

The Boy Scouts In Russia eBook

The Boy Scouts In Russia

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THE BORDER

A train had just come to a stop in the border station of Virballen. Half of the platform of that station is in Russia; half of it in East Prussia, the easternmost province of the German empire. All trains that pass from one country to the other stop there. There are customs men, soldiers, policemen, Prussian and Russian, who form a gauntlet all travelers must run. Here passports must be shown, trunks opened. Getting in or out of Russia is not a simple business, even in the twentieth century. All sorts of people can't come in while a good many who try to get out are turned back, and may have to make a long journey to Siberia if they cannot account for themselves properly.

This train had stopped in the dead of night. But, dark and late as it was, there was the usual bustle and stir. Everyone had to wake up and submit to the questioning of police and customs men. About the only people who can escape such inquisition at Virballen or any other Russian border station are royalties and ambassadors. Most of the passengers, however, didn't have to come out on the platform. In this case, indeed, only two descended. One of these was treated by the police officials with marked respect. He was the sort of man to inspire both respect and fear. Very tall, he was heavily bearded, but not so heavily as to prevent the flashing of his teeth in a grim and unpleasant smile. Nor were his eyes hidden as the rays of the station lights fell upon them.

He was called "Excellency" by the policemen who spoke to him, but he ignored these men, save for a short, quick nod with which he acknowledged their respectful greetings. His whole attention was devoted to the boy by his side, who was looking up at him defiantly. This boy won a tribute of curious looks from all who saw him, and some glances of admiration when it became increasingly plain that he did not share the universal feeling of awe for the man by his side. This was accounted for, partly at least, it might be supposed, by the fact that he wasn't a Russian. The Americans in the train, had they been out on the platform, would have recognized him at once for he was sturdily and obviously American.

The train began to move. With a shrill shriek from the engine, and the banging of doors, it glided out of the station. Soon its tail lights were swinging out of sight. But the Russian and the American boy remained, while the train, with its load of free and cheerful passengers, went on toward Berlin.

"You wouldn't let me take the train. Well, what are you going to do with me now?" asked the boy.

His tone was as defiant as his look and if he was afraid, he didn't show it. He wasn't afraid, as a matter of fact. He was angry.

The Russian considered him for a moment, saying not a word. Then he called in a low, hushed tone, and three or four policemen came running up.

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"You see this boy?" he asked.

"Yes, excellency."

"It has pleased His Majesty the Czar, acting through the administration of the police of St. Petersburg, to expel him from his dominions. He is honored by my personal attention. I in person am executing the order of His Majesty. I shall now conduct him to the exact border line and see to it that he is placed on German soil. His name is Frederick Waring. On no pretext is he to be allowed to return to Russian soil. Should he succeed in doing so, he is to be arrested, denied the privilege of communication with any friend, or with the consul or ambassador of any foreign nation, and delivered to me in Petersburg. You will receive this order in due form to-night. Understood?"

"Yes, excellency."

"Photographs will be attached to the official order." He turned again to the boy, and for just a moment the expressionless mask was swept from his eyes by a look of fierce hatred. "Now, then, step forward! As soon as you have passed the line on the platform you will be on German territory, subject to German law. I give you a word of good advice. Do not offend against the German authorities. You will find them less merciful than I."

"I'm not afraid of you," said Fred. He was angry, but his voice was steady nevertheless. "You've cheated me. You've had my passport and my money taken from me. What do you think I can do, when you land me in a strange country in the middle of the night, without a kopeck in my pocket? But I'll find a way to get back at you. Any man who would treat me the way you have done is sure to have treated some other people badly, too. And I'll find them—perhaps they'll be stronger than I."

"Your papers were confiscated in due process," said the Russian. He smiled very evilly. "As for your threats—pah! Do you think your word would carry any weight against that of Mikail Suvaroff, a prince of Russia, a friend of the Grand Duke Nicholas and General of the army?"

"Oh, you're a great man," said Fred. "I know that. But you're not so great that you don't have to keep straight. You may think I had no business to come to Russia. Perhaps you are right, but that's no reason for you to treat me like this. After all, you're my uncle —"

"Silence!" said Suvaroff harshly, startled at the carrying power of the boy's voice.

Fred stepped nimbly across the line.

"You can't touch me now, by your own word!" he taunted. "I'm in Germany, and your authority stops at the border! I say, I could forget everything except the way you've put



me down here in the middle of the night, without a cent to my name or a friend I can call on! You needn't have done that. I don't suppose you took my money—you don't need it—but you let your underlings take it."

"I do not know that you ever had the money you say was taken from you," said Suvaroff, controlling himself. "It is easy for you to make such a charge. But the officers who arrested you deny that they found any money in your possession. There is no reason to take your word against them."

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Fred stared at him curiously for a moment.

“Gee! You do hate us—and me!” he said, slowly. “I think you really believe all you’ve said about me! Well, I’m glad if that’s so. It gives you a sort of excuse for behaving the way you have to me. And I’d certainly hate to think that any relative of mine could act like you unless he thought he was in the right, anyhow!”

Suvaroff strangled with anger for a moment. His cruel eyes became narrow.

“I have changed my mind!” he cried, suddenly. “Seize him! Bring him back!”

Fred stood perfectly still as two or three policemen and a couple of soldiers in the white uniform coats of Russia came toward him. He knew that it would be useless either to run or to fight. But, as it turned out, there was no need for him to do either, for from behind him a sharp order was snapped out by a young man who had been listening with interest. Quietly a file of German soldiers with spiked helmets stepped forward.

“Your pardon, excellency,” said the German officer. “It is, of course, quite impossible for us to permit Russian officials or soldiers to make an arrest on our side of the line!”

“A matter of courtesy—” began Suvaroff.

“Pardon again,” said the German, very softly. “Just at this moment courtesy must be suspended. With a general mobilization in effect upon both sides—”

Suvaroff suppressed the angry exclamation that was on his lips. For a moment, however, he seemed about to repeat his order, though his men had halted at the sight of German bayonets.

“I should regret a disturbance,” said the German, still speaking in his quiet voice. “My orders are to permit my men to do nothing that might bring on a clash, for just now the firing of a single shot would make war certain. Yet there is nothing in my orders to forbid me to resist an act of aggression by Russia. We are prepared for war, though we do not seek it.”

Fred, almost losing interest in his own pressing troubles at this sudden revelation of a state of affairs of which he had known nothing whatever, looked fixedly at Suvaroff. He saw the Russian bite his lips, hesitate, and finally take off his hat and make a sweeping bow to the German officer.

“I agree, mein herr Lieutenant,” he said, mockingly. “The time has come, I think. It may be that the fortunes of war will bring us together. Meanwhile I wish you joy of him you have saved!”

The German did not answer. He watched the departing Russians and then, smiling faintly, he turned to Fred.

"I'll have to ask you to give some account of yourself, if you please," he said, in excellent English. "I'm Lieutenant Ernst, of the Prussian army. Sentenced to guard duty here—for my sins. Now will you tell me what all this means?"

"I had a passport," said Fred directly, and meeting the German's eyes frankly. "Prince Suvaroff is my uncle, my mother's brother. Her family refused to recognize my mother after her marriage to my father, and so Prince Suvaroff does not like me. I had to see him on business and family matters. I was arrested. My passport and my money were taken away from me—and you saw what happened. He took me off the train and put me across the border."

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Ernst nodded.

"Things are done so in Russia—sometimes," he said. "Not always, but they are possible, for a great noble. Well, I have seen things nearly as bad in my own Prussia! I shall have to see what may be done for you. If you reach Berlin, your ambassador will be able to help you, yes?"

"I am quite sure of it," said Fred, eagerly. "I don't want to trouble you, but if you could help me to get there—"

A soldier interrupted him. He stepped up to Ernst, saluted, and, permission given, spoke in the officer's ear. Ernst started.

"One minute," he said. "I am called away—I will return in one minute."

The minute dragged itself out. In all directions there was a rising sound, confused, urgent. Fifteen minutes passed. Then a soldier came to Fred.

"The lieutenant will see you inside," he said, gravely.

Fred followed him. Ernst, his face sober, but with shining eyes, spoke to him at once.

"War has been declared," he said. "War between Germany and Russia! My young friend, you are in hard luck! The train from which you were expelled is the last that will even start for Berlin until the mobilization is complete."

Outside there was a sudden rattle of rifle fire. Fred stared at the German officer.

"That is the beginning," he said. "We happen to have the stronger force here. We are taking possession of the Russian side of the border station! I wish we might catch Suvaroff—he is a good soldier, that one at least, and worth a division to the Russians. But there'll be no such luck. He'll have got away, of course—a fast motor, or some such way. And they've got more troops close up than we have."

And still Fred stared. He seemed unable to realize that this popping of rifles, this calm, undemonstrative series of statements by an unexcited German officer, meant that war had come at last—the European war of which people even in America had talked for years as sure to come!

"As for you, I meant, of course, to lend you the money and let you go on to Berlin," said Ernst. "Now I can lend you the money, but there will be no trains. You can't stay here. The Russians, I think, will advance very quickly, and it will not be here that we shall try to stop them, but further back and among the lakes to the south. Even if there is a concentration, however, foreigners will not be wanted."

“What shall I do?” asked Fred.

“You speak German?”

“Yes.”

“Then I shall lend you some money—what I can spare. You can start back toward Koenigsberg and Danzig. Your consul will be able to help you. You can walk and the people will gladly sell you food.”

“Yes, and thank you for the chance, I’m a Boy Scout; I won’t mind a hike at all.”

CHAPTER II

UNDER ARREST

So it was arranged for Fred Waring, thousands of miles from home, to start from Virballen. The lieutenant who had saved him from Suvaroff lent him what money he could spare, though all told it was less than a hundred marks, which is twenty dollars.

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"Good-bye, and good luck go with you," said Ernst. "If we do not meet again it will be a real good-bye. If you can send the money back, let it go to my mother in Danzig. If you cannot, do not let it worry you! If any people ask you questions, answer them quickly. If any tell you to stop, stop! Remember that this is war time and every stranger is suspected. You will be in no danger if you will remember to answer questions and obey orders."

"Thank you again—and good-bye," said Fred. He had known this German officer for only a few minutes, but he felt that he was parting from a good friend, and, indeed, he was. Not many men would have been so considerate and so kindly, especially at such a time, to a strange boy from a foreign land, and one, moreover, who had certainly not come with the best of recommendations. "I—I hope you'll come through all right."

"That's to be seen," said Ernst, with a shrug of the shoulders. "In war who can tell? We take our chances, we who live by the sword. If a Russian is to get me, he will do so, and it will not help to be afraid, or to think of the chances that I may not see the end of what has been begun to-night! We have been getting ready for years. Now we shall know before long if we have done enough. The test has come for us of the fatherland."

And then Fred said a bold thing.

"I can wish you good luck and a safe return, Lieutenant," he said. "But I can't wish that your country may be victorious because my mother, after all, was a Russian."

"I wouldn't ask that of you," said Ernst, with a laugh. "Even though it is Prince Suvaroff's country, too?"

"There are Germans you do not like, I suppose—who are even your enemies," said Fred. "Yet now you will forget all that, will you not?"

"God helping us, yes!" said Ernst. "You are right. Your heart must be with your own. But you don't seem like a Russian, or I would not be helping you."

Then Fred was off, going on his way into the darkness alone. Ernst had told him which road to follow, telling him that if he stuck to it he would not be likely to run into any troop movements.

"Don't see too much. That is a good rule for one who is in a country at war," he had advised. "If you know nothing, you cannot tell the enemy anything useful, and there will be less reason for our people to make trouble for you. Your only real danger lies in being taken for a spy. And if you are careful not to learn things, that will not be a very great one."

Fred was not at all afraid, as a matter of fact, as he set out. Before he had stepped across the mark that stood for the border he had been hugely depressed. He had been



friendless and alone. He had been worse than friendless, indeed, since the only man for many miles about who knew him was his bitter enemy. Now he had found that he could still inspire a man like Ernst with belief in his truthfulness and honesty, and the knowledge did him a lot of good. And then, of course, he had another excellent reason for not being afraid. He was entirely ignorant of the particular dangers that were ahead of him. He had no conception at all of what lay before him, and it does not require bravery not to fear a danger the very existence of which one is entirely without knowledge.

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The idea of walking all through the summer night, as Ernst had advised him to do, did not seem bad to him at all. As a scout at home, he had taken part in many a hike, and if few of them had been at night, he was still thoroughly accustomed to being out-of-doors, without even the shelter of a tent or a lean-to. Nor was he afraid of losing his way, for as long as the stars shone above, as they did brilliantly now, he had a sure guide.

Fred wasn't tired, for he had enraged Suvaroff, who had seemingly wanted him to be frightened, by sleeping during the journey to Virballen whenever he could. It had been comfortable enough on the train; he had not been treated as a prisoner, but as a guest. And he had, as a matter of fact, been aroused only an hour before the train had reached the frontier.

So he had been able to start out boldly and confidently. In the country through which he was now tramping the nights are cool in summer, but the days are very hot. So Fred had made up his mind, as soon as he understood that he had a good deal of walking before him, to do as much of his traveling as was possible by night, and to sleep during the day. In East Prussia, as in some parts of Canada, the summer is short and hot; the winter long and cold.

There was nothing about the silent countryside, as he tramped along an excellent road, to make him think of war. The fields about him seemed to be planted less with grain; they were very largely used for pasture, and he saw a good many horses. He remembered now that this was the great horse breeding district of Germany. Here there were great estates with many acres of rolling land on which great numbers of horses were bred. It was here, he knew, that the German army, needing great numbers of horses every year, found its mounts.

"They'll need more than ever now," he thought to himself. "If there's really to be war, I suppose they'll take every horse that's able to work at all, whether it's a good looking beast or not. Poor horses! They don't have much chance, I guess."

He thought of the Cossacks he had seen in Russia, wiry, small men, in the main, mounted on shaggy, strong, little horses, no bigger in reality than ponies. He had heard of the prowess of the Cossacks, of course. They had fought well in the past in a good many wars. But somehow it seemed rather absurd to match them, with their undersized horses, against magnificent specimens of men and horseflesh such as the German cavalry. He had passed a squadron of Uhlans, near Virballen, outlined against the sky. They had been grim and business-like in appearance. But then the Cossacks were that, too, though in an entirely different way.

"I wish I had someone along!" he thought, at last.

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That was when the dawn was beginning to break. Off to the east the sun was beginning to rise, and in the grey half light before full day there was something stark and gaunt about the country. Before him smoke was rising, probably from a village. But that sign of human habitation, that certain indication that people were near, somehow only made him feel lonelier than he had been in the starlit darkness of the night. This would be good enough fun, if only one of his many friends back home were along—Jack French, or Steve Vedder. It was with them that he had shared such adventures in the past. And yet not just such adventures, either. This was more real than anything his adventures as a Boy Scout had brought him, though he belonged to a patrol that got in a lot of outdoor work, and that camped out every summer in a practical way.

Being alone took some of the zest out of what had seemed, once Lieutenant Ernst's loan had saved him from his most pressing worry, likely to be a bully adventure. Now it seemed rather flat and stale. But that was partly because having tramped all night, he was really beginning to be tired. So he went on to the village, and there he found a little inn, where he got a good breakfast and a bed, in which, as soon as he had eaten his meal, he was sound asleep.

Few men were about the village when he went in. He had noticed, however, the curious little throng, early as it was, about a bulletin ominously headed, "Kriegzustand!" That meant mobilization and war. The men had answered the call already, all except those who were too old to spring to arms at once. Some of the older ones, he knew, would be called out, too, for garrison duty, so that younger men might go to the front.

In his sleep he had many dreams, but the most insistent one was made up of the tramp of heavy feet and the blowing of bugles and the rattling of horses' feet. And this wasn't a dream at all, for when he awoke it was to find a soldier shaking him roughly by the shoulders, and ordering him to get up. And outside were all the sounds of his dream. The sun was high for he had been asleep for several hours. So he got up willingly enough, and hurried his dressing because he remembered what Ernst had told him. Then he followed the soldier downstairs, and found himself the prisoner in an impromptu sort of court-martial.

Really, it wasn't as bad as that. Considering that he had no passports and nothing, in fact, to show who he was, and that no responsible person could vouch for him, he was very lucky. It was because he was a boy, and obviously an American boy, that he got off so easily. For after he had answered a few questions, a major explained the situation to him very punctiliously.

"You must be detained here for two or three days," said the major. "This is an important concentration district, and many things will happen that no foreigner can be allowed to see. We believe absolutely that you are not unfriendly, and that you have no intention of reporting anything you might chance to learn to an enemy. But in time of war we may

not take any risks, and you will, therefore, be required to remain in this village under observation.

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"Within the village limits you will be as free as if you were at home, in your own country. You will not be allowed to pass them, however, and if you try to do so a sentry will shoot you. As soon as certain movements are completed, you will be at liberty to pass on, on your way to Koenigsberg. I will add to Lieutenant Ernst's advice. When you reach Koenigsberg, after you have reported yourself to the police, wait there until a train can take you to Berlin. It will mean only a few days of waiting, for at Koenigsberg there are already many refugees, and the authorities want to get them to Berlin as soon as the movements of troop trains allow the railway to be reopened for passenger traffic."

Fred agreed to all this. There was nothing else for him to do, for one thing, and, for another, he was by no means unwilling to see whatever there might be to be seen here. He could guess by this time that without any design he had stumbled on a spot that was reckoned rather important by the Germans, for the time being at least, and he had heard enough about the wonderful efficiency of the German army to be anxious to see that mighty machine in the act of getting ready to move.

He did see a good deal, as a matter of fact, that day and the next. It was on the famous Saturday night of the first of August that he had left Virballen. Sunday brought news of a clash with France, far away on the western border, and of the German invasion of Belgium. Monday brought word of a definite declaration of war between Germany and France, and of the growing danger that England, too, might be involved.

And all of Sunday and all of Monday supplies of all sorts poured through the little village in an unceasing stream. Motor cars and trucks were to be seen in abundance, and Fred caught his first glimpse, which was not to be his last, of the wonderful German field kitchens, in the mighty ovens of which huge loaves of bread were being baked even while the whole clumsy looking apparatus was on the move. But it only looked clumsy. Like everything else about the German army, this was a practical and efficient, well tried device.

Then suddenly, early on Tuesday, he was told that he was free to go, or would be by nightfall. And that day all signs of the German army, save a small force of Uhlans, vanished from the village. That evening, refreshed and ready for the road again, Fred set out. And that same evening, though he did not know it until the next day, England entered the war against Germany.

CHAPTER III

A STRANGE MEETING

As he walked west Fred noticed, even in the night, a change in the country. It was not that he passed once in a while a solitary soldier guarding a culvert, as he neared a railway, or a patrol, with its twinkling fire, watching this spot or that that needed special

guarding. That was part of war, the part of war that he had been able to foresee. It wasn't anything due to the war that made an impression on his mind so much as a sort of thickening of the country. Though he had traveled so short a distance from the Russian border, there seemed to be more people about.

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Great houses, rising on high ground, with small, contented looking villages nestling, as it were, under their protection, were frequent. He was, as a matter of fact, in a country of great aristocratic landholders, the great nobles of Prussia, the men who are the real rulers of the country, under the Prussian King, who is also the German Kaiser. And in many of these great houses lights were burning, even after midnight, when all signs of life in the villages had ceased. The country was stirring, and there was more of it to stir. Now from time to time he heard the throbbing hum of an automobile motor. Only one or two of these passed him, going in either direction, on the road along which he was traveling. But there were parallel roads, and he could hear the throbbing motors on these, and often see the pointing shafts of light from their lights, searching out the road before them as they sped along.

Fred knew enough of Germany to understand something of what he saw and heard. It was from these great houses that a great many officers were contributed to the army. These young men had no real career before them from their birth, almost, except in the army. So it was easy to guess why the lights were burning in those mansions, and why there was anxiety among them, and why the throbbing motor cars were humming over the roads.

If Germany were beaten back in the beginning, if the task she had undertaken proved too heavy, this was the province that was sure to feel the first brunt of invasion. Behind him, to the east, Fred knew were the great masses of Russia, moving slowly, but with a terrible, always increasing force. No wonder these people were stirring, were sending out all their men to drive back the huge power that lay so near them, a constant menace!

But now, though he did not know it, Fred was approaching real danger for the first time. Many of the motors he saw and heard were going west. Though he could not guess it, they were carrying women and children away from the old houses that were too much exposed, too directly in the path of a possible invasion for the helpless ones to be left in them when the men had gone to fight. All Germany had to be defended. It happened to be the part of East Prussia to bear invasion, if it came to that.

