of facts from their new friends.

Sunday services, read by the grizzled old Captain, seemed very solemn and strangely touching. They were held on deck, where the rattling of shrouds and the soft lap of the water made a wonderful accompaniment to the familiar words of the prayer book. The boys could not help noticing that every man listened closely and respectfully. They joined in the responses, and sang lustily when it came time for the hymns.

The Captain did not read a sermon. Instead he closed the book, and for a short five minutes spoke to the men simply, clearly, and to the point. Then there was one more song. Services do not usually end with it; but as the sound rose, the boys thrilled and chilled with patriotism. It was "My Country, 'tis of thee" and those men roared it from the depths of their big, honest, loyal hearts.

When the group scattered, Porky and Beany went forward and stood looking into the distance that bid their Great Adventure. That the Adventure was at that moment approaching, drawing nearer and nearer, they did not dream. The sea looked too calm, too serene, to hide such a terror. They were talking about the safe and quiet crossing they were having when Colonel Bright approached.

"What now, my gay young buccaneer?" he asked, stopping and lighting a cigar.

"We were saying what a good old safe trip we are having," said Porky.

The Colonel frowned. "Better say that after we arrive," he said,

puffing hard.

"Oh, I'm not afraid!" said Porky.

"Nor me!" added Beany.

"I know you are not," said the Colonel. "But there is one thing I always remind my men of. That is this: never be afraid but never fail to be careful. You would be a fool to take a chance with a mad dog, wouldn't you? Well, your enemy is a mad dog or worse, every time, whether he is trying to get your reputation or your life. You never want to take chances. Watch him. Sleep with one eye open. Listen to every breath of wind. Watch, and watch eternally. You are only safe when he is dead, or disarmed and in prison. And never belittle your enemy. Better think of him as bigger than he is, cleverer, and more cunning. When you belittle his strength you give him the advantage because you will not fight so hard. And don't take chances."

"No, sir," said Porky.

"Another thing," said the Colonel. "We are not in the danger zone yet. When we reach that, you will see our Captain taking all the precautions that can possibly be taken. Understand we do not anticipate trouble. This is such a small boat that I scarcely think the Germans would bother with it. At the same time, if by any chance they have found out that we are crossing with important papers, agreements, and chemicals, they will be on the lookout for us and we will have a good chase if we manage to escape. I don't say this to scare you boys; but you are here, and I don't want you to underrate the present danger. I will be good and glad to get across myself. Not a word of this to the others, understand."

He nodded and walked on. The boys looked at each other.

"Wow!" said Porky softly.

For awhile the boys stared out over the sea. "Time for grub," Beany finally said.

"Hungry?" asked Beany.

"No," said Porky. He laughed. "You know what Colonel Bright's done to me? He's made me imagine things. I thought I saw something over there in the light--way, way off."

Beany stared. "Nothing doing!" he declared. "I could see if it was there, you know."

"Yes, I know your eyes," said Porky nervously. "I saw a gull or a porpoise, I suppose."

"I suppose you didn't see anything," said Beany, scanning the level sea. "Come on down to dinner."

"All right," agreed Porky. He turned from the rail with a last glance seaward. He seized his brother and whirled him about.

"Look! Look!" he cried. "There it is again, straight ahead! What's that?" Beany's keen eyes swept the sea in a lightning glance. Then he dashed for the companionway and fairly fell into the presence of the Captain.

"A periscope! A periscope!" he gasped.

In another instant the Captain was on the bridge, the glasses at his eyes. He commenced rapping out short orders.

The boys, watching breathlessly, saw the guns trained on the little periscope which, like the reared head of a poisonous snake, came darting at them with a swiftness which seemed incredible. Then everything seemed to, happen at once. The little racer on whose throbbing deck they stood swerved like a frightened colt. Her guns spoke together; and at the same time something slim and long cut cleanly through the water and passed by, missing the Firefly's side so narrowly that the boys felt their knees weaken under them. The periscope shook as the guns volleyed again, wavered uncertainly, and sank from sight.

"We hit her!" said Beany at the rail.

The Firefly, with every ounce of steam on, dashed ahead, doubling here and there and darting about like a frightened hare. A spot of oil appeared on the water.

"Something wrong," said Porky; "but you can bet we are slated to get right out of the immediate vicinity of here at our earliest convenience!"

The Captain, on the bridge, was talking earnestly with Colonel, Bright and the other officers. Every face held a look of almost incredulous relief. The gunners stood close to their steel charges, every man ready for instant action. The Firefly raced ahead, on and on. No one thought of the interrupted meal. No one thought of anything but the danger so narrowly passed. They were still far away from the danger zone. It had been a most unexpected attack.

No one noticed when the sun went down or when dusk fell. Not until darkness wholly hid the sea did they turn from their sea-wide search for approaching danger.

Then the Captain came down from the bridge and approached the boys.

"How did you happen to discover the periscope before the lookout did?" he asked.

Porky spoke for his brother. "It's his eyes," he said. "You see, sir, he has what they call abnormal eyesight. He can see farther and clearer than anybody else. He can see in the dark too, nearly as well as by day. So it wasn't the fault of the lookout that Beany saw it first. He always sees everything before anybody else gets a chance."

"That's odd," mused the Captain. "Well, young fellow, you saved the ship this time all right. It looks as though you had better

be stationed on deck when we reach the danger zone. Come down now and get you supper. You never want to go into danger when you are hungry." He slapped Beany on the back and passed on.

The boys followed, suddenly conscious that they had omitted the important ceremony of dinner, but Beany was almost too nervous to eat. He felt as though those keen eyes of his should be on deck. There was a great clatter at the table, the Captain alone sitting in his usual serious silence.

Young Coggins called out, "Well, that's over with, anyway! They say lightning never strikes in the same place twice."

The Captain smiled. "That's true enough," he said, "but for the sake of safety I had better tell you that these submarines nearly always travel in pairs. We are apt to meet the sister U-boat yet."

A silence fell. "I don't feel sleepy," murmured young Coggins. "Wouldn't it be nice to sleep on deck to-night?"

"Deck for mine!" said Porky in a low voice. "I will say I don't get many thrills out of this being cooped downstairs when there are subs all around."

"Downstairs!" quoted Coggins scornfully. "Don't let the Captain hear you talking about the 'downstairs' of his ship, you landlubber, you!"

"Well, I don't care what you call it! It's downstairs to me anyhow! And whatever you call it, I don't want to sleep there."

"Bosh!" said Coggins. "I tell you we won't see another sub on the whole trip. Do you know the percentage of boats that see subs on their way over?"

He launched into a flow of statistics. Porky and Beany seemed to listen. In fact they were thinking hard. As usual, they thought the same thing, and as they were fully conscious that they were doing so, they found the process as satisfactory as a regular spoken conversation.

"Me for bed," said Coggins finally.

"You don't mean bed, do you?" asked Porky. "How the Captain would feel if he should hear you call his nice berths 'beds!'"

"I thought you were coming on deck," said Beany.

"Of course not; that was a joke," said Coggins.

"Good-night then," said the boys. They went up on deck. It was perfectly dark. Not even a riding light was shown, and through the darkness at top speed raced the Firefly.

