A BOY SCOUT'S COURAGE

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Cover

A BOY SCOUT'S COURAGE

By

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A BOY SCOUT'S COURAGE

CHAPTER I–A FRIEND IN NEED

"As long as I can't be at home, I'd rather be here than anywhere in the world I can think of!"

Was it little more than a week, thought Harry Fleming, American Boy Scout living in London, since he had uttered those words so lightly? Was it just a week since Grenfel, his English scoutmaster, had bidden the boys good-bye? Was it just two days since father and mother had been so suddenly recalled to the States? Was it just that very morning that he and his good chum Dick Mercer had been detailed on this mission which had led to the discovery of the secret heliographs so busily sending messages to the enemy across the North Sea? Was it just a few hours since the two Scouts, hot on the trail, had cached papers and motorcycles and started the closer exploration of that mysterious estate outside the sleepy English village, leased, so the village gossip had it, by a rich American who eccentrically denied himself to all comers and zealously guarded the privacy of his grounds?

Was it just a few moments since he had urged, even commanded Dick Mercer to leave him, caught in a trap set for just such trespassers as they? Had he urged his chum to leave him in his agony, for the ankle was badly wrenched, and seek safety in flight? For it was Harry Fleming, hero of "A Boy Scout's Daring," whom we now find listening in an agony of fear rather than of pain to such sounds as came to him after Dick had, so reluctantly, left him pinned in the trap. He could hear, plainly enough, the advance of the two searchers who had scared Dick into hiding in the rhododendron bush; he could even see the gleam of their flashlights, and was able, therefore, to guess what they were doing. For the moment it seemed impossible to him that Dick should escape.

As to himself, he was quite sure that he would be captured in a few minutes, and, as a matter of fact, there were things that made the prospect decidedly bearable. The pain in his ankle from the trap in which he had been caught was excruciating. It seemed to him that he must cry out, but he kept silence resolutely. As long as there was a chance that he might not fall into the hands of the spies who were searching the grounds, he meant to cling to it.

But the chance was a very slim one, as he knew. He could imagine, without difficulty, just about what the men with the flashlights would do, by reasoning out his own course. They would look for footprints. These would lead them to the spot where he and Dick had watched the raising of the wireless mast, and thence along the path they had taken to return to the wall and to safety. Thus they would come to him, and he would be found, literally like a rat in a trap.

And then, quite suddenly, came the diversion created by Dick's daring dash for escape, when he sped from the bush and climbed the wall, followed by the bullets that the searchers fired after him. Harry started, hurting his imprisoned ankle terribly by the wrench his sudden movement gave it. Then he listened eagerly for the cry he dreaded yet expected to hear, that would tell him that Dick had been hit. It did not come. Instead, he heard more men running, and then in a moment all within the wall was quiet, and he could hear the hue and cry dying away as they chased him along the road outside.

"Well, by Jove!" he said to himself, enthusiastically, "I believe Dick's fooled them! I didn't think he had it in him! That's bully for him! He ought to get a medal for that!"

It was some moments before he realized fully that he had gained a respite, temporarily, at least. Obviously the two men who had been searching with flashlights had followed Dick; there was at least a good chance that no one else knew about him. He had decided that there was some system of signal wires that rang an alarm when a trap was sprung. But it might be that these two men were the only ones who were supposed to follow up such an alarm.

He carried a flashlight himself, and now he took the chance of playing it on his ankle, to see if there was any chance of escape. He hooded the light with his hand and looked carefully. But what he saw was not encouraging. The steel band looked most formidable. It was on the handcuff principle and any attempt to work his foot loose would only make the grip tighter and increase his suffering. His spirits fell at that. Then the only thing his brief immunity would do for him would be to keep him in pain a little longer. He would be caught anyhow, and he guessed that, if Dick got away, he would find his captors in a savage mood.

Even as he let the flashlight wink out, since it was dangerous to use it more than was necessary, he heard a cautious movement within a few feet. At first he thought it was an animal he had heard, so silent were its movements. But in a moment a hand touched his own. He started slightly, but kept quiet.

"Hush–I'm a friend," said a voice, almost at his elbow. "I thought you were somewhere around here, but I couldn't find you until you flashed your light. You're caught in a trap, aren't you?"

"Yes," said Dick. "Who are you?"

"That's what I want to know about you, first," said the other boy–for it

was another boy, as Harry learned from his voice. Never had a sound been more welcome in his ears than that voice! "Tell me who you are and what you two were doing around here. I saw you this afternoon and tracked you. I tried to before, but I couldn't, on account of your motorcycles. Then I just happened to see you, when you were on foot. Are you Boy Scouts?"

"Yes," said Harry. "Are you?"

"Yes. That's why I followed–especially when I saw you coming in here. We've got a patrol in the village, but most of the scouts are at work in the fields."

Rapidly, and in a whisper, Harry explained a little, enough to make this new ally understand.

"You'd better get out, if you know how, and take word," said Harry. "I think my chum got away, but it would be better to be sure. And they'll be after me soon."

"If they give us two or three minutes we'll both get out," said the newcomer, confidently. "I know this place with my eyes shut. I used to play here before the old family moved away. I'm the vicar's son, in the village, and I always had the run of the park until these new people came. And I've been in here a few times since then, too."

"That's all right," said Harry. "But how am I going to get out of this trap?"

"Let me have your flashlight a moment," said the stranger.

Harry gave it to him, and the other scout bent over his ankle. Harry saw that he had a long, slender piece of wire. He guessed that he was going to try to pick the lock. And in a minute or less Harry heard a welcome click that told him his new found friend–a friend in need, indeed, he was proving himself to be!–had succeeded. His ankle was free.

He struggled to his feet, and there was a moment of exquisite pain as the blood rushed through his ankle and circulation was restored to his numbed foot. But he was able to stand, and, although limpingly, to walk. He had been fortunate, as a matter of fact, in that no bone had been crushed. That might well have happened with such a trap, or a ligament or tendon might have been wrenched or torn, in which case he would have found it just about impossible to move at all. As it was, however, he was able to get along, though he suffered considerable pain every time he put his foot to the ground.

It was no time, however, in which to think of discomforts so comparatively trifling as that. When he was outside he would be able, with the other scout's aid, to give his foot some attention, using the first aid outfit that he always carried, as every scout should do. But now the one thing to be done was to make good his escape.

Harry realized, as soon as he was free, that he was not by any means out of the woods. He was still decidedly in the enemy's country, and getting out of

it promised to be a difficult and a perilous task. He was handicapped by his lack of knowledge of the place and what little he did know was discouraging. He had proof that human enemies were not the only ones he had to fear. And the only way he knew that offered a chance of getting out offered, as well, the prospect of encountering the men who had pursued Dick Mercer, returning. It was just as he made up his mind to this that the other scout spoke again.

"We can't get out the way you came in," he said. "Or, if we could, it's too risky. But there's another way. I've been in here since these people started putting their traps around, and I know where most of them are. Come on!"

Harry was glad to obey. He had no hankering for command. The thing to do was to get out as quickly as he could. And so he followed, though he had qualms when he saw that, instead of going toward the wall, they were heading straight in and toward the great grey house. They circled the woods that gave them the essential protection of darkness, and always they got further and further from the place where Dick and Harry had entered. Harry understood, of course, that there were other ways of getting out but it took a few words to make him realize the present situation as it actually was.

"There's a spot on the other side they don't really guard at all," said his companion. "It's where the river runs by the place. They think no one would come that way. And I don't believe they know anything at all about what I'm going to show you."

Soon Harry heard the water rustling. And then, to his surprise, his guide led him straight into a tangle of shrubbery. It was hard going for him, for his ankle pained him a good deal, but he managed it. And in a moment the other boy spoke, and, for the first time, in a natural voice.

"I say, I'm glad we're here!" he said, heartily. "D'ye see?"

"It looks like a cave," said Harry.

"It is, but it's more than that, too. This place is no end old, you know. It was here when they fought the Wars of the Roses, I've heard. And come on–I'll show you something!"

He led the way on into the cave, which narrowed as they went. But Harry, pointing his flashlight ahead, saw that it was not going to stop.

"Oh! A secret passage! I understand now!" he exclaimed, finally.

"Isn't it jolly?" said the other. "Can't you imagine what fun we used to have here when we played about? You see, this may have been used to bring in food in time of siege. There used to be another spur of this tunnel that ran right into the house. But that was all let go to pot, for some reason. This is all that is left. But it's enough. It runs way down under the river–and in a jiffy we'll be out in the meadows on the other side. I say, what's your name?"

They hadn't had time to exchange the information each naturally craved

about the other before. And now, as they realized it, they both laughed. Harry told his name.

"Mine's Jack Young," said the other scout. "I say, you don't talk like an Englishman?"

"I'm not," explained Harry. "I'm American. But I'm for England just now–and we were caught here trying to find out something about that place."

They came out into the open then, where the light of the stars enabled them to see one another. Jack nodded.

"I got an idea of what you were after–you two," he said. "The other one's English, isn't he?"

"Dick Mercer? Yes!" said Harry, astonished. "But how did you find out about us?"

"Stalked you," said Jack, happily. "Oh, I'm no end of a scout! I followed you as soon as I caught you without your bicycles."

"We must have been pretty stupid to let you do it, though," said Harry, a little crestfallen. "I'm glad we did, but suppose you'd been an enemy! A nice fix we'd have been in!"

"That's just what I thought about you," admitted Jack. "You see, everyone has sort of laughed at me down here because I said there might be German spies about. I've always been suspicious of the people who took Bray Park. They didn't act the way English people do. They didn't come to church, and when the pater–I told you he was the vicar here, didn't I?–went to call, they wouldn't let him in! Just sent word they were out! Fancy treating the vicar like that!" he concluded with spirit.

Harry knew enough of the customs of the English countryside to understand that the new tenants of Bray Park could not have chosen a surer method of bringing down both dislike and suspicion upon themselves.

"That was a bit too thick, you know," Jack went on. "So when the war started, I decided I'd keep my eyes open, especially on any strangers who came around. So there you have it. I say! You'd better let me try to make that ankle easier. You're limping badly."

That was true, and Harry submitted gladly to such ministrations as Jack knew how to offer. Cold water helped considerably; it reduced the swelling. And then Jack skillfully improvised a brace, that, binding the ankle tightly, gave it a fair measure of support.

"Now try that!" he said. "See if it doesn't feel better!"

"It certainly does," said Harry. "You're quite a doctor, aren't you? Well, now the next thing to do is to try to find where Dick is. I know where he went–to the place where we cached our cycles and our papers."

Like Dick, he was hopelessly at sea, for the moment, as to his whereabouts.