And so the people of the great houses were making their migration. The men went to their regiments; the women to Berlin, and to the great fortresses that lay nearer than Berlin—Koenigsberg, Danzig, Thorn. This was historic country that Fred was traversing, the same country that had trembled beneath the thundering march of Napoleon's grand army more than a hundred years before, when the great Emperor had launched the mad adventure against Russia that had sealed his fate.

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But he didn't think of these things, except of Napoleon, as he trudged along. Once more he traveled through the night. Once more, as the first signs of morning came, he began to feel tired, and, despite the food he had carried with him which he had stopped to eat about midnight, he was hungry. And, as had been the case on the night of his tramp from Virballen, the first rays of the rising sun showed him a village. It was in a hollow, and above it the ground rose sharply to a large house, evidently very old, built of a grey stone that had been weathered by the winds and rains of centuries. It was a very old house, and strangely out of tune, it seemed to Fred, with the country though not with the times. It was so old that it showed some traces of fortification, and Fred knew how long it was since private houses had been built with any view to defence. It was a survivor of the days when this whole region had been an outpost of civilization against hordes of barbarian invaders.

One curious thing he noticed at once about the great house. No flag was flying from it, though it boasted a sort of turret from which a flag might well have been flung out to the wind. All the other big houses he had seen had had flags out and the absence of a standard here seemed significant, somehow.

When he entered the village he found that there was no inn. He saw the usual notice of mobilization and the proclamation of war, but the people were not stirring yet. He had to wait for some time before he found a house where people were up. They looked at him curiously, but grudgingly consented to give him breakfast. There was an old man, and another who was younger, but crippled. And this cripple was the one who seemed most puzzled by Fred's appearance in the place. He surveyed him closely and twice Fred caught him whispering, evidently about him.

Then the cripple slipped away and came back, just as Fred was finishing his meal, with a pompous looking, superannuated policeman, recalled to duty since the younger men had all gone to war. This man asked many questions which Fred answered.

"You are American?" asked the policeman, finally. "You are sure you are not English?"

All at once the truth came over Fred. They thought he was English! Then England must have entered the war! They would think that he was an enemy, perhaps a spy! Yet, though he knew now the cause of the suspicious looks, the mutterings, he couldn't utter a word in his defence. He hadn't been formally accused of anything.

"Yes, I'm an American," he said, quietly. "I'm not English. I've no English blood in me."

He had intended to try to get a place to sleep in the village, but now he decided that it would be better to get away as soon as he could. If there had been soldiers about, or any really responsible police officials, he would not have been at all disturbed. But these people were nervous and ignorant; the best men of the place had gone, the ones

most likely to have a good understanding. So he paid his little reckoning, and started to walk on.

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They followed him as he started. As soon as he was in the open road again, a new idea came to him. Why not try the great house on the hill? There certainly someone would know the difference between an American and an Englishman. He was very tired. He knew that, even if he went on, he would have to stop at some village sooner or later. And if he was suspected here, he would be at the next place.

And so, trying to ignore the little crowd that was following him, he turned off and began climbing toward the mansion above the village.

It was like a signal. From behind him there rose a dull murmur. A lad not much older than himself raced up and stood threateningly in his path.

"If you are an American and honest, why are you going there?" asked this boy, a peasant, and rather stupid in his appearance.

"None of your business!" said Fred, aroused. He didn't think that the advice of his friend Lieutenant Ernst to answer questions covered this.

"You can't go there. There are spies enough there already!" cried the other.

And then without any warning, he lunged forward and tried to grapple with Fred.

That aroused all the primitive fight in Fred. He met the attack joyously for wrestling was something he understood very well. And in a moment he had pinned the peasant boy, strong as he was, to the earth.

But he had got rid of one opponent only to have a dozen others spring up. There was a throng about him as he shook himself free, a throng that closed in, shouting, cursing. For a moment things looked serious. Fred now understood these people thought he was a spy. And he could guess that it would go hard with him if he didn't get away. He forgot everything but that, and he fought hard and well to make good his escape. But they were too many for him. Try as he would, he couldn't get clear, although he put up a fight that must have been a tremendous surprise to his assailants. In the end, though, they got him down, with cries of triumph.

And then there came a sudden diversion from outside the mob. Down the road from the great house, shrieking a warning, came a flying motor car. Its siren sounded quick, angry blasts, and the mob, terrified, broke and scattered to get out of the way of the car. Fred, stupefied, didn't run. He had to jump quickly to one side to get out of the car's path. Then he saw that it was slowing down, and that it was driven by a boy of his own age. This boy leaned toward him.

"I'm going to turn and go back. Jump aboard as I come by—I won't be going very fast!" he cried.



Fred didn't stop to argue or to wonder why this stranger had come to his aid in such a sensational and timely fashion. Instead, he gathered himself together and, as the car swung about and passed him, leaped in. As he grasped the seat, the driver shot the car forward and it went roaring up the hill, pursued by a chorus of angry cries from the crowd, utterly balked of its prey.

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"That was a close call for you!" said the driver, in German.

But something in his tone made Fred look at him sharply. And then part of the mystery was solved. For the driver was not a German at all, but plainly and unmistakably a Russian.

"Yes—but how—why—?"

"Wait! Don't talk now!" said the driver. "Wait till we're inside. We'll be all right there, and I've got a few questions I'd like to ask, too."

There was no more danger from the mob of villagers, however. The speed of the car, even on the steep grade, was too great to give pursuers on foot a chance, and so its driver was able, in a few moments, to drive it through great open gates into a huge courtyard.

"Now who are you?" he asked. "And why were those people attacking you?"

"They thought I was English," said Fred. "I suppose England must have declared war on Germany, too."

"She has. Aren't you English, then?"

"No, I'm American. My name's Fred Waring. You're a Russian, aren't you?"

"Yes. My name's Boris Suvaroff. This is a summer place my father owns here. He's away. I'm glad of that, because the Germans would have taken him prisoner if he'd been here."

For just a moment neither seemed to catch the other's name. Then the Russian boy spoke.

"Fred Waring—an American?" he said. "I—is it possible? I've got a cousin called Waring in America! My father's first cousin married an American of that name years and years ago."

"She was a Suvaroff—my mother," said Fred, but he spoke stiffly. "Her family here disowned her—"

"Some of them—only some of them," said Boris. "Are you really my cousin? My father wrote to your mother long ago—but he got no answer! He has often told me of her. He was very fond of her! Are you really my cousin?"

"I guess I am!" said Fred. "I'm glad to know that some of you will own me! My uncle Mikail had me arrested when I went to see him in Petersburg!"

And then while they learned about one another, the two of them forgot the war and the danger in which they stood.

CHAPTER IV

COUSINS

“So you have seen Mikail Suvaroff!” said Boris. He shook his head. “We have seen little of him in the last few years. He and my father do not agree. Mikail is on the side of the men about the Czar who want no changes, who want to see the people crushed and kept down. My father wants a new Russia, with all the people happier and stronger.”

“Then I should think they wouldn’t agree,” said Fred, heartily. “Mikail is like the Russians one reads about, dark and mysterious, and always sending people to Siberia and that sort of thing.”

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"It isn't as bad as that, of course," said Boris, with a laugh. "Russia isn't like other countries, but we're not such barbarians as some people try to make out. Still, of course, there are a lot of things that ought to be changed. Russia has been apart from the rest of the world because she's so big and independent. That's why there are two parties, the conservatives and the liberals. My father is all for the Czar, but he wants the Czar to govern through the men the people elect to the Duma. After this war—well, we shall see! There will be many changes, I think. You see, this time it is all Russia that fights. Against Japan we were not united. It is the Russian people who have made this war."

"I only knew there was danger of war the night it began," said Fred. "I suppose it is on account of Servia, though?"

"Yes. That started it. They are Slavs, like ourselves. It is as it was when we fought Turkey nearly forty years ago. The Turks were murdering Slavs in the Balkans, and all our people called on the Czar to fight. This time we could not let Austria bully a nation that is almost like a little brother to Russia."

"I can understand that," said Fred. "I suppose there's enough of the Slav in me, from my mother, to make me feel like that, too."

"Even after the way Mikail treated you? Tell me about that. Why did he behave so, though I suppose you may not know?"

"I don't, really. My father is dead, you know. I and my mother are alone. She has always loved Russia, though she calls herself an American, and is one, and has always made me understand that I am an American, before all. But she has taught me to love Russia, too. And she has always told me that there were estates in Russia that belonged to her, and would belong to me. She and my father were angry and hurt because of the way her family treated them, but she said that some time she wanted me to take possession of the estate, and to live for a little time each year in Russia. She said that the peasants on the place would be better off if I did that."

"Yes," Boris nodded. "That is what those who criticise us do not always remember. Russian nobles do look after their peasants. The peasants in Russia have not had the advantages of the poor in other countries. They are like children still. My father is a father to all the people on our estate. When they are sick, he sees that they are cared for. If there are bad crops, he gives them food and money. We must all do such things."

"That's what she told me. Well, she wrote letters and she could get no answers. So she decided to come herself. But she was taken ill. Not seriously, but ill enough so that the doctor did not want her to travel. And that was why I came. I went to my uncle, because he was in charge of her affairs. And then, though he was kind enough when I first saw him, and promised to help me, I was arrested. All my papers were

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taken away, and all my money. And he brought me to Virballen, after I had been kept in a sort of prison for three or four weeks. There I was taken off the train for Berlin and put across the border, without any money or passports. The German lieutenant himself was going to send me to Berlin, but then the news came that war had been declared, and he advised me to walk. I was held up at the first village I came to, and I got as far as this. You saw what happened here in this little village.”

“That is very, very strange,” said Boris, vastly puzzled. “Do you know what charge was made against you?”

“No! Some tommyrot about a conspiracy against the Czar. But just what it was I was never told. I am forbidden to re-enter Russia.”

“I don’t understand at all,” said Boris. “Mikail can’t want to keep your mother’s property for himself. He is a very rich man—by far the richest of the family, though none of the Suvaroffs are poor. And I know about your mother’s lands, because they are next to our own.”

“The money that comes from them has always been sent to her,” said Fred. “That was what I was thinking of, too. There was no trouble, you see, until it seemed that we might want to live on the place from time to time.”

“Yes. My father has had something to do with the arrangements. Your mother is well off, even without her own property, isn’t she?”

“Yes. My father was not a millionaire, but he always had plenty,” answered Fred, very frankly.

“Mikail did hate the idea of her marriage,” said Boris, reflectively. “I could understand this better if I thought that he was trying to keep her inheritance from her to show his dislike. But it cannot be that. There is something very mysterious. I wish my father were here! I think perhaps he would understand.”

“Where is he, Boris?”

“With the army by this time! He did not believe there would be war, to the very last. That is the only reason I am still here. But he himself was called back as soon as things began to look serious. I stayed here with my tutor but he is gone now. He is a German, and has been called out. It is fortunate that my father had gone, because the Germans would have held him, of course, if he had been here. They have come here three or four times to look for him, but now I think they have decided that we have told the truth, and that he is not here.”

“How did you happen to come to my aid in such a fashion? I was beginning to think that I was in serious danger down there.”

“You were, Fred! They thought you were an English spy. And they hate the English worse than they do us, I think. They have thought that the English should be on their side. When they found it could not be so, they thought that at least England would be afraid to fight.”

“I see that. But you—what brought you out?”

“I know those people. And when I saw that they were attacking someone, it seemed to me that I couldn’t just stand by and look on. It was sure to be someone on my own side that they were treating so—the cowards! But a mob is always cowardly. And, of course, I knew that I could manage easily with the automobile. They were sure to scatter when they saw it coming, because they are afraid of motors, anyway.”

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"Well, you can belittle it as much as you like, but you certainly saved me from an awfully nasty situation. And you didn't know who I was, either!"

"No, I didn't, of course. But it makes me feel all the better to find out it was you, Fred. Still you know we're not out of the woods yet."

"We're all right here, aren't we?"

"I don't know. I think the Russians will be in East Prussia, and well in, before very long. If that happens and the German army is pushed back of this line, these people will be entirely out of control, except if Russian troops happen to come to this particular spot—and there's no especial reason why they should."

"You mean they might attack the house?"

"They might do anything, especially if the war seems to be going against them. They're good enough people, as a rule, but in times like these there's no telling what will happen."

"I hadn't thought of that. But—yes, you're right, of course. What do you think we'd better do, Boris?"

"There's nothing to be done at once. We've got to wait a little while, and let the situation develop. If we tried to get away now, it would be very risky indeed, I think. You see, between us and the Russian border there are a lot of German troops. And, even if you went back now toward Koenigsberg and Berlin, I'm afraid you'd have a hard time. You see, you haven't any passport. And you're partly Russian. Then you've been here, and they'd know that. I'm afraid you'd stand a good chance of being locked up. Tell me just what happened at Virballen."

Fred told him all that he could remember, and Boris frowned.

"Ernst will make a report, you see," he said. "I'm afraid they'll be looking for you. It makes it look as if you were in a bad hole."

"How do you mean? There's nothing in what happened there to interest Germany, is there?"

"If things had been normal that night, you'd have found out what there was, I can tell you! You see the Russian and the German secret police work together very well. It's all right when they're looking for nihilists and violent revolutionaries—the sort of people who would think it a great thing to assassinate either the Kaiser or the Czar. But the trouble is that if a big man in either Germany or Russia has a grudge against someone, he can use that whole secret police machinery against him. That's what Mikail Suvaroff was doing to you."

“But the Germans?”

“He would have seen to it, I suppose, that the secret police on our side told the Germans here some cock and bull story—enough to induce them to make it unpleasant for you. That was arranged in advance probably. Right there on the border, with war starting, those fellows lost their importance. The soldiers, like Ernst, were in full command. But they’ll be as busy and as active as ever a little way behind the fighting line, looking for spies. They’ll remember what the Russians had to say about you, and they’ll decide that you’re a suspicious character, and lock you up in some fortress till the war’s over!”

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"Gee! That's a nice prospect! Say, Boris, what am I to do? If I go to Berlin, I'll be arrested! If I go back to Russia, my uncle will probably have me boiled in oil or something! If I stay here, your peasant friends down below will lynch me! I'm beginning to think I'm not popular around here!"

Boris laughed, but his eyes were grave.

"It's a ridiculous situation," he said. "I don't really know what to say. I don't believe you need to fear Mikail very much. He has a good deal to think of by this time, because, now that the war has come, he won't have time for intrigue. He's a first-class soldier. He made a splendid record in the war with Japan—and not many of our generals did, you know. But I tell you what I think we'd better do. Wait here until we hear from my father. He will know. And when he learns that you are here, he will be able to protect you in some fashion."

"But how are you going to hear from him here?"

"That's a secret—yet! But there's a way, never fear. A way that the Germans don't suspect, and won't be able to interfere with. Tell me, Fred. If it is safe for you to go back into Russia, will you stand by me? Or would you rather take your chance of going home through Germany? I'm a Boy Scout, and we have known for a long time some of the work we would have to do if war came."

"I'm with Russia, even if America stays out," said Fred, with instant decision. "Blood's thicker than water—you know the old saying. And I am half a Russian. If there's any way that I can help, you can count me in. I'm a Boy Scout, too, when it comes to that. I didn't know there were any in Russia, though."

"There are. They're all over Europe now, you know. Well, we'll see. What's this?"

A servant had entered.

"There is a man who would see you, Boris Petrovitch," he said, using the familiar address of Russian servants.

CHAPTER V

THE GERMANS

Boris jumped up.

"That is good!" he said. "I have been hoping he would come."

“You do not know who it is,” said the servant. “Boris Petrovitch, do not see this man. He is a German. He looks to me like one of their spies.”

“I will look at him first,” said Boris, with a smile. “But, Vladimir, I think your eyes are getting feeble. It is time you were sent to the place in the Crimea to rest, like the old horses that can no longer do their share of the work.”

Vladimir bridled indignantly. But then a slow smile came over his face.

“Is it Ivan?” he asked.

“It should be,” said Boris. “I shall know as soon as I see him.”

The newcomer was waiting in the great hall. Boris, with Fred at his heels, got a glimpse of him; then without ceremony he ran down the polished staircase.

“So you have come at last!” he cried.

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Ivan was a loutish German in appearance, and only his eyes betrayed the fact that he was not as stupid as he looked. At the sight of Boris he smiled, and the act changed his whole expression. But Fred thought he had never dreamed of so splendid a disguise. This man, he guessed, must have come many miles through Germany, in a country where the closest possible watch was being kept for spies, and for all, indeed, who might even be suspected of espionage. And it was easy to see how he had been able to do it. Fred knew that he must be a Russian. Yet in every detail of his appearance he was German. His clothes, his bearing, his every little mannerism, were carefully studied. Fred guessed that this was no servant, but a secret agent of much skill and experience. He was to learn the truth of his surmise before many days had passed.

"Ivan Feodorovitch!" said Boris. "So you really got through! Have you brought the—"

He stopped at a forbidding look in the man's eye. For a moment he seemed to be puzzled. Then he understood that it was the presence of Fred, a stranger, that was bothering Ivan.

"Oh!" he cried, with a laugh. "Ivan, you may speak before this stranger as freely as before me. Let him be a stranger to you no longer. He is my cousin from America—the son of Marie Feodorovna, who went away to be married before I was born!"

Fred was not prepared for what followed. There was an outcry, first of all, from the half dozen servants in the great hall. They crowded forward curiously to look at him. And as for Ivan, he stared blankly for a moment, and then plumped down on one knee and, to Fred's unspeakable embarrassment, seized his hand and kissed it.

"He and all of them are old, old retainers of our house," Boris explained swiftly. "To them one of our blood ranks second only to the Czar himself. My father saw to it always that here we were surrounded only by such faithful ones. These people and their ancestors before them have been in the service of us and of our ancestors for many, many generations—since before the freeing of the serfs, of course."

It was Boris who brought Ivan back to the errand that had caused his sudden appearance.

"Have you brought the parts for the wireless?" he asked. "It was as my father foresaw. The first thing the Germans did was to come here and render the installation useless, as they supposed."

"It need not remain useless," said Ivan. "Everything needful I have brought. The station may be working by to-night. Except that there can not be anything worth sending for a few hours, it might be set up now. Better not to use it and risk betraying our secret until there is real need of it."

Boris turned to Fred to explain.

“We have spies all through East Prussia, and through Galicia and Silesia, too, of course,” he said. “They can find out a good many things of interest and importance to our army. But it is one thing to obtain such knowledge and quite another to find some means of sending it back to our people. We hope, if we are not sent away from here too soon, that we can make this house very useful that way. It stands high, you see, and we have a very powerful wireless. The Germans knew this and they thought they had made it useless.”

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"Oh, that's great!" said Fred. "Perhaps I can help, too, because I can send by wireless. I don't know whether I would be much good with the Continental code, because I've learned only with Morse. But I might be of some use."

"Another operator will be of the greatest use," said Boris. "I know a little, a very little, about it. And there is a man here. But I am afraid that they will come very soon and take every man who is of fighting age away."

"But your men aren't soldiers!"

"Most of them have served their term in the army. But, even if they had not, the Germans would take every able-bodied man. That is all right. We are probably keeping back all Germans who might go home and go into the army, and all the other countries will do the same with men of a nation with which they are at war."

"Vladimir has all that I brought," said Ivan, breaking in now. "As for me, I must go again."

"Go? Now? Aren't you going to stay?"

"No! I have much to do. I may be back. But if I return, I shall come through the cellar—you understand? There are strange movements of troops in this region that I cannot understand at all. There are far fewer soldiers here than I thought there would be. I have not been able to find traces of more than a single corps of Germans—and we had expected them to have three or four, at the very least, concentrated in East Prussia as soon as the war broke out. At Augustowo they were even expecting an attack."

"Then if there are so few as that, won't we advance?"

"Ah, that I don't know! The Austrians, I hear, are very busy. They say they are moving already in great strength across the border, but that is far away from here, and it is not our concern. It is for us to keep the Germans so busy here that they will not be able to crush France before England can get her army into action. At the beginning it does not matter so much whether we win victories or not, so long as we can force the Germans to send many corps here instead of using them to invade France. But I have talked enough. Now—good-bye, and may God be with you here!"

"Good-bye," said Boris, and Fred repeated Ivan's wish in Russian. Ivan seemed astonished.

"So your mother taught you her mother tongue!" he said. "Ah, but that is splendid!"

Then he was off.

“Ivan might have been a great actor, I believe,” said Boris. “See, isn’t he the German to the life as he goes, there? No wonder he can deceive them so!”

“It’s pretty dangerous work for him, though, I should think,” said Fred. “They wouldn’t waste much time on him if they caught him, would they?”

“Only the time they needed for a drumhead court-martial. After that, if he was lucky, he would be shot instead of being hung. But he is ready, you see. It is his part. Oh, we Russians are all united now, if we never were before! Germany has threatened us for years. She has set Austria against us. This time we had to fight, and you will see that all Russia will be behind the Czar. We learned our lessons against the Japanese. That was not a popular war. It was not made by the people, but by a few who forced the Czar’s hand. Now we shall make the world see that though Russia may be beaten, she has the power to rise from defeat.”