"Sort of thrilling, isn't it?" said Porky in a low tone as they leaned over the rail and looked down at the mysterious water below them. "Gee, I hope we don't get torpedoed! I worry about the Colonel. I don't know how well he can swim, or anything

about it. He'd catch cold, too, like as not!" He grinned.
"Say, do you know what I did back home? I knew you'd laugh if I told you. I bought a couple pounds of--"

"Chocolate," completed Beany. "I did too."

"Any malted milk tablets?" asked Porky.

"Yep, a couple of bottles."

"Oh, gee! Doesn't it beat anything? I suppose yours are for the Colonel in case of shipwreck. Just that!"

"Of course", grinned the other twin. "Well, we are well stocked up; and as long as we have done it, let's fix things up in case anything should happen. You know the Colonel will think of himself the very last one. And if anything does happen, old chap, just you stick right by the Colonel."

"You know if there is anything we can do, and do it is swim."

The two boys went down to their stateroom, and got out the precious store of chocolates and malted milk. Each boy put his share in the oil skin water-tight money belt that had been one of Mr. Leffingwell's many gifts. Their money went easily into a much smaller and less complicated carrier that each boy wore around his neck. Then, feeling ready for any emergency, they hurried back to the dark and silent deck. They stayed up until midnight. Then the wind started up, increasing in violence until the chilled watchers took refuge below.

The boys turned in.

It seemed about fifteen minutes when Porky sat up. Beany was leaning down from the upper berth.

"Did you call me?" he asked.

"No, I thought you called me," said Porky.

"All right," said Beany. He swung to the floor. "Hustle and dress. I bet some thing is on foot."

He hustled himself into his clothes and was ready as soon as Porky, who considered himself the record dresser. Together they slipped through the dark passage and went up on deck. The Firefly fled like a wild thing, cutting a swift path through a rough and choppy sea.

They went forward. Motionless, a dark blur against the sky line, they saw the lookout, his eyes searching the waste. Scudding clouds were massing in the east. A storm was on the way. The boys walked the length of the steamer and leaned over the stern, where the water boiled furiously away from the propeller. Close beside them another watch silently studied the surface of the sea. The night lifted a little. It was nearly dawn. The boys felt depressed. Porky turned and studied the sky in the east; Beany kept his keen eyes on the water behind the Firefly. Suddenly he clutched his brother's arm.

"See! See!" he cried. "Where that patch of white shows! She's coming! Look! Look!"

The glass of the lookout swept the waves. "Nothing there," he said gruffly. Then with a gasp he cried loudly, "Torpedo port; torpedo port!"

Porky saw a slim, swift something cleaving the water. It made straight for the ship. His reason told him that it would strike; he grasped his brother by the arm. "The Colonel!" he cried and made for the cabins below.

Their hurried descent was broken by a terrific crash which threw them headlong. They scrambled to their feet and, gaining the Colonel's door, burst it open.

"Quick, quick, Colonel!" they cried.

They hustled him up the companionway. The little Firefly had already listed heavily to port when another torpedo struck her with shattering force. She rocked back and forth, striving to right herself. The boats were being lowered. The Captain called for the Colonel, and insisted on his entering the largest lifeboat. Two other boats were already crowded and launched. The Firefly settled with a sickening motion.

"All off!" cried the Captain. He glanced over the deserted ship, and jumped for the boat the Colonel was sitting in. As he landed a bulky parcel shot past him, and landed at the colonel's feet. Then another bundle sailed accurately through the air. The first was the Colonel's uniform; the second, his great top-coat. On the slanting, shivering deck the twins stood looking down, yelling madly. "Put on your clothes!" Porky was frantically calling.

"Look in the pockets!" called Beany.

The Captain stood up with a despairing gesture. "Jump!" he commanded.

The boys nodded, but instead of obeying, they disappeared behind the cabin. For a moment the men rested on their oars, then at a command from the Captain they pulled furiously away from the sinking ship which threatened to engulf them as she went down. However, they had gained a safe distance before the doomed vessel, rocking back and forth, gained a dreadful momentum, showed her splintered and shattered hull as if in mute excuse for her action, and disappeared forever in the engulfing sea.

The Captain stood looking at the place where the vessel had disappeared.

Colonel Bright buried his face in his hands.

"Gone!" he groaned. "What shall I say to their people?" He choked as he put on the clothes the boys had rescued and thrown after him. He felt in the pocket of the coat as Beany had yelled for him to do. It held a water-proof belt stuffed with chocolate

and malted milk tablets. Again he groaned.

"What ailed them? Why didn't they jump?" he asked. Over and over again he asked the question but there was no one to answer. In the distance the other boats were working toward the east. Far the other side of where the doomed boat had gone down, they could see the gray back of the submarine, now lying on the surface. Strangely enough, she did not try to pursue or shell them. The men at the oars rowed furiously to escape. The wind rose, and the rain, which had been drizzling down, commenced to fall in torrents. It made a shield as enveloping as a heavy fog. The submarine was not to be seen, and they, of course, were hidden from her. Hour after hour the rain fell; and all the men rowed, taking turns at the heavy oars. The Colonel sat silent. He could not forget the young gallant pair gone down with the ship, two splendid lives snuffed out in an hour.

Night came to the drenched, hungry men a time of torture. In the morning, the Colonel divided a part of the chocolate, which restored a portion of strength to the rowers. So another day dragged toward its close. The rain had stopped, and a hot sun had dried their clothing. They were beginning to feel the pangs of thirst, but the hoard of chocolate and malted milk tablets mercifully held out. In the far, far distance they could see one of the other boats. The others were gone. Where, they could not tell.

Then at dawn happened the miracle. Out of the dusk a big ship seemed to take form. She was miles away, but to their eyes, growing accustomed only to the unrelenting stretch of sea and sky, she seemed to loom over them.

As it grew lighter, they could see that she was a huge transport with her convoys about her.

Carl Coggins leaped to a seat, tearing off a silk shirt as he did so. He ran a big oar through the sleeves and waved it wildly.

"I have always wanted to do this," he cried. "Now you see why I wouldn't wear a service shirt under my tunic!"

"Wave ahead!" said the Colonel. "Here's hoping they see you!"

The little boatful anxiously watched the great ship and her convoys. Would she pause?

CHAPTER XIII

A SUBMARINE FLIES A FLAG OF TRUCE

Furiously Carl waved his white flag, Every eye was fastened on the distant shape. A cry went up from the men in the little boat.

"They see us--they see us!"

They renewed their rowing with all their remaining strength, as though the great ship laying to in the distance might suddenly start away.

But instead they saw a couple of boats put off--motor-boats that cut their way furiously through the water and soon reached them. A word of explanation from the Captain of the Firefly to the young officer in charge of the motor-boat, and they were taken in tow, while the exhausted oarsmen leaned heavily on their oars, and every heart sent up a prayer of thanksgiving.

The transport was the one they had been trying to overtake, and Colonel Bright's own men met him with cheers and sobs as he was assisted on deck. He and the others were hurried below where they were put under the care of the ship's doctor.

A search now began for the remaining boats. It was not until just before dark that the powerful glasses in the hands of one of the lookout men discovered some small specks far to starboard. It was the missing boats. As soon as they, with their loads of suffering men, had been taken on board, the transport and her convoys, wrapped in darkness, plunged forward through the gathering night.

They were approaching the danger zone.