And he had, moreover, to reckon with the turns and twists of the tunnel, which there had been no way of following in the utter darkness. But Jack Young, who, of course, could have found his way anywhere within five miles of them blindfolded, helped him, and they soon found that they were less than half a mile from the place.

"Can you come on with me, Jack?" asked Harry. He felt that in his rescuer he had found a new friend, and one whom he was going to like very well, indeed, and he wanted his company, if it was possible.

"Yes. No one knows I am out," said Jack, frankly. "The pater's like the rest of them here–he doesn't take the war seriously yet. When I said the other day that it might last long enough for me to be old enough to go, he laughed at me. I really hope it won't, but I wouldn't be surprised if it did, would you?"

"No, I wouldn't. It's too early to tell anything about it yet, really. But if the Germans fight the way they always have before, it's going to be a long war."

They talked as they went, and, though Harry's ankle was still painful, the increased speed the bandaging made possible more than made up for the time it had required. Harry was anxious about Dick; he wanted to rejoin him as soon as possible.

And so it was not long before they came near to the place where the cycles had been cached.

"We'd better go slow. In case anyone else watched us this afternoon, we don't want to walk into a trap," said Harry. He was more upset than he had cared to admit by the discovery that he and Dick had been spied upon by Jack, excellent though it had been that it was so. For what Jack had done it was conceivable that someone else, too, might have accomplished.

"All right. You go ahead," said Jack. "I'll form a rear guard–d'ye see? Then you can't be surprised."

"That's a good idea," said Harry. "There, see that big tree, that blasted one over there? I marked that. The cache is in a straight line, almost, from that, where the ground dips a little. There's a clump of bushes."

"There's someone there, too," said Jack. "He's tugging at a cycle, as if he were trying to get ready to start it."

"That'll be Dick, then," said Harry, greatly relieved. "All right–I'll go ahead!"

He went on then, and soon he, too, saw Dick busy with the motorcycle.

"Won't he be glad to see me, though?" he thought. "Poor old Dick! I bet he's had a hard time."

Then he called, softly. And Dick turned. But–it was not Dick. It was Ernest Graves!

CHAPTER II–AN UNEXPECTED BLOW

For a moment it would have been hard to say which of them was more completely staggered and amazed.

"What are you doing here?" Harry gasped, finally.

And then, all at once, it came over him that it did not matter what Ernest answered; that there could be no reasonable and good explanation for what he had caught Graves doing.

"You sneak!" he cried. "What are you doing here–spying on us?"

He sprang forward, and Graves, with a snarling cry of anger, lunged to meet him. Had he not been handicapped by his lame ankle, Harry might have given a good account of himself in a hand-to-hand fight with Graves, but, as it was, the older boy's superior weight gave him almost his own way. Before Jack, who was running up, could reach them, Graves threw Harry off. He stood looking down on him for just a second.

"That's what you get for interfering, young Fleming!" he said. "There's something precious queer about you, my American friend! I fancy you'll have to do some explaining about where you've been to-night!"

Harry was struggling to his feet. Now he saw the papers in Graves' hand.

"You thief!" he cried. "Those papers belong to me! You've stolen them! Give them here!"

But Graves only laughed in his face.

"Come and get them!" he taunted. And, before either of the scouts could realize what he meant to do he had started one of the motorcycles, sprung to the saddle, and started. In a moment he was out of sight, around a bend in the road. Only the put-put of the motor, rapidly dying away, remained of him. But, even in that moment, the two he left behind him were busy. Jack sprang to the other motorcycle, and tried to start it, but in vain. Something was wrong; the motor refused to start.

"That's what he was doing when I saw him first!" cried Harry, with a flash

of inspiration. "I thought it was Dick, trying to start his motor–but it was Graves trying to keep us from starting it! But he can't have done very much–I don't believe he had the time. We ought to be able to fix it pretty soon."

"It's two miles to the repair place!" said Jack, blankly.

"Not to this repair shop," said Harry, with a laugh. The need of prompt and efficient action pulled him together. He forgot his wonder at finding Graves, the pain of his ankle, everything but the instant need of being busy. He had to get that cycle going and be off in pursuit; that was all there was to it.

"Give me a steady light," he directed. "I think he's probably disconnected the wires of the magneto–that's what I'd do if I wanted to put a motor out of business in a hurry. And if that's all, there's no great harm done."

"I don't see how you know all that!" wondered Jack. "I can ride one of those things, but the best I can do is mend a puncture, if I should have one."

"Oh, it's easy enough," said Harry, working while he talked. "You see, the motor itself can't be hurt unless you take an axe to it, and break it all up! But to start you've got to have a spark–and you get that from electricity. So there are these little wires that make the connection. He didn't cut them, thank Heaven! He just disconnected them. If he'd cut them I might really have been up a tree because that's the sort of accident you wouldn't provide for in a repair kit."

"It isn't an accident at all," said Jack, literally.

"That's right," said Harry. "That's what I meant, too. Now let's see. I think that's all. Good thing we came up when we did or he'd have cut the tires to ribbons. And there are a lot of things I'd rather do than ride one of these machines on its rims–to say nothing of how long the wheels would last if one tried to go fast at all."

He tried the engine; it answered beautifully.

"Now is there a telephone in your father's house, Jack?"

"Yes. Why?" for Jack was plainly puzzled.

"So that I can call you up, of course! I'm going after Graves. Later I'll tell you who he is. I'm in luck, really. He took Dick's machine–and mine is a good ten miles an hour faster. I can race him and beat him but, of course, he couldn't know which was the fastest. Dick's is the best looking. I suppose that's why he picked it."

"But where is Dick?"

"That's what I'm coming to. They may have caught him but I hope not. I don't think they did, either. I think he'll come along here pretty soon. And, if he does, he'll have an awful surprise."

"I'll stay here and tell him–"

"You're a brick, Jack! It's just what I was going to ask you to do. I can't leave word for him any other way, and I don't know what he'd think if he came

here and found the cycles and all gone. Then take him home with you, will you? And I'll ring you up just as soon as I can. Good-bye!"

And everything being settled as far as he could foresee it then, Harry went scooting off into the night on his machine. As he rode, with the wind whipping into his face and eyes, and the incessant roar of the engine in his ears, he knew he was starting what was likely to prove a wild-goose chase. Even if he caught Graves, he didn't know what he could do, except that he meant to get back the papers.

More and more, as he rode on, the mystery of Graves' behavior puzzled him, worried him. He knew that Graves had been sore and angry when he had not been chosen for the special duty detail. But that did not seem a sufficient reason for him to have acted as he had. He remembered, too, the one glimpse of Graves they had caught before, in a place where he did not seem to belong.

And then, making the mystery still deeper, and defying explanation, as it seemed to him, was the question of how Graves had known, first of all, where they were, and of how he had reached the place.

He had no motorcycle of his own or he would not have ridden away on Dick's machine. He could not have come by train. Harry's head swam with the problem that presented itself. And then, to make it worse, there was that remark Graves had made. He had said Harry would find it hard to explain where he had been. How did he know where they had been? Why should he think it would be hard for them to explain their actions?

"There isn't any answer," he said to himself. "And, if there was, I'm a juggins to be trying to find it now. I'd better keep my mind on this old machine, or it will ditch me! I know what I've got to do, anyhow, even if I don't know why."

Mile after mile he rode, getting the very best speed he could out of the machine. Somewhere ahead of him, he was sure, riding back toward London, was Graves. In this wild pursuit he was taking chances, of course. Graves might have turned off the road almost anywhere. But if he had done that, there was nothing to be done about it; that much was certain. He could only keep on with the pursuit, hoping that his quarry was following the straight road toward London. And, to be sure, there was every reason for him to hope just that.

By this time it was very late. No one was abroad; the countryside was asleep. Once or twice he did find someone in the streets of a village as he swept through; then he stopped, and asked if a man on another motorcycle had passed ahead of him. Two or three times the yokel he questioned didn't know; twice, however, he did get a definite assurance that Graves was ahead of him.

Somehow he never thought of the outrageously illegal speed he was making. He knew the importance of his errand, and that, moreover, he was a menace to nothing but the sleep of those he disturbed. No one was abroad to get in his

way, and he forgot utterly that there might be need for caution, until, as he went through a fair sized town, he suddenly saw three policemen, two of whom were also mounted on motorcycles, waiting for him.

They waved their arms, crying out to him to stop, and, seeing that he was trapped, he did stop.

"Let me by," he cried, angrily. "I'm on government service!"

"Another of them?" One of the policemen looked doubtfully at the rest. "Too many of you telling that tale to-night. And the last one said there was a scorcher behind him. Have you got any papers? He had them!"

Harry groaned! So Graves had managed to strike at him, even when he was miles away. Evidently he, too, had been held up; evidently, also, he had used Harry's credentials to get out of the scrape speeding had put him in.

"No, I haven't any credentials," he said, angrily. "But you can see my uniform, can't you? I'm a Boy Scout, and we're all under government orders now, like soldiers or sailors."

"That's too thin, my lad," said the policeman who seemed to be recognized as the leader. "Everyone we've caught for speeding too fast since the war began has blamed it on the war. We'll have to take you along, my boy. They telephoned to us from places you passed–they said you were going so fast it was dangerous. And we saw you ourselves."

In vain Harry pleaded. Now that he knew that Graves had used his credentials from Colonel Throckmorton, he decided that it would be foolish to claim his own identity. Graves had assumed that, and he had had the practically conclusive advantage of striking the first blow. So Harry decided to submit to the inevitable with the best grace he could muster.

"All right," he said. "I'll go along with you, officer. But you'll be sorry before it's over!"

"Maybe, sir," said the policeman. "But orders is orders, sir, and I've got to obey them. Not that I likes running a young gentleman like yourself in. But–"

"Oh, I know you're only doing your duty, as you see it, officer," he said. "Can't be helped–but I'm sorry. It's likely to cause a lot of trouble."

So he surrendered. But, even while he was doing so, he was planning to escape from custody.

CHAPTER III–A GOOD WITNESS

Dick's surprise and concern when he found the cache empty and deserted, with papers and motorcycles alike gone, may be imagined. For a moment he thought he must be mistaken; that, after all, he had come to the wrong place. But a quick search of the ground with his flashlight showed him that he had come to the right spot. He could see the tracks made by the wheels of the machine; he could see, also, evidences of the brief struggle between Harry and Graves. For a moment his mystification continued. But then, with a low laugh, Jack Young emerged from the cover in which he had been hiding.

"Hello, there!" he said. "I say, are you Dick Mercer?"

"Yes!" gasped Dick. "But how ever do you know? I never saw you before!"