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"What will happen here if they do take the men away?"

"They won't take them all. Only the younger ones. There will be enough left to look after the place and after us. Though if they come, I shall have to hide you, my cousin! I am just thinking of that. I shouldn't wonder if those stupid people would have sent word to someone. We had better be prepared. Come with me—I will show you something."

Fred followed Boris, and in a few minutes found himself in a great room that was obviously the dining-room of the house. In this room there were many pictures, and the walls were panelled in oak, blackened by smoke and age. Boris looked about to make sure that they were not observed, then he touched a spot in one of the panels, and it slid open. Beyond this, however, was revealed an unbroken wall. Again Boris touched a certain spot, and now this wall, seemingly solid and unbroken, gave way, just as the oaken panel had done.

"Even if they discovered the panel, you see, they would not have the secret," said Boris. "I will show you the exact spots you must touch. Then if they come, you can reach this place by yourself. Once in here, you will be safe. Carry an electric torch always with you. I will give you one later. You will find two sets of arrows marked every few feet through the passages to which this leads. The upper ones point to the outside door that is at the end of a passage far beyond the house. The lower ones, if you follow their course, will bring you back to these panels. So you cannot lose your way."

"By George, that certainly sounds mysterious! Have you always planned for something like this?"

"Oh, these passages are very old. This house, you see, was built at a time when intrigue was more common than now. But when my father began to see, as he did years ago, that Germany was sure to force war upon us, and that it would probably come in his lifetime, he made many changes. This is not really a private house at all—it is a little outpost of Russia, here in the midst of an enemy's country. And it is not the only one. In Silesia and in Galicia we have places like it."

"Perhaps the Germans will find that Russia is not so slow after all!"

Outside now there rose a peculiar sound, but one that Fred identified at once.

"That sounds like your Germans coming now, Boris," he said, quietly. "I've heard crowds making just that same noise at home—on election night, for instance, when they were coming to make the winner give them a speech."

Boris listened for a moment, then he went to a window.

“Yes,” he said. “But it’s not the sort of Germans we need to worry about. It’s only the people from the village. Old men, and women, and children—boys, of course. I’m surprised that they should come for they know they can’t get in.”

But even as he spoke, there came a thunderous sound of knocking at the outer door and the sharp grounding of arms—a noise as ominous as it was unmistakable.

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"There are soldiers, too. They are here much sooner than I thought they could come!" exclaimed Boris. "Here, into that passage with you! Listen! Follow the arrows! They will lead you down. Stop at a double arrow. You will be able to hear. The wall is very thin there, on purpose. You can hear what is going on in the great hall and still be perfectly safe. I'll come for you as soon as I can get rid of them."

"All right. But will you be safe yourself? Oughtn't you to come with me, Boris?"

"Oh, they won't do anything to me! I'm only a boy, you see. They'll never think that I could be dangerous. In with you, now! We can't keep the soldiers out. I don't want to give them an excuse for burning the place down, and they'd do it in a minute if there was any resistance."

CHAPTER VI

THE TUNNEL

Fred found the secret passage much less confusing than he had thought it likely to be. As soon as he had stepped in, the panels slid back into place, and the passage was immediately dark. But Boris had had time to find an electric torch for him, and had told him where to find another—or two or three, for that matter—when that was exhausted.

"We've always kept them there in case of emergencies," he had explained.

So Fred had felt assured of a supply of light, which was the one absolutely necessary thing if, as was entirely possible, the German soldiers stayed in the house for any time. One other thing, of course, was necessary; food and drink. And that, too, he knew where to find. Boris had told him of a store of compressed foods, and of fresh water, piped into this amazing passageway from the outer entrance, far beyond the limits of the gardens and grounds of the house.

The first thing Fred did was to switch on the light of his torch and inspect the warren in which he had found sanctuary. It was not at all the musty, bad smelling place he had expected it to be. The walls had been plastered and stained a dull grey, which did not reflect the light from his torch appreciably. The arrows appeared, as Boris had said they did, at frequent intervals.

"Not much of a secret." That was Fred's first thought. "But it needn't be. The men who worked in here are the ones the family can trust absolutely, I suppose."

It gave Fred a certain thrill to feel himself in touch with such things, to know that he belonged to such a family as the Suvaroffs, capable of inspiring such devotion in its retainers—which, though Boris regarded it as a matter of course, seemed a great thing to Fred, with his American upbringing.

“What a piece of luck!” he reflected. “Imagine my stumbling on such a splendid fellow as Boris! If it hadn’t been for all this trouble, I might never have known I had a cousin! And he’s the sort of cousin I call worth having! He amounts to something—and I don’t believe he’s as old as I am. Well, I’ve got to show him that an American scout can keep up his end! I’ll try to play the game with him.”

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It made up for all the trouble he had had since he had first seen his uncle. He was more puzzled than ever, after what Boris had told him, to account for the behavior of Mikail Suvaroff.

"I'll bet there's some explanation," he said to himself. "I certainly hope so! Seeing Boris makes me inclined to like these Russian relatives a whole lot, and I'd like to think that Uncle Mikail could square himself somehow. He's got a whole lot to make up for, of course."

Though he did feel that very strongly, he was able now to frame a thought that had come to him more than once after he had become certain that it was Prince Suvaroff who had caused his arrest. And that was that Suvaroff had seemed far too big and important a man to do a small, petty thing.

"He's got a wrong idea of me, some way," Fred decided. "He has heard something, or made up his mind to something that isn't so. Well, I hope I get back to Russia and stay out of jail long enough to find out what was wrong. Perhaps this war will make a difference, especially if I'm lucky enough to be able do something for 'Holy Russia'."

Fred moved along quietly while he was thinking of the extraordinary sequence of events that had brought him to where he now was, flashing his light on the arrows, and looking for the double mark that would show him he had reached the spot of which Boris had told him. But when he got there he had no need of any sign, for he could hear voices distinctly on the other side of a very thin wall. Boris was speaking.

"I'm so sorry, Herr Hauptmann," Boris was saying, in faultless German. "I did see some of the peasants chivying a fellow down below. And I did go out, of course, in my car, to see if I could help him. I got him away from them. But he didn't come all the way back. He wanted to go on, and it's not just the time I should choose for entertaining guests. So I didn't urge him to stay."

"I'm sorry to seem to doubt your word. In fact, Prince, I don't," said a rumbling voice, that of the German captain Boris had been addressing, as Fred could guess. "But was this person you rescued so—chivalrously—an Englishman?"

"I really don't know, Herr Hauptmann. He might have been. Or an American. One or the other, I should think."

"Clever Boris!" thought Fred. "He'll tell him some truth and some fiction! He has got to deceive him, of course—that's war."

"I have reason, Prince, to think that he was an English spy," the captain went on. "You will allow my men to make a search? And, by the way, I shall be sorry to take away

your servants, but my orders are to arrest and send to detention camps every man of military age I find here.”

“I understand, captain. I am entirely in your hands, of course. I should like to know if it will be possible for me to return soon to Russia?”

“You must go to higher officers than myself, Prince,” said the captain. “If it rested with me—! But, of course, it does not. If you see your father soon, however, will you give him my compliments? And tell him from me that I should esteem it an honor if we should meet in the field?”

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"Gladly, captain. It is a pity that such good friends and neighbors as we have all been must be enemies, is it not? But it was not our doing."

Fred frowned a little.

"That sounds rather bad," he said to himself. "If this captain has lived near here, he must know a good deal about the place. And, by George, if they make a search they will find the wireless machinery that Ivan brought in with him! It may be a mighty bad thing for this house and for Russia that Boris saw me and brought me in, though it was certainly lucky for me!"

But even then Fred did not guess the extent of the trouble he had really caused. He listened intently, but for a time there was silence beyond the wall. Then he heard a murmur of voices, and guessed that a report of the search for him was being made. And then the captain's voice boomed out.

"Prince," he said, "I must ask you to come with me and to consider yourself under arrest. It is very painful but those are my orders. Colonel Goldapp wishes to see you. I think it is only a form."

"What? You will take me away?" Fred caught the dismay in his cousin's tone, and winced slightly. But then he understood that it was not fear for himself that moved Boris, but anxiety lest the important plans of which he was such an essential part should be spoiled. "But my father—he thinks that I am safe here until he can make arrangements for me to return to Russia."

"I am sorry." The German's tone, gruff though it was, was by no means unkindly. "Orders, however—I have no choice. Doubtless you will be allowed to return as soon as the colonel has seen you."

"Well, there is no use in arguing, of course," said Boris. He raised his voice, and Fred understood that what followed was meant especially for his ears. "Where will you take me, Herr Hauptmann?"

"Colonel Goldapp's quarters are at present in the parsonage near the village. You will be examined there, Prince. We shall be there to-night, at least, perhaps longer."

"I see. I will be ready in a few moments. Will you excuse me if I write some instructions for Vladimir, who will be in charge after I go? You may, of course, read what I write."

"Assuredly."

Then there was silence. The room outside was so quiet that Fred had a chance to realize how perfectly the place in which he was hidden served its purpose. He could hear the heavy breathing of someone near the wall. Then a chair scraped along the

floor, and in a moment he heard the scratching of a pen. And then there came a new sound, a tapping, as with two fingers. That was Boris, and quite suddenly Fred understood. Boris was tapping out a message to him in telegraphic code.

“You must take charge here,” Boris tapped with his fingers. “I will tell Vladimir to get you as soon as it is safe. The parsonage where I will be taken is very near the outlet of the secret passage. If Ivan returns, tell him I am there, and that I will sing or whistle the song of the Volga boatmen from time to time, so that he may know the window of my room, if there is no guard in the room with me. Do not answer, for they might hear.”

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“Good boy! He certainly has nerve!” said Fred to himself, admiringly. “He doesn’t know what’s going to happen to him next, but he is certainly doing all he can to make things come right.”

Then there was a new confusion of noise outside. Fred heard Boris call Vladimir and speak to the old servant in Russian. Then the German officer gave Vladimir his instructions.

“This place will be left alone for the present,” he said. “Prince Alexander Suvaroff has been a good friend and neighbor, and, though he is an enemy, we desire to respect his property as long as possible. But neither you nor any who are left in the house with you must go out—this for your own safety—except to get food and then go yourself.”

Fred heard a general movement then, and guessed that they were going out. Silence followed, and, after listening for a time, he decided upon an exploration of the secret passage. A vague plan was taking form in his mind already. It seemed to him that, as he was at liberty, he should do anything that was in his power to free Boris. Until he knew more of the lay of the land, he could not even make a real plan, but it was possible, he thought, that something that was in his mind might easily prove to be feasible.

It was easy, with his torch and the guiding arrows, to follow the devious, winding course of the passage. He surmised that its ascents and descents, which seemed arbitrary and unreasonable as he pursued them, were due to other entrances than the one he knew. It would be necessary, as he could understand, to have more than one means of getting in and out of such a passage. And when he found himself at last going in a straight path which sloped easily downward, he guessed that he was beyond the house, and that he had come to a part of the passage that led to the outer world.

Here there was a trace of dampness, but nothing like what might have been expected in what was really a tunnel. Fred had to admire the excellence of the construction work. The descent, as he knew from what he had seen outside, must really be very sharp. But it was managed here with turns and zigzags so that the grade was never very sharp.

Fred became suddenly conscious of a change in the air.

“I must be near the opening,” he thought.

A couple of minutes proved that he was right. He now remembered that Boris had not had time to tell him how the door or gate was operated. But he decided not to go back at once, but to try to discover the secret for himself. It had occurred to him that it was more than probable that a sentry or two might be left in the house, and he had no mind

to stay in the passageway, helpless and useless, if Vladimir found it impossible to let him out at once.

At the end of the passage he found a solid, seamless door. He decided at once it must work on an axis of some sort and that it must be set in motion by pressing a spring. And so, steadily and systematically, he searched the whole door, until he struck the right spot at last. As the door moved, he marked the spot with a tiny pencil mark. It swung open—and he looked into the eyes of a startled German soldier, his mouth wide open!

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CHAPTER VII

A DARING RUSE

It would be hard to say which was more surprised—Fred or the soldier. For just a moment they stood, both of them, perfectly still, staring at one another with fallen jaws. And then Fred acted by pure instinct, and without the semblance of a plan in his mind. He had played football in school and on the team of his scout troop in America. And now he dived for the astonished German's legs and brought him down with a flying tackle. The heavy gun flew out of the soldier's hands, and, fortunately for Fred, he fell so that his head struck the ground heavily. He was stunned and, for the moment at least, safe and out of commission.

There was time, therefore, for Fred to see how the ground lay. He found that he was in a slight hollow, sandy in the bottom, where he stood and the soldier lay. He imagined that at certain times this hollow might be filled with water, for the sand had that appearance, and, moreover, there was a gully, evidently washed out by water, leading down into the pit.

"Wonder how long he's good for?" speculated Fred, looking at the soldier. "A few minutes, anyhow. He got quite a bump!"

He satisfied himself in a moment that the soldier was not badly hurt. He was a ridiculous figure as he lay there sprawled out. His breathing was heavy; it sounded almost like heavy snoring. He was very young, scarcely more than a boy himself. His uniform was entirely new, as was his equipment. He was very slight too, and his face was typical of a certain sort of German. He looked, Fred thought, like a bird. It was a queer idea, and he laughed as it came to him, but it did describe this German absolutely.

"I'll risk it," Fred decided. He hesitated about the door. Perhaps he ought to close it. But if he did, he couldn't open it again from this side for that was a secret he hadn't learned. And, after all, the only danger was that the soldier might come to his senses and go in—and if he did that, Fred could follow him. So taking the rifle, he crawled along the gully the rain had washed out, moving very cautiously. As he neared the top, he lifted his head and saw, not more than fifty yards away, a grey stone house, simple and unassuming. A flag pole had been put up in front of this house, and a German flag drooped from it. Soldiers were all about the place, and two automobiles stood before the door. Motorcycles were lying on the ground. While Fred watched, two men rode up on the snorting, crackling little machines and hurried into the house.

This was undoubtedly the parsonage, now being used as the headquarters of Colonel Goldapp. Fred's heart sank as he surveyed the place. It seemed to him that there

wasn't much chance that he could rescue Boris. There were too many Germans about. Even though there was no reason for the staff to anticipate an attack, he could guess that the place would be well guarded. And yet he was here because he hoped that he would be able, after seeing the parsonage, to devise some plan of getting Boris away.

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However, that was something to be attempted later, if at all. His chief concern now was for the soldier he had thrown. And now he made his way back, and found to his dismay that the man was beginning to recover his senses. As Fred came back he stretched, yawned, and sat up, with the most ludicrous mixture of fright and wonder in his eyes. Fred had his gun, and at the sight of that the soldier spoke indignantly.

"Give me back my gun!" he said, testily. "It is against the rules for anyone to touch my gun. If you let the corporal catch you with that, there'll be trouble. I promise you!"

Fred had hard work to control his features. He wondered if the man was really a little simple-minded, or if the effects of his fall still confused him. He finally decided that both theories were right. For a moment he hesitated, wondering what to do. He wanted to get back into the passageway, and he did not want the German to see him doing it. As he thought, he studied the entrance attentively. And he was startled suddenly to find that he could not see it! Had something happened? Had the door closed automatically? If that were so, he was in a nice fix, and he would soon join Boris as a prisoner.

But then he realized that the seeming disappearance of the opening was simply the result of clever screening, by means of bushes. It had deceived him for the moment. He saw that the door was so contrived that anyone emerging from it would seem to anyone even a few feet away, to be simply coming out from behind a bush. And then he got his great idea, an idea that made him turn his head, so that the soldier would not see the grin he could not suppress.

"Here, give me that gun!" said the soldier, again. He was more impatient than before, and his tone was one of anger. He struggled to his feet, too, and stood, swaying uncertainly, still weak and very dizzy as the result of his fall.

"Beware!"

The word came in a sepulchral, heavy voice from directly behind the soldier. He swung around, greatly puzzled.

"Who's there?" he called, sharply.

"I am everywhere!" said the same voice.

But now it came from the very ground at his feet.

And then the voice spoke, swinging around, as the soldier turned, like a dancing dervish, trying always to face the voice, only to have it come from some new quarter.

"Attend carefully to what I say!" said the mysterious voice. "You have risked death by coming to this spot! But I am merciful, and I wish to preserve all soldiers who fight for

their fatherland! I am the spirit of this place! I command you to go! Go up the gully. Stand with your back turned to this place and count one hundred. Then, and only then, you may return. Your gun will be here, and you may then go in peace. This ground is sacred to me. On your life, when you have regained your gun, go! Do not look back! Do not hesitate! And, above all, tell no one what you have seen! I have spoken!"

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The soldier was trembling now in every limb. He looked hard at Fred, as if he suspected that he might have something to do with this mysterious, awesome voice. But Fred's lips had never moved. Fred, at home, had often amused the guests of his family and the gatherings of the scout patrol to which he belonged with this trick of ventriloquism. But the German evidently had never heard of such a thing. And suddenly he broke into a run. He made for the gully and ran along it with stumbling feet.

"Now stop!" boomed the voice—directly in front of him! "Not a step further! Begin to count aloud. But do not shout!"

"Ein, zwei, drei, vier—" began the German, obediently.

And Fred, half choking with suppressed laughter, slipped behind the screened entrance of the secret passageway, while the soldier's back was still turned. He did not quite close the door, but waited to make sure that the German's curiosity did not get the better of his fright, which had certainly been real enough. But it was all right. The man counted right up to a hundred, and once or twice, to Fred's huge amusement, when he stammered, and lost track of his numbers, he went back and counted several of them over again! But he finished at last, and Fred heard him come stumbling down the gully. He seemed to hesitate then.

"May I really go now?" he asked. "I did not know there was a spirit here, or I would not have come."

"Yes. Go, and quickly!" said Fred, throwing his voice out so it came from far above the soldier.

He heard the soldier running then, and in a moment closed the door behind him, and began retracing his steps along the secret tunnel.

"Gee! That was a close call!" he said to himself. "Serves me good and right, too, for doing more than I was told! I might have spoiled everything by not waiting until I knew more about the place. If that soldier hadn't been ready to see a ghost in anything he didn't have some reason to expect to meet, I'd be in a lot of trouble now. And yet I'll bet he's brave enough, too. If he had an enemy he could see and touch, he'd fight all right."

But Fred had more to think about now than what had happened, or what might have happened, either. He was more interested in what was to come next. He went along, flashing his torch. There was no sound at the thin wall, where he stopped, when he reached it, to listen for the sound of voices in the great hall. That encouraged him. He decided that if any soldiers had been left on guard in the place, they would have been in there. And when he came near to the panel by which he had entered, when he let his torch wink out he saw that there was a light ahead of him.

For a moment he caught his breath, wondering if some enemy had discovered the secret, and was waiting to pounce on him. But he went on, because he decided that if anyone were waiting they must know already that he was in the tunnel. And in a moment he came face to face with old Vladimir.

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"The coast is clear, excellency," said the old Russian. "All the Germans have gone—a curse upon them! My master has told me to treat you as if you stood in his place until he returns. I have the things that Ivan brought. Is it your pleasure that I should deliver them to you?"

Fred was puzzled for a moment. Then he remembered the wireless.

"Oh, yes, by all means!" he said. "And show me the room where the wireless is. You know all about that, Vladimir?"

"I know where it is. I do not understand such devil's work, but I am an old man, and stupid."

Fred laughed.

"Perhaps it's devil's work, but if we have any luck it will be pretty useful to us," he said. "Come on, if it's safe for me to come out. There's a lot for me to do."

Vladimir led the way to the top of the house. On the roof, like a pent-house, there was a little room or cupola, and in this was a partially dismantled wireless installation. Fred was left there alone while Vladimir went off to get the things that Ivan had given to him for safekeeping, and he studied the installation closely. It was different from any that he had ever seen, but its leading principle, of course, was familiar to him. At first it surprised him to find that it was supplied with power by weak batteries, which the Germans had ruined.

"You couldn't send more than twenty miles with those batteries!" he said to himself.

But when Vladimir returned that was explained. For he removed a picture that hung on the wall and disclosed a number of wires.

"I do not understand," he said. "But my master and Ivan have told me that those wires that you see run down to a place far below the cellar, where there is a great engine that moves when petrol is put into it—"

"Oh, I see, a dynamo run by a Diesel engine, probably!" said Fred, suddenly enlightened. "That's a fine idea! They can develop power without steam! Costs a lot—but it's worth it, of course! I'll just try that out!"

Quickly he connected up the wires, tried out his key, after replacing the parts that had been taken away, and in a moment got a powerful spark.

