

Boy Scout Series Volume 7

**The Boy Scout
Automobilists**

OR

Jack Danby in the Woods

By Major Robert Maitland

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CHAPTER I

CALLED TO ACTIVE SERVICE

"What's this call for a special meeting of the Boy Scouts, Jack?" asked Pete Stubbs, a First Class Boy Scout, of his chum Jack Danby, who had just been appointed Assistant Patrol Leader of the Crow Patrol of the Thirty-ninth Troop.

"Well, I guess it isn't a secret any more," said Jack.

He and Pete Stubbs worked in the same place, and they were great chums, especially since Jack had enlisted his chum in the Boy Scouts.

"The fact is," he continued, "that Scout-Master Durland has been trying for several days to arrange the biggest treat the Troop, or any other Troop, has ever had. You know the State militia begins maneuvers pretty soon, Pete?"

"Say, Jack," cried red-haired Pete, dancing up and down in his excitement, "you don't mean to say that there's a chance that we are to go out with the militia?"

"I think this call means that there's more than a chance, Pete, and that the whole business is settled. You see, some of the fellows work in places where they might find it hard to get off. In the militia it's different. The law makes an employer give a man time off for the militia when it's necessary, but there's no reason why it should be that way

for us. But Mr. Durland has been trying to get permission for all of us."

"I'll bet he didn't have any trouble here when he came to see Mr. Simms," said Pete, enthusiastically. "If all the bosses were like him, we'd be all right."

"They're not, Pete, though I guess most of them try to do what's fair, when they understand just how things are. But, anyhow, Mr. Simms thought it was a fine idea, and he went around and helped Mr. Durland with the other people, who weren't so ready to let off the Boy Scouts who happened to be working for them. And I guess that this call means that it's all fixed up, for if it hadn't been nothing would have been said about it."

Pete and Jack, with the other members of the Troop, reported at Scout headquarters that night, and gave Scout-Master Durland a noisy welcome when he rose to address them.

"Now," he said, "I want you to be quiet and listen to me. A great honor has been paid to the Troop. We have been invited to take part, as Scouts, in the coming maneuvers of the National Guard. There is to be a sham war, you know, and the militia of this State and the neighboring State, with some help from the regular army, are to take part in it. A troop of Boy Scouts has been selected from the other State, and after the militia officers had inspected all the Troops in this State they chose the Thirty-ninth."

He had to stop then for a minute to give the great cheer that greeted his announcement time to die away.

"Gee, Jack, I guess we're all right, what?" asked Pete, happily.

"Be still a minute, Pete. Mr. Durland isn't through yet."

"Now, I have gone around and got permission for all of you to go on this trip," the Scout-Master went on. "It's going to be different from anything we've ever done before. It's a great big experiment, and we're going to be watched by Boy Scouts and army and National Guard officers all over the country. It means that the Boy Scouts are going to be recognized, if we make good, as a sort of reserve supply for the militia. But we are going, if we go, without thinking about that at all. Forget the militia, and remember only that you will have a chance to do real scouting, and to make real reports of a real enemy."

"Look here," cried Dick Crawford, the Assistant Scout-Master, suddenly, "I want everyone to join in and give three cheers for Scout-Master Durland. I know how hard he's worked to give every one of us a chance to make this trip and get the experience of real scouting. And it's up to every one of us to see that he doesn't have any reason to feel sorry that he did it. He trusts us to make good, and we've certainly got to see to it that we do. Come now—three times three for the Scout-Master!"

Then came the formal giving of the instructions that were required for preparation for the trip. Each Scout got word of the equipment that he himself must bring.

"And mind, now, no extras," said Durland, warningly. "If the weather is at all hot, it's going to be hard work carrying

all we must carry, and we don't want any Scouts to have to drop out on the march because their knapsacks are too heavy. We will camp by ourselves, and we will keep to ourselves, except when we're on duty. Remember that I, as commander of the Troop, take rank only as a National Guard captain, and that I am subject to the orders of every major and other field officer who may be present.

"Some of the militiamen and their officers may be inclined to play tricks, and to tease us, but the best way to stop them is to pay no attention to them at all. Now, I want every boy to go home and spend the time he can spare before the start studying all the Scout rules, and brushing up his memory on scoutcraft and campcraft. Polish up your drill manual, too. That may be useful. We want to present a good appearance when we get out there with the soldiers."