The following day, the Colonel was himself again. He had been too long a soldier to let the loss of the two boys, dear as they were, completely crush him. They were lost; it was the fortune of war. They were lost as thousands of other young, splendid fellows had been lost; and although the Colonel could scarcely bear to think of the grief of the poor mother back home when she should learn of the loss of her two idolized sons, he put the picture behind him. Here was a transport full of men, his own command largely, and a deep anxiety beset him when he looked over the sea, searching its surface for a glimpse of a telltale periscope.

He fell to watching the convoys with their bristling guns and the intricate tackle used in this modern game of war at sea. They looked capable, every inch of them, and deadly in their efficiency. Yet occasionally the deadly U-boat claimed one of these as a victim. Once more his eyes roved over the big transport.

It was packed and jammed with men. They were quartered in every possible place. Happy, jolly fellows, full of the finest courage in the world, ready for anything, eager for the next adventure, meeting victory with modesty, accepting disaster with a smile. The rails on each side of the ship were lined with men watching, watching like himself, yet with a difference.

The Colonel smiled as he guessed the eagerness with which they hoped for a sight of a submarine. Not a man of them there wanted to drown, but he wanted to see a sub, and with the hopefulness of his character he felt that the chances were good for getting away before any damage was done.

Still thinking of the boys he had loved so well, he leaned once more over the rail, his sad blue eyes searching the sea. Waves and sky; waves and sky; a gull in the distance but nothing else. For an hour he stood there thinking, forgetful of his promise to go below, staring about, searching the vastness for a sign of the danger that lurked everywhere, the terrible U-boats; but he looked and saw nothing. Another night passed but as the day dawned, a sudden warning call sounded through the ship, and peering through his porthole, the Colonel saw the long, slim shape of a torpedo whizzing toward the great ship. It was badly aimed and as it passed harmlessly on, a thunder of guns shattered the peace of the morning. The Colonel rushed on deck. As he did so, he saw the turret of a U-boat between the transport and her nearest convoy sink out of sight. Again the guns spoke as the boat went down. The periscope of the sub wavered and leaned far out of true. Another torpedo cut the water and struck the transport a glancing blow, doing but little damage. The two convoys were now busy with another U-boat that had attacked them.

One of the convoys, a destroyer of the latest and finest type, threw a smoke screen between the U-boat and the transport, but the U-boat, evidently under orders to get the transport with its crowds of men at any cost, came to the surface in the midst of the smoke and, using the screen to her own advantage, slipped close to the transport. As she did so there was another clamor of guns from both the convoys. The Colonel could not see the result of the firing. The guns on the transport were aimed at the nearest U-boat which had come so, close to her intended victim. She lay on the surface, and one torpedo and then another shot from her firing tubes. The fire from the transport missed her again.

The torpedoes seemed possessed. Instead of holding the straight line that would have doomed the great ship to certain destruction, they skipped here and there. One of them turned and narrowly missed the U-boat which was now apparently making an effort to submerge. So strangely did the boat act that the gunner hesitated as he was about to give the order to fire.

No other torpedo was sent out, and the submarine kept to the surface, swinging slowly.

"She must be badly crippled," said the Captain to Colonel Bright, who stood beside him on the bridge. He gave the order to an officer to open fire on the boat.

As the men leaped to their guns, a strange thing happened. The hatch on the submarine opened, and a man leaped out to the deck. He waved a white flag.

"No good!" said the Captain. "That's been done before. I won't risk one of my boat crews over there."

"You can't shoot at a flag of truce," said the Colonel hastily.

"You have to in warfare like this," said the Captain bitterly. The figure on the U-boat, looking very small in the distance, continued to wave his flag. The Captain nodded to the commander of the gun crew on the nearest turret. The gun leaped into

position. At that instant the figure on the reeling submarine whipped a small flag from his pocket and flourished it beside the other. The officers and men on board the transport gasped.

It was an American flag!

Yes, there on a German submarine a solitary figure was waving aloft the Stars and Stripes.

The Captain uttered an exclamation of amazement, and shook his head at the gun crew. Almost at once a couple of motor-boats, filled with armed men, shot from the transport and raced over the rough sea to the rolling sub.

"We will soon know what all this is about," said Captain Greene. "Come down while I prepare a wireless."

The two Captains and the Colonel went below, while the men crowded the rail and watched the boats, now at the side of the distant submarine. It was a long time before they started back. The men could see that they were loading the boats with something that looked like rolls of cloth. Finally they returned.

The officers, coming back to the decks, were greeted by volleys of deafening cheers, boots, calls, laughter. Every man who could get near the railing was there. They were packed solidly, looking down at the boats below. Those who could not reach a point of vantage swung up on their companions' shoulders. Everybody hooted and laughed. Presently there was a break in the line, and four strapping sailors made their way through with a burden which they laid none too gently on the deck. Another and another, and still they came, until at the Captain's feet there was a row of fourteen unconscious figures, wound and strapped with rope until they resembled mummies. Captain Greene bent closely above the figures. Two of them wore the uniform of German officers; but one and all were unconscious, and tightly roped.

"What does this mean?" demanded Captain Greene. He looked up just as a stifled cry came from the Captain of the Firefly. On the other side of him, Colonel Bright staggered and would have fallen, had not a friendly hand steadied him. He as well as the Captain of the Firefly were staring with bulging eyes at the figure that was just emerging from the crowd at the rail. As they stared, apparently unable to speak, another figure joined the first.

Covered with dirt, unkempt, dressed in what seemed to be cast-off fragments of all the uniforms under the sun, the two figures stood looking around with broad grins, on their pale and smudgy faces.

A bloody bandage half hid the face of one of them, the other nursed a hand bundled in rough, soiled cloths.

Colonel Bright tried to speak. Words failed him. He gulped feebly, and waved a hand at the apparitions. They stepped forward and wearily saluted.

"Yes, Sir, it's us!" said the scarecrow with the bandage.

Porky and Beany had come back!

CHAPTER XIV

THE TWINS BEGIN THEIR STORY

With scarcely a look at the still trussed-up figures on the deck, Colonel Bright rushed forward, and in a second had the two boys in his arms.

"Please, Colonel, can't we go down to your cabin? I rather guess we are all in." Porky swayed against the Colonel's broad shoulder.

The Colonel beckoned to a couple of his men who were standing near. They dashed forward, and almost carried the exhausted boys down into the Colonel's roomy cabin.

"Not a word now, boys, until we get you comfortable. Are you hungry?"

The boys looked at each other.

"I guess we are starved," Beany managed to pipe in a small voice.

Captain Greene went to the door and gave a quick order. A couple of men got them out of their rags and into fresh pajamas. Then a light meal came in.

Porky heaved a sigh. "I suppose you want to know about it," he said.

The Colonel looked at him.

"No, I don't," he said. "It is enough to get you back. Suppose you try to sleep for awhile."

Porky smiled. "Say, Colonel, that's good of you!" he said. "We are done up a bit, aren't we, Beany?"

Beany did not reply. He was sound asleep, sitting bolt upright on his locker.

"Hello there, young fellows," the Colonel said cheerily twelve hours later. "How do you feel after your little nap? Think you could eat a little something?"

"Just try us, sir," said Porky. "Say, Colonel, sir, we have a lot to tell you! May we talk while we eat breakfast?"

"You certainly may," said the Colonel, "but I will have to call Captain Greene. This is his ship, and he has a right to hear

anything you have to tell."

Captain Greene came in; the boys did not notice that a shorthand clerk sat just outside the open door.