"That's great!" he said, to himself, ignoring old Vladimir, who watched him in fascinated wonder. "I can send a long distance with that spark!"

Then he pounced on something he had overlooked before,—a little book bound in black leather. As he opened it, he gave an exclamation of joy. It was a code book, as he saw at once, and on the inside of the cover was a list of wireless stations, with their calls. There was one at Virballen, he saw, and a dozen other places just over the border, and running quite a distance into Russian territory, including one at Augustowo, were named.

“Ivan told me to guard that book as if it were my life,” said Vladimir. “He said to put it in a safe place, and to destroy it if the Germans found it, even if they killed me for doing it.”

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"He was right," said Fred, soberly. "If the Germans got that book, it would be as valuable to them as a whole army, Vladimir."

"It is very strange," said the old man. "I do not understand, but I am old and stupid, and it is not for me to question my betters."

Fred sat down and studied the code for a few moments. More than ever he was glad now that his mother had always insisted that he must be able to read and speak her Russian tongue. He would have to send in Morse, instead of in the somewhat simpler Continental code, but that, he thought, would make little difference. Some operator would be certain to understand his sending.

And now he sat down and began calling Suwalki. He would have liked to call Virballen, which was nearer, but he was not sure that the Russians were still in possession of their station there, since he remembered that the Germans had had the superior force there on the Saturday night when the war broke out—a night that seemed to lie a century in the past now!

For a long minute he hammered out his call. And then through the air, over miles of hostile country, came a welcome whisper in his ear—the whisper of the answering call from Suwalki! He was in touch with Russia!

CHAPTER VIII

WITHIN THE ENEMY'S LINES

For many reasons Fred did not want to hold a long talk with the Suwalki operator. German wireless stations were undoubtedly at work in the surrounding country, and, though there was no great danger that his messages might be intercepted and read, it was not advisable, of course, to let the Germans, who were sure to be watchful, know that there was a private Russian station somewhere within German limits. The instruments here were tuned to a certain wave length, and he guessed that this was standard for all Russian military stations, and different from that of the Germans. But when he held his circuit to listen he got whisperings that sounded almost like static electricity. It was evident that a good many stations were sending, and that the air all about was full of the waves.

So he contented himself with a brief and direct report of what had happened, explaining why Boris was not himself present to make this report. He asked for information as to the movements of the Russian army, but got no satisfaction.

"We don't know ourselves," said the Suwalki operator. "Things are moving very fast, but absolutely no news is being given out. I know that our cavalry—Cossacks, chiefly—have crossed the border at half a dozen different points. The Germans and the

Austrians have invaded Poland, and our troops have all been withdrawn from that region. The concentration there is going on at Brest-Litovsky, and behind the line of Warsaw-Novo Georgevsk. But here there are a good many troops. There may be Cossacks within a few miles of you. They are raiding. Here it is said that our first move will be to try to cut the German railways."

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That was all he could find out. He arranged for word of Boris's seizure to be sent to his father, and then closed his circuit and went below, in search of old Vladimir.

By now it was afternoon, and Fred began to think that if Boris had been coming back that day he would have arrived already. Plainly, it seemed to him, Colonel Goldapp must have decided to retain him as a prisoner. He wanted to get down near the parsonage again, but he was afraid to venture out by the secret passage. He didn't know how thoroughly he had frightened the soldier who had so nearly caught him. If the man had recovered his wits and decided that it was no ghost, but a very substantial and real person who had bowled him over, there would doubtless be a guard in the hollow, by the outer entrance of the tunnel. And, in any case, it was too risky to seek egress by that means again in broad daylight.

"Vladimir," he said, when he found the old servant, "I want you to make me look like a German, if you can. Disguise me, so that I may go down toward the village safely. Is it possible?"

Vladimir studied him for a moment.

"I think so," he said. "There are plenty of clothes here, and there is a man who has often helped when there were to be private theatricals."

The transformation was soon completed, and when he looked at himself in a glass Fred had to laugh. His clothes were those of a Prussian peasant, and a few very slight changes in his appearance had been made by the man to whom Vladimir had spoken. They worked wonders, and Fred decided that he could go anywhere in Prussia now with impunity.

"Is it safe for you to leave the house?" he asked Vladimir.

"Yes, for they think that I am harmless," said the old man.

"I wish to know how to open the door of the tunnel from the outside," said Fred. "But I think it would be unsafe to go there directly. It will be better for you to start out and get there as if you had gone by chance. It is near the parsonage where my cousin is, and if anyone questions you, you could say, I should think, that you wanted to be near your master."

"Yes," said Vladimir. "That would be safe."

"Then do you go there and stay, unless they drive you away. I will go there, too, if I can, and if the coast is clear and no one is watching, you can show me. Unless, indeed, you can tell me now?"

“It will be better for me to show you,” said Vladimir. “The looks of the outside change constantly. A storm will destroy a bush, or some other landmark there, and, though I could touch the proper spot in the darkness myself, I would find it hard to describe it to you. I will start at once?”

“Yes. And I will come to you, if it is safe, as soon as I can. I should not be more than ten minutes behind you in reaching the hollow.”

Nothing about the whole adventure upon which he had embarked so strangely, and with so little intention on his own part, impressed Fred more than the unquestioning obedience old Vladimir yielded to him. More than ever before, he realized that the Suvaroffs must indeed be as great a family as his mother had declared. Though she had become a true American, Mrs. Waring had never ceased to love the land of her birth, and she had always tried to impress Fred with her own feeling for the great house to which she had belonged.

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“Such families as the Suvaroffs can do much harm to themselves and to others,” she had said. “But they can also be of great service to those of their blood, to those who are dependent upon them, and to their country.”

The truth of this was constantly being impressed anew upon Fred at this time. He was struck especially by the difference between the way that the people of this house treated Boris and himself, and the attitude that had been noticeable in those who had served his uncle, Mikail Suvaroff. Mikail was decidedly a greater figure than Boris’s father. Yet it was not devotion that he seemed to inspire. He won obedience, not because his people were devoted to him, but because he had filled them with fear, and because they knew the consequences that would certainly follow if he were displeased in any way.

It was still light when Fred left the house. He went out by a side entrance, reaching the road from the garden. Vladimir had gone down the hill before him. It was understood that he would manufacture some errand as an excuse for his appearance in the village. A number of the people of the village were in the road near the great house; they stared at it curiously, and with hostile murmurs. They paid no attention to Fred, however, and this convinced him that his disguise was good. He passed near them, and he breathed more freely when he had gone by.

At the foot of the hill he turned away from the village. Here he remembered something that both amused and annoyed him. He had not asked just where the parsonage was. He knew its location with reference to the outer portal of the tunnel, to be sure, but he had come to that underground. However, he remembered where the sun had been when he had emerged into the open air before, and, after some profitless scouting about, a passing motorcycle set him on the right track. It set him thinking, too.

“There are an awful lot of these fellows with dispatches running about,” he said to himself. “It seems to me that this place is more than a colonel’s headquarters. A colonel has just one regiment under him, and he certainly wouldn’t need so many riders to carry his orders about—unless he were in command of a detached fort or position, and Colonel Goldapp isn’t. I guess he’s there, right enough, but I’ve an idea there’s someone more important, as well. It might be worth while to find out just what is going on around here.”

But that could wait. For the moment his task was to meet Vladimir and then to spy out the parsonage. Meeting Vladimir proved easier than he had hoped. He followed the trail of the man on the motorcycle until he was within sight of the grey stone parsonage, and then had his bearings exactly. He approached the hollow cautiously, but no one was around. The ground was fairly soft; there had been rain within the last three or four days. And so, as he approached the spot of his encounter with the superstitious soldier, Fred was able to tell that no visitation had been made to the hollow. He marked the footsteps of the soldier; the man had evidently run from the place.

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Looking around cautiously, he saw that everything was clear, and dropped down on hands and knees as he reached the gully. Vladimir was waiting, and in less than a minute explained the secret of the door.

"All right," said Fred. "Now you get back to the house, and either be near the entrance to the passage yourself, or keep someone stationed there. I don't know what's going to happen, so I can't tell you, but I think that maybe I shall get Boris away from the parsonage."

Vladimir's eyes gleamed.

"I am an old man," he said, "and I fear that I am useless. But if I can help to rescue him ___"

"If you can help, I'll let you know," said Fred. "But I don't know yet even how I shall set about it. And I think it's more important for someone we can trust absolutely to be in the house. There may be nothing for you to do there, and yet, if anything does come up, you will be needed there very quickly. Shall you go back through the tunnel?"

"No. They may have watched me as I came out, and it will be better for them to see me return. No one suspects the tunnel yet, but some of these Germans are clever."

"Right! Well, I know how to get into it now from this end, and that may help a lot. But I hope that when I use it again Boris will be with me."

He let old Vladimir go out first. Then, after waiting for several minutes, he went up the gully in his turn, and set out boldly and with no attempt to hide his movements, for the parsonage.

There was even more activity there now than there had been when he had first set eyes upon it. There were more automobiles; four of them altogether. At the wheel of each sat a soldier driver in grey uniform, and with a cloth covered helmet. Each car was of the same type, a long rakish grey body, low to the ground. As he neared the house an officer wearing a long, grey coat came out, accompanied by two or three younger men. He turned to speak to them, then got into one of the cars, which immediately drove off. As it went a peculiar call was sounded, more like a trumpet than an automobile horn. Fred guessed then what he afterward learned to be a fact; that the automobiles used by the German staff officers on active service had horns that indicated the rank of the officer using them.

It seemed to Fred that there were more officers than soldiers about. There seemed to be only enough soldiers to provide a guard. Sentries were all about, but there were officers almost in swarms. He walked along, indifferently rather than boldly, and he was sharply challenged when he drew fairly near to the house.

“You can’t go any further, youngster,” said the soldier. “The staff has taken this house.”

Fred stared at him rather stupidly, but turned away. Then he was called back suddenly, and for a moment his heart was in his mouth at the thought that his disguise had been penetrated and that he was about to be made a prisoner. Like Boris, he was concerned only with the effect of this upon his plans. He did not think of his own safety, although, had he been caught, he might have expected the fate of a spy, since he was in disguise within the German lines. It proved, however, that he was not to be arrested. A young captain was eyeing him sharply.

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"Come with me, boy," he said. "We are short of servants in the house here. You will do."

For a moment he was indignant, but then his heart leaped happily. If he was taken into the house as a servant, he could find out all and more than he had hoped, and that without risk.

CHAPTER IX

"THERES *many* A slip—"

Once inside the house, Fred found a scene of orderly confusion. That is, it looked like confusion to him, but he could see that, for all the bustling and the hurrying that went on, everyone knew just what his part in the work was. Telephone bells were ringing all the time, and Fred noticed now that wires entered the house through the dining-room window. Evidently a field telephone system had been installed and connected this house with a whole region, of which, in a military way, it seemed to be the brain. Then Fred heard a voice that he recognized at once, and started at the sound, until he placed it as that of the captain who had taken Boris away, and remembered that the captain had not seen him, even before he was disguised.

Fred's work, he soon found, was simplicity itself. He was to do the bidding of any officer. He was sent on errands, from one part of the house to another; often he carried written messages, handed to him by staff officers, to the room in which three telegraph operators were hard at work. Generally speaking, he was there to do odd jobs and make himself generally useful. Luckily, he was taken for granted. Everyone seemed assured that he was one of the village boys, pressed into service because he happened to be the first one to come along.

But for the first hour or so it was impossible for him to make any attempt to discover if Boris was still in the house. He was too busy, and he dared not spoil his opportunity to learn something really worth while by seeming to spy about. He was rewarded before long for his patience, for just as he was beginning to despair, an officer spied him in a moment when he was not actively engaged upon some errand.

"Here, boy," called the officer, "take this tray!"

Fred took a tray from a soldier who was holding it awkwardly.

"Take it upstairs to the room on the third floor where a sentry is on guard. He will let you in. When the prisoner there has finished his meal, return with the tray to the kitchen. Do not let any knife or fork or spoon stay in the room when you go. So you will make yourself really useful and release a man who can do things for which you are too young."

It seemed to Fred, as he started upstairs with his tray, that this luck was almost too good to be true. He scarcely dared to hope for what had seemed to him the inevitable explanation of his errand. But when the sentry opened the door of the locked room, and he looked in, he saw Boris sitting dejectedly on the side of a bed. It was all he could do to suppress a cry of delight, but he managed it, and he was hugely tickled as he saw Boris's indifferent glance at him. His disguise must be good, or Boris would have known him. He put the tray down, and then walked to the window. He looked down first, and then up. Then with a grin, he turned to his cousin.

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"Not a word," he said, quickly. "Do you know me?"

Boris stared; then a smile broke out all over his face. There was no need for him to put his answer into words. Fred came very close.

"Speak low, but do not whisper," he said. "Tell me, what have they done to you?"

"Nothing. Colonel Goldapp has been too busy to see me."

"I don't wonder! Boris, this is no colonel's headquarters. It is more like that of an army corps. And there is at least one general here. His name is von Hindenburg."

"Von Hindenburg? He is commander-in-chief in East Prussia! If he is here, there must be a German concentration in this region! They did not expect that! Oh, I must get out and get the news back—"

"Yes. The wireless is working. I talked this afternoon to Suwalki."

And in a few words he told Boris the essential facts of what had happened since the raid upon the great house on the hill on that morning.

"How often do they come in here?" he asked.

"Only when my meals are brought to me. There will be no one else now to-night, I think, unless Colonel Goldapp sends for me. They are very polite. I think I shall be alone most of the time. They have no idea that I will try to get away, because they think I know they have so many sentries and patrols about that it would be useless for me to try to do it."

"Listen, then, Boris. I will go now. I think they will let me go now. I have been working hard for them about the house. But I will come back later. Stay near your window, so that I can see a handkerchief if you hold it. Then I will throw up a stone with a string tied about, and you can draw up a rope and slip down. If this general is so important we ought to let them know. I will send the word by wireless and then come back."

"Good! It is risky for you. They wouldn't spare you if they caught you trying to help me to get away. But if you can manage it at all, have clothes like the ones you wear ready for me, in a bundle. Vladimir will get them for you."

Fred nodded, and was off at once. He was detained a little time when he went down with the tray, but he pleaded finally with a kindly looking officer, telling him that he was very tired, and had not expected to stay away from home so long, and was allowed to go. He went to the opening of the tunnel, found that the place was unguarded, and decided from the general appearance of the hollow that it was not visited by soldiers.

Indeed, it was within the outer line of sentries, and, in a way, safer because of that. Had it been beyond that line, it would have been much harder to reach.

The operator at Suwalki, when he called him by wireless, complained bitterly, saying that he had been trying for hours to get an answer. Boris's father had been heard from and was extremely anxious to get into touch with his son. But it seemed the news that Fred sent made up for this. The man at Suwalki was incredulous.

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"Our information is that General von Hindenburg is many miles from where you are," he flashed back. "Are you sure of your facts?"

"Absolutely sure," Fred answered. "Do you want the exact location of the house used as headquarters? I can describe it for you if you have the village shown on your map."

"Yes. Give it to me," came the answer.

Before he finished his wireless talk, Fred felt that the Russian operator did not fully trust him. Nor did he blame him. He knew the excellence of the German spy system; he had heard a good deal about it from Boris, and, for that matter, before he had even seen Boris at all. So he only laughed, though he hoped that this feeling would not prevent the Russians from using the information he had given. He could not see just how it was to be useful to them, however. Possibly the fact that von Hindenburg was here, and not to the south, was the important thing.

By this time it was growing dark, and Fred decided that it would soon be safe to try to throw the cord up to Boris's window—as safe, at least, as it would ever be. He got a bundle of clothes from Vladimir, and this time he determined to travel through the tunnel, since he knew that if he went by the outside route he would have trouble in getting through the sentries. Luck was with him again. He was nervous as he opened the door and came out into the night, but there was no one about. At a little distance he could hear steady footsteps; evidently a sentry was walking his beat near by. But Fred's scout training had taught him how to move quietly and he slipped through the gully and toward the house without raising an alarm.

Once he was on the right side of the house, he found shelter in a clump of bushes, where, unseen himself, he could study the situation. His first thought was of the house. He soon found the window of Boris's room. Immediately below it were the windows of corresponding rooms, and one of these was lighted. This made him pause at once. For the rope to be drawn up, or for Boris to show himself before that lighted window for even the moment of a swift descent, might well be fatal. That was one point, but he speedily devised a way of overcoming that.

There was another danger to be considered, and it took him longer to calculate this. Naturally there was a patrol about the house. Fred himself had had to avoid the sentry, making his steady round. Now he lay in the bushes and timed the man's appearances for nearly half an hour. There were two men, as a matter of fact, and they met on each circling of the house. Fortunately, their meeting came at the very end of the garden. So Fred was able to work out a sort of mental chart of their movements, and to confirm it by timing them. The two sentries met on his side of the house at the eastern end. The first walked west, the second north. The one who walked west had his back to Fred and to the window where Boris waited for a minute. Then he, too, turned north. Then came a blessed interval of just a minute, in which neither sentry was in sight. Altogether, there

was a period of almost two minutes in which no eye would be fixed on Boris's window, unless the sentry chanced to turn and look back.

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To make sure, Fred studied both men. And not once did either of them look back or up. Their attention did not seem to centre on the house at all. It was as if their instructions were more to prevent a surprise attack from outside, or the coming of some spy, than to watch those who were already in the house.

Once he had made up his mind, Fred buried himself deeper in the shrubbery and risked using his pocket flashlight while he wrote a note to Boris, telling him what he had learned of the movements of the sentries. He told Boris, also, not to draw up the rope at once, but to climb from his window to the flat roof, something easy enough to manage, and then to move along five paces. There the rope, when it was drawn up, would be invisible against the grey stone of the house wall, whereas, against a lighted window, it would show up so plainly that the most stupid sentry would be sure to see it.

Fred had substituted a tennis ball for the stone he had originally intended to throw. The ball had many advantages. In case his aim was bad, the ball would not make a noise if it fell or if it struck against the wall, while the sound of a stone would have betrayed them had he failed to put it through the window. Now he tied his note to the ball, making it firm and secure with the end of a ball of twine. About his body he had coiled a long, very thin, very strong rope. After Boris had the end of the cord he would fasten the rope to his end, and so enable Boris to draw it up. And to guard against losing the end of the cord, he tied it to his own left wrist.

He waited for the sentries to meet; gave the one who stayed on his side a start, and then, taking careful aim, threw his ball. At home Fred had played baseball. More than once a game had depended on the accuracy of his toss of a hot grounder to the first baseman. In basketball games, he had stood, with the score tied, to shoot for the basket on a foul, when the outcome was to be settled by the accuracy of his throw. But never had he been as nervous as he was now. The ball flew straight and true, however. He saw it enter the window. And the next moment a tug on his wrist told him that Boris had it.

He waited breathlessly. Then two short pulls signalled that Boris had read his note and would follow his instructions. He gave three sharp tugs, and then settled down to wait, with beating heart, for now the crucial test was coming. The other sentry was about to appear. If he noticed the thin string, by any chance, the whole scheme would be spoiled and Fred, in all probability, would be caught and treated as a spy.

The man came around the corner of the house, walking slowly, his head down. As he neared the twine he stopped for just a moment and looked up. Fred scarcely dared to breathe. He knew what had happened. The twine had brushed against the sentry's cheek. But then a puff of wind carried it away, and the man went on, brushing at his cheek, thinking, perhaps, a moth had touched it.

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One sharp tug of the twine. That was the signal to Boris to go ahead. His eyes strained on the window, Fred saw his cousin's figure appear on the sill, saw him climbing swiftly up a water pipe, and then saw him drop to the flat roof, hidden for the moment by a low parapet. Then there was another period of agonized waiting, for again a sentry was to pass. Fred used the brief interval of enforced inaction to loosen the rope and place it on the ground, tied to the loose end of the twine he took from his wrist, so that it would have a clear passage through the bushes. Then the coast was clear again, and he signalled to Boris to draw it up. Up, up went the twine; then the rope started. And at last it dangled against the side of the house. Fred, knowing it was there, could scarcely see it himself. He decided that the sentries would never notice it.

Then came the last pause. And when the sentry had passed the rope, Boris slipped over the parapet and started his descent. He had to come quickly for he had less than two minutes to reach the ground and join Fred in his shelter. Down he came, hand over hand, so fast at the end, when he just slid, letting the rope slip through his fingers, that he must have burned the skin from his palms. But he made it, and came running toward Fred. He was crouched low against the ground. But, just before he reached the bushes there was a shout from above, a flash, a loud report. A bullet sang over Fred's head, and the next moment the garden was alive with rushing, shouting men, ablaze with flashing points of electric light. They tried to hide in the shrubbery. But in vain. At this last moment, when Fred's plan had seemed sure of success, disaster had come—for some German officer, going on the roof, had been just in time to see the rope and spoil everything with his chance shot!