"Well, you see me now," said Jack. "Harry Fleming told me to look for you here. He said you'd be along some time to-night, if you got away. And he was sure you could get away, too."

"Harry!" said Dick, dazed. "You've seen him? Where is he? Did he get away? And what happened to the cycles and the papers we hid there? Why–"

"Hold on! One question at a time," said Jack. "Keep your shirt on, and I'll tell you all I know about it. Then we can decide what is to be done next. I think I'll attach myself temporarily to your patrol."

"Oh, you're a scout, too, are you?" asked Dick. That seemed to explain a good deal. He was used to having scouts turn up to help him out of trouble. And so he listened as patiently as he could, while Jack explained what had happened.

"And that's all I know," said Jack, finally, when he had carried the tale to the point where Harry rode off on the repaired motorcycle in pursuit of Ernest Graves. "I should think you might really know more about it now than I do."

"Why, how could I? You saw it all!"

"Yes, that's true enough. But you know Harry and I were too busy to talk much after we found that motor was out of order. All I know is that when we got here we found someone I'd never seen before and never want to see again

messing about with the cycles. We thought it must be you, of course–at least Harry did, and of course I supposed he ought to know."

"And then you found it was Ernest Graves?"

"Harry did. He took one look at him–and then they started right in fighting. Harry seemed to be sure that was the thing to do. If I'd been in his place, I'd have tried to arbitrate, I think. This chap Graves was a lot bigger than he. He was carrying weight for age. You see, I don't know yet who Graves is, or why Harry wanted to start fighting him that way. I've been waiting patiently for you to come along, so that you could tell me."

"He's a sneak!" declared Dick, vehemently. "I suppose you know that Harry's an American, don't you?"

"Yes, but that's nothing against him."

"Of course it isn't! But this Graves is the biggest and oldest chap in our troop–he isn't in our patrol. And he thought that if any of us were going to be chosen for special service, he ought to have the first chance. So when they picked Harry and me, he began talking about Harry's being an American. He tried to act as if he thought it wasn't safe for anyone who wasn't English to be picked out!"

"It looks as if he had acted on that idea, too, doesn't it, then? It seems to me that he has followed you down here, just to get a chance to play some trick on you. He got those papers, you see. And I fancy you'll be blamed for losing them."

"How did he know we were here?" said Dick, suddenly. "That's what I'd like to know!"

"Yes, it would be a good thing to find that out," said Jack, thoughtfully. "Well, it will be hard to do. But we might find out how he got here. I know this village and the country all around here pretty well. And Gaffer Hodge will know, if anyone does. He's the most curious man in the world. Come on–we'll see what he has to say."

"Who is he?" asked Dick, as they began to walk briskly toward the village.

"You went through the village this afternoon, didn't you? Didn't you see a very old man with white hair and a stick beside him, sitting in a doorway next to the little shop by the Red Dog?"

"Yes."

"That's Gaffer Hodge. He's the oldest man in these parts. He can remember the Crimean War and–oh, everything! He must be over a hundred years old. And he watches everyone who comes in. If a stranger is in the village he's never happy until he knows all about him. He was awfully worried to-day about you and Harry, I heard," explained Jack.

Dick laughed heartily.

"Well, I do hope he can tell us something about Graves. The sneak! I certainly hope Harry catches up to him. Do you think he can?"

"Well, he might, if he was lucky. He said the cycle he was riding was faster than the other one. But of course it would be very hard to tell just which way to go. If Graves knew there was a chance that he might be followed he ought to be able to give anyone who was even a mile behind the slip."

"Of course it's at night and that makes it harder for Harry."

"Yes, I suppose it does. In the daytime Harry could find people to tell him which way Graves was going, couldn't he?"

"Yes. That's just what I meant."

"Oh, I say, won't Gaffer Hodge be in bed and asleep?"

"I don't think so. He doesn't seem to like to go to bed. He sits up very late, and talks to the men when they start to go home from the Red Dog. He likes to talk, you see. We'll soon know–that's one thing. We'll be there now in no time."

Sure enough, the old man was still up when they arrived. He was just saying good-night, in a high, piping voice, to a little group of men who had evidently been having a nightcap in the inn next to his house. When he saw Jack he smiled. They were very good friends, and the old man had found the boy one of his best listeners. The Gaffer liked to live in the past; he was always delighted when anyone would let him tell his tales of the things he remembered.

"Good-evening, Gaffer," said Jack, respectfully. "This is my friend, Dick Mercer. He's a Boy Scout from London."

"Knew it! Knew it!" said Gaffer Hodge, with a senile chuckle. "I said they was from Lunnon this afternoon when I seen them fust! Glad to meet you, young maister."

Then Jack described Graves as well as he could from his brief sight of him, and Dick helped by what he remembered.

"Did you see him come into town this afternoon. Gaffer?" asked Jack.

"Let me think," said the old man. "Yes–I seen 'um. Came sneaking in, he did, this afternoon as ever was! Been up to the big house at Bray Park, he had. Came in in an automobile, he did. Then he went back there. But he was in the post office when you and t'other young lad from Lunnon went by, maister!" nodding his head as if well pleased.

This was to Dick, and he and Jack stared at one another. Certainly their visit to Gaffer Hodge had paid them well.

"Are you sure of that, Gaffer?" asked Jack, quietly. "Sure that it was an automobile from Bray Park?"

"Sure as ever was!" said the old man, indignantly. Like all old people, he hated anyone to question him, resenting the idea that anyone could think he was mistaken. "Didn't I see the machine myself–a big grey one, with black stripes as

ever was, like all their automobiles?"

"That's true–that's the way their cars are painted, and they have five or six of them," said Jack.

"Yes. And he come in the car from Lunnon before he went there–and then he come out here. He saw you and t'other young lad from Lunnon go by, maister, on your bicycles. He was watching you from the shop as ever was!"

"Thank you, Gaffer," said Jack, gravely. "You've told us just what we wanted to know. I'll bring you some tobacco in the morning, if you like. My father's just got a new lot down from London."

"Thanks, thank'ee kindly," said the Gaffer, overjoyed at the prospect.

Then they said good-night to the old man, who, plainly delighted at the thought that he had been of some service to them, and at this proof of his sharpness, of which he was always boasting, rose and hobbled into his house.

"He's really a wonderful old man," said Dick.

"He certainly is," agreed Jack. "His memory seems to be as good as ever, and he's awfully active, too. He's got rheumatism, but he can see and hear as well as he ever could, my father says."

They walked on, each turning over in his mind what they had heard about Graves.

"That's how he knew we were here," said Dick, finally. "I've been puzzling about that. I remember now seeing that car as we went by. But of course I didn't pay any particular attention to it, except that I saw a little American flag on it."

"Yes, they're supposed to be Americans, you know," said Jack. "And I suppose they carry the flag so that the car won't be taken for the army. The government has requisitioned almost all the cars in the country, you know."

"I'm almost afraid to think about this," said Dick, after a moment of silence. "Graves must know those people in that house, if he's riding about in their car. And they–"

He paused, and they looked at one another.

"I don't know what to do!" said Dick. "I wish there was some way to tell Harry about what we've found out."

Jack started.

"I nearly forgot!" he said. "We'd better cut for my place. I told Harry we'd be there if he telephoned, you know. Come on!"

CHAPTER IV–THE FIRST BLOW

To Harry, as he was taken off to the police station, it seemed the hardest sort of hard luck that his chase of Graves should be interrupted at such a critical time and just because he had been overspeeding. But he realized that he was helpless, and that he would only waste his breath if he tried to explain matters until he was brought before someone who was really in authority. Then, if he had any luck, he might be able to clear things up. But the men who arrested him were only doing their duty as they saw it, and they had no discretionary power at all.

When he reached the station he was disappointed to find that no one was on duty except a sleepy inspector, who was even less inclined to listen to reason than the constables.

"Everyone who breaks the law has a good excuse, my lad," he said. "If we listened to all of them we might as well close up this place. You can tell your story to the magistrate in the morning. You'll be well treated to-night, and you're better off with us than running around the country–a lad of your age! If I were your father, I should see to it that you were in bed and asleep before this."

There was no arguing with such a man, especially when he was sleepy. So Harry submitted, very quietly, to being put into a cell. He was not treated like a common prisoner; that much he was grateful for. His cell was really a room, with windows that were not even barred. And he saw that he could be very comfortable indeed.

"You'll be all right here," said one of the constables. "Don't worry, my lad. You'll be let off with a caution in the morning. Get to sleep now–it's late, and you'll be roused bright and early in the morning."

Harry smiled pleasantly, and thanked the man for his good advice. But he had no intention whatever of taking it. He did not even take off his clothes, though he did seize the welcome chance to use the washstand that was in the room. He had been through a good deal since his last chance to wash and clean up, and he was grimy and dirty. He discovered, too, that he was ravenously hungry. Until that moment he had been too active, too busy with brain and body, to notice his hunger.

However, there was nothing to be done for that now. He and Dick had not stopped for meals that day since breakfast, and they had eaten their emergency rations in the early afternoon. In the tool case on his impounded motorcycle Harry knew there were condensed food tablets–each the equivalent of certain things like eggs, and steaks and chops. And there were cakes of chocolate, too, the most nourishing of foods that are small in bulk. But the knowledge did him little good now. He didn't even know where the motorcycle had been stored for the night. It had been confiscated, of course; in the morning it would be returned to him.

But he didn't allow his thoughts to dwell long on the matter of food. It was vastly more important that he should get away. He had to get his news to Colonel Throckmorton. Perhaps Dick had done that. But he couldn't trust that chance. Aside from that, he wanted to know what had become of Dick. And, for the life of him, he didn't see how he was to get away.

"If they weren't awfully sure of me, they'd have locked me up a lot more carefully than this," he reflected. "And of course it would be hard. I could get out of here easily enough."

He had seen a drain pipe down which, he felt sure, he could climb.

"But suppose I did," he went on, talking to himself. "I've got an idea it would land me where I could be seen from the door–and I suppose that's open all night. And, then if I got away from here, every policeman in this town would know me. They'd pick me up if I tried to get out, even if I walked."

He looked out of the window. Not so far away he could see a faint glare in the sky. That was London. He was already in the suburban chain that ringed the great city. This place–he did not know its name, certainly–was quite a town in itself. And he was so close to London that there was no real open country. One town or borough ran right into the next. The houses would grow fewer, thinning out, but before the gap became real, the outskirts of the next borough would be reached.