"Well, in the first place, Colonel, here are your papers. We went back to get them, and we took them with us all in their oil-silk wrapper, but those fellows over there in the submarine tore the oil-silk up. They took the papers, of course, but I got 'em back when we put the bunch to sleep."

"Begin at the beginning, please," said Captain Greene.

"And tell me why you didn't jump when I said, 'Jump,'" demanded the Captain of the Firefly.

"Why, we had to get those papers!" said Porky simply. "I don't think that was insubordination. I knew the Colonel wanted them. He was so careful of them."

"All right," said the Colonel. "What happened then?"

"Why, the Firefly rolled around for a minute and then she went down. Say, Colonel, were you ever on a sinking ship? We got sucked right in with her. I thought we never would come up. I got out first, and I didn't see Beany, and Gee! I was never so seared in my life. I was just thinking about diving for him when he popped up all out of breath, same as I was. We had to float awhile, we were so used up. Then we happened to look up. We hadn't said a word yet, and there was that submarine. It had come up on the other side of us, between us and where the ship had been. So we couldn't get around to where you must have been in the boats. There was a man on the little top deck place, and he had a boat hook, and first I knew he was sticking for me with that boat hook, just as though I was, somebody's hat lost overboard. He didn't care whether he stuck his old hook into a meat boy or not. I saw he wanted us anyhow; so I said, 'Come on!' to Beany, and swum up the side of the submarine, and clambered onto the little deck, and Beany followed. Mr. Boy-sticker grunted something at us, and shoved us down the little steep ladder, and there we were in the inside of that submarine!

"The boy-sticker shoved us over to a table, and there was an officer sitting with a bottle and glass, and a small chunk of a sort of black bread."

"That stuff is made of sawdust and oatmeal, I'll bet," said Beany. "It was worse than we would give the pigs!"

"Well," said Porky, "we stood where we had been shoved, and pretty soon the officer looked up, and the boy-sticker commenced to talk to him in German.

"The officer commenced to look real bright and interested. He said, 'Goot! Goot!' three or four times, and then he said something to us in German. I shook my head, and he tried French. He said, 'Parley voos Frongsay?' and I said, 'Wee wee!' and Beany he butted in and said, 'Better not be so fresh with your wees

unless he's got a dictionary to lend you,' and the officer jumped and said, 'Himmel! Where have you come from?' in just as good English as that. We both said Syracuse; and he laughed, and said, 'What a small world! Why, I went to Syracuse University!'

"You would never think a guy that had chances in a real country like ours would act like he did. He kept us standing there, and he asked us all about everything back home, and just as we thought he was getting real friendly he said cool as anything, 'We saved you because we are short handed. Do as you are told. Obey. It's your one chance. We will shoot you, no doubt, when we get to port.'"

"Wasn't that nice and encouraging," asked Beany of the attentive audience. "They made us take off all our clothes and put on those old things that had belonged to the two fellows who had died. And then we went to work. Well, he set me to fixing up the little bunk place he slept in, when he did sleep. The rest of us just laid down anywhere. There's not a lot of room in a submarine."

"Yes, and first thing," said Beany, "Porky was wigwagging me to be careful what I did, and to try to keep the Captain from looking."

"Yes, because what do you think I had found? A wad of papers that looked like plans just lying around on his locker, and a whole row of bottles. Medicines I suppose, and one of them said Anesthetique, and I made up my mind that was dope."

"The next thing happened, he set me to oiling up the torpedoes. Gee, it made me so mad to see those great smooth things lying there on their shelves ready to roll into the tubes and be shot at some good American ship! All at once it came to me what to do if I could work it. So I took that knife Mr. Leffingwell gave me, the one with a whole tool-chest in it, and I opened it behind my hand, and found a dandy screw-driver. Then I took a look over the torpedo I was fussing with, and I saw it steered by its tail. I knew it must be carefully adjust, and I sort of memorized where all the screws were."

"They can remember anything," said Colonel Bright to Captain Greene. "Go on!"

"Well, sir, that night I went to sleep, or pretended to, right under the torpedo shelves, and when I heard everybody snore, I went to work, and twisted all those screws a little."

The Captain burst out into a roar of laughter.

"Well, son," cried Captain Greene, "it certainly worked! Could you see the result of your scheme?"

"No, sir, we couldn't see a thing. But I thought it must have worked because--well, I felt it must!"

"Then everybody in the boat seemed to be mad at everybody else; and everything they said sounded as though they were threatening each other. Once the Captain laughed when the boy-sticker man said something to me, and he said,

"Do you know what he said?' And I said no; and the Captain said, 'Well, it's too bad you never learned German! He was telling you just what he intends to do to you as soon as I give him leave. He's a faithful soul, is Heinrich, and he wants you for his very own.'

"I said, 'Well, what you going to do about it? I guess it made me sort of mad to have him sit there and poke fun at me. He looked at me a minute, and then he up and shied his glass at me. It was a big heavy glass, but he was a little full as usual, and didn't aim very well."

"It took him on the side of the head, just the same," said Beany.

"Well, anyhow," continued Porky, "he looked at me and he said, 'When you speak to me say Sir or next time I'll kill you.'" Porky grinned. "He looked as though he meant it, too."

"You bet he meant it!" said Beany. "He was just aching to shoot us through the torpedo tube, the way they always get rid of dead ones. Gee, I was scared to death for Porky. That Captain seemed to pick on Porky, and he mixed us so, us looking just alike, that he put a white band around my arm, so he could tell which wasn't Porky."

"Well, I guess you don't want to hear all this junk," said Porky.

"We want every bit of it," said Captain Greene.

"Tell them about the fight they had," said Beany, shifting his bandaged hand.

"We saw one thing right off," said Porky. "The Captain was the whole push, just as if he was king. He sat there with a big revolver beside him on the table, and I can tell you he didn't trust his own shadow. The way Beany, and I doped it out, he was running in hard luck. He had been sent out to sink a certain number of ships before he could report, and all he had torpedoed was just the Firefly. Grub was getting low, two of his men were dead, and another one was curled up on the locker sicker than a pup. Once in awhile the Captain would look at him, and say to us in English, 'About twenty-four hours more, eh? Then he goes through the tube.'"

"He just didn't have any heart at all," shuddered Beany. "Of course that was why they didn't kill us; they couldn't run the boat and tend to the torpedoes and the periscope and the engines all at once in a case of a fight, with three men short. And then they had to fight."

"Tell us about that," said Colonel Bright.

"I don't know when it was," said Porky. "Night and day was all alike down there, but there was one big yellow-haired fellow that ran the engine. He had been ordered to show me about it; and, say, I will say I can run a submarine now. It was what you call intensive training. When I was slow, he gave me a clip on the head. He could just do anything with machinery. But they certainly

have got that submarine engine perfected so it will do everything but talk. Any child could run it as soon as he learned the different levers. I don't believe we have anything like it; but we can have now because there's the pattern outside there. You didn't shell it, did you?"

"Certainly not," said Captain Greene. "It is in charge of a picked crew of our men right outside."

"Well, don't let 'em take her down until I get a chance to show them how she works. There is just one lever that controls the diving gear, and that is hidden, so you can't find it if you don't know about it. I came near turning the old thing over. I got beaten up that trip."

"Get to the fight," said Beany.