CHAPTER X

SENTENCED

Both Fred and Boris recognized at once the hopelessness of flight. Both thought instinctively of the hollow and the concealed entrance to the tunnel, and both knew that to attempt to use that now would not save them, and would give away a secret that might be supremely important at some future time, either to them or to someone else among those who shared the precious secret. The grounds were flashing with light in all directions; soldiers called to one another; men ran all around, looking for them.

And yet, hopelessly caught as they were, neither could give up supinely. Both had the dauntless fighting spirit that must be conquered, that will never give up, not only while hope remains, but while disaster, be it ever so certain, has not actually come to pass. They were in a sort of thicket, almost as thick as a primeval jungle. At the same moment the thought seemed to come to each of them that the one chance for momentary safety lay in keeping perfectly still. They were side by side, wedged in a little opening they had made for themselves, and now they went down together.

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All about them the din of the pursuit continued. Officers were pouring out of the house to join the hunt. Shouts and cries resounded. Fred had to smile to himself. It seemed to him that the boasted system and order of the German army could not be what he had always heard about it if the escape of two boys could produce such a disorganization.

And then there was a sudden diversion. The noise seemed to die away. It did not cease for there was still a good deal of talking, but there was no more shouting, until there was a sudden whirring sound.

"An aeroplane!" whispered Boris. "I've seen them for the last few days, flying in all directions. They use them for scouting."

"I knew I ought to recognize that sound!" said Fred.

It seemed fairly safe for them to speak to one another now. For some reason it was quite evident they had been forgotten.

There was an interval of almost complete silence; then came a sudden explosion of orders. Half a dozen motorcycles sprang into crackling life; there was the unmistakable din of a powerful aeroplane engine, which, with no muffler, is noisy enough to wake the dead. Then came the whirring of its propeller. They were sure that if they only dared to raise their heads, they would see the machine rising near by.

But there was more to follow that was just as inexplicable. The motorcycles chugged away; then three automobiles started. Their engines roared for a moment before they subsided to the ordered, steady hum of a smooth running motor. On the first car that got away there was a horn that made Boris start convulsively as he heard its bugle note, and grasp Fred's shoulder.

"That horn belongs only to a car used by a full general!" he said. "It must be von Hindenburg going, Fred! That flying machine brought important news!"

That had been evident to Fred almost from the first. He wondered mightily what was going to happen next. It seemed incredible that the Germans, knowing that he and Boris must soon be found, and that only patience was necessary if they were to be caught, would so quickly give up looking for them. And yet—Boris was right, of course. A general would not depart with such abundant evidence of haste and sudden decision unless some grave news had come through the air.

One question was soon settled. Scarcely had General von Hindenburg's car started, with the musical call of its horn clearing the way for it, when the search for the two scouts was renewed with as much vigor as had been shown before the coming of the aeroplane. And this time it was speedily successful. There was less din and confusion. Fred saw at once that some officer with a cool and level head had taken charge. The

searchers now did the simple, obvious thing. They divided the grounds up into sections, and beat over each section thoroughly, with the result that a corporal and a private speedily came upon Boris and Fred, and, raising a sort of view halloo, dragged them out into the open, flashing their electric torches in their eyes.

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"Here they are!" cried the corporal. "Herr Hauptmann, here they are!"

A captain came up quickly, and at the sight of Fred exclaimed sharply in his surprise.

"You're the boy I chose to help with the work in the house here!" he said. His face darkened. "He is a spy! Take him into the guard room and lock him up." He barely glanced at Boris. "Yes, that is the other. See that he is taken back to his quarters, corporal, and that a sentry remains constantly on guard."

"He is not a spy! If he is one, then so am I!" Boris broke out in a sharp protest. "He must be treated exactly like myself, or I must be used as he is!" throwing caution to the four winds.

"I am giving the orders here," said the German, coldly. "We have no desire to treat you harshly, Prince. You and your father have won the liking and respect of all your neighbors here, and it is a matter of regret that we must detain you at all. But you must be able to see for yourself that there is a great difference between an open enemy like yourself and one who pushes his way among us to get what information he can—"

"I beg your pardon, captain," Fred interrupted, thoroughly awake by this time to the danger in which he stood. "It was by your orders, and against my own protest, that I came into the house here at all."

"You will have an opportunity to explain all such matters at your trial," said the captain. "I can assure you that all will be done in a regular fashion, and that you will have every opportunity to defend yourself. Colonel Goldapp will doubtless arrange for a quick hearing since we shall not be here much longer."

Fred was quite cool and collected. He was frightened, to be sure, and he was brave enough to admit that to himself. He had good reason to be frightened. There is no offence more serious than espionage in time of war, and by every rule of war he was a spy. He had pretended to be a German, which he was not, and had been found within the German lines. It was true, of course, that he had been ordered into headquarters, but that was a trifling point, and, though he had raised it, Fred knew very well that no technicality would save him if the truth about him came out.

Boris understood all this, undoubtedly, quite as well as Fred or the German captain, but he was beside himself. He felt that Fred had run into this terrible danger because of him, in order to try to rescue him from an imprisonment that, though annoying, was by no means a serious matter.

"Take me instead of him!" he cried, forgetting that with every word he was really making Fred's case worse. "I—"

“I’ll be all right,” said Fred, with a cheerfulness he certainly did not feel. “All I want is a fair trial. If I get that, I’ll be all right.”

Unwillingly enough, Boris let himself be led away. Something in Fred’s look, or in his voice, had warned him not to say anything more. So Fred saw him go, and was taken himself to the guard room, of which he was the only occupant save for the impassive Pomeranian sentry. Fred guessed, somehow, that German soldiers in war time did not often do things that caused them to be put under arrest. In the little he had seen of them he had come to understand what it was that made a German army so formidable.

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He expected to be brought before the court early in the morning but, in fact, he was called out in less than an hour, and taken into the dining-room of the parsonage. Here, at the head of the table, sat an officer in a colonel's uniform; Colonel Goldapp, unquestionably, presiding over the court, which included four officers beside himself. Fred knew enough of the military law to understand what was going on. He saw a young lieutenant sitting with some papers before him. Another came and drew him aside.

"I am to defend you," this officer said, pleasantly. "That is, of course, I am to see that you get fair treatment. You are accused of being a spy. The charge, as I understand it, is that you are a Russian, but have disguised yourself as a German. If this is true, the best advice I can give you is to plead guilty and throw yourself on the mercy of the court. Your age will be taken into consideration."

"I am not a Russian," said Fred, quickly. "I am an American. I demand an opportunity to see the American ambassador, or at least the nearest American consul."

"Is that all?"

"That is all I can say. It is true that I am an American, and I believe it is my right, as a foreigner, to ask to see the representative of my country, since America and Germany are not at war, but are friendly one to the other."

"That would be true if you were charged with an offence in a civil court. But in a court-martial there are no such rules. Once more, I believe your best course is to plead guilty. I do not know the evidence against you, but I can tell you that the court might be merciful if you admitted your guilt frankly, while it would probably treat you more harshly if you forced it to prove your guilt."

Fred shook his head, however. And so the trial began. It was a real trial, and fair enough, but a trial by court-martial is not like one in a civil court, especially in time of war. There were no delays. The judge-advocate stated the case against Fred very briefly. He called as witness the officer who had brought Fred into headquarters, who said that the prisoner had been entirely willing to come. Then the corporal who had found him testified. And the third witness, when he was called, was none other than Lieutenant Ernst, who had befriended Fred at Virballen! At the sight of him Fred's heart sank. He began to understand what a strong case there really was against him.

At Ernst's first words there was almost a sensation, for the lieutenant brought out the fact that Fred was related to the Suvaroff family. The fact that Fred had gone straight to the house of his kinsman came out as a result of Ernst's evidence, and Fred knew that it would be useless to say that this had been the result of pure chance, and that he had not even known of Boris's existence. It was true, but it was none the less incredible. It

was easy to see when Ernst had finished giving his testimony, which he did reluctantly, and with a good deal of sympathy for Fred, that the court had made up its mind.

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There were no witnesses for Fred to call. He told his own story, but it was not believed. The finding of the court was inevitable: "Guilty as charged!" And Colonel Goldapp, in an expressionless voice, pronounced sentence.

"The prisoner is old enough, though he is only a boy, to know the fate of a spy. He risked this fate. He will be shot at once. Captain von Glahn will take charge of the execution of the court's sentence."

Fred passed through the minutes that followed as if he were in a dream. It seemed to him that it was someone else who was led into the garden, placed against a wall, and blindfolded. Von Glahn, a young officer, came and stood beside him.

"The firing squad will be here at once," he said. "I am sorry. Is there any message I can deliver for you?"

And then outside a bugle rang out, and there was a burst of wild, frenzied yelling and the next moment a crash of firing.

CHAPTER XI

THE COSSACKS

Something fell against Fred, something heavy and warm. It was a full minute before he realized that it was von Glahn, staggering, coughing. He supported the German officer for a moment. Then they went down together with von Glahn, still coughing terribly, on top. That saved Fred's life. For over him now, for the next five minutes, there raged a furious fight. Horses were all through the grounds; Fred heard them, and the savage, unearthly cries of their riders. For the first minute there was a good deal of firing. He guessed that the firing squad that had been meant for him was putting up a stiff struggle; later he knew it.

Then abruptly it was all over. There was no sound save the groans of wounded men. The firing ceased, and with it the fierce shouts of those who had invaded the garden at that most critical of moments. Fred realized afterward that he must have fainted, for when next he could see and hear, there was a faint light in the sky. He was aroused by the moving of the heavy weight of von Glahn's body, and looked up to see a bearded man, small and wiry, in a rough sheepskin coat, who grinned down at him.

"Not hurt, eh, comrade?" said this man in Russian. He seemed surprised when Fred answered in his own tongue, and started back. But he had pushed the body of the German captain away, and Fred rose to his feet a little unsteadily. It was a wild, strange scene upon which his eyes rested. All about the place where he had lain the ground was covered with evidences of a furious struggle. Nearly a score of Germans lay about, dead. Among them were half a dozen Cossacks, and over one of these stood a

riderless horse, muzzling his master's body inquisitively. Fred was about to question the man who had relieved him of von Glahn's weight when there was a sudden rush, and Boris, sobbing with delight, threw his arms about him and kissed him on both cheeks.

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"Here—I say, Boris, don't do that!" he cried.

"Oh, I forgot that is not your custom!" said Boris. "But I thought you were dead! I thought they had killed you! I saw them bring you out from my window, and if the sentry had not stopped me, I would have thrown myself out to join you! Come with me—my father is here!"

Fred was still dazed. His escape had been so miraculous that he wanted to pinch himself to see if he were still awake. A month before he had been at home in America, envied by the rest of his patrol because he was actually to go to far-off Russia by himself. And since then he had been three times a prisoner, had been in danger of exile to Siberia, and just now had escaped by mere seconds meeting a blast of bullets from a German firing squad, a victim of a war that had not even been dreamed of when he had sailed from America!

But there could be no real doubt of the truth as he followed Boris into the house. In the dining-room where he had been sentenced to death, he came upon Lieutenant Ernst, chatting amiably with half a dozen Russian officers in their white coats. The German grinned at him.

"You're in luck, youngster," he said. "I'm not so sorry, really! They didn't get what they came after, you see."

"No, worse luck!" said a Russian. "How did the old fox know we were coming?"

Ernst only looked wise, and did not answer. Fred was surprised by the way in which captive and captors mingled, seemingly on the most friendly terms. But when he thought it over, it did not seem so strange. Ernst and these Russians knew what a huge thing this war was. Each had his part to play, and would play it as well as he could. But individuals, after all, could not count for much, and the man who was prisoner to-day might be on top to-morrow. Later bitterness and personal hatred might come, but as yet, as Fred began to understand, these men hadn't come to that. They were like players on rival football teams after a hotly contested game. In the play each man would fight his hardest; after the whistle blew, friendship ruled. The referee's whistle had blown when Ernst was caught in a trap.

Boris pushed on into a smaller room. Here Fred saw a man he would have known anywhere as Boris's father, and, for that matter, as some close relative of his mother. Alexander Suvaroff, General of Division in the Russian army, looked very much like Mikail, but there was a sharp difference between them. This Suvaroff was as kindly in aspect as the other was repellent and harsh. His eyes twinkled affectionately when he saw Fred.

“Welcome, cousin,” he said. “Even if our chief purpose failed, I am glad we got here in time to save you. You heard that General von Hindenburg got away?”

“I knew that before we were caught,” said Fred, “but I didn’t know you had come for him.”

“Of course they did!” said Boris. “Your wireless message told the staff he was here, and my father led a cavalry raid behind the German lines to try to catch him. But—he ran away!”

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The general laughed at the contempt in Boris's tone.

"Of course he ran away!" he said. "I only wonder how he knew we were coming! That was bad luck—because not once did we strike so much as a German patrol as we rode."

"I can tell you," said Fred. "An aeroplane brought word. Its pilot must have seen you as he flew overhead, and suspected that you were coming here."

"So!" Suvaroff frowned. "I did not think of that! However, it is better than what we suspected at first. It looked as if someone at headquarters must have betrayed the plan. Well, it was too good to come true. If we had caught him and his staff, we might have hastened the end of the war by a good many months. Von Hindenburg is the ablest general in Germany, though he has been in disgrace for years. They sent for him as soon as war came. He'll do good work."

Fred was thinking.

"If that aeroplane saw you coming, general," he said, "isn't there danger that they may try to surround you here?"

"Yes, more than danger. They are sure to try to do it! But their cavalry is very slow, and I do not believe they have infantry enough near by to make any trouble for us." He frowned thoughtfully. "There is something very peculiar about the whole situation around here! If von Hindenburg is here, it means that their chief concentration on this front must be here. And yet we get reports of an astonishingly small number of troops! Not more than two corps."

Boris looked eagerly at his father, and then at Fred. But before he could speak General Suvaroff went on, crisply.

"You can ride?" he asked Fred. "Good! I will see that you and Boris have horses. Then we shall start. We can be back in our own lines before daylight."

Fred hesitated. Then Boris took the words from his mouth.

"Father, I want to stay!" he said, eagerly. "It will be safe. I can get back to the house and they can never catch me there, you know! They may not even search for me, but if they do, I can hide from them in the tunnel. And you say the German movement about here is puzzling. Would it not be well to have some way of sending word from here? Ivan is at work. But no matter what he discovers, if we are not at the house, it will do no good. Let me stay!"

"I should like to stay, too," said Fred.

“Impossible!” said General Suvaroff at once to that. “You would be shot as soon as you were caught—you are under sentence now. They would not treat you as a prisoner of war, even if they caught you among my troopers.”

“But if they did not catch me—”

“No! I cannot let you take so great a risk. You are of my kin, and I owe a duty to your mother. I shall see that you get back safely to Russia and are sent home by sea from there.”

“But if I go into Russia, I shall be arrested—those are Prince Mikail's orders,” said Fred, quietly. “I am sure to be caught there, and here there is a chance that I may not be found. If you take Lieutenant Ernst with you as a prisoner, no one among the Germans will know me, except as I appear now. If I change back to my own clothes, I shall be safe from anything worse than detention. None of the officers of the court-martial escaped, did they?”

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"No, that is true," said Suvaroff. He spoke thoughtfully. It was plain that Fred's argument was making an impression on him. "I have heard something of your affair with Mikail. I shall look into that. Eh—I don't know just what to do!"

"Let us stay!" pleaded Boris. "We will be careful, and we know now just what dangers we must avoid."

"I think we shall be back here, in force, before the week is out," said his father, after a moment's reflection. "Very well, you shall stay! It is true that you may be of the greatest service. I have not the right to consider personal matters when the welfare of Russia is at stake."

It was light by now. In curious contrast to the shambles of the garden and the disorder of the house, its windows shattered by bullets, its furniture broken and draperies torn in the swift conflict that had followed the appearance of the Cossacks, roosters were crowing outside and birds were singing. General Suvaroff gave a sharp order; subordinates passed it along. A bugle sounded, and, five minutes later, after the general had said good-bye to the two scouts, the Cossack raiders rode away. They were strung out in a long column along the road. As they passed through the village Fred and Boris, watching from an upper window of the abandoned parsonage, saw the villagers watching. Boris had a powerful field glass, and through this he and Fred could see the very faces of the watching Germans. Hatred and fear mingled in the looks they sent after the invaders of their country.

"One can't blame them," said Fred, with a shudder. "War's rather ghastly, isn't it, Boris?"

He looked down into the garden, and Boris's eyes followed his.

"Yes," said the Russian. "That's the ugly part of it. It's all ugly. But sometimes war must come, it seems to me. We in Russia have never wanted to make war. We have fought because we were forced to fight. I think that is what history will say of us in this war."

"They are not going toward Russia," said Fred, looking after the raiders, who were melting into the landscape now. "Their road seems to be due west."

"They must ride in a long circle, I suppose," said Boris. "If they went straight back, they would run right into the Germans. There must be a lot of the enemy between us and the Russian lines—their main body, you see. And my father won't want to fight. His object is to get back with as many men as possible. It would be useless to send a thousand Cossacks against an army corps."

"Oh, of course! It's wonderful to think of how they got here, Boris, riding right through the enemy's country! It's like the work cavalry did on both sides in our Civil War. They used to get behind the enemy's lines and cut telegraph wires and railways all the time."

In the village, there were now more signs of life. As the Cossacks rode by, the street had been empty, but now men and women were coming out furtively. They began to come toward the parsonage.

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"Time for us to go," said Fred, with decision. "We wouldn't have much chance if they caught us here. And if we're to be of any use, those people have got to think that we've gone."

"Right!" said Boris. "Hello—look up there! I was afraid of that!"

He pointed to a monoplane, flying high and coming from the north, from the direction of the Baltic.

"Looking for the raiders," said Fred. "Let's hurry. I think we ought to report what has happened by wireless. Your father's party may need help."

CHAPTER XII

THE TRICK

It was nervous work going through the lower floor of the house, through the garden, trampled by the rush of the Cossack charge, through bushes clipped and torn by bullets. All about was a curious silence, broken only by the sounds that the birds made, and the humming insects, which were not at all disturbed by war and the ruin it left in its wake. It was a relief to both scouts to pass into the tunnel. There everything seemed normal, strange though the place was. And in a few moments they were back in the great hall of the Suvaroff house, and were being greeted with delight by old Vladimir, though he reproached them, too, for coming back.

Their first thought was for the wireless. Fred sent a brief report of what had happened, describing the escape of General von Hindenburg. And then, as he was about to end the message, Ivan stood beside him. His eyes were shining and he seemed greatly excited.

"Tell them that von Hindenburg has only a masking force here with very few first line troops," he said. "Most of the Germans are far to the south. Their plan is to join the Austrians in an advance from Cracow. Here they hope to hold the lakes with a few troops. They expect our army to advance. They will give up Johannisberg and Ortelsburg. They will make no stand at all until we come to Allenstein. The whole movement here is a trick. They hope to lead us on here and then drive a great wedge into the heart of Poland, until they can strike at Warsaw."

Fred made no comment. He sent the message, then asked his own questions.

"You know of the raid last night?"

"I heard something of it—and that the old fox Hindenburg escaped. Tell me the rest."

"I'll be off," he said, when they had done. "Half a mile away I have a cache. There is a motorcycle and the uniform of a German soldier—a man of the cycle corps. I shall follow General Suvaroff."

"Can you catch them?" asked Boris, doubtfully. "They ride fast."

"Not so fast," said Ivan. "There may be fighting to do as well as running, and for fighting you need horses that are not too tired. It would be foolish to save an hour or two by hard riding and lose everything at the end for lack of the power to break through. And a motorcycle can do better than the fastest horse."

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"But how did you get one?" asked Fred. "And the German uniform?"

Ivan smiled significantly.

"I met a man of about my size," he said. "I was walking. And I was tired. I took his cycle and his uniform away from him."

There was something about his tone and the look in his eyes that made Fred refrain from asking any more questions. He admired Ivan greatly, but he was a little afraid of him, too. In him he could see what lay behind the general belief that Russia was still a barbarous, partially civilized state, the underlying truth of the old saying: "Scratch a Russian, and you will find a Tartar beneath." He was glad that Ivan was on his side, and was bound to him, moreover, by his loyalty to the name of Suvaroff.

"Listen, now," said Ivan. "Here it is very dangerous. Stay as long as you can, but never let yourselves be caught in the house by any Germans. Do not let the villagers see you. Take to the tunnel without hesitation if there is an attack upon the house, or a search. I think you will be safe as long as you are watchful, but you cannot be off your guard for even a moment. The Germans will think that you went back with the Cossacks but they will try to make sure."