Straight in front of him, looking over the housetops, he could see the gleam of water. It was a reservoir, he decided. Probably it constituted the water supply for a considerable section. And then, as he looked, he saw a flash–saw a great column of water rise in the air, and descend, like pictures of a cloudburst. A moment after the explosion, he heard a dull roar. And after the roar another sound. He saw the water fade out and disappear, and it was a moment before he realized what was happening. The reservoir had been blown up. And that meant more than the danger and the discomfort of an interrupted water supply. It meant an immediate catastrophe–the flooding of all the streets nearby.

In England, as he knew, such reservoirs were higher than the surrounding country, as a rule. They were contained within high walls, and, after a rainy

summer, such as this had been, would be full to overflowing. He was hammering at his door in a moment, and a sleepy policeman, aroused by the sudden alarm, flung it open as he passed on his way to the floor below.

Harry rushed down, and mingled, unnoticed, with the policemen who had been off duty, but summoned now to deal with this disaster. The inspector who had received him paid no attention to him at all.

"Out with you, men!" he cried. "There'll be trouble over this–no telling but what people may be drowned. Double quick, now!"

They rushed out, under command of a sergeant. The inspector stayed behind, and now he looked at Harry.

"Hullo!" he said. "How did you get out?"

"I want to help!" said Harry, inspired. "I haven't done anything really wrong, have I? Oughtn't I be allowed to do whatever I can, now that something like this has happened?"

"Go along with you!" said the inspector. "All right! But you'd better come back–because we've got your motorcycle, and we'll keep that until you come back for it."

But it made little difference to Harry that he was, so to speak, out on bail. The great thing was that he was free. He rushed out, but he didn't make for the scene of the disaster to the reservoir, caused, as he had guessed, by some spy. All the town was pouring out now, and the streets were full of people making for the place where the explosion had occurred. It was quite easy for Harry to slip through them and make for London. He did not try to get his cycle. But before he had gone very far he overtook a motor lorry that had broken down. He pitched in and helped with the slight repairs it needed, and the driver invited him to ride along with him.

"Taking in provisions for the troops, I am," he said. "If you're going to Lunnon, you might as well ride along with me. Eh, Tommy?"

His question was addressed to a sleepy private, who was nodding on the seat beside the driver. He started now, and looked at Harry.

"All aboard!" he said, with a sleepy chuckle. "More the merrier, say I! Up all night–that's what I've been! Fine sort of war this is! Do I see any fightin'? I do not! I'm a bloomin' chaperone for cabbages and cauliflowers and turnips, bless their little hearts!"

Harry laughed. It was impossible not to do that. But he knew that if the soldier wanted fighting, fighting he would get before long. Harry could guess that regular troops–and this man was a regular–would not be kept in England as soon as territorials and volunteers in sufficient numbers had joined the colors. But meanwhile guards were necessary at home.

He told them, in exchange for the ride, of the explosion and the flood that

had probably followed it.

"Bli'me!" said the soldier, surprised. "Think of that, now! What will they be up to next–those Germans? That's what I'd like to know! Coming over here to England and doing things like that! I'd have the law on 'em–that's what I'd do!"

Harry laughed. So blind to the real side of war were men who, at any moment, might find themselves face to face with the enemy!

CHAPTER V–THE SILENT WIRE

Probably Jack Young and Dick reached the vicarage just about the time that saw Harry getting into trouble with the police for speeding. The vicar was still up; he had a great habit of reading late. And he seemed considerably surprised to find that Jack was not upstairs in bed. At first he was inclined even to be angry, but he changed his mind when he saw Dick, and heard something of what had happened.

"Get your friend something to eat and I'll have them make a hot bath ready," said the vicar. "He looks as if he needed both!"

This was strictly true. Dick was as hungry and as grimy as Harry himself. If anything, he was in even worse shape, for his flight through the fields and the brook had enabled him to attach a good deal of the soil of England to himself. So the thick sandwiches and the bowl of milk that were speedily set before him were severely punished. And while he ate both he and Jack poured out their story. Mr. Young frowned as he listened. Although he was a clergyman and a lover of peace, he was none the less a patriot.

"Upon my word!" he said. "Wireless, you think, my boy?"

"I'm sure of it, sir," said Dick.

"And so'm I," chimed in Jack. "You know, sir, I've thought ever since war seemed certain that Bray Park would bear a lot of watching and that something

ought to be done. Just because this is a little bit of a village, without even a railroad station, people think nothing could happen here. But if German spies wanted a headquarters, it's just the sort of place they would pick out."

"There's something in that," agreed the vicar, thoughtfully. But in his own mind he was still very doubtful. The whole thing seemed incredible to him. Yet, as a matter of fact, it was no more incredible than the war itself. What inclined him to be dubious, as much as anything else, was the fact that it was mere boys who had made the discovery. He had read of outbreaks of spy fever in various parts of England, in which the most harmless and inoffensive people were arrested and held until they could give some good account of themselves. This made him hesitate, while precious time was being wasted.

"I hardly know what to do–what to suggest," he went on, musingly. "The situation is complicated, really. Supposing you are right, and that German spies really own Bray Park, and are using it as a central station for sending news that they glean out of England, what could be done about it?"

"The place ought to be searched at once–everyone there ought to be arrested!" declared Jack, impulsively. His father smiled.

"Yes, but who's going to do it?" he said. "We've just one constable here in Bray. And if there are Germans there in any number, what could he do? I suppose we might send word to Hambridge and get some police or some territorials over. Yes, that's the best thing to do."

But now Dick spoke up in great eagerness.

"I don't know, sir," he suggested. "If the soldiers came, the men in the house there would find out they were coming, I'm afraid. Perhaps they'd get away, or else manage to hide everything that would prove the truth about them. I think it would be better to report direct to Colonel Throckmorton. He knows what we found out near London, sir, you see, and he'd be more ready to believe us."

"Yes, probably you're right. Ring him up, then. It's late, but he won't mind."

What a different story there would have been to tell had someone had that thought only half an hour earlier! But it is often so. The most trivial miscalculation, the most insignificant mistake, seemingly, may prove to be of the most vital importance. Dick went to the telephone. It was one of the old-fashioned sort, still in almost universal use in the rural parts of England, that require the use of a bell to call the central office. Dick turned the crank, then took down the receiver. At once he heard a confused buzzing sound that alarmed him.

"I'm afraid the line is out of order, sir," he said.

And after fifteen minutes it was plain that he was right. The wire had either been cut or it had fallen or been short circuited in some other way. Dick and Jack looked at one another blankly. The same thought had come to each of them, and at the same moment.

"They've cut the wires!" said Dick. "Now what shall we do? We can't hear from Harry, either!"

"We might have guessed they'd do that!" said Jack. "They must have had some one out to watch us, Dick–perhaps they thought they'd have a chance to catch us. They know that we've found out something, you see! It's a good thing we stayed where we could make people hear us if we got into any trouble."

"Oh, nonsense!" said the vicar, suddenly. "You boys are letting your imaginations run away with you! Things like that don't happen in England. The wire is just out of order. It happens often enough, Jack, as you know very well!"

"Yes, sir," said Jack, doggedly. "But that's in winter, or after a heavy storm–not in fine weather like this. I never knew the wire to be out of order before when it was the way it is now."

"Well, there's nothing to be done, in any case," said the vicar. "Be off to bed, and wait until morning. There's nothing you can do now."

Dick looked as if he were about to make some protest, but a glance at Jack restrained him. Instead he got up, said good-night and followed Jack upstairs. There he took his bath, except that he substituted cold water for the hot, for he could guess what Jack meant to do. They were going out again, that was certain. And, while it is easy to take cold, especially when one is tired, after a hot bath, there is no such danger if the water is cold.

"Do you know where the telephone wire runs?" he asked Jack.

"Yes, I do," said Jack. "I watched the men when they ran the wire in. There are only three telephones in the village, except for the one at Bray Park, and that's a special, private wire. We have one here, Doctor Brunt has one, and there's another in the garage. They're all on one party line, too. We won't have any trouble in finding out if the wire was cut, I fancy."

Their chief difficulty lay in getting out of the house. True, Jack had not been positively ordered not to go out again, but he knew that if his father saw him, he would be ordered to stay in. And he had not the slightest intention of missing any part of the finest adventure he had ever had a chance to enjoy–not he! He was a typical English boy, full of the love of adventure and excitement for their own sake, even if he was the son of a clergyman. And now he showed Dick what they would have to do.

"I used to slip out this way, sometimes," he said. "That was before I was a scout. I–well, since I joined, I haven't done it. It didn't seem right. But this is different. Don't you think so, Dick?"

"I certainly do," said Dick. "Your pater doesn't understand, Jack. He thinks we've just found a mare's nest, I fancy."

Jack's route of escape was not a difficult one. It led to the roof of the scullery, at the back of the house, and then, by a short and easy drop of a few feet,

to the back garden. Once they were in that, they had no trouble. They could not be heard or seen from the front of the house, and it was a simple matter of climbing fences until it was safe to circle back and strike the road in front again. Jack led the way until they came to the garage, which was at the end of the village, in the direction of London. Their course also took them nearer to Bray Park, but at the time they did not think of this.

"There's where the wire starts from the garage, d'ye see?" said Jack, pointing. "You see how easily we can follow it–it runs along those poles, right beside the road."

"It seems to be all right here," said Dick.

"Oh, yes. They wouldn't have cut it so near the village," said Jack. "We'll have to follow it along for a bit, I fancy–a mile or so, perhaps. Better not talk much, either. And, I say, hadn't we better stay in the shadow? They must have been watching us before–better not give them another chance, if we can help it," was Jack's very wise suggestion.

They had traveled nearly a mile when Dick suddenly noticed that the telephone wire sagged between two posts.

"I think it has been cut–and that we're near the place, too," he said then. "Look, Jack! There's probably a break not far from here."

"Right, oh!" said Jack. "Now we must be careful. I've just thought, Dick, that they might have left someone to watch at the place where they cut the wire."

"Why, Jack?"

"Well, they might have thought we, or someone else, might come along to find out about it, just as we're doing. I'm beginning to think those beggars are mighty clever, and that if we think of doing anything, they're likely to think that we'll think of it. They've outwitted us at every point so far."

So now, instead of staying under the hedge, but still in the road, they crept through a gap in the hedge, tearing their clothes as they did so, since it was a blackberry row, and went along still in sight of the poles and the wire, but protected by the hedge so that no one in the road could see them.

"There!" said Jack, at last. "See? You were right, Dick. There's the place–and the wire was cut, too! It wasn't an accident. But I was sure of that as soon as I found the line wasn't working."

Sure enough, the wires were dangling. And there was something else. Just as they stopped they heard the voices of two men.

"There's the break, Bill," said the first voice. "Bli'me, if she ain't cut, too! Now who did that? Bringing us out of our beds at this hour to look for trouble!"