"The engineer was nutty. He talked all the time and muttered to himself, and it got on the Captain's nerves or what he had left of them. He stared at the engineer half the time; and that made Louie peevish, I suppose. He took it out on me more or less--kept me sweating over that engine every minute he was awake. He wanted a drink too. It was sort of raw the way that Captain would sit there and guzzle and never give the others a bit of it. Louie would watch and watch and swallow hard; and the Captain would watch him back again and grin. They were just like a lot of savage dogs."

"Well, they didn't have enough to eat, to begin with," said Beany, "and then the air was so bad, and they were all cooped up in that little space, and you couldn't hear any outside noises at all. You don't know how funny that is."

"They took our watches, so we couldn't tell the time, and, honest, I thought we must have been there a month. And they all knew that something pretty fierce would happen to them if they went back home without sinking the ships that had been required of them. They have it all down to a system."

"Well, pretty soon Louie took to leaving me with the engine, and he would walk back past the Captain. He saluted him every time, and he watched that bottle just like a starved dog. And every time the Captain would slowly take hold of the bottle and grin. And then Louie would walk back again."

"Then once he went a little too close, and the Captain said something in German, and stuck out his foot, and tripped Louie up. He fell the length of the apartment; just plunged down because he wasn't expecting it. Beany was trying to do something for the sick man on the locker, and I was at the engine. We were sort of out of the way; and it was a lucky thing, because Louie went mad then and there, that's all there was to it. I never saw anything so awful, and neither did Beany. He didn't look human. He had the bluest eyes you ever saw when he was right, and they turned red as blood. And his face got dead white, and he showed all his teeth like a dog does. He had big yellow teeth with longer ones, like a dog's fangs, at the corners. And say, he was quicker than a cat! The Captain didn't have a chance to pull his gun. Louie had him by the arms, and was trying to break him in

two backward. A couple of other men ran to help the Captain, and that Louie just kicked out back, and doubled them both up, one after the other, in a corner. Nobody else interfered. I suppose Louie knew, if he knew anything, that he was a gone goose anyhow, and he wanted to punish the Captain. They never said a word. Louie had the Captain's right wrist in his left hand, so the Captain couldn't shoot, and I saw he was trying to twist the Captain's right arm so he could break it."

"That Captain was some quick, too," said Beany.

"They tripped and fell, and went rolling all over the place. That was when I most tipped the boat over. I forgot my levers, watching them and wondering if we would all get killed before the thing was over. Once they broke loose and came up, one each side of the table and the Captain leveled his revolver and pulled the trigger but it didn't fire. Guess it jammed or something. Anyhow, in the second that it refused to work, Louie was across the table and at him again. He was sure mad now. There was regular froth at the corners of his mouth, and he reached out as he clinched and clawed the whole side of the Captain's face off. Gosh!

"Then all at once the Captain got his right arm loose, and he brought round like lightning, and pressed the muzzle of the revolver right against Louie's side and bang! off she went. Louie never spoke, just grunted, and crumpled down on the floor. The Captain looked at him a minute, and then he dropped into a chair himself; and I tell you by that time he looked as though he did need a bracer. He was all in. Louie would have killed him sure as sure if he hadn't shot him.

"Nobody spoke or said anything. The Captain sat there a long time, just panting and staring down at Louie. Then he looked at me, and said, 'He had it coming to him. Can you run that engine and not turn turtle?'"

"And I said, 'Sure!' Then he said something in German to the men. He talked and talked, but of course we couldn't tell what he said. Presently four of them took Louie and laid him in the torpedo chute, and there he was; and nobody paid any more attention to him than if he wasn't there at all. Gee, it was awful!"

CHAPTER XV

A SPY ON BOARD

Porky rubbed a hand across his eyes, as though to shut out a disagreeable sight. Beany shook his head. The boys evidently hated the pictures that memory drew.

"Let's have the rest of it, boys," said the Captain of the Firefly. "We may as well have the whole thing at once."

"Well!" said Porky 'sighing, "that's how things went until to-day--or I guess it was yesterday, wasn't it? Anyhow, I can't tell just when anything happened. All I know is that everybody was just as though they were strung on wires.

"And that Captain got uglier and uglier. He talked German to the men, and then he would turn around and speak the best English you ever heard. It seemed awfully funny. He knew a lot of people back home, all the high-brows, and when he got pretty full, he would commence to sing. And say he had that Caruso guy lashed to the mast, I bet. He sang love stuff, and sob stuff, and a lot of opera stuff that sounded like gargling. Gee, it was great!

"Then he would make me and Beany stand at attention, and he would tell us all about the German army, and how strong it is, and all about their navy, and how we just had to be wiped off the map. The United States, I mean, and he would make us repeat all sorts of statistics about what the Germans had won and done."

"He said there was one chance in a million of our escaping," said Beany, "and he wanted us to have a lot of inside dope to tell our people. Of course it was all brag, almost every bit of it. We could see one thing. Those fellows were all sore. They didn't know what at, but they were sore just the same. Our fellows are never like that."

"You bet they are not!" said Porky, fondly and proudly. "The difference is plain as the nose on your face. I tell you what I did do; I made some little drawings of some of the things we heard. Sort of plans they were talking over. But you can see the submarine yourselves. You say she is safe."

"Get to what happened this morning--I mean yesterday," said Beany.

"Well," said Porky, "first thing we knew, the Captain looked through the periscope, and then he turned around and told the others something, and, say, they were pleased to death! You see they wanted to make up their required number of ships torpedoed, and get back to port. The Captain called me over, and told me to look, and there you were, way off, but plain. It was not really light. We submerged right away, and the Captain told me to fix some coffee. They wanted coffee nineteen times a day or so. I went over to the little corner where they cooked what few things they did cook, and then I happened to think of that bottle. The one with Anesthetique on it. That looked near enough to Anesthetic to be the same thing; and I wondered what would happen if I dumped some of it in the coffee. I didn't know what it was; but there was a chance anyhow for it to work. It might make 'em sick if nothing else, and I couldn't seem to see them pegging away at one of our ships with one or two or three of those torpedoes, even if I had monkeyed with their tail feathers.

"So I tipped the wink to Beany to kind of hold the center of the stage, and, say, that was funny! Beany braced up to the Captain, and saluted and said, 'Is it an American ship out there, sir?' and the Captain said, 'Sure thing, kiddo!' He could talk just like anybody, you know. Then Beany looked as though he was going

to cry; and he said, 'Can't you make an exception, Capt, let this one go?' The Captain thought that was a big joke and pretended to think about it, and finally he said, 'No, I can't see my way clear to do that; but I'll tell you what we will do. We won't leave a single boatful to starve. We will destroy every human-being on the transport and the convoys. I think we will meet a sister U-boat here this morning, and we will have a real good time.'

"Beany saw I had dumped the stuff in the coffee pot, and he just hung his head and walked off, the Captain looking after him and sneering.

"Gee, I was in a cold chill! I didn't know but the coffee would taste queer, and then they wouldn't drink it, and would kill us besides, before we had a chance to report to anybody. And I didn't dare taste it, for fear it was an instantaneous actor, and would do for me first. So I just passed the cups, and filled them up, and trusted to luck. And every man put his down without a word until it came to the Captain and, he said, 'It was worth keeping you for a little while. You make real German coffee, best in the world.' Everybody wanted two cups, and it took all there was; and the Captain thought that was a scream because there wasn't any left for Beany and me.