"We will be careful," said Boris. "You are sure of what you have learned? There will be no more than two army corps in this region?"

"That is certain. I have scouted for twenty miles to the west and I have been along the railway lines. If there were more troops coming, I should have discovered it. I am sure of that."

"And now you are going back toward our lines?"

"Yes. I may be of service to your father. And, in any case, I shall be of more use if I am with the German advanced position than if I stayed here, far in the rear. Good-bye!"

He departed through the tunnel. And then for Fred and Boris began a task almost harder than any that could have been set. They had to wait. There was nothing for them to do except sit in the little turret room. Below, Vladimir and the others kept a sort of guard, but there seemed little reason even for that.

From the turret, whence the wireless waves were sent pulsing out through the air, a fine view of the surrounding country for a good many miles was to be had. For the most part this was a level section, slightly undulating, but with very few high spots. From their vantage point the roads stretched out like ribbons or like lines on a map. Fred opened the wireless and amused himself by listening. At first he could hear only a confused jumble through the receivers that were clamped to his ear. Then he changed his wave length, experimenting until he got a clear series of dots and dashes.

“I think I’ll take this down,” he said to Boris. “It’ll be like Greek to us, of course, but it’s all German wireless talk, and it all means something. Perhaps if we’re lucky, we’ll stumble on to the key of the code they’re using, and that might be useful.”

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After a time Boris, who could receive well enough but was an inexperienced sender, relieved him, and Fred, taking the field glass, began to search the horizon. Soon something caught his eye and held his attention. At first he thought he saw troops moving, coming from the east. It seemed strange that German troops should be in retreat so soon, but in a moment he understood. He did not see soldiers moving along the road, but a company of civilians, with carts that were drawn by men and women. At first the sight puzzled him, but then he understood, and he called to Boris to look.

"They're clearing out the villages toward the border," he said.

Boris only glanced through the glass.

"Yes. They were doing it the day after the war began, too," he said. "It's better for them, of course. If civilians are about where there is fighting, they are in danger from both sides. The Germans wouldn't stop a minute at shelling one of their own villages if we were holding it. Fred, I think they must be going to send our little lot away, too. There are soldiers coming along the road—Uhlans."

Fred looked down and saw a picket of lancers approaching, headed by an officer. And in a few minutes there were signs of great activity in the village. Soon the exodus began. And then the Uhlans turned at the road leading up to the great house, and began to climb.

"Coming to warn our people, I suppose," said Boris. "We'll make ourselves scarce, Fred. Vladimir can talk to them when they arrive."

But Fred did not go without one more sweeping look about him. And it showed him something that surprised him.

"I've got a curious feeling," he told Boris, when they had slipped into the secret passage. "I've got what we call a hunch in America—a feeling that Ivan has been fooled. You didn't see what I did just now. I'm perfectly certain I saw troops marching on two roads that aren't very far apart, to the north."

"Marching east or west?"

"East. I think a real trap is being prepared, Boris. And—I'm going to try to find out the truth!"

"How?"

"I'd better not tell you, Boris. Go back and listen—see what you can hear at the thin wall. I'm afraid that if we both go we might be heard, if they are near there. I want to know where those Uhlans come from."

“All right,” said Boris, wondering a little. He went off, and Fred, as soon as he had disappeared, began to make his way very quietly, almost stealthily, indeed, toward the other end of the tunnel—the one that gave to the open air.

“He’d never have let me go if I had told him,” he said to himself, feeling the need of justifying what looked like treachery, since his own conscience was accusing him. “And I didn’t lie to him. I didn’t say that I would be there when he came back. I only hope I get out before he finds I’ve gone!”

When he reached the opening he felt safe, and there he stopped and wrote a note to Boris, telling him what he meant to do and why he had not taken him into his confidence before.

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"He's sure to find that," said Fred to himself. "He'll come down here looking for me, and I suppose he'd go out, too, no matter how dangerous it might be, if I didn't leave this note."

As he swung the door that let him out, Fred felt the little thrill that always came to him when he opened the way thus to the outer air. Ever since he had come upon the German soldier here the first time, he had had this feeling. This time, however, the way was clear, and he slipped out and made his way swiftly toward the parsonage. He took advantage of every bit of cover for he had no wish to be seen, at least as yet. Soon he reached the vantage spot he sought. From it he commanded a view of the village, and of the entrance to the great Suvaroff house on the hill as well.

The dismal procession from the village had already begun. The place, in fact, was already almost entirely deserted. Orders from the army evidently counted for a good deal here. Fred wondered what Americans would have done in a like case. But the departure of the villagers, who knew him, and might have recognized him even in his German guise, relieved him immensely. Before the house on the hill he could see a mounted Uhlan on guard over the horses. The rest had gone inside. There were only five of them altogether, which made him feel confident that none would be left behind. There were too few for that.

As time passed, he wondered why they stayed inside so long. In a way, it was to his liking that they should, but it made him nervous. He was afraid that a real search was being made; afraid that, by some stroke of misfortune, Boris's hiding-place had been revealed. But at last he saw the solitary horseman outside the house stiffen to rigid attention. Then the others came out, and he almost shouted in his relief when he saw that they brought no one with them. The officer swung to his saddle and in a minute more the little command was cantering down the hill. Fred looked at the village searchingly now. There was no one left. A quarter of a mile away the rear end of the wretched procession of refugees straggled along the road, going west. They were not looking back.

Now it was time to put his plan to the test. The chances of full success, as he understood perfectly, were most remote. And the danger was great. He had not seen these Uhlans; there might well be someone even in that small party who would recognize him. And he knew what would happen then, if he were caught. But his plan compelled him to run that risk, and he emerged from his shelter, and struck out boldly along the road the Uhlans had taken to come to the village. He walked northeast, and he knew that that in itself would be suspicious, but it was all part of his plan.

He had not long to wait for the plan to begin, or at least to work out according to his calculations. Behind him he heard a shout, but, affecting not to hear it, he did not turn. And in a few moments he heard the sound of galloping hoofs behind him. Even then he did not turn until a Uhlan had ridden past him.

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“Stop!” cried the soldier. “Where are you going?”

Fred looked at him blankly.

“Stop!” said the German again, for Fred, after having looked at him, had moved on. Still Fred paid no attention, and the man rode up to him and leaned over, dropping a heavy hand on his shoulder and shaking him in no gentle way.

“Where are you going, I say? Answer!” roared the Uhlan.

But Fred only smiled and pointed first to his ears and then to his mouth. By pantomime he pretended to be deaf and dumb. And when the officer came up, Fred was still smiling—and silent. He knew he had never seen this officer before.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ESCAPE

“What’s the matter with him, Schmidt!” asked the officer.

Fred knew enough of German uniforms by this time to place him as a lieutenant of the lowest grade, and was thankful that he did not have an experienced man to deal with.

“Deaf and dumb, I think, Herr Lieutenant,” said the man. “I rode up behind him, calling to him and making a good deal of noise, but he did not even know I was coming until I was on top of him.”

“Well, he can’t go this way!” said the lieutenant. “How are we to make him understand that?”

“If I dismounted and turned him about, he might perhaps understand,” said the soldier.

“Try it!”

Fred had hard work to conceal his amusement but he managed it. The soldier solemnly turned him about and pushed him in the direction whence he had come. But Fred immediately turned around, walked a couple of paces as he had been going, and then stopped, smiling broadly. Then he turned around, shook his head violently, and turned back.

“He’s trying to tell us he wants to keep on the way he was going,” said the lieutenant.

The two Germans seemed to be puzzled, but then the officer got an idea. He produced paper and pencil and wrote hurriedly.

“Who are you? Where are you going?” he wrote. Then he handed the paper to Fred. Fred hesitated for a moment. He understood German and could talk it very well. But he was a little nervous about writing it, especially in the German script. He could write it, but he was not sure that he could write it so well that it would seem like the work of a German. However, he took the chance.

“My name is Gebhardt,” he wrote. “I come from Munich, and I am visiting my uncle and aunt here at Gumbinnen. My uncle sent me to Insterberg and then I found I could not go back by train. Soldiers have made me turn around so many times that it has taken me all this time to get here. Why can I not go to Gumbinnen?”

The officer took the paper and, when he had read it, told the soldier. They seemed to find Fred’s explanation plausible, and his writing had passed muster.

“Here is a fine mess!” said the lieutenant. “Poor boy! I feel sorry for one with such an affliction! And is he not between the devil and the deep blue sea? In Gumbinnen there will be Russian cavalry by to-morrow—and at Insterberg, I suppose, the first real battle will be fought!”

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Fred caught his breath. He was getting what he wanted now, certainly! If only he did not betray himself! If the officer would only go on and tell him a little more! And he did go on, almost as if he were speaking to himself.

"If his people have any sense, they will have cleared out of Gumbinnen before this. He knows someone at Insterberg, perhaps, but if it is the plan to let the Russians come so far without fighting and then strike while they are there, the population will have been ordered out. And they have been unloading troop trains at Insterberg, too—so that the Russians would not find out how many men we had here. Eh—take him up behind you, Schmidt! We can't abandon him. Perhaps the hospital people or the cooks can make some use of him."

Fred heard this with a start of dismay. It was decidedly more than he had bargained for, because now that he had the information he had come to get, he wanted to get back to the wireless as quickly as possible. It did him no good to know the German plan, or to have a hint of what it was, unless he could pass on his knowledge to those who could make some use of it. But he could not protest when the officer wrote down an explanation of what was to be done with him, telling him that the road to Gumbinnen was not safe, but that he would see to it that Fred should get to a safe place.

So when the soldier Schmidt patted his horse's back and indicated that Fred should climb up, Fred had no choice but to obey. He had plenty to think of, too, as they rode along. For one thing, while he had taken his chance and won, since this officer had not seen him before, there was every prospect that he would be recognized if he were now taken to headquarters. He supposed that that was where they were going, and he knew that a number of the officers who had left the parsonage with General von Hindenburg on the night of the Cossack raid would be present. It would be strange, indeed, if none of them knew him. And it took no imagination to guess what recognition would mean.

There was just one thing in his favor now. It was beginning to get dark. He did not know how far they had to ride, but he hoped it was a long way. Ordinarily, he would not have wanted the ride to be prolonged because his position was highly uncomfortable. Fred could ride well himself, but riding alone on a horse and sitting behind a man who fills his own saddle with very little to spare are two different things.

Try as he would, Fred could not think of a means of getting away. To escape from five mounted men by slipping off the horse and running for it was manifestly impossible. He gave up that idea before he even elaborated upon it. But soon the glimmering dawn of an idea did come to him. The pace slackened, and he noticed that he and Schmidt were falling behind. The lieutenant called out sharply, and Schmidt, growling to himself beneath his breath, used his spur and brought his horse up into alignment with the others again. But only for a hundred yards or so. Then the horse faltered and fell behind again. Now the lieutenant reproved Schmidt sharply.

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"I'm sorry, Herr Lieutenant," said Schmidt. "My poor beast is very tired, and he is carrying an extra burden. He has had more work to do to-day than any of the others. If you would permit me to drop behind and come in alone—it is not so far now?"

"Very well," said the lieutenant. "We'll never get there if we hang back waiting for you." And he gave the word to ride on.

Schmidt at once began to take things more easily. Fred heard him grunting to himself.

"Those verdamter young officers!" he grumbled. "Just because they have a pair of shoulder straps, they think they know it all! I would like to put some of them across my knee!"

Fred knew enough of German discipline to be vastly amused by this. But he had no time now to think of trifling things. His whole energy was devoted to finding some way to turn this new circumstance to his own advantage. It seemed to him that there ought to be some way of managing it. And in a moment he got the idea. Schmidt was as tired as his horse, or even more so, and by this time he was swaying in his saddle and half asleep, as a trained horseman often does. Fred leaned forward and very quietly cut the saddle girth almost through. He knew that the slightest strain would finish the work. Schmidt was utterly unconscious of what was going on. Fred could tell, from the man's breathing, just what his condition was. He would snore a little and then, with a start, he would arouse himself, breathing normally for a minute. Then the snoring would start again. He was trusting himself entirely to his horse.

Dusk had fallen now, and Fred decided that it was time to see if his plan was feasible. He took a handkerchief from his pocket, rolled it into a ball, and flung it straight ahead, so that it fell, unrolling, right before the horse's eyes. The effect was inevitable. The frightened horse reared. At the strain the severed girth gave, and the saddle, rolling, spilled both Schmidt and Fred into the road, while the horse bolted. Fred lay still, watching Schmidt, who rose, cursing fluently, and stood for a moment staring stupidly after his horse. Then he began to call, and broke into the awkward, lumbering run of the cavalryman.

Fred might have slipped away then, but he was sure that Schmidt would catch the horse, which must, he thought, be trained to stop even after a momentary panic. And it was not his plan to seize a chance that might after all not be as good as it looked. He wanted to make as sure as possible of getting away. And now, as soon as Schmidt had started after the horse, he crawled over to the saddle, which lay where it had fallen. He took the heavy revolver from the holster and was duly grateful for one thing he had noticed—these Uhlans carried no carbines. Their only weapons, seemingly, were their lances and the revolvers in their holsters.



He was not a moment too soon. Schmidt came back almost at once, leading his horse. He was scolding it for running, and he was also expressing his opinion of government saddles and leather. He found the broken girth, and sat down at once to mend it. Fred scarcely dared to breathe for a moment. But Schmidt did not notice the empty holster, and though he growled and swore when he saw how the girth had snapped, he did not seem to notice that it had been cut almost through.

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Fred went over and looked at him. Then, idly, indifferently, he went to the horse, which was standing perfectly still, though its flanks were still heaving. Fred patted the horse's head. Schmidt glanced around at him. His back was turned, and he seemed to see nothing worthy of attention in Fred's attitude.

And then, with one spring, Fred was on the horse's back, and, bending low, was urging the tired animal back over the road he had travelled so slowly. With a cry of mingled rage and surprise Schmidt leaped up and began shouting. But the horse, ready enough to obey when it was running riderless away, now obeyed the more convincing orders of its rider. Fred, moreover, was a welcome contrast to Schmidt's big bulk; there was a difference of at least seventy pounds.

Fred turned once to look at Schmidt, and saw him staring with an expression of stupefaction at the empty holster. Then he devoted himself entirely to the road ahead. It was as he had thought and hoped; Schmidt did not have another pistol. And, with Fred urging him on, the horse galloped on as if it had been really fresh.

"Thank heaven he's stupid, that Schmidt!" thought Fred.

Then he had a fit of remorse. He was afraid that it would go hard with Schmidt, for he knew that in the German army excuses are not readily accepted. However, it was not a time to think of sentiment. Fred was taking desperate chances himself, and it had been a case of seizing any chance of escape that offered itself. Not only his own liberty, but very probably his own life had depended upon his getting away. He knew enough, by this time, to understand that the outcome of the first campaign of the war might depend upon the accuracy of the information the Russians obtained of the German movements.

It was plain to Fred that the Russians, in this quarter at least, had not been well served by their spies. He was surprised at the absence of initiative the Russians had shown in some ways. Aeroplane scouting, for instance, would have made it impossible for the Germans to spring such a surprise as evidently was in preparation. The Germans were using their aerial scouts. It was one of them, detecting the approach of General Suvaroff and his Cossack raiders, who had spoiled the plan for the capture of von Hindenburg.

But though he had felt that he was perfectly justified in sacrificing Schmidt to his own need to escape, Fred could not help feeling sorry for the poor fellow.

"I hope he'll be able to think up a good story!" he said to himself. "And, by George, I hope I don't meet any more German soldiers! They would certainly finish me off if they found me riding on a German horse! There isn't anything I could do that would make them think that was all right, no matter how stupid they were!"



He urged his horse on now as hard as he dared, tired though he knew it to be. His plan was simple enough. He meant to ride to within a mile of the village, and then dismount, letting the horse go wherever it liked. Its usefulness to him would be over as soon as it had put him past the possibility of pursuit. He thought his troubles were nearly over. But suddenly, around a turn in the road, came a glare of light, and in his ears sounded the bugle of a German military automobile.

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CHAPTER XIV

ALTERED PLANS

Fred's horse did for him what he could scarcely have done for himself in time. It reared and threw him, then bolted. Tired already, the sudden appearance of the monstrous ray of light and the roar of the approaching motor was too much for that horse. Fred was not hurt by the fall. Having had no stirrups from which to disengage his feet, he was able to let himself go. And he had no sooner landed than he was up. For just a moment, he knew he must be plainly visible in the glare of the searchlight. But he dashed for the side of the road and made his way through a hedge and into the field on the other side. There he began to run as fast and as hard as he could.

He had two chances, he thought. One, that he had not been seen at all; the other, that whoever was in the car might think he had passed on the flying horse. If he had been seen, however, he could not hope to escape by running. He was too tired, for one thing, after the strenuous experience of the previous night, and for another, he was almost certain to be seen, for after he had traversed a space that was covered with shrubs and young trees, he would be in the open. And a bullet could travel faster than he could.

And so, after making his dash, he stopped running and threw himself down, facing the road, to watch and to listen. At first he thought he was safe, for the car roared by. But in a moment his ear caught a different note in the sound of the motor, and then the engine stopped. It started again in a moment, but now the headlight was coming toward him again! The car had been turned around. It was back, undoubtedly, to look for him. Still he decided not to run, but to stay where he was, though every instinct prompted him to take the chance of flight. That, however, was pure panic, and he fought against the impulse.

The car came along slowly. He was not more than a hundred feet from the road, and the headlight showed him the progress of the car. Its blinding light, however, made it impossible for him to see the car itself or its occupants. It gave them the advantage. Finally the car stopped, and he groaned. It had stopped exactly opposite his hiding-place! He had hoped that they would not be able to tell just where he had left the road, but in a moment the explanation came to him. He had trampled down the hedge in getting through, of course, and had left a trail that a child might have followed.

Then the headlight was switched off, and for a moment he lost the car altogether. His ears, rather than his eyes, told him that someone was coming. He heard the breaking down of the hedge, and then footsteps moving slowly, but coming closer. And in a moment he saw a little stabbing ray of light that wandered back and forth. Whoever was stalking him was evidently not afraid of him.

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Suddenly he remembered his pistol, the one he had taken from Schmidt's holster. He gripped it convulsively. After all, he was not as helpless as he had believed. He waited. Should he risk all now, with a shot—a shot that might warn this stalker off and give him another chance to escape, even though there were others in the car? He drew out the pistol, and cocked it. Then, at the faint sound, a voice called to him out of the darkness.

"Do not fire! It is I—Ivan! Ivan Ivanovitch!"

For a moment Fred thought he was going to collapse, so great was the relief and the slackening of tension. He did laugh out, but caught himself at once.

"Ivan!" he said. "I thought it was a German officer! It is I, Ivan—Fred Waring!"

"I knew it," said Ivan, coming up close. "I saw you for just a second as your horse reared. It was just a flash of your face, but if I have ever seen a face once, I never forget it. And you have the look of a Suvaroff about you, even though you are different. I would have known you for one of the breed had I met you anywhere in the world, had no one told me who you were. And so I turned to find you and follow you."

"But what are you doing here? I thought you were to rejoin our own army?"

"I was pressed into service as a chauffeur. This car was needed near the front, and there was no one to drive it. I deceived them wholly, with my uniform, and my motorcycle. And so they forced this car upon me! My plan was to use it, instead of my cycle, to get past their lines."

"But you are riding straight to Gumbinnen—and they are near there in force!"

"No, they have retreated from there. They know that we are too strong for them, and they do not care to fight."

"Yes, and do you know why? Because they have been bringing troops up secretly to Insterberg, and are planning to fight a great battle there on their own grounds! You were wrong, Ivan, in the information you sent."

Wasting no words, he quickly told of what he had learned that evening. And Ivan smote his hands together for he was deeply troubled.

"And I thought I knew all their plans!" he said, savagely. "If the staff had acted upon my information, we should have marched into a trap!"

"Now I must get to the wireless," said Fred. "That was what I meant to do when you frightened my horse there in the road."



“Come, I will drive you back. It will not take long, and your work is more important than mine now. It is safe, too. You can be hidden in the car in case we encounter any Germans. But that is not likely. They are not as thick in this district as they were forty-eight hours ago.”

They made their way together to the car, and Fred laughed.

“I don’t think I was ever so scared as when you turned and came back. It was worse, in a way, than when they were going to shoot me in the parsonage garden. I’d been so sure I was safe—and then to hear that bugle call on your car!”

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"It is not right for you to run such risks," said Ivan. "I wish you were behind our lines! You are not even a Russian, and yet you have been near to death for us."

"Don't you worry about me!" said Fred. "I don't suppose that I would have started this, but when I was pushed into it as I was, I feel like doing all I can. If the Germans had caught me when Boris hid me in the tunnel, they would have treated me like an enemy, so I thought I might as well give them a good excuse, since they were going to do it anyhow."