"I'd like to lay my hands on them, that's all!" said the second voice. "A good job they didn't carry the wire away–'twon't take us long to repair, and that's one precious good thing!"

"Linemen," said Jack. "But I wonder why they're here? They must have come a long way. I shouldn't be surprised if they'd ridden on bicycles. And I never heard of their sending to repair a wire at night before."

"Listen," said Dick. "Perhaps we will find out."

"Well, now that we've found it, we might as well repair it," said the first lineman, grumblingly. "All comes of someone trying to get a message through to Bray and making the manager believe it was a life and death matter!"

"Harry must have tried to telephone–that's why they've come," said Jack. "I was wondering how they found out about the break. You see, as a rule, no one would try to ring up anyone in Bray after seven o'clock or so. And of course, they couldn't tell we were trying to ring, with the wire cut like that."

"Oh, Jack!" said Dick, suddenly. "If they're linemen, I believe they have an instrument with them. Probably we could call to London from here. Do you think they will let us do that?"

"That's a good idea. We'll try it, anyway," said Jack. "Come on–it must be safe enough now. These chaps won't hurt us."

But Jack was premature in thinking that. For no sooner did the two linemen see them than they rushed for them, much to both lads' surprise.

"You're the ones that cut that wire," said the first, a dark, young fellow. "I've a mind to give you a good hiding!"

But they both rushed into explanations, and, luckily, the other lineman recognized Jack.

"It's the vicar's son from Bray, Tom," he said. "Let him alone."

And then, while their attention was distracted, a bullet sang over their heads. And "Hands oop!" said a guttural voice.

CHAPTER VI–A TREACHEROUS DEED

Harry Fleming had, of course, given up all hope of catching Graves by a direct pursuit by the time he accepted the offer of a ride in the motor truck that was carrying vegetables for the troops in quarters in London. His only hope now was to get his information to Colonel Throckmorton as soon as possible. At the first considerable town they reached, where he found a telegraph office open, he wired to the colonel, using the code which he had memorized. The price of a couple of glasses of beer had induced the driver and the soldier to consent to a slight delay of the truck, and he tried also to ring up Jack Young's house and find out what had happened to Dick.

When he found that the line was out of order he leaped at once to the same conclusion that Jack and Dick had reached–that it had been cut on purpose. He could not stay to see if it would be reopened soon. A stroke of luck came his way, however. In this place Boy Scouts were guarding the gas works and an electric light and power plant, and he found one squad just coming off duty. He explained something of his errand to the patrol leader, and got the assurance that the telephone people should be made to repair the break in the wire.

"We'll see to it that they find out what is the trouble, Fleming," said the patrol leader, whose name was Burridge. "By the way, I know a scout in your troop–Graves. He was on a scout with us a few weeks ago, when he was visiting down here. Seemed to be no end of a good fellow."

Harry was surprised for he had heard nothing of this before. But then that was not strange. He and Graves were not on terms of intimacy, by any means. He decided quickly not to say anything against Graves. It could do no good and it might do harm.

"Right," he said. "I know him–yes. I'll be going, then. You'll give my message to Mercer or Young if there's any way of getting the line clear?"

"Yes, if I sit up until my next turn of duty," said Burridge, with a smile. "Good luck, Fleming."

Then Harry was off again. Dawn was very near now. The east, behind him, was already lighted up with streaks of glowing crimson. Dark clouds were massed there, and there was a feeling in the air that carried a foreboding of rain, strengthening the threat of the red sky. Harry was not sorry for that. There would be work at Bray Park that might well fare better were it done under leaden skies.

As he rode he puzzled long and hard over what he had learned. It seemed to him that these German spies were taking desperate chances for what promised to be, at best, a small reward. What information concerning the British plans could they get that would be worth all they were risking? The wireless at Bray Park; the central station near Willesden, whence the reports were heliographed–it was an amazingly complete chain. And Harry knew enough of modern warfare to

feel that the information could be important only to an enemy within striking distance.

That was the point. It might be interesting to the German staff to know the locations of British troops in England, and, more especially, their destinations if they were going abroad as part of an expeditionary force to France or Belgium. But the information would not be vital; it didn't seem to Harry that it was worth all the risk implied. But if, on the other hand, there was some plan for a German invasion of England, then he would have no difficulty in understanding it. Then knowledge of where to strike, of what points were guarded and what were not, would be invaluable.

"But what a juggins I am!" he said. "They can't invade England, even if they could spare the troops. Not while the British fleet controls the sea. They'd have to fly over."

And in that half laughing expression he got the clue he was looking for. Fly over! Why not? Flight was no longer a theory, a possibility of the future. It was something definite, that had arrived. Even as he thought of the possibility he looked up and saw, not more than a mile away, two monoplanes of a well-known English army type flying low.

"I never thought of that!" he said to himself.

And now that the idea had come to him, he began to work out all sorts of possibilities. He thought of a hundred different things that might happen. He could see, all at once, the usefulness Bray Park might have. Why, the place was like a volcano! It might erupt at any minute, spreading ruin and destruction in all directions. It was a hostile fortress, set down in the midst of a country that, even though it was at war, could not believe that war might come home to it.

He visualized, as the truck kept on its plodding way, the manner in which warfare might be directed from a center like Bray Park. Thence aeroplanes, skillfully fashioned to represent the British 'planes, and so escape quick detection, might set forth. They could carry a man or two, elude guards who thought the air lanes safe, and drop bombs here, there–everywhere and anywhere. Perhaps some such aerial raid was responsible for the explosion that had freed him only a very few hours before.

Warfare in England, carried on thus by a few men, would be none the less deadly because it would not involve fighting. There would be no pitched battles, that much he knew. Instead, there would be swift, stabbing raids. Water works, gas works, would be blown up. Attempts would be made to drop bombs in barracks, perhaps. Certainly every effort would be made to destroy the great warehouses in which food was stored. It was new, this sort of warfare; it defied the imagination. And yet it was the warfare that, once he thought of it, it seemed certain that the Germans would wage.

He gritted his teeth at the thought of it. Perhaps all was fair in love and war, as the old proverb said. But this seemed like sneaky, unfair fighting to him. There was nothing about it of the glory of warfare. He was learning for himself that modern warfare is an ugly thing. He was to learn, later, that it still held its possibilities of glory, and of heroism. Indeed, for that matter, he was willing to grant the heroism of the men who dared these things that seemed to him so horrible. They took their lives in their hands, knowing that if they were caught they would be hung as spies.

The truck was well into London now, and the dawn was full. A faint drizzle was beginning to fall and the streets were covered with a fine film of mud. People were about, and London was arousing itself to meet the new day. Harry knew that he was near his journey's end. Tired as he was, he was determined to make his report before he thought of sleep. And then, suddenly, around a bend, came a sight that brought Harry to his feet, scarcely able to believe his eyes. It was Graves, on a bicycle. At the sight of Harry on the truck he stopped. Then he turned.

"Here he is!" he cried. "That's the one!"

A squad of men on cycles, headed by a young officer, came after Graves.

"Stop!" called the officer to the driver.

Harry stared down, wondering.

"You there–you Boy Scout–come down!" said the officer.

Harry obeyed, wondering still more. He saw the gleam of malignant triumph on the face of Graves. But not even the presence of the officer restrained him.

"Where are those papers you stole from me, you sneak?" he cried.

"You keep away from me!" said Graves. "You–Yankee!"

"Here, no quarreling!" said the officer. "Take him, men!"

Two of the soldiers closed in on Harry. He stared at them and then at the officer, stupefied.

"What–what's this?" he stammered.

"You're under arrest, my lad, on a charge of espionage!" said the officer. "Espionage, and conspiracy to give aid and comfort to the public enemy. Anything you say may be used against you."

For a moment such a rush of words came to Harry that he was silent by the sheer inability to decide which to utter first. But then he got control of himself.

"Who makes this charge against me!" he asked, thickly, his face flushing scarlet in anger.

"You will find that out in due time, my lad. Forward–march!"

"But I've got important information! I must be allowed to see Colonel Throckmorton at once! Oh, you've no idea of how important it may be!"

"My orders are to place you under arrest. You can make application to see anyone later. But now I have no discretion. Come! If you really want to see Colonel Throckmorton, you had better move on."

Harry knew as well as anyone the uselessness of appealing from such an order, but he was frantic. Realizing the importance of the news he carried, and beginning to glimpse vaguely the meaning of Graves and his activity, he was almost beside himself.

"Make Graves there give back the papers he took from me!" he cried.

"I did take some papers, lieutenant," said Graves, with engaging frankness. "But they were required to prove what I had suspected almost from the first–that he was a spy. He was leading an English scout from his own patrol into trouble, too. I suppose he thought he was more likely to escape suspicion if he was with an Englishman."

"It's not my affair," said the lieutenant, shrugging his shoulders. He turned to Harry. "Come, my lad. I hope you can clear yourself. But I've only one thing to do–and that is to obey my orders."

Harry gave up, then, for the moment. He turned and began walking along, a soldier on each side. But as he did so Graves turned to the lieutenant.

"I'll go and get my breakfast, then, sir," he said. "I'll come on to Ealing later. Though, of course, they know all I can tell them already."

"All right," said the officer, indifferently.

"You're never going to let him go!" exclaimed Harry, aghast. "Don't you know he'll never come back?"

"All the better for you, if he doesn't," said the officer. "That's enough of your lip, my lad. Keep a quiet tongue in your head. Remember you're a prisoner, and don't try giving orders to me."

CHAPTER VII–THE TRAP

The bullet that sang over their heads effectually broke up the threatened trouble between Dick Mercer and Jack Young on one side, and the telephone linemen on the other. With one accord they obeyed that guttural order, "Hands oop!"

They had been so interested in one another and in the cut wire that none of them had noticed the practically noiseless approach of a great grey motor car, with all lights out, that had stolen up on them. But now, with a groan, Dick and Jack both knew it for one of the Bray Park cars. So, after all, Dick's flight had been in vain. He had escaped the guards of Bray Park once, only to walk straight into this new trap. And, worst of all, there would be no Jack Young outside to help this time, for Jack was a captive, too. Only–he was not!

At the thought Dick had turned, to discover that Jack was not beside him. It was very dark, but in a moment he caught the tiniest movement over by the hedge, and saw a spot a little darker than the rest of the ground about it. Jack, he saw at once, had taken the one faint chance there was, dropped down, and crawled away, trusting that their captors had not counted their party, and might not miss one boy.

Just in time he slipped through a hole in the hedge. The next moment one of the headlights of the grey motor flashed out, almost blinding the three of them, as they held up their hands. In its light four men, well armed with revolvers, were revealed. "Donnerwetter!" said one. "I made sure there were four of them! So! Vell, it is enough. Into the car with them!"