The start for the camp of the State militia, who were to gather under the command of Brigadier-General Harkness at a small village near the State line, called Guernsey, was to be made on Sunday. The Scouts would be in camp Sunday night, ready at the first notes of the general reveille on Monday morning to turn out and do their part in the work of defending their State against the invasion of the Blue Army, under General Bliss, of the rival State.

"You see," said Jack, explaining matters to Pete Stubbs and Tom Binns as they went home together after the meeting, "we are classed as the Red Army, and we are supposed to be on the defensive. The Blue Army will try to capture the State capital, and it is our business to defeat them if possible."

"How can they tell whether we beat them or not, if we don't do any fighting?" asked Tom Binns.

"In this sort of fighting it's all worked out by theory, just as if it were a game of chess, Tom, and there are umpires to decide every point that comes up."

"How do they decide things, Jack?"

"Why, they ride over the whole scene of operations, either on horseback, or, if the field is very extensive, in automobiles. If troops are surrounded, they are supposed to be captured, and they are sent to the rear, and required to keep out of all the operations that follow. Then the umpires, who are high officers in the regular army, decide according to the positions that are taken which side has the best chance of success. That is, if two brigades, of different sides, line up for action, and get into the best tactical positions possible, the umpires decide which of them would win if they were really engaged in a true war, and the side that gets their decision is supposed to win. The other brigade is beaten, or destroyed, as the case may be."

"Then how about the whole affair?"

"Well, each commanding general works out his strategy, and does his best to bring about a winning position, just as they would at chess, as I said. There is a time limit, you see, and when the time is up the umpires get together, inspect the whole theatre of war, and make their decision."

"It's a regular game, isn't it, Jack?"

"Yes. The Germans call it Krug-spiel—which means war-game, and that term has been adopted all over the world. It's played with maps and pins, too, in the war colleges, both for sea and land, and that's how officers get training for war in time of peace. It isn't an easy game to learn, either."

"Where do we come in, Jack? What is it we're supposed to do?"

"Obey orders, in the first place, absolutely. And I don't know what the orders will be, and neither does anyone else, so I can't tell you just what we'll do. But, generally speaking, we'll just have to do regular scout duty. It will be up to us to detect the movements of the enemy, and report, through Scout-Master Durland, who'll be Captain Durland, during the maneuvers, to the staff."

"General Harkness's staff, you mean, Jack? Just what is a staff, anyhow?"

"The headquarters staff during a campaign is a sort of extra supply of arms and legs and eyes for the commanding general. The staff officers carry his orders, and represent him in different parts of the field. They carry orders, and receive reports, and they take just as much routine work as possible off the hands of the general, so that he'll be free to make his plans. You see the general never does any actual fighting. He's too valuable to risk his life that way. He's supposed to stay behind, and be ready to take advantage of any chance he sees."

"Times have changed, haven't they, Jack? In the old histories we used to read about generals who led charges and did all sorts of things like that."

"Well, it would be pretty wasteful to put a general in danger that way now, Pete. He's had plenty of chance to prove his bravery, as a rule, and, when he's a general, and has years of experience behind him, the idea is to use his brain. If he is in the rear, and by his eyes and the reports he gets in all sorts of ways, can get a general view of what is going on, he can tell just what is best to be done. Sometimes the only way to win a battle is to sacrifice a whole brigade or a division—to let it be cut to pieces, without a chance to save itself, in order that the rest of the army may have time to change its position, so that the battle can be won. That's the sort of thing the general has got to decide, and if he's in the thick of the fighting in the old-fashioned way, he can't possibly do that."

"I think it's going to be great sport, don't you, Jack?" asked Tom Binns. "Will there be any real firing?"

"Yes—with smokeless powder, because they want to test some new kinds. But they'll use blank cartridges, of course. There'll be just as much noise as ever, but there won't be any danger, of course."

"I don't like the sound of firing much," said Tom Binns, a little shamefacedly. "Even when I know it's perfectly safe and that there aren't any bullets, it makes me awfully nervous."