"Here we are," said Ivan. "Even if you were frightened, this may turn out well. You will save some time, and I can take you to the very opening of the tunnel."

"Well, it's only fair for this car to do me a good turn after the fright it gave me," said Fred.

Ivan drove swiftly when they started again. On that deserted road, through a country that had been blasted by the approach of war, though as yet there had been no actual fighting, there was no reason for cautious driving. And five minutes brought them to the parsonage, and so to a point as close to the opening of the tunnel as the car could go. As the motor stopped Ivan swore in surprise.

"Look!" he said.

To the west there were a dozen darting searchlights winking back and forth across the sombre sky. And below the searchlights were hundreds of tiny points of fire.

"They're advancing!" he cried. "And listen!"

From the east there came a dull sound that rose presently to a steady, loud roar.

"Everything has changed!" cried Ivan, his face white. "We are pushing the attack—we must have occupied Gumbinnen! The Germans are being driven back—and they are bringing up their supports! They must mean to fight here to protect the railway! This place will be the centre of a battle before morning! I shall give up my plan. The only thing that counts now is to get word to the staff of what is going on back here! Come!"

"What about the car?"

"If it is still here after we have sent word, good! If it is not, we must do without it."

Ivan began running toward the mouth of the tunnel. But Fred, before he followed, switched off the lights and ran the car off the side of the road, so that it was under the wall of the parsonage garden and sheltered, to a certain extent, by the heavy foliage of a large tree, whose branches overhung the wall.

"I'd like to think that that car was where we could get at it," he said to himself. "I have an idea that this place is going to be mighty unpleasant before long."

Then he followed Ivan. The Russian had already entered the tunnel. Fred, when he followed him, heard him running up the long passage that led up to the house. Before he could reach the opening, however, he heard other steps coming toward him, and a moment later Boris was heaping reproaches on him.

"I thought they had caught you!" he cried. "I saw them chasing someone, and it looked like you. In fact, I was sure it was you at first sight."

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"It was," said Fred, grimly. "I'll tell you about that later, Boris! You'd better get everyone out of this place. We can't stay here any longer. Unless I'm greatly mistaken, this will be used as a target for artillery by morning. It will if Ivan is right."

"He rushed by me just now. He would say nothing except that you were behind."

"He's at the wireless. Come on! We'll see if he has found out anything more."

For ten minutes after they reached the turret, they could get nothing out of Ivan, who was sending hard, with only an occasional pause to listen to what the other operator sent to him. Then he sat back with a sigh of relief.

"We were in time!" he said. "These troops back here are the ones that were supposed to be massing behind Liok, to resist the feint we were making there. They are too clever, those Germans! They have their airships to tell them the truth, and their railways to move men swiftly from one side to another. But they have not enough men! We shall beat them yet. Our attack will stop. See—look here!"

He moved to a table, and with pens and pencils made a rough diagram of the position.

"They gave up Gumbinnen without a fight, and formed in a half circle behind. They had so few men there that it was an invitation to us to try to outflank them. Our right could sweep out and draw in behind their left—so. And then their supporting troops could outflank our right, in turn, and it would be caught between two fires! They have fewer troops than we in East Prussia to-day, but ours are separated, while they risked all to bring all theirs together at this one point and left the south unguarded from Mlawa to Liok! Oh, it was daring—Napoleon might have planned that!"

"I see," said Fred. "Then when they had won here, they could have used their railway to move troops southward?"

"Exactly so! A hundred and fifty thousand men all together can beat a hundred thousand, if all else is equal. But one army of a hundred thousand can beat two of seventy-five thousand apiece, meeting them at different times. So our attack will stop. We shall leave a covering force here at Gumbinnen—or perhaps all our troops here will stay, but on the defensive, while others are rushed up from Grodno to outflank them, not on their right, as they hoped, but on their extreme left!"

He was silent for a moment.

"I need one man here," he said. "One man, to keep the engine running for the dynamo. Everyone else must leave this house. You, Boris Petrovitch, most of all—you and your cousin. I am responsible to your father for your safety for it is through my fault that the plans were badly made."

“But why must you stay, Ivan?” asked Boris.

“I must stay until I am ordered away,” said Ivan. “But it will not be safe here after daylight—perhaps there will be trouble even before that. Yes, I think it will be very soon now.”

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“Well, I think I shall stay,” said Fred.

“No,” said Ivan. “Listen! If you go now, quickly, you can get away in the car. Here is the road you must follow.” He took a map and pointed. “See—swing west first, and then south—far south. So you will be safe from the Germans, for they have abandoned that section except for the railway from Insterberg to Liok. That is guarded, but thinly. In the car are two long coats such as the German officers wear, and two helmets. They are under the rear seat. Put those on, and you will pass most of their sentries, if you should encounter them.”

“If he says we must go, we must do it,” said Boris, quickly. “I should like to stay, too, Fred, but he is right. We can do no good here, and if you are caught it will be very bad. It would not matter with me, for they would only treat me as a prisoner.”

Fred was still unwilling. He had not Boris’s Russian readiness to accept whatever came, but there was something about Ivan that convinced him that argument would be useless.

“Go now,” said Ivan, “and God go with you! I will see to it that Vladimir and the others follow.”

And so Fred went through the tunnel again, this time with Boris. He wondered if he would ever see this place again.

CHAPTER XV

A DASH THROUGH THE NIGHT

Both boys were startled when they reached the open air again to observe how the din of the battle to the east had increased. They paused for a moment to stare at one another.

“That is real war,” said Boris. “Not like the skirmish here when the Cossacks came.”

“The Germans are giving way on purpose, of course, if Ivan is right—and it seems to me he must be,” said Fred. “I am afraid to think of what will happen to him.”

“I do not like to think of it, either,” said Boris, “but it is fate. He has his work to do, and it is all for Russia—for God and the Czar! I have always been taught that we can die only once, and that it is a holy thing to die for Russia.”

“Yes, but it is better to live for Russia than to die for her, if it is possible,” said Fred. “Come! We have no time to lose, I suppose.”

They approached the car in a death-like silence. It was still where Fred had left it. There was a little delay in the start. Both Fred and Boris had driven cars, but they were not familiar with this one, and it seemed a good idea to learn the controls before they started. But in a few moments they were off. The car rode easily, and the motor was very powerful. It was a silent one, too, considering its great power. Fred took the wheel first.

“We can take it in turns,” he said. “Get some sleep, if you can, Boris. I’ll rouse you if there is any need of that. And I’ll be glad to rest myself, after a time. Just now I’m too excited to sleep, even if there were no especial reason for keeping awake.”

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There was something so wonderful, so weird that it was almost ghostly, about that ride in its beginning. Behind them was the din of the heavy fighting between them and Gumbinnen. The sky was streaked with the flashes of searchlights, and the vibration of the cannon beat against their ears incessantly. Yet the road before them, as it lay like a white ribbon in the path of the great headlight, was absolutely empty. They passed houses, went through villages. And in none of the houses was there a light or a sign of life. The whole countryside had been abandoned.

"It reminds me of things I've read about the plague in olden times," thought Fred. "People used to run away like that then, and leave a dead countryside behind them. It would almost look more natural if there were signs of fighting."

There were to be plenty all about here soon. But that night there was nothing, save the inferno of noise and the dazzling points of light in the sky behind them, to suggest anything save the deepest peace. Grain stood in some of the fields. In others, where the harvesting had begun, there were reaping machines. But despite the noise, there was a strange and unearthly silence. Fred had driven at night through lonely country before, and he could remember the way dogs at almost every house had burst into furious barking as the car approached. Now there were no dogs! It was a trifling thing to think of now, but just then it seemed to Fred that the absence of the dogs meant even more than the dark, silent houses themselves.

The houses did look as if their owners might be asleep within, but the dogs would have barked their alarm. And so that came to be the symbol of the flight of the people to him.

They had many miles to go. After a couple of hours Fred changed seats with Boris, and for a time dozed, though he scarcely slept. However, he did get a good rest, and when they came near to the stretch of road that Ivan had told them would mark the crisis of the trip, both boys were in good condition for the test. They slowed down at the sound of an engine's whistle, the first nearby noise that had come to their ears since they had left the parsonage. It startled them tremendously at first, but then they remembered Ivan's warning.

"There is one place where, for about four miles, the road runs very close to the railway," he had said. "The Germans will have patrols all along the railway line, but there is no reason why they should pay any attention to you. Be watchful—that is the vital thing. And especially so when you begin to descend a long hill. At the bottom of that hill the railway crosses your road, and that culvert will be watched with especial care. After that you will find the way clear, for our nearest outposts should not be more than a mile or so beyond the railway there. We would have seized the line before, except that until we had straightened our front in that quarter it would have been useless to do it."

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The whistle that they heard warned them that they were getting near to this dangerous stretch of road, and in a few moments the sight of a train, sparks flying from the smokestack of the engine, gave them visual proof as well. Then for a time they ran along parallel with the tracks. Fires were burning along the railway at intervals of about a hundred and fifty yards, and at times, in the firelight, they could see a dark figure moving slowly.

"Heaven knows what this bugle means!" said Fred, as they drew into line with the tracks. "But if we sound it they may make up their minds that we're all right—and I'm not anxious for them to get curious about us."

So he sounded the bugle from time to time. They aroused no curiosity. Plainly these sentries thought there was nothing strange about the passage of a military automobile, nor, in fact, was there. It was not likely that they would know enough of the general disposition of the German army to speculate as to what officers might be doing hereabout.

"Here we are! We're beginning to dip," said Boris, after a time. "The culvert Ivan spoke of must be at the bottom of this hill. The road gets away from the railway again after that, and when we have passed there we ought to be all right."

"There's just one thing," said Fred, with a frown. "They must know just as well as Ivan that the Russian outposts lie not far beyond them. Won't they think it strange for us to be going full speed toward the Russian lines this way?"

"No. I think that's easily accounted for, Fred. There is a crossroad less than half a mile beyond that culvert. They will suppose that we mean to take the turn. Ivan would have thought of that, I'm sure, if there had been any danger that they would not expect us to be traveling on this road."

"I guess you're right, Boris. It sounds reasonable. And anyway, if there is a chance, we've got to take it. I'm certainly not going to hesitate just for that after we've come as far as this. We'll soon know because, as you say, once we're past that culvert, we'll be safe. That's the crucial spot."

The grade grew sharper as they descended, and the pace of the car increased. Now, at the bottom, stretching across the white road, they could see a heavy shadow and above on what was unquestionably the railway, half a dozen lights.

"They've got more than a sentry there. It seems to be a regular post," said Fred, a little nervous, as they approached. "I'd like to slow down here—we're taking this hill pretty fast."

"Yes," agreed Boris, who was driving. "But it's not just the time to slow down, is it?"

“Hardly. We’ve got to shoot under there so fast that they won’t have a chance to find out too much about us. The headlight will help us, too. It ought to dazzle them so that they won’t be able to see into the car at all. As soon as we’re close to them, I’m going to sound the bugle pretty steadily.”

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They rushed on toward the culvert faster and faster. The powerful headlight illuminated the scene before them, and they could see a dozen or more dark figures. And as they came closer, they saw that several men were looking at them, trying to shade their eyes with their hands.

Fred sounded the bugle steadily now, and saw that this seemed to relieve the watchers. For the first time he took his eyes from the culvert itself and looked around. The road here descended much more steeply than the railway, and that, Fred judged, was the reason for the culvert. For the first time he realized that the culvert was not quite at the bottom of the hill; that beyond it the road still bore downward quite sharply for a space, until it turned. It was plain to him that there were more dangers ahead than those represented by the soldiers on the culvert.

The pace of the rushing car was faster now than would have been altogether comfortable had they been on a road they knew perfectly. Here, with a curve just ahead that was an unknown quantity, there was real danger in the sheer speed of the machine. Heavy as the car was, it lurched and swayed from side to side. And simply to shut off the power would not have been enough. Moreover, that was something both of them would have feared to do. The slightest mischance, the most trifling circumstance, might arouse suspicion in the watchers on the culvert. It was necessary, and Ivan had warned them specially of this, to dash under that at the highest possible speed for there would be stationed not private soldiers alone, who would be likely to take it for granted that an officer's coat and helmet meant that all was well, but an officer as well.

And an officer would be curious as to the meaning of this solitary car, rushing over a road that had been deserted, in all probability, for at least two days. No, there could be no slowing down, even had the fearful grade made it possible.

Then they flashed into the shadow. For just a moment, before they were actually under the culvert, Fred, looking up, saw the white faces of those above, staring curiously. Then he lowered his head, for he knew that his face and Boris's gave the lie to their helmets. Streaked with dust they both were, to be sure. There had been a mist in the low-lying country through which they had come, and the flying dust of the higher, drier parts of the road had caked on their faces. But they were not the faces of officers.

Fred thought he heard a shout as they passed under the culvert. But shouts were not enough to check them. What they both feared was a volley. And that, as they passed out and beyond the menace of the culvert, did not come.

"Look back! See if they are looking after us!" cried Boris.

"No!" Fred shouted in his ear, for now the rush of the wind made it difficult for them to hear anything. "The light is on us now—they might see too plainly. And, if we were

officers going as fast as this, there would be no reason for us to look back—Oh! Look out!”

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They had come to the turn. So great was their speed that they seemed to reach it before they were well out from the shadow of the culvert, yet they had traveled two hundred yards or more. There was nothing really to frighten Fred as he cried out unless it was the sudden imminence of the turn, which had seemed much further away when they had first seen it. It was less what he saw than some indefinable thing he felt.

Whether Boris's hand was wavering or whether some hitherto unsuspected weakness had developed in the machine, Fred could not tell. But he seemed to sense somehow that all was not well. There was some break in the rhythm of the car's movement that warned him.

Now they took the turn. Took it on two wheels—on one! For a moment it seemed that they must upset. Then, by a miracle, the car righted itself. For a moment it seemed about to straighten itself out and resume its flight. And then, together, Fred and Boris saw what lay before them, and Boris tried frantically to swing the car out. In the road lay the wreck of a huge van.

It was too much for Boris. He did swerve the car, but it struck the wreck. There was a deafening crash, and then they were hurled out onto the turf by the roadside, while the motor roared and flames leaped out over the wreck.

CHAPTER XVI

BETWEEN THE GRINDSTONES

For a moment Fred was stunned by the force of his fall. But it was only for a moment, since, by something that was very like a miracle, he was unhurt. He got up and looked around, a little dazed, for Boris. In a moment he saw him lying very still, his white face lighted up by the flames from the burning car. He ran over and he was vastly relieved to see that his cousin was conscious.

"My leg is broken, I think," said Boris, speaking quickly. "Fred, you must run for it alone. You will be able to get to the Russian lines. But hurry! They are coming, I'm sure! They must have heard the crash!"

"Do you think I'm going to leave you here?" asked Fred, indignantly. "We'll sink or swim together, Boris!"

"Why should two of us suffer when one can escape?" asked Boris. "Besides, you've got to go, Fred, for my sake as well as for your own. They'll treat me well enough. But if they catch us here wearing German uniform coats—well, you know what that would mean!"

Fred was startled. He had not thought of that.



“Take my coat and helmet and get away as fast as you can,” urged Boris. “Then I can say that I have been in the car. They’d know that, of course, but I could make them believe that I was in it against my will, and that the two men in uniform they saw had escaped. If they catch you, they’ll send you back to headquarters and you’ll be recognized there at once. Then they’d do to me whatever they did to you, just because I was caught in your company. No, it’s the only chance for either of us, Fred, and you’ve got to take it quickly.”

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The idea of abandoning a friend, and much more one who had come to mean so much to him as did Boris, seemed terrible to Fred. And yet it was impossible for him to refute Boris's argument. His cousin was right. And now he could hear the voices of approaching men. Naturally, if the Germans on the culvert thought that a car containing two German officers had been wrecked, they would come to the rescue. There was no time to be lost.

"I suppose you're right, Boris," he said, with a groan. "But it's the hardest thing I've ever had to do! But it is so. It would make it worse for you if I stayed. That's the only reason I'll go, though! You believe that, don't you?"

"Of course I do!" said Boris. "Haven't you proved what sort you are, when you risked your life to try to help me to get away at the parsonage? Go! Hurry! Get this coat and helmet off me!"

So Fred set to work. He had to move Boris to get the coat off, and the Russian groaned with the pain of his broken leg. Fred dared not wait, now that he had made up his mind to fly, even to see the extent of the injury, much less to apply first aid. Had there been time, he might have made Boris comfortable, for, like all well trained Boy Scouts, he understood the elementary principles of bandaging and had made more than one temporary setting in splints for broken bones. But he knew that the Germans would be there in a minute or two, and he had no reason to suppose that they would lack common humanity. They would care for Boris. Probably they had a surgeon back at the culvert, or fairly near at hand, at any rate.

"Get off the road," said Boris, gritting his teeth. "My head is swimming, and I'm afraid I'm going to faint or do some such foolish thing! But don't stay in the road. They're sure to go along, looking for you."

Fred had reasoned that out for himself. And now, when he had rolled up Boris's coat and helmet into a bundle, he leaped a narrow ditch and plunged into a thick mass of bushes. He did not know the country here, and had no notion of what sort of cover he might find. But luck was with him though for a moment he thought he had stumbled into a disastrous predicament. The ground gave way beneath him suddenly and he felt himself falling. He relaxed instinctively, and came down on hands and knees on a mass of leaves and twigs. He had fallen into a sort of shallow pit, but deep enough to shelter him. It seemed to him to be like a deadfall, such as he knew trappers sometimes make. The place was ideal for such a use, but now no steel-jawed trap yawned for him. And it was only a moment before he realized that this was just the hiding-place for him—and one, moreover, for which he himself might have searched in vain.

"They'll never look for me as near the wreck as this," he said to himself. "They'll spread out probably, but I think I'll be safe here. As safe as anywhere, and it will give me a chance to find out what's happening, too."

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The side of the pit nearest the road was almost open, though it was screened by bushes and foliage. Fred, however, was able to peer out and to see the dancing flames, giving a weird and ghostly appearance to the scene in the road. The Germans were very close now and he had just time to poke up some branches to hide the opening through which he had fallen. Then he lay down, his eyes glued to a sort of natural peephole that gave him a view of the road.

"It's like a grandstand seat!" he said. "But I hope no one wants to see my ticket because I'm afraid the usher would make me change my seat!"

But then Fred had to give his whole attention to what was going on in the road. The Germans came running up, a young officer in the lead. There were a half dozen of them. At first, as they looked about near the burning car, they saw no one. But then one of the soldiers saw Boris and raised a shout. The officer went over, leaned down and then started back with a cry of surprise.

"That is no German officer!" he exclaimed. He bent over again and Fred winced as he saw him shaking Boris by the shoulder. He wondered if Boris was shamming, or if he had really fainted. Then it was plain that there was no pretence. The officer, gently enough, raised Boris's head, and taking a flask from his pocket, forced a little of the spirits it contained into Boris's mouth. Fred saw his cousin stiffen; he was coming to his senses. Then the officer let him down, but made a sort of pillow for him with a cushion that had been thrown out of the automobile when it was overturned.

"Feel better? Good!" he said. "Now tell me what happened! Where are the two officers who were in the car? Were they hurt?"

"I—do not know," said Boris.

Fred had to strain his ears to catch what Boris said. Boris was weak and exhausted, and Fred was glad that the German officer seemed kindly and disposed to be humane.

"You do not know? How is that? You were in the car with them, weren't you?"

"I was in the car, but I do not know what happened after the accident. I was thrown out—and I did not know anything until you roused me just now."

"But what were you doing in the car, then? Who were those officers? Where were they going?"

"I do not know. I know only that I was walking along the road, because all the people had been sent away from their homes, when the car stopped, and a man told me to get in and sit low, so that I should not be seen. Then we drove very fast and after a while there was a crash, and I was thrown out."

“Can you walk?”

The German’s tone had changed somewhat. It was anxious now, and puzzled.

“I—don’t know,” said Boris. “There is a pain in my leg—here, right above the ankle. Ouch!”

Fred saw the German officer slip his hand down over the spot to which Boris pointed, and his touch dragged the exclamation of pain from Boris.

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"You can't walk, that's certain!" said the German. "You've got pluck, boy! There's a nasty break there. You need a surgeon! Well, I'll have to do what I can for you until we can find one. Can you stand a little more pain? Niehoff, give me your emergency kit. You have the splints? So! I shall see what I can do."

He was busy for a moment. Then with a sergeant, evidently his second in command, he withdrew to be out of Boris's hearing. But as it chanced, his movement brought him to a point where it was easier than ever for Fred to hear everything he said.