"Well, then, we commenced to wait to see what happened. And nothing happened. Nothing! The whole shooting match acted peppy. Beany whispered to me, 'Was it the wrong bottle?' And I didn't know what to think. I guess we came close enough to fire, and as soon as the machinery was ready, they swung a torpedo into the chute right behind that dead sailor, pressed the lever, and the dead man and the torpedo went shooting out together. Then they sent out another torpedo; and the Captain, at the periscope, commenced to talk in German, and the gunner looked and, say, his eyes bulged! But then something hit us a sort of glancing blow and we submerged right away. And my word! Just as we got down there, the Captain turned to the man at the steering gear to order him to the surface again I guess, and there he was all doubled over. He was out.

"The Captain took a couple of steps toward him, and a silly kind of look came into his face, and he just went down in a heap, and in one minute every man was flat on the floor. Well, there we were, alone you might say, with that submarine to get to the surface! And what we don't know about those boats would fill a dictionary.

"Beany said, 'Get her up if you can, Pork,' and he jumped for some rope, and commenced to tie everybody up. We didn't know how long that Anesthetique stuff was apt to work, and we didn't feel like taking any chances.

"So Beany made a good job of it, and I monkeyed with the steering gear the way they had told me, and the way I had seen, and up she came. Beany was just finishing, but I hurried up on deck, and, say, I thought you were going to do for me, anyhow!"

Porky seemed wholly unconscious of having accomplished anything out of the usual routine. He leaned back. "So that's all there

is of that," he said.

"When did those fellows wake up?" asked Beany, "or did it kill them?"

Captain Greene laughed. "I am sorry you didn't keep the bottle," he said. "Your friends are only just now waking up. It is a prolonged process, and rather distressing, I should judge."

"I did save the bottle," said Porky. "Here it is, if you want it. I had to put it in my pocket, because I wanted to get it out of sight as soon as ever I could."

"Sensible of you," said the Captain. "I will have that bottle analyzed if there is anything left in it. There may be a new combination there that will be of value sometimes."

"What else happened!" asked the Colonel.

"Not a thing, sir," said Porky; "don't see why we are so done up, either. We didn't do much."

"It was a slight nervous strain, I think," said the Captain, "cooped up there, expecting to be killed."

"Did he threaten you many times?" asked the Colonel.

"Yes, sir, a lot; but we got so we didn't mind much except the time he did for Heinrich. Then we sort of felt as though it was getting personal, as you might say. Oh, I'm glad to be out of it!"

The ship's doctor stepped up to Porky and felt his pulse.

"Just a trifle under par yet," he said, arranging Beany's bandages. "I would suggest another nap or two."

"All right," said the officers and they moved toward the door.

"We aren't sleepy," said Porky. "How could we be sleepy at this time of day?" He yawned widely. Everybody laughed.

"Just try it and see what you can do in the way of snoring," said the doctor. "One more good snooze, and you will be ready to bring in another submarine and some more prisoners."

He left the room, and in two minutes the boys were both asleep. They were exhausted, with the trying mental exhaustion that people feel who have undergone great anxiety and danger.

The two Captains and the Colonel went into Captain Greene's cabin and for a long time talked the matter over. They could hear the crew and the soldiers making merry. It had been a great experience; an experience which fortunately had had a good ending. Already a lot of the boys were writing highly-colored, lengthy accounts home--accounts which were doomed never to pass the censor!

Colonel Bright was happy as a boy. He chuckled and laughed and patted his friends on the back. He was so glad to have his two

boys restored to him that he didn't know what to do. He kept tiptoeing back to look at the boys as they slept. And sleep they did hour after hour, until their young bodies were renewed and refreshed. When they finally awoke, it was with the feeling that they never could sleep again. They went up on deck to take their usual morning look around. It was not yet time to report to Colonel Bright. To their great surprise, they were lying outside a harbor. In the distance they could see through the morning haze the lines of shipping and the bright tiled roofs of the houses. There was a feeling of expectation on board the ship. Porky hailed a sailor and asked where they were.

"In Europe," said the Jacky, smiling, and hurried away.

"In Europe!" repeated Porky. "I bet Colonel Bright will tell us." They hurried below. But to their eager questions the Colonel merely repeated the sailor's reply. The boys hurried on deck again. They stood by the rail, staring at the purple shore, when they were startled by a shot below, the sound of a scuffle, and as they turned a man raced past, leaped the rail and was swallowed by the sea. Scarcely had his head appeared again when with a rush Captain Greene gained the rail. For a moment he took aim; a steady, relentless aim. A puff of smoke marked the shot, and the black head, bobbing on the waves, disappeared. A hand was raised, and seemed to wave a good-by.

The boys watched breathlessly, then turned to stare at the Captain, who was peering intently at the water. There was something in his stern, set face that forbade questioning. For once they were completely silenced.

When the head, did not come to the surface, the Captain turned and went hastily down the companionway. The boys looked at each other.

"What on earth does it all mean?" Porky demanded of no one in particular.

They, too, hurried, down. The door of the Captain's cabin was ajar. Colonel Bright, very pale, and supported by the purser, sat opposite the door. When he saw the boys' anxious faces he nodded, and they went silently to his side.

Then they saw that on the Captain's bunk a form, limp and ghastly, was stretched out under the hand of the surgeon. It was the Captain of the Firefly, and as they looked, the surgeon stood upright.

"He is dead," he said briefly. He came around by Colonel Bright, and assisted him to his feet.

"Better come to your own cabin, sir," he suggested.

"Come, boys," said Colonel Bright. Then to the surgeon, and the purser: "I am merely scratched. I do not need further assistance. See you can't do something further for that poor fellow." He turned and, followed by the boys, walked slowly down the passage to his own large, comfortable cabin, where he dropped wearily into a chair, and with a gesture directed the boys to

remove his tunic. No one spoke until he had been partly undressed, and had laid down on the bunk.

"Well, boys," he said then, with the little twinkling smile they loved, "I certainly was born lucky! I suppose you are both simply bursting to know what has happened, and I don't blame you. I want to say first of all, though, that you have shown a great deal of discretion; a great deal of discretion indeed."

The boys looked wildly at each other. They were not very strong on long words, and while they were sure that they were being praised, they were not sure just exactly what discretion meant. Beany simpered and let it go at that; Porky mumbled, "Much obliged."

Colonel Bright pulled his torn shirt over the spot on his broad shoulder where a wad of absorbent cotton and a lot of crisscrossed surgeon's plaster marked the slight wound. He moved the shoulder curiously. "That will be stiff for a couple of days, I suppose, but that is all there will be to it. Nothing but a scratch. Did you see the man go overboard, boys?"

"Yes, sir, we did," said Porky; "but we didn't see who it was. Was it any one we knew? We saw the Captain shoot him."

"Yes," said Beany of the eagle eye, "it made me feel funny, somehow. The Captain shot quick. Just bing! and the bullet hit him, about an inch above the back of his neck just a shade to the left of the middle of his head."

"Close enough to keep him down below until the day of judgment," said the Colonel, sighing. "So you didn't see his face? Well, boys, if you had, you would have seen a familiar countenance. It was our second mate; and a spy!"

"What?" cried both boys, startled at the words and tone.

"Just that!" said the Colonel. "We have had a scene, I can tell you. If one of you will order a cup of coffee for me I will tell you all about it." He leaned back and closed his eyes. Beany made for the door; and Porky sat in silence until his brother returned with a tray of coffee, toast and bacon.