No pretence about this chap! He was German, and didn't care who knew it. He was unlike the man who had disguised himself as an English officer, at the house of the heliograph, but had betrayed himself and set this whole train of adventure going by his single slip and fall from idiomatic English that Harry Fleming's sharp ears had caught. Dick, was thrilled, somehow, even while he was being roughly bundled toward the motor. If these fellows were as bold as this, cutting telephone wires, running about without lights, giving up all secrecy and pretence, it must mean that the occasion for which they had come was nearly over. It must mean that their task, whatever it might be, was nearly accomplished–the blow they had come to strike was about ready to be driven home.

"'Ere, who are you a shovin' off?" complained one of the linemen, as he was pushed toward the motor. He made some effort to resist but the next moment he pitched forward. One of the Germans had struck him on the head with the butt of his revolver. It was a stunning blow, and the man was certainly silenced. Dick recoiled angrily from the sight, but he kept quiet. He knew he could do no good by interfering. But the sheer, unnecessary brutality of it shocked and angered him. He felt that Englishmen, or Americans, would not treat a prisoner so–especially one who had not been fighting. These men were not even soldiers;

they were spies, which made the act the more outrageous. They were serving their country, however, for all that, and that softened Dick's feeling toward them a little. True, they were performing their service in a sneaky, underhanded way that went against his grain. But it was service, and he knew that England, too, probably used spies, forced to do so for self-defence. He realized the value of the spy's work, and the courage that work required. If these men were captured they would not share the fate of those surrendering in battle but would be shot, or hung, without ceremony.

A minute later he was forced into the tonneau of the car, where he lay curled up on the floor. Two of the Germans sat in the cushioned seat while the two linemen, the one who had been hit still unconscious, were pitched in beside him. The other two Germans were in front, and the car began to move at a snail's pace. The man beside the driver began speaking in German; his companion replied. But one of the two behind interrupted, sharply.

"Speak English, dummer kerl!" he exclaimed, angrily. "These English people have not much sense, but if a passerby should hear us speaking German, he would be suspicious. Our words he cannot hear and if they are in English he will think all is well."

"This is one of those we heard of this afternoon," said the driver. "This Boy Scout. The other is riding to London–but he will not go so far."

He laughed at that, and Dick, knowing he was speaking of Harry, shuddered.

"Ja, that is all arranged," said the leader, with a chuckle. "Not for long–that could not be. But we need only a few hours more. By this time tomorrow morning all will be done. He comes, Von Wedel?"

"We got the word to-night–yes," said the other man. "All is arranged for him. Ealing–Houndsditch, first. There are the soldiers. Then Buckingham Palace. Ah, what a lesson we shall teach these English! Then the buildings at Whitehall. We shall strike at the heart of their empire–the heart and the brains!"

Dick listened, appalled. Did they think, then, that he, a boy, could not understand? Or were they so sure of success that it did not matter? As a matter of fact, he did not fully understand. Who was Von Wedel? What was he going to do when he came? And how was he coming?

However, it was not the time for speculation. There was the chance that any moment they might say something he would understand, and, moreover, if he got away, it was possible that he might repeat what he heard to those who would be able to make more use of it.

Just then the leader's foot touched Dick, and he drew away. The German looked down at him, and laughed.

"Frightened?" he said. "We won't hurt you! What a country! It sends its

children out against us!"

His manner was kindly enough, and Dick felt himself warming a little to the big man in spite of himself.

"Listen, boy," said the leader. "You have seen things that were not for your eyes. So you are to be put where knowledge of them will do no harm–for a few hours. Then you can go. But until we have finished our work, you must be kept. You shall not be hurt–I say it."

Dick did not answer. He was thinking hard. He wondered if Jack would try to rescue him. They were getting very near Bray Park, he felt, and he thought that, once inside, neither Jack nor anyone else could get him out until these men who had captured him were willing. Then the car stopped suddenly. Dick saw that they were outside a little house.

"Get out," said the leader.

Dick and the telephone man who had not been hurt obeyed; the other lineman was lifted out, more considerately this time.

"Inside!" said the German with the thick, guttural voice. He pointed to the open door, and they went inside. One of the Germans followed them, and stood in the open door.

"Werner, you are responsible for the prisoners, especially the boy," said the leader. "See that none of them escape. You will be relieved at the proper time. You understand?"

"Ja, Herr Ritter!" said the man. "Zu befehl!"

He saluted, and for the first time Dick had the feeling that this strange procedure was, in some sense, military, even though there were no uniforms. Then the door shut, and they were left in the house.

It was just outside of Bray Park–he remembered it now. A tiny box of a place it was, too, but solidly built of stone. It might have been used as a tool house. There was one window; that and the door were the only means of egress. The German looked hard at the window and laughed. Dick saw then that it was barred. To get out that way, even if he had the chance, would be impossible. And the guard evidently decided that. He lay down across the door.

"So!" he said. "I shall sleep–but with one ear open! You cannot get out except across me. And I am a light sleeper!"

Dick sat there, pondering wretchedly. The man who had been struck on the head was breathing stertorously. His companion soon dropped off to sleep, like the German, so that Dick was the only one awake. Through the window, presently, came the herald of the dawn, the slowly advancing light. And suddenly Dick saw a shadow against the light, looked up intently, and saw that it was Jack Young. Jack pointed. Dick, not quite understanding, moved to the spot at which he pointed.

"Stay there!" said Jack, soundlessly. His lips formed the words but he did not utter them. He nodded up and down vehemently, however, and Dick understood him, and that he was to stay where he was. He nodded in return, and settled down in his new position. And then Jack dropped out of sight.

For a long time, while the dawn waxed and the light through the window grew stronger, Dick sat there wondering. Only the breathing of the three men disturbed the quiet of the little hut. But then, from behind him, he grew conscious of a faint noise. Not quite a noise, either; it was more a vibration. He felt the earthen floor of the hut trembling beneath him. And then at last he understood.

He had nearly an hour still to wait. But at last the earth cracked and yawned where he had been sitting. He heard a faint whisper.

"Dig it out a little–there's a big hole underneath. You can squirm your way through. I'm going to back out now."

Dick obeyed, and a moment later he was working his way down, head first, through the tunnel Jack had dug from the outside. He was small and slight and he got through, somehow, though he was short of breath and dirtier than he had ever been in his life when at last he was able to straighten up–free.

"Come on!" cried Jack. "We've no time to lose. I've got a couple of bicycles here. We'd better run for it."

Run for it they did, but there was no alarm. Behind them was the hut, quiet and peaceful. And beyond the hut was the menace of Bray Park and the mysteries of which the Germans had spoken in the great grey motor car.

CHAPTER VIII–A DARING RUSE

Harry, furious as he was when he saw Graves allowed to go off after the false accusation that had caused his arrest, was still able to control himself sufficiently to think. He was beginning to see the whole plot now, or to think he saw it. He remembered things that had seemed trivial at the time of their occurrence, but

that loomed up importantly now. And one of the first things he realized was that he was probably in no great danger, that the charge against him had not been made with the serious idea of securing his conviction, but simply to cause his detention for a little while, and to discredit any information he might have.

He could no longer doubt that Graves was in league with the spies on whose trail he and Dick had fallen. And he understood that, if he kept quiet, all would soon be all right for him. But if he did that, the plans of the Germans would succeed. He had seen already an example of what they could do, in the destruction of the water works. And it seemed to him that it would be a poor thing to fail in what he had undertaken simply to save himself. As soon as he reached that conclusion he knew what he must do, or, at all events, what he must try to do.

For the officer who had arrested him he felt a good deal of contempt. While it was true that orders had to be obeyed, there was no reason, Harry felt, why the lieutenant should not have shown some discretion. An officer of the regular army would have done so, he felt. But this man looked unintelligent and stupid. Harry felt that he might safely rely on his appearance. And he was right. The officer found himself in a quandary at once. His men were mounted on cycles; Harry was on foot. And Harry saw that he didn't quite know what to do.

Finally he cut the Gordian knot, as it seemed to him, by impounding a bicycle from a passing wheelman, who protested vigorously but in vain. All he got for his cycle was a scrap of paper, stating that it had been requisitioned for army use. And Harry was instructed to mount this machine and ride along between two of the territorial soldiers. He had been hoping for something like that, but had hardly dared to expect it. He had fully made up his mind now to take all the risks he would run by trying to escape. He could not get clear away, that much he knew. But now he, too, like Graves, needed a little time. He did not mind being recaptured in a short time if, in the meanwhile, he could be free to do what he wanted.

As to just how he would try to get away, he did not try to plan. He felt that somewhere along the route some chance would present itself, and that it would be better to trust to that than to make some plan. He was ordered to the front of the squad–so that a better eye could be kept upon him, as the lieutenant put it. Harry had irritated him by his attempts to cause a change in the disposition of Graves and himself, and the officer gave the impression now that he regarded Harry as a desperate criminal, already tried and convicted.

Harry counted upon the traffic, sure to increase as it grew later, to give him his chance. Something accidental, he knew, there must be, or he would not be able to get away. And it was not long before his chance came. As they crossed a wide street there was a sudden outburst of shouting. A runaway horse, dragging a delivery cart, came rushing down on the squad, and in a moment it was broken

up and confused. Harry seized the chance. His bicycle, by a lucky chance, was a high geared machine and before anyone knew he had gone he had turned a corner. In a moment he threw himself off the machine, dragged it into a shop, ran out, and in a moment dashed into another shop, crowded with customers. And there for a moment, he stayed. There was a hue and cry outside. He saw uniformed men, on bicycles, dashing by. He even rushed to the door with the crowd in the shop to see what was amiss! And, when the chase had passed, he walked out, very calmly, though his heart was in his mouth, and quite unmolested got aboard a passing tram car.

He was counting on the stupidity and lack of imagination of the lieutenant, and his course was hardly as bold as it seems. As a matter of fact it was his one chance to escape. He knew what the officer would think–that, being in flight, he would try to get away as quickly as possible from the scene of his escape. And so, by staying there, he was in the one place where no one would think of looking for him!

On the tram car he was fairly safe. It happened, fortunately, that he had plenty of money with him. And his first move, when he felt it was safe, was to get off the tram and look for a cab. He found a taxicab in a short time, one of those that had escaped requisition by the government, and in this he drove to an outfitting shop, where he bought new clothes. He reasoned that he would be looked for all over, and that if, instead of appearing as a Boy Scout in character dress of the organization, he was in the ordinary clothes, he would have a better chance. He managed the change easily, and then felt that it was safe for him to try to get into communication with Dick.