"There is something deuced queer about this business!" said the officer. "I think this boy is telling the truth, but we saw two officers in the front seat of that car. That much was certain. They were not ground into powder in the accident, you know. If they had been killed, there would be something left of them. They got out all right—that's evident. And they made themselves scarce. They must have known we would come, and if they have gone so quickly, it is because they did not want us to see them at close quarters."

"Spies, you think?" asked the sergeant.

"Evidently! But how they got here I'd hate to guess! They came from a quarter where we are in complete control. Yet they stole one of our cars, and a couple of uniform coats and helmets, at least!"

"We can look further for them," said the sergeant.

"Yes—and one might look a long time in a haystack before one found a needle! However, let the men spread out along the road and see what they can find. Give the order!"

Fred sighed with relief. He had been right in his decision to stay where he was, as he understood fully when he saw the soldiers go off down the road, looking for some trace of the passing of the two imaginary officers. Meanwhile the officer went back to Boris.

"We'll take this lad back with us," he said to the sergeant. "He needs attention, and I prefer to give someone in higher authority a chance to talk to him. This is a very mysterious affair, all around. It is too much for my brain!"

"And for mine, too!" grumbled the sergeant. "If I had my way, we would have orders to shoot all suspicious characters first and find out whether they deserved it or not afterward. I thought we should stop that automobile when we saw it coming."

"And I did not," said the officer, sharply.

The sergeant said nothing more.



Soon the men returned from their fruitless search. Then a litter was improvised and Boris was placed upon it and taken away. Fred had been very fearful for it had seemed more than likely to him that a sentry would be left to watch the wreck. If that had been done, it would have complicated his position, because he could scarcely have hoped to get out of his shelter without making some noise. But this was a precaution that apparently did not suggest itself to the Germans.

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And so, as soon as they were well out of hearing, Fred scrambled out, leaving his dangerous coats and helmets behind, and began trudging boldly along the road. He did not know the character of the wooded section through which the road now ran, and it seemed to him that he would be safer in the road than if he tried to walk under cover.

Fred was very tired. And, now that the excitement was fading, he was beginning to realize that he had not escaped entirely scatheless from the wreck of the car. Every bone and muscle in his body was sore and aching, and he wondered how many black and blue spots he would find when he got a chance to look for them.

By Ivan's reckoning, he had something like two miles to go to reach the Russian outposts. He was now in a sort of No Man's Land that lay between the two armies. And, indeed, before long, he saw fires twinkling ahead—the fires of the Russians. That was as he came to the crossroad of which Boris had spoken. It seemed that his troubles must be nearly over. And just then he heard a clatter of hoofs and saw, riding up the crossroad toward him, a troop of German Uhlans. He began running. But they had seen him and gave chase. He dared not stop. On he ran, hoping that the Russians were nearer than their fires.

CHAPTER XVII

AN OLD ENEMY

Suddenly over Fred's head there was a peculiar whistling. He had never heard that sound before, but somehow he knew by instinct what it was. He was under fire! Behind him were the shots, but the firing was wild and at random. He plunged into the bushes now, for to do so was to choose the lesser of two evils. He was fairly safe, so sheltered from the bullets, since if they could not see him, the Uhlans would not be likely to fire at him at all. And while it was certain that they could follow him in and catch him if he stayed in the brush, he would delay them at least, and the Russians were so near that they might hear the firing and come up.

That came about even sooner than he had thought possible. He stopped, panting. The Uhlans were close on his trail by this time, and he heard them coming up. But then came a sudden shouting of orders, and, a moment later, a furious fusillade that was answered from the Russian side. Over the rattle of the firing, too, came a sound he remembered well, though he had heard it only once before—the yelling of charging Cossacks. For the second time the wild Russian horsemen had come to his rescue in the nick of time!

But this time there was more of a fight, since the two little bodies of horsemen were far more evenly matched than had been the case when General Suvaroff had led his daring raid behind the German lines in the effort to capture von Hindenburg. For five minutes



the fighting was fast and furious. Fred could hear the clash of steel against steel and the spiteful spitting of revolvers and automatic pistols. Then the wild Russian shout of victory arose, and he heard sounds of galloping fast dying away. Even though he could see nothing, he knew which side had won.

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"Thank Heaven!" he said to himself. "I wonder if they couldn't chase them and raid the culvert. There aren't so many troops there! Then we could surely get Boris away from them."

But the first thing to do, of course, was to come out of his cover and make himself known to his rescuers. There was a certain risk in even that simple procedure, and Fred was not so carried away by the excitement of the fight as to forget it. There was more than a chance that if he broke out, the Russians would mistake him for some German who had tried to escape by taking refuge in the brush, and that they would shoot without waiting to make sure. But he had to take the chance, and he minimized the risk as much as he could by tying his white handkerchief to a stick and carrying it before him as he pushed his way into the ditch.

He waved this as he emerged. At first no one saw him. Then a Cossack spied him and sent his horse straight at him. Fred leaped aside as he saw that the man meant to ride him down, and, shouting, waved his white flag. He dodged the first assault, but the Cossack spun his pony around in little more than his own length, and waving his dangerous lance, came at him again. He shouted again, and waved his white flag harder than ever. That would not have saved him, however, but just as the Cossack lunged and Fred threw himself down, sure that he would either be speared or trampled by the horse, an officer dashed up and struck up the lance with his sword.

"Don't you see the white flag?" he roared. "We do not kill men who surrender!"

"They say that the Germans are hanging every Cossack they capture," said the man, sullenly.

"Never mind what they say!" said the officer. "Hello! That man is not a soldier at all!"

"Neither soldier nor German!" cried Fred in Russian, springing up. "Those Uhlans were chasing me! I have just escaped from the German lines. I did not think that I should fare as badly among my friends as among the enemy!"

"Nor shall you, friend!" said the Russian officer with a laugh. "So you are a Russian? Well, you look as if you might be anything!"

"I'm afraid I do," said Fred, a bit ruefully. He could imagine, even though he could not see himself, that the Russian was quite right. He was caked with dirt. In the fall from the automobile, as he had discovered while he was walking away from the wreck, he had sustained a nasty cut over the eye, which, though it was not painful, had bled a good deal. And this had made his appearance even worse than it had been before. His clothes were torn, too.

"Who are you, and where do you come from?" asked the Russian.

In a few words Fred told his story. When he said that he had left Boris Suvaroff a prisoner at the culvert, with a broken leg, the officer started.

“Can’t you go after him?” Fred pleaded. “They have very few men there. You could sweep them away.”

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"Not with this force. And I should not dare to go so far without special orders," said the officer. "We could not charge the culvert, and, approaching it from this side, we should have to ride uphill. But I am sure that when those in command know your story, a force will be sent to rescue Prince Boris. Come with us now. I will get you a horse if you are able to ride. The Uhlans left some behind!"

Fred could ride, and said so. And in a few minutes he was riding toward the fires that twinkled before them, side by side with the Russian officer, who was anxious to know all that Fred could tell him.

"That was splendid!" he cried enthusiastically when he heard how Fred had discovered the real purpose of the Germans by his ruse in pretending to be deaf and dumb. "And it means, too, that we will get some real work to do here in this quarter. I thought at first that the army in the north would get all the fighting. We have been sitting here for nearly a week, doing nothing. This is the first skirmish we have had, for our orders are not to bring on an action, but only to prevent the enemy from coming toward us if they show any sign of attacking."

"If what I have heard is true, there will be an advance from this quarter soon," said Fred. "If the Germans are to be outflanked, it must be by the troops here. And that ought to mean as much fighting as anyone could hope to get."

"That is what we are looking for," said the officer. "But you—you will be glad of a rest for a time, I should think!"

"I want to get my cousin back," said Fred. "It was hard to leave him."

"It was the only thing to do. You saved his life as well as your own by going. And one who saves a Suvaroff does a fine thing for Russia in these days—if this Boris is like the rest of the breed."

"Oh, we have never known!" said Fred, suddenly remembering. "Did General Suvaroff get back safely after he failed to catch General von Hindenburg?"

"He did! He had less than a thousand men, and he rode for sixty miles or more through a whole German army! He was intercepted but when he found a German brigade lined up in his path, instead of trying to circle around it, and so giving the Germans time to surround him, he cut right through it!" answered the officer, smiling.

"That was splendid!"

"I don't think the war will show anything better!" said the Russian, with enthusiasm. "He charged before the Germans knew that he was fairly upon them, and the whole fight lasted less than ten minutes. Then our fellows were through and riding for our lines. And the best of it was that not more than fifty of our saddles were emptied. The

Germans are wonderful fighters, I believe. We shall have a hard time beating them. But they fight too much by rule. A German cavalry commander would have been brave enough to try to do that, but he would not have tried because he would have known that it was an unsound plan.”

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"I wish Boris knew that his father was safe," said Fred, a little sadly. "He has been worried, although he has said nothing."

"Eh—he might have known it! Yes, he got back safely enough. As to whether he is safe now, that is another matter. He is in the thick of the fighting around Gumbinnen, and he is not one of those generals who stay in the rear. He is like Skobelev. Have you heard of him?"

"He commanded at Plevna, against the Turks?"

"And in a good many other battles! Skobelev, though he was in command of the whole army, would insist always on being in the thick of the fighting himself. He wore his white coat, and he rode a white horse. So he was always to be seen by his own men and by the enemy. Perhaps he was wrong, but soldiers will fight better for a general who shares their perils. Skobelev used to do impossible things, because he believed that nothing was impossible that brave men made up their minds to do."

Fred thought of Russian generals in the war with Japan who might have changed the whole course of that conflict had they had such ideas. But he said nothing of this. Russian soldiers were mindful of that disastrous war, he thought. And Fred had an idea that before this far greater struggle was over, the world would have been forced to forget the failures of Manchuria. Men who fought as he had seen Russians do were not going to be beaten again.

Fred was mounted now on a big, rawboned horse that had lost its Uhlan rider. He was so tired that he was swaying in his saddle, and the Russian noticed this.

"Keep awake a little longer," he said, cheerily. "We haven't very much further to go. In half an hour, I think, you can be in a real bed, with sheets and blankets."

"I don't need anything like that," said Fred, rousing himself and smiling. "I think I could sleep on a board that was studded with nails! And I know that they could fight a battle all around me to-night without waking me up when I once get to sleep."

"I'd like to let you stop here—we are within our lines now—but I know the staff will want to see you and ask a few questions. And you have done so much already for Russia that I believe you will want to do that much more before you rest."

"Oh, a few minutes more or less won't make any difference!" said Fred. He yawned hugely. "As long as I'm awake, I can make myself stay awake. If I once let go, though, I promise you I'll be hard to rouse!"

There were more Russians about here than Fred had supposed. It was plain that since Ivan had had any information as to the conditions here, re-enforcements had been brought up, for it was not through outposts that they were riding, but through a large

body of troops. Tents stretched in all directions and fires were numerous, dotting the fields like stars. There were no woods here; it was open country again. To the left Fred caught a glimpse of the silver sheen of a river reflecting the starlight.

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"How far are you going to take me?" asked Fred.

"To headquarters. We have less than half a mile to ride now. The general will be glad to see you."

The Russian chuckled, and there seemed to be a hidden meaning in his laugh. At any other time, when he was less weary, Fred would have noticed that. He would have wondered at it, at least; he might even have guessed its meaning. But now he only asked, quite idly: "Who is in command of the troops here?"

"You will soon know," said the Russian, repeating his chuckle.

Fred did, indeed, soon get the answer to his question. They rode up to a small farmhouse, ablaze with light, late as it was. The place was well guarded. The Russian officer slipped off his horse.

"Wait one minute," he said. He went, and returned at once. Then he led the way inside. And Fred, all weariness banished by the sight, stared into the cold, evil eyes of Mikail Suvaroff, wearing his general's uniform.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GREAT WHITE CZAR

There was a moment of absolute, chilling silence; the sort of silence that, in the old phrase, can be felt. For just an instant it was plain that Mikail Suvaroff did not recognize the nephew he hated. But then he knew him, and a flash of cold, malignant hatred lit up his eyes, while his lips curved in a curious, sneering smile.

"So—it is you?" he said. "I thought I had not seen the last of you on the platform at Virballen! Lieutenant, you may leave us."

"Yes, general," said the lieutenant who had rescued Fred. He was plainly puzzled and confused. "I did not tell your kinsman that you were in command here. I thought he would be delightfully surprised by being confronted with you suddenly. But—"

"Exactly! You were quite right, lieutenant. And now you may leave us!"

The lieutenant flushed at the rebuke, saluted stiffly, and left the room.

Fred was alone with his uncle.

"You are brave, at least," said Mikail, presently. "That will, perhaps, be a comfort to you later. Yet you were not well advised to serve the Germans as a spy. They have not

been able to save you from me this time, you see. It is not a case this time of the station at Virballen, with the superiority of numbers on their side for the moment."

"It is your Cossacks who saved me from the Germans," said Fred. "I have been a spy—but it has been in the interest of Russia. General Alexander Suvaroff and his son can tell you that."

"Perhaps," said Mikail, his eyes and mouth fixed, so that no one could have guessed what was in his mind. "It is strange that you feel forced to call upon those who cannot say anything for or against you—since they are in the hands of the Germans."

Inspiration came suddenly to Fred, and he said nothing. He gave his uncle stare for stare.

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"Well, what have you to say?" said Mikail, at last. "What defence have you, spy?"

Still Fred said nothing, and he saw the veins in Mikail's hands swelling with anger.

"So?" he said, when he understood that Fred would not speak. "Well, there will be a way to make you talk, doubtless. I might have you shot now—or hung. But you are my nephew. You shall have the fairest of trials, for it must not be said that I did not see that you were well treated!" He chuckled ominously. Then he raised his voice. In answer to his call two officers came in.

"You will be held personally responsible for this prisoner," he said. "He is to be sent at once to Grodno for trial as a spy. I will dictate the process accusing him. Let him be dispatched in the morning, under heavy guard."

The officers saluted. Then soldiers were called and Fred was led away. From the first he realized the utter hopelessness of any attempt to escape. He was in the midst of a great army. He could not hope, no matter what happened, to get more than a few yards in any direction. Yet even the thought of his peril did not keep him awake. No sooner was he put in the guard room, where half a dozen soldiers were with him, than he sank into a heavy sleep. He was too tired, in fact, to realize to the full how serious the matter was.

But in the morning, when he was roused to partake of a meal, the full and dreadful peril of his situation came over him. There was something appalling about the way in which his guards looked at him. Most of all, there was a terrible quality in the sympathy of the young lieutenant who paid him a hurried visit.

"I did not know, of course," he said, quickly. "I should have had to take you to him, just as I did, but I should have prepared you for what was coming. I have heard something of the story. You have aroused the general's hatred—and there are terrible stories of his power. Tell me, is there anyone who can speak for you? It may be that I can get some word to them—though it would cost me dear if Prince Mikail discovered that I had done it."

"Boris Suvaroff and his father would help me," said Fred. "But Boris is a prisoner, and so is Prince Alexander, if my uncle tells the truth! And the American ambassador—though I suppose he could do nothing."

"I will do what I can. And remember that Dmitri Sazonoff is your friend, and will believe always that you are a true friend of Russia. Good-bye! You go to Grodno. There, unless there has been a change, are the headquarters of the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholavitch, who is in supreme command of all our armies. You will be tried there by court-martial. I wish it meant more—but count upon me for all that I can do."

It was still comparatively early when Fred began his journey to Grodno, which was, as he knew, one of the concentration points of the Russian army. The trip was begun in a great motor truck, empty now, which had been used to bring food and ammunition to the front. It was one of a long train of similar vehicles, and in it he rode to the border, where he was transferred to a military train.

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He was able on the trip to see what was going on, since no attempt was made to keep him from doing so. And everything he saw served only to impress him more and more with the utter hopelessness of his position. The roads were choked with dense masses of advancing Russians. Troops, horse and foot, hospital trains, ammunition and provision trains, guns—all were moving up; evidently in preparation for the striking of a heavy blow at the German power in East Prussia on a new line of attack.

For the first time Fred saw a country that was really in the grip of a modern army. The swift movements of the German army around the Suvaroff house had not given this impression. There were not so many Germans, relatively speaking at least, and their movements were made with less confusion and greater speed, owing to their possession of railways that had been built with an especial view to their being used in time of war.

Here the railways had all been destroyed by the Germans who had retreated before the advancing Russians. In many places, too, fields had been burned over, that the standing crops might not fall into the hands of the invaders.

Fred almost laughed at the irony of the whole sight. It was because of him that this movement was being made. At great risk to himself he had obtained the information that had led to the sudden change in the Russian plans, of which the great movement he saw was a part. He should be receiving thanks and honors instead of being on his way to headquarters as a prisoner of war, condemned, as he well knew, in advance. For Fred had no illusions. He knew the power of Mikail Suvaroff, who was so plainly an important member of the high Russian command. Against so great a man his word would be valueless.

"This Russian army is like a steam roller," Fred thought to himself. "It may be stopped here or there, but not for long. It will roll over this whole country sooner or later. Well—I'm glad! Even if I've got to suffer because my uncle hates me, it's not Russia's fault. I want Russia to win."

His guards treated Fred well enough. He had an idea that he owed the consideration he received to Lieutenant Sazonoff. He was quite sure that General Mikail Suvaroff had nothing to do with it! And his journey, which might have been one of acute discomfort, was made more than tolerable.

It was late when the train in which he rode after the border was reached arrived in Grodno. Here the army was in complete possession. Men in uniform were everywhere; the civilian population seemed almost to have disappeared. The din was constant. For hours, after he had been taken to a cell in the central police station, he lay awake and listened. Guns rumbled through the streets, motor cars chugged all through the night. He was aroused in the morning by sounds of frantic, steady cheering, and when the guard brought him his breakfast, he asked what that meant. The man's eyes lighted up.

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"The Little Father has come to be with his soldiers!" he said. "He has come to give us his blessing and bid us fight for him and Holy Russia! How can we lose now?"

"The Czar himself?" said Fred. He smiled. He had hoped, when he left America, to see the Czar before his return. There was small chance of that now, even though they were in the same town.

The Russians delayed as little as had the Germans in bringing him to trial. And here in Grodno there was even less ceremony than there had been in the dining-room of the East Prussian parsonage.

A young officer was assigned to defend him, but he took the task as a joke.

"You'll be condemned, of course," he said. "Prince Mikail knows you are a spy. I think you're very lucky that he didn't hang you outside of his own headquarters! Better plead guilty. It will save time for everyone."

But Fred refused. Hopeless as the case was, he was still determined to take every chance there was, and to fight for every minute of delay. But the proceedings were soon over. The charge against him was read so quickly that he could scarcely follow it. He was allowed to speak for himself, but none of the officers of the court paid any attention to him. The verdict was quickly found. And the president of the court was just about to pronounce sentence when there was an interruption. Into the room strode a man at whose entrance every officer started to his feet, saluting. The newcomer jerked his hand to his forehead, answering the salute, and then stood staring about.

Fred, had never seen such a figure. The man was a giant. He wore a khaki uniform. He was nearly seven feet tall, but he was so magnificently formed that it was only the way he towered over even the tall Russian officers about him that his great height was apparent. Fred knew him at once. It was the Grand Duke Nicholas.

"The court is dissolved!" he said, in a harsh, rasping voice. "I will take charge myself of the prisoner. Boy, come with me!"

Utterly amazed, Fred obeyed. The Grand Duke seized his arm in a vise-like grip and half pushed, half dragged him along with him. Fred was too amazed even to wonder what had happened or what was to happen next. He found himself being led into a room that was filled with officers. They were grouped about one end of the room, where, near a window, there stood a short man in a brilliant uniform. Fred gasped as he recognized him. At the same moment the grip on his arm was loosened, and the Grand Duke Nicholas swept off his cap.

“Your Majesty,” he said, “this is the American boy of whom we have heard. One who has done such things as he is charged with must hear his fate from your own lips. He is charged by Mikail Suvaroff with being a spy and a traitor. On the other hand—”

The Czar smiled.

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"Thanks to our good Alexander, we know the truth," he said. "By your kinship to the great family of Suvaroff, Frederick Waring, you are of our kin. Were you a Russian, there would be another reward that we might give you. But you own your father's nationality, though you have proved that there is good Russian blood in your veins. It is our pleasure to confer on you the order of St. Stanislas, with the crossed swords, given for bravery only! Now you may go to the cousin who came here in time to save you."

Dazed, Fred backed away, knowing only that he had not done the right thing. A hand fell on his shoulder and he looked up into the eyes of Boris's father.

"Boris is waiting for you," he said. "The mystery of Mikail's hatred for you has been solved. He is quite mad—he has been relieved of his command. I have long suspected this madness and now the whole world knows it! Your trials are over, my American cousin!"

"But how was Boris rescued?"

"Your friend Lieutenant Sazonoff managed that. He got permission from his brigadier to attack the railway. I shall see that he is promoted."