Then while the Colonel ate, they busied themselves about one thing and another around the cabin, until at last the Colonel set down the empty coffee cup, and spoke.

"I often wonder," he said, "how you boys learned some of the great truths that you know."

Porky laughed. "Like not talking when you ate?" he asked. "That was Mom. She always says that you can't expect to learn anything from a hungry man."

"A very wise woman," the Colonel said. "She is perfectly right." He looked at his watch.

"There is a little time, and while I smoke I will tell you all about the little fuss we have just finished. Yes, boys, the man

you saw killed was the second mate of this ship, and a spy; a miserable spy. No use wasting pity on him; he got what he deserved."

The Colonel scowled.

CHAPTER XVI

SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE

Porky and Beany sat perfectly still, staring with round, bulging eyes at the Colonel. They did not speak. They just sat there and thought and stared, and stared and thought again. This was about the most stunning blow of all. They had known the mate throughout the voyage as a silent, kindly man who had treated them well but had not made the least impression on them otherwise. A spy! It couldn't be! Porky was conscious of a wave of horror as he told himself that there must be some mistake. Not the second mate! Such a nice man, always pottering about, always ready to answer questions, always interested in everything, always and forever asking questions himself, wanting to know everything about themselves and their home and their plans for the future.

And he had been specially interested in the Colonel--where he was going and what he was going to do.

Now that the boys, taking time to think about it, happened on that thought, it was rather funny what an amount of interest the old fellow had taken in trivial things concerning their beloved Colonel. But it had gone over the boys' heads because they were so accustomed to having every one think that the Colonel was about the whole thing, and to hearing every one talk about him, that the strange interest of the second mate did not raise a question in their minds.

They had merely felt the flattered importance that they always felt about anything and everything concerning the truly great and simple-minded man whom they were so proud to know and to be with.

For Colonel Bright was a truly great man. They were to learn that fact more and more as time went on, and as they saw him tried by circumstances that could only bring out the best and noblest in men. They saw troubled, perplexed, wounded and distressed. It was their great good fortune to feel that there were times when this great man really needed their boyish but deeply loyal and loving support. It was just as well that the future, so terrible and so bloodstained, was hidden from their young eyes.

It is enough for this story that already the boys recognized the gallant, simple courage and tenderness of the Colonel; enough that all their lives they were to be strengthened and ennobled by the example of his straightforward everyday life. When Porky and

Beany had themselves become great men, when, in their turn, boys looked up to them with admiration and love, they learned to look back with boundless gratitude to the fate that had led them, through the Boy Scouts, into the friendship of Colonel Bright.

A faint inkling of this, passed through the minds of the twins as they sat waiting for the Colonel to begin his story. And each knew that the other felt it.

The Colonel regarded the boys with twinkling eyes.

"Sort of surprising, isn't it?" he said. "Not that this affair would ever have come into your scheme of things at all, but for one thing. I have got you over here, and in some ways it is positively the worst fool thing I ever pulled off--taking the responsibility of two kids like you, at a time like this."

"But, Colonel, please!" interrupted Porky. "Don't think I am fresh, but just this once, while there is no one around, and no one will know we are lacking in respect to you, sir, as a superior, please, Colonel, let me tell you--"

"Go on," said the Colonel.

"Well," said Porky, "looks to us as though we were going to land pretty soon, and we don't know where next nor anything about it; but please, Colonel, just as long as you can, please let us stick by you! We have got to; we promised Mrs. Bright; and, besides, we don't look young, do we, Colonel? Now, honest, we don't!" He felt of his chin. "The way it looks, we have got to shave pretty quick, by next year anyhow. And we are tall; we are tall as you; and we look older when we are good and dirty, and we will be that mostly over here, I guess. And say, Colonel, we ain't afraid; honest!"

"Oh, Lord!" groaned the Colonel. "That's the worst of it! If I could put a little wholesome fear into your heads, I would feel better. However, boys, I want your word of honor that you will never make any serious move without consulting me."

"We promise!" said both boys, and Beany as an after-thought repeated, "Not any serious in move."

"Then here is where we stand," said the Colonel, as the boys approached closer to his chair.

"In two hours we will disembark. The harbor is clear, and it is the first time in two weeks that any transports have been able to come in as near as this. It is a great chance. I am glad of this chance to tell you what the outlook is. I have been sent over here, boys, to work directly with General Pershing. We will be near and directly at the front all the time if our lives are spared. I did not know this when we started. It was all in the sealed orders that our late friend the mate was so anxious to get into his possession. But about that later. Just what our duties are to be I cannot tell until I have had a conference with the General. Here is where you come in. As I understand it now, I am to be in charge of a wing, not very many miles from headquarters. I intend to use you as messengers. It is not a

light task. Heaven forgive me if I am the cause of bringing you to harm! But the fact remains that as I see things, one life, young or old, is no better than another in this great crisis. It is up to every human being to do his or her part. Fate has led you a long ways from home; and in spite of that coming crop of whiskers, Porky, you are rather young. However, as I said, that weighs nothing in the balance of necessity. Nothing! Man, woman, child, we all must help. Man, woman, and child, we have got to help, and now!

"I may not have another chance to talk to you privately for some time. A few things are to be impressed on your minds. The first is this. Take no foolish chances. Don't be foolhardy. We cannot afford to waste our tools. And in this struggle tools are what you are, not boys, not human beings that will feel cold, and heat, and pain and privations; just tools. So take no chances.

"We will go right from the dock to General Pershing. I do not know where he is. However, after I have seen him, I will know where to place you. He will tell me if my plan for you as I have outlined it is a good one. Rest assured that I will keep you as near me as I possibly can.

"I have told you my first order. No chances other than the chances of war. The second thing is to keep ourselves as clean and as well as you possibly can. Take every safeguard that you can possibly take. You do not want to be on the sick list the time when I most need you. That's about all, boys. Don't forget that I am always your friend."

The boys gulped queerly. Then Beany spoke up boldly.

"And don't you forget that we are your friends, too! I read a piece once in a reader about a lion that was all tied up with ropes and a mouse happened around and chewed him loose. You are a colonel, but we are your friends just the same."

The Colonel burst out laughing. "Chew away, old fellow!" he said when he could speak. "In the meantime let's get ready to leave."

"But, Colonel," wailed Porky, who never forgot anything and who had an amount of curiosity that later nearly lost the Colonel one of his "tools," "--but, Colonel, what about the mate?"

"By Jove, I forgot I promised to tell you about him! Well, two or three times Captain Greene thought his traps looked as though some one had been going through them, but he had everything locked up, and special keys made. These were on him night and day. But, you see, the mate knew a trick worth two of that. As he had the run of everything, he simply doped the cup of coffee the Captain always took before going to bed, and, while the man was under the influence of the drug, he simply went through things. Fortunately he was unable to find some papers that he was most anxious to get hold of, and in the meantime the Captain spoke to the ship's doctor about feeling queer and lazy in the morning.

"Because everybody is suspicious of everything out of the beaten track these days, the doctor took to watching things a little on

his own hook. He finally analyzed some of the coffee, and that put him on the right track. A smart lad, that doctor, I can tell you! But it looked as though the mate smelled a mouse. For days the Captain slept normally, while I commenced to get a dose of the same medicine. I did not know what was happening in the Captain's cabin, and no one was watching me. One night the doctor came in just after I had had my last cigar and sat talking to me. Blamed if I didn't go to sleep sitting bolt upright talking to him! He laid me down on the bunk, and my cigar stub came in for analysis. There was more dope! Fact! Things got pretty thick along about then. No one suspected the mate, but we suspected everybody else on the ship almost. Then little things commenced to happen to the ship's machinery. One little thing after another broke down. We seemed to be regular bait for submarines. He had some way of signaling them other than the ship's wireless. It is certain that he never got hold of that, and he did not succeed in putting it out of commission if he tried to do so. We don't know whether he did try or not.