In this attempt luck was with him again. He called for the number of the vicarage at Bray, only to find that the call was interrupted again at the nearest telephone center. But this time he was asked to wait, and in a moment he heard Jack Young's voice in his ear.

"We came over to explain about the wire's being cut," said Jack. "Dick's all right. He's here with me. Where are you? We've got to see you just as soon as we can."

"In London, but I'm coming down. I'm going to try to get a motor car, too. I'm in a lot of trouble, Jack–it's Graves."

"Come on down. We'll walk out along the road toward London and meet you. We've got a lot to tell you, but I'm afraid to talk about it over the telephone."

"All right! I'll keep my eyes open for you."

Getting a motor car was not easy. A great many had been taken by the government. But Harry remembered that one was owned by a business friend of his father's, an American, and this, with some difficulty, he managed to borrow. He was known as a careful driver. He had learned to drive his father's car at

home, and Mr. Armstrong knew it. And so, when Harry explained that it was a matter of the greatest urgency, he got it–since he had established a reputation for honor that made Mr. Armstrong understand that when Harry said a thing was urgent, urgent it must be.

Getting out of London was easy. If a search was being made for him–and he had no doubt that that was true–he found no evidence of it. His change of clothes was probably what saved him, for it altered his appearance greatly. So he came near to Bray, and finally met his two friends.

CHAPTER IX–THE CIPHER

"What happened to you?" asked Jack and Dick in chorus.

Swiftly Harry explained. He told of his arrest as a spy and of his escape. And when he mentioned the part that Ernest Graves had played in the affair, Jack and Dick looked at one another.

"We were afraid of something like that," said Jack. "Harry, we've found out a lot of things, and we don't know what they mean! We're sure something dreadful is going to happen to-night. And we're sure, too, that Bray Park is going to be the centre of the trouble."

"Tell me what you know," said Harry, crisply. "Then we'll put two and two together. I say, Jack, we don't want to be seen, you know. Isn't there some side road that doesn't lead anywhere, where I can run in with the car while we talk?"

"Yes. There's a place about a quarter of a mile further on that will do splendidly," he replied.

"All right. Lead the way! Tell me when we come to it. I've just thought of something else I ought never to have forgotten. At least, I thought of it when I took the things out of my pockets while I was changing my clothes."

They soon came to the turning Jack had thought of, and a run of a few hundred yards took them entirely out of sight of the main road, and to a place

where they were able to feel fairly sure of not being molested.

Then they exchanged stories. Harry told his first. Then he heard of Dick's escape, and of his meeting with Jack. He nodded at the story they had heard from Gaffer Hodge.

"That accounts for how Graves knew," he said, with much satisfaction. "What happened then?"

When he heard of how they had thought too late of calling Colonel Throckmorton by telephone he sighed.

"If you'd only got that message through before Graves got in his work!" he said. "He'd have had to believe you then, of course. How unlucky!"

"I know," said Jack. "We were frightfully sorry. And then we went out to find where the wire was cut, and they got Dick. But I got away, and I managed to stay fairly close to them. I followed them when they left Dick in a little stone house, as a prisoner, and I heard this–I heard them talking about getting a big supply of petrol. Now what on earth do they want petrol for? They said there would still be plenty left for the automobiles–and then that they wouldn't need the cars any more, anyhow! What on earth do you make of that, Harry?"

"Tell me the rest, then I'll tell you what I think," said Harry. "How did you get Dick out? And did you hear them saying anything that sounded as if it might be useful, Dick?"

"That was fine work!" he said, when he had heard a description of Dick's rescue. "Jack, you seem to be around every time one of us gets into trouble and needs help!"

Then Dick told of the things he had overheard–the mysterious references to Von Wedel and to things that were to be done to the barracks at Ealing and Houndsditch. Harry got out a pencil and paper then, and made a careful note of every name that Dick mentioned. Then he took a paper from his pocket.

"Remember this, Dick?" he asked. "It's the thing I spoke of that I forgot until I came across it in my pocket this morning."

"What is it, Harry?"

"Don't you remember that we watched them heliographing some messages, and put down the Morse signs? Here they are. Now the thing to do is to see if we can't work out the meaning of the code. If it's a code that uses words for phrases we're probably stuck, but I think it's more likely to depend on inversions."

"What do you mean, Harry?" asked Jack. "I'm sorry I don't know anything about codes and ciphers."

"Why, there are two main sorts of codes, Jack, and, of course, thousands of variations of each of those principal kinds. In one kind the idea is to save words–in telegraphing or cabling. So the things that are likely to be said are represented by one word. For instance *Coal*, in a mining code, might mean 'Struck vein at

two hundred feet level.' In the other sort of code, the letters are changed. That is done in all sorts of ways, and there are various tricks. The way to get at nearly all of them is to find out which letter or number or symbol is used most often, and to remember that in an ordinary letter E will appear almost twice as often as any other letter–in English, that is."

"But won't this be in German?"

"Yes. That's just why I wanted those names Dick heard. They are likely to appear in any message that was sent. So, if we can find words that correspond in length to those, we may be able to work it out. Here goes, anyhow!"

For a long time Harry puzzled over the message. He transcribed the Morse symbols first into English letters and found they made a hopeless and confused jumble, as he had expected. The key of the letter E was useless, as he had also expected. But finally, by making himself think in German, he began to see a light ahead. And after an hour's hard work he gave a cry of exultation.

"I believe I've got it!" he cried. "Listen and see if this doesn't sound reasonable!"

"Go ahead!" said Jack and Dick, eagerly.

"Here it is," said Harry. "'Petrol just arranged. Supply on way. Reach Bray Friday. Von Wedel may come. Red light markers arranged. Ealing Houndsditch Buckingham Admiralty War Office. Closing.'"

They stared at him, mystified.

"I suppose it does make sense," said Dick. "But what on earth does it mean, Harry?"

"Oh, can't you see?" cried Harry. "Von Wedel is a commander of some sort–that's plain, isn't it? And he's to carry out a raid, destroying or attacking the places that are mentioned! How can he do that? He can't be a naval commander. He can't be going to lead troops, because we know they can't land. Then how can he get here? And why should he need petrol?"

They stared at him blankly. Then, suddenly, Dick understood.

"He'll come through the air!" he cried.

"Yes, in one of their big Zeppelins!" said Harry. "I suppose she has been cruising off the coast. She's served as a wireless relay station, too. The plant here at Bray Park could reach her, and she could relay the messages on across the North Sea, to Heligoland or Wilhelmshaven. She's waited until everything was ready."

"That's what they mean by the red light markers, then?"

"Yes. They could be on the roofs of houses, and masked, so that they wouldn't be seen except from overhead. They'd be in certain fixed positions, and the men on the Zeppelins would be able to calculate their aim, and drop their bombs so many degrees to the left or the right of the red marking lights."

"But we've got aeroplanes flying about, haven't we?" said Jack. "Wouldn't they see those lights and wonder about them?"

"Yes, if they were showing all the time. But you can depend on it that these Germans have provided for all that. They will have arranged for the Zeppelin to be above the positions, as near as they can guess them, at certain times–and the lights will only be shown at those times, and then only for a few seconds. Even if someone else sees them, you see, there won't be time to do anything."

"You must be right, Harry!" said Jack, nervously. "There's no other way to explain that message. How are we going to stop them?"

"I don't know yet, but we'll have to work out some way of doing it. It would be terrible for us to know what had been planned and still not be able to stop them! I wish I knew where Graves was. I'd like–"

He stopped, thinking hard.

"What good would that do?"

"Oh, I don't want him–not just now. But I don't want him to see me just at present. I want to know where he is so that I can avoid him."

"Suppose I scout into Bray?" suggested Jack. "I can find out something that might be useful, perhaps. If any of them from Bray Park have come into the village to-day I'll hear about it."

"That's a good idea. Suppose you do that, Jack. I don't know just what I'll do yet. But if I go away from here before you come back, Dick will stay. I've got to think–there must be some way to beat them!"

CHAPTER X–A CAPTURE FROM THE SKIES

Jack went off to see what he could discover, and Harry, left behind with Dick, racked his brain for some means of blocking the plan he was so sure the Ger-

mans had made. He was furious at Graves, who had discredited him with Colonel Throckmorton, as he believed. He minded the personal unpleasantness involved far less than the thought that his usefulness was blocked, for he felt that no information he might bring would be received now.

As he looked around it seemed incredible that such things as he was trying to prevent could even be imagined. After the early rain, the day had cleared up warm and lovely, and it was now that most perfect of things, a beautiful summer day in England. The little road they had taken was a sort of blind alley. It had brought them to a meadow, whence the hay had already been cut. At the far side of this ran a little brook, and all about them were trees. Except for the calls of birds, and the ceaseless hum of insects, there was no sound to break the stillness. It was a scene of peaceful beauty that could not be surpassed anywhere in the world. And yet, only a few miles away, at the most, were men who were planning deliberately to bring death and destruction upon helpless enemies–to rain down death from the skies.

By very contrast to the idyllic peace of all about them, the terrors of war seemed more dreadful. That men who went to war should be killed and wounded, bad though it was, still seemed legitimate. But this driving home of an attack upon a city all unprepared, upon the many non-combatants who would be bound to suffer, was another and more dreadful thing. Harry could understand that it was war, that it was permissible to do what these Germans planned. And yet–

His thoughts were interrupted by a sudden change in the quality of the noisy silence that the insects made. Just before he noticed it, half a dozen bees had been humming near him. Now he heard something that sounded like the humming of a far vaster bee. Suddenly it stopped, and, as it did, he looked up, his eyes as well as Dick's being drawn upward at the same moment. And they saw, high above them, an aeroplane with dun colored wings. Its engine had stopped and it was descending now in a beautiful series of volplaning curves.

"Out of essence–he's got to come down," said Harry, appraisingly, to Dick. "He'll manage it all right, too. He knows his business through and through, that chap."

"I wonder where he'll land," speculated Dick.

"He's got to pick an open space, of course," said Harry. "And there aren't so many of them around here. By Jove!"

"Look! He's certainly coming down fast!" exclaimed Dick.

"Yes–and, I say, I think he's heading for this meadow! Come on–start that motor, Dick!"

"Why? Don't you want him to see us?"

"I don't mind him seeing us–I don't want him to see the car," explained Harry. "We'll run it around that bend, out of sight from the meadow."

"Why shouldn't he see it?"

"Because if he's out of petrol he'll want to take all we've got and we may not want him to have it. We don't know who he is, yet."

The car was moving as Harry explained. As soon as the meadow was out of sight Harry stopped the engine and got out of the car.