"This will be good practice for you, then, Tom, because it will help you to get used to it. I hope we'll never have another war, but we want to be ready if we ever do. 'Be prepared'—that's our Scout motto, you know, and it means for the things that we might have to do in war, as well as the regular peaceful things that come up every day."

"Will there be any aeroplanes?" asked Pete Stubbs. "I'm crazy to see one of those things flying sometime, Jack. I never saw one yet, except that time when the fellow landed here and hurt himself. And I didn't see him in the air, but only after he made his landing. The machine was all busted up then, too."

"I think there'll be some aeroplane scouting by the signal corps. Several of the men in that are pretty well off, you know, and they have their own flying machines. I guess that's one of the things they'll try to determine in these maneuvers, the actual, practical usefulness of aeroplanes, and whether biplanes or monoplanes are the best."

"Say, Jack, why couldn't we Boy Scouts build an aeroplane sometime? If we learned something about them this next week, I should think we might be able to do something like that. I know a lot of fellows that have made experiments with toy ones, that wind up with a spring that's made out of rubber bands. They see how far they will fly."

"I think that would be great sport, Pete. But we won't have any time for that until after we've been through the maneuvers. But I'll tell you what some of us may get a

chance to do next week, though it's a good deal of a secret yet."

"What's that, Jack! We'll promise not to say a word about it, won't we, Tom?"

"You bet we won't, Jack! Tell us—do!" pleaded Tom Binns.

"I guess it's all right for me to tell you if you won't let it go any further. Well, it's just this. They're going to do a lot of experimenting with a new sort of automobile for scout duty, and I think some of us will get a chance with them."

"Gee, I wish I knew how to run a car the way you do, Jack. I'd love that sort of thing."

"I can soon teach you all I know, Pete. It isn't much. Come on down to the factory garage after work to-morrow morning, and I'll explain the engines to you, instead of eating lunch. Are you on?"

"You bet I am! Will they let us?"

"Mr. Simms will, if I ask him, I'm sure."

CHAPTER II

THE RED ARMY

The Scouts, under Durland and Dick Crawford, went to Guernsey on a special car of a regular train. Durland, in making the arrangements for the trip, had told the adjutant-general of the State militia that he wanted to keep his Troop separate from the regular militiamen, as far as possible.

"I've got an idea, from a few words I've heard dropped," he told that official, "that some of the boys rather resent the idea of the Boy Scouts being included in the maneuvers. So, for the sake of peace, I think perhaps we'd better keep them as far apart as possible. Then, too, I think it will make for better discipline if we stick close together and have our own camp."

"I guess you're right," said the adjutant-general. "I'll give you transportation to Guernsey for your Troop on the noon train on Sunday. There'll be a special car hitched to the train for you. Report to Colonel Henry at Guernsey station, and he'll assign you to camp quarters. You understand—you'll use a military camp, and not your regular Scout camp. The State will provide tents, bedding and utensils, and you will draw rations for your Troop from the commissary department during the maneuvers."

"I understand, Colonel," said Durland. "You know I served in the Spanish war, and I was able to get pretty familiar with conditions."

"I didn't know it, no," said Colonel Roberts, in some surprise. "What command were you with? I didn't get any further than Tampa myself."

"I was on General Shafter's staff in Cuba," said Durland, quietly.

Colonel Roberts looked at the Scout-Master a bit ruefully.

"You're a regular," he said, half-believingly. "Great Scott, you must be a West Pointer!"

"I was," said Durland, with a laugh. "So I guess you'll find that my Troop will understand how to behave itself in camp."

"I surrender!" said the militia colonel, laughing. "If you don't see anything you want, Captain, just ask me for it. You can have anything I've got power to sign orders for. And say—be easy on the boys! They're a bit green, because this active service is something new for most of us. They mean well, but drilling in an armory and actually getting out and getting a taste of field-service conditions are two different things."

"I think it's all splendid training," said Durland, "and if we'd had more of it before the war with Spain there wouldn't have been so many graves filled by the fever. Why, Colonel, it used to make me sick to go around among the volunteer camps about Siboney and see the conditions

there, with men who were brave enough to fight the whole Spanish army just inviting fever and all sorts of disease by the rankest sort of carelessness. Their officers were brave gentleman, but, while they might have been good lawyers and doctors and