"Then one night or one morning, rather, the doctor was found unconscious just outside the Captain's door. When he came to, he said he had felt uneasy about things, because nothing had happened for several days, so he thought he would take a look around. He was in his stocking feet, and just as he reached the Captain's cabin, he saw a form ahead of him against the white door. He approached cautiously, but could not tell whether the person saw him or not. He did, all right. As soon as the doctor was within striking distance, the shadow struck and down went the doctor. He was hit with some padded weapon a glancing blow that merely knocked him out for a few hours. If it had struck full--well, we would have been shy one good doctor.

"When he was all right again, we put our heads together, and decided to bait the midnight visitor with some bogus papers. Of course we still did not have the least suspicion as to the real source of the trouble.

"That mate was in our confidence, and was at all our consultations. We followed clue after clue suggested by him. And I will say they were good ones. We found part of the missing papers sewed into the bedding roll of a soldier who happened to be saddled with a jaw-breaking German name, the hangover from some ancestors. We trotted him off to the brig, intending to execute him later. Then we found a trinket belonging to the Captain in the pocket of one of the sailors, a Swede. The idea was, you see, to scatter our attention.

"I don't know where we would have ended if it hadn't been for a trick of the Captain's. He told the mate, and everybody else he could get hold of, that he had an ulcerated tooth, and was going to take a sleeping powder. He had some powdered sugar all fixed up. The mate was the only man in the cabin at the time, and the Captain said all at once something came over him as though a voice had shouted, 'Here is the man!'

"Yet not a line of the fellow's face changed. It was just sheer intuition. When the mate left the room, the Captain got hold of the doctor, who was the only one we were really trusting then, and tipped him off. He in turn came to me and I did my part by

declaring loudly that I was dead tired and was going to turn in.

"Well, boys, at four this morning we caught our bird. The mate, of all men on the ship! They caught him red-handed, as they say, at the Captain's locker, and the doctor laid him out with a neat little tap from a billy, and when he came to we put him through the third degree. And we overhauled his things and found enough information to get him a string of German crosses a yard long.

"He was meek as could be; but I know now that was because he thought he had a good chance to get away somehow. We are near shore; and it seems he can swim like a duck--a long-distance champion and all that. He was so very meek about it that we were a little careless. I know it taught me a lesson. There are only two places where a spy is safe: in his grave, or in irons; and he's not very safe then. He watched his chance and when he got a second's show, he moved like a whirlwind. He knocked his guard down and grabbed his revolver, all in one jump, shot full at Captain Greene, missed him but winged me and killed the captain of the Firefly, poor fellow!

"Then he made for the door with Captain Green after him; and you know the rest."

"Gee!" said Porky.

"Sakes!" added Beany.

There was a silence. The Colonel looked at his watch. There was a sound of tramping from above.

"They are getting the men ready to go ashore," he said. "This is to be the last daylight disembarkation. Better go up and take a look around, boys. It is worth seeing. Are your things all ship-shape?"

"Yes, sir; all ready to pick up," said Porky, "Can't we do something for you?"

"Not a thing, thank you! This arm does not even burn now. When you see me on deck, just fall in, and don't let me have to look for you." He smiled and dismissed them with a nod as the doctor entered.

"Doc," he said as the young man proceeded to put a dressing on the wounded arm, "there go two, of the most remarkable boys I have ever known. I expect great things of them sooner or later if their lives are spared."

And with this prophecy, which was to be fulfilled far sooner than the Colonel dreamed, the subject was closed.

On deck the boys, with their bags beside them, watched the orderly rush of disembarkation with the keenest delight. They were as glad to go ashore as they had been to go aboard in that far, fair America that they were so proud and happy to call home.

Load after load of men left the side of the great ship, and the empty boats came dancing back from the great distant docks for

other loads. The men were all happy and excited. The air was clear and clean as though it had just been washed, as indeed it had by a heavy rain the night before.

Overhead a couple of great planes circled above the harbor. The thought that they did not know where they were lent a touch of unreality and, romance to it all. The boats full of men went gayly off, the soldiers singing, calling, and whistling back to their mates still on board.

"Well, we are here!" said Porky soberly.

"Yep!" answered Beany. There was a long silence. Then, "We are here all right!" he repeated.

"Yep!" said Porky.

"I Wish we could call mom and pop up on a long distance and tell them we are safe. It's going to be some old time before we see them again!"

"Sure is!" agreed Porky, his face growing strangely long at the thought. "There's one thing we got to remember. We are here, and they were game to let us come. I didn't realize how game they were, Beans, but they sure were game! Well, we have got to pay them up for it, and the only way we can do it, is by first taking the best care of ourselves that we possibly can, and then by doing something to make them proud of us. Of course we don't know what we can do, but something will come up, I know; and it's up to us to do it."

"You bet we will!" said Beany solemnly. They turned again to watch the sailors.

Colonel Bright appeared on deck just then, and the boys hurried to his side, and stood unobtrusively behind him.

The next few hours passed in such a whirl that they were never clearly defined in the boys' memory. Event followed event with dizzying rapidity. Short trips on strange, camouflaged little railroads, alternated with dashes in strange, large, unkempt automobiles driven by haggard, desperate, cool, young fellows who looked and were equal to any emergency. Little was said. Occasionally they were personally conducted by one or two French officers who talked rapidly in their own tongue to Colonel Bright, who actually understood what they said, and fired back remarks almost as rapid as theirs.

"Machine guns!" Beany muttered once to his brother.

As they went on, the country commenced to show devastating effect of war. By the time darkness fell they were passing through a torn and tumbled landscape, with here and there a ruined village. They reached a place finally, unlighted, almost unmarked in the darkness. The boys wondered at the cleverness of the chauffeur as he silently rounded a corner and brought his car up to a ruined gateway, behind which a small squat building showed dimly.

Without a word Colonel Bright went rapidly up the path, the boys

following closely behind, while the orderly carried the Colonel's bags.

A low tap on the door and it opened, disclosing a densely dark hall or room; the boys could not see enough to tell what it was. As the door was closed, a flashlight was pressed, and they were able to follow their guide across the space and through another corridor to a heavy door. A low tap and this door was opened.

As they entered, a man rose from a desk. He was gray and grizzled; a man whose keen face and eagle glance were destined to live as long as history is written or read, a man in whom America rests her pride and hopes.

As they entered, he bent his piercing glance upon them; then, recognizing Colonel Bright, his face was lighted with a bright smile that suddenly wiped out its lines of care, and he stepped forward, both hands extended in greeting.

It was General Pershing.

The boys, standing well back in the shadows of the gloomy room, felt something catch their throats.

France... the firing line... General Pershing...

All at once, they had no doubts, no memories, no homesickness, no regrets. France; the firing line; General Pershing!

The boys stood rigidly at attention. The room was dark; no one saw them. It did not matter. Joy and courage and high hopes filled their hearts.

It was the beginning of their Great Adventure.

THE END

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