"He may have seen it as he was coming down–the car, I mean," he said. "But I doubt it. He's got other things to watch. That meadow for one–and all his levers and his wheel. Guiding an aeroplane in a coast like that down the air is no easy job."

"Have you ever been up, Harry?"

"Yes, often. I've never driven one myself, but I believe I could if I had to. I've watched other people handle them so often that I know just about everything that has to be done."

"That's an English monoplane. I've seen them ever so often," said Dick. "It's an army machine, I mean. See its number? It's just coming in sight of us now. Wouldn't I like to fly her though?"

"I'd like to know what it's doing around here," said Harry. "And it seems funny to me if an English army aviator has started out without enough petrol in his tank to see him through any flight he might be making. And wouldn't he have headed for one of his supply stations as soon as he found he was running short, instead of coming down in country like this?"

Dick stared at him.

"Do you think it's another spy?" he asked.

"I don't think anything about it yet, Dick. But I'm not going to be caught napping. That's a Bleriot–and the British army flying corps uses Bleriots. But anyone with the money can buy one and make it look like an English army 'plane. Remember that."

There was no mistake about that monoplane when it was once down. Its pilot was German; he was unmistakably so. He had been flying very high and when he landed he was still stiff from cold.

"Petrol!" he cried eagerly, as he saw the two boys, "Where can I get petrol? Quick! Answer me!"

Harry shot a quick glance at Dick.

"Come on," he said, beneath his breath. "We've got to get him and tie him up."

The aviator, cramped and stiffened as he was by the intense cold that prevails in the high levels where he had been flying, was no match for them. As they sprang at him his face took on the most ludicrous appearance of utter surprise. Had he suspected that they would attack him he might have drawn a pistol. As it was, he was helpless before the two boys, both in the pink of condition and

determined to capture him. He made a struggle, but in two minutes he was lying roped, tied, and utterly helpless. He was not silent; he breathed the most fearful threats as to what would happen to them. But neither boy paid any attention to him.

"We've got to get him to the car," said Harry. "Can we drag him?"

"Yes. But if we loosened his feet a little, he could walk," suggested Dick. "That would be ever so much easier for him, and for us, too. I should hate to be dragged. Let's make him walk."

"Right–and a good idea!" said Harry. He loosened the ropes about the aviator's feet, and helped him to stand.

"March!" he said. "Don't try to get away–I've got a leading rope, you see."

He did have a loose end of rope, left over from a knot, and with this he proceeded to lead the enraged German to the automobile. It looked for all the world as if he were leading a dog, and for a moment Dick doubled up in helpless laughter. The whole episode had its comic side, but it was serious, too.

"Now we've got to draw off the gasoline in the tank in this bucket," said Harry. The German had been bestowed in the tonneau, and made as comfortable as possible with rugs and cushions. His feet were securely tied again, and there was no chance for him to escape.

"What are you going to do?" asked Dick. "Are you going to try to fly in that machine?"

"I don't know, yet. But I'm going to have it ready, so that I can if I need to," said Harry. "That Bleriot may be the saving of us yet, Dick. There's no telling what we shall have to do."

Even as he spoke Harry was making new plans, rendered possible by this gift from the skies. He was beginning, at last, to see a way to circumvent the Germans. What he had in mind was risky, certainly, and might prove perilous in the extreme. But he did not let that aspect of the situation worry him. His one concern was to foil the terrible plan that the Germans had made, and he was willing to run any risk that would help him to do so.

"That Zeppelin is coming here to Bray Park–it's going to land here," said Harry. "And if it ever gets away from here there will be no way of stopping it from doing all the damage they have planned, or most of it. Thanks to Graves, we wouldn't be believed if we told what we knew–we'd probably just be put in the guard house. So we've got to try to stop it ourselves."

They had reached the Bleriot by that time. Harry filled the tank, and looked at the motor. Then he sat in the driver's seat and practiced with the levers, until he decided that he understood them thoroughly. And, as he did this, he made his decision.

"I'm going into Bray Park to-night," he said "This is the only way to get in."

"And I'm going with you," announced Dick.

CHAPTER XI–VINDICATION

At first Harry refused absolutely to consent to Dick's accompanying him, but after a long argument he was forced to yield.

"Why should you take all the risks when it isn't your own country, especially?" asked Dick, almost sobbing. "I've got a right to go! And, besides, you may need me."

That was true enough, as Harry realized. Moreover, he had been investigating the Bleriot, and he discovered that it was one of a new safety type, with a gyroscope device to insure stability. The day was almost without wind, and therefore it seemed that if such an excursion could ever be safe, this was the time. He consented in the end, and later he was to be thankful that he had.

Once the decision was taken, they waited impatiently for the return of Jack Young. Harry foresaw protests from Jack when he found out what they meant to do, but for him there was an easy answer–there was room in the aeroplane for only two people, and there was no way of carrying an extra passenger.

It was nearly dusk when Jack returned, and he had the forethought to bring a basket of food with him–cold chicken, bread and butter, and milk, as well as some fruit.

"I didn't find out very much," he said, "except this. Someone from London has been asking about you both. And this much more–at least a dozen people have come down to Bray Park to-day from London."

"Did you see any sign of soldiers from London?"

"No," said Jack.

He was disappointed when he found out what they meant to do, but he took his disappointment pluckily when he saw that there was no help for it. Harry explained very quietly to both Jack and Dick what he meant to do and

they listened, open mouthed, with wonder.

"You'll have your part to play, Jack," said Harry. "Somehow I can't believe that the letter I wrote to Colonel Throckmorton last night won't have some effect. You have got to scout around in case anyone comes and tell them all I've told you. You understand thoroughly, do you?"

"Yes," said Jack, quietly. "When are you going to start?"

"There's no use going up much before eleven o'clock," said Harry. "Before that we'd be seen, and, besides, if a Zeppelin is coming, it wouldn't be until after that. My plan is to scout to the east and try to pick her up and watch her descend. I think I know just about where she'll land–the only place where there's room for her. And then–"

He stopped, and the others nodded, grimly.

"I imagine she'll have about a hundred and twenty miles to travel in a straight line–perhaps a little less," said Harry. "She can make that in about two hours, or less. And she'll travel without lights, and in the dark. Big as they are, those airships are painted so that they're almost invisible from below. So if she comes by night, getting here won't be as hard a job as it seems at first thought."

Then the three of them went over in every detail the plan Harry had formed. Dick and Harry took their places in the monoplane and rehearsed every movement they would have to make.

"I can't think of anything else that we can provide for now," said Harry, at last. "Of course, we can't tell what will come up, and it would be wonderful if everything came out just as we had planned. But we've provided for everything we can think of. You know where you are to be, Jack?"

"Yes."

"Then you'd better start pretty soon. Good-bye, Jack!" He held out his hand. "We could never have worked this out without you. If we succeed you'll have had a big part in what we've done."

A little later Jack said good-bye in earnest, and then there was nothing to do but wait. About them the voices of the insects and frogs changed, with the darkening night. The stars came out, but the night was a dark one. Harry looked at his watch from time to time and at last he got up.

"Time to start!" he said.

He felt a thrill of nervousness as the monoplane rose in the air. After all, there was a difference between being the pilot and sitting still in the car. But he managed very well, after a few anxious moments in the ascent. And once they were clear of the trees and climbing swiftly, in great spirals, there was a glorious sensation of freedom. Dick caught his breath at first, then he got used to the queer motion, and cried aloud in his delight.

Harry headed straight into the east when he felt that he was high enough.

And suddenly he gave a cry.

"Look!" he shouted in Dick's ear. "We didn't start a moment too soon. See her–that great big cigar-shaped thing, dropping over there?"

It was the Zeppelin–the battleship of the air. She was dipping down, descending gracefully, over Bray Park.

"I was right!" cried Harry. "Now we can go to work at once–we won't have to land and wait!"

He rose still higher, then flew straight for Bray Park. They were high, but, far below, with lights moving about her, they could see the huge bulk of the airship, as long as a moderate sized ocean liner. She presented a perfect target.

"Now!" said Harry.

And at once Dick began dropping projectiles they had found in the aeroplane–sharply pointed shells of steel. Harry had examined these–he found they were really solid steel shot, cast like modern rifle bullets, and calculated to penetrate, even without explosive action, when dropped from a height.

From the first two that Dick dropped there was no result. But with the falling of the third a hissing sound came from below, and as Dick rapidly dropped three more the noise increased. And they could see the lights flying–plainly the men were running from the monster. Its bulk lessened as the gas escaped from the great bag and then, in a moment more, there was a terrific explosion that rocked the monoplane violently. Had Harry not been ready for it, they might have been brought down, But he had been prepared, and was flying away. Down below there was now a great glare from the burning wreckage, lighting up the whole scene. And suddenly there was a sharp breaking out of rifle fire. At first he thought the men below had seen them, and were firing upward. But in a moment he saw the truth. Bray Park had been attacked from outside!

Even before they reached the ground, in the meadow where Harry and Jack had emerged from the tunnel, the firing was over. But now a searchlight was playing on the ground on the opposite bank, and Harry and Dick saw, to their wonder and delight, that the ground swarmed with khaki-clad soldiers. In the same moment Jack ran up to them.

"The soldiers had the place surrounded!" he cried, exultingly. "They must have believed your letter after all, Harry! Come on–there's a boat here! Aren't you coming over?"

They were rowing for the other shore before the words were well spoken. And, once over, they were seized at once by two soldiers.

"More of them," said one of the soldiers. "Where's the colonel?"

Without trying to explain, they let themselves be taken to where Colonel Throckmorton stood near the burning wreckage. At the sight of Harry his face lighted up.

"What do you know about this?" he asked, sternly, pointing to the wrecked airship.

Harry explained in a few words.

"Very good," said the colonel. "You are under arrest–you broke arrest this morning. I suppose you know that is a serious offence, whether your original arrest was justified or not?"

"I felt I had to do it, sir," said Harry. He had caught the glint of a smile in the colonel's eyes.

"Explain yourself, sir," said the colonel. "Report fully as to your movements to-day. Perhaps I shall recommend you for a medal instead of court martialling you, after all."

And so the story came out, and Harry learned that the colonel had never believed Graves, but had chosen to let him think he did.

"The boy Graves is a German, and older than he seems," said the colonel. "He was here as a spy. He is in custody now, and you have broken up a dangerous raid and a still more dangerous system of espionage. If you hadn't come along with your aeroplane, we would never have stopped the raid. I had ordered aviators to be here, but it is plain that something has gone wrong. You have done more than well. I shall see to it that your services are properly recognized. And now be off with you, and get some sleep. You may report to me the day after to-morrow!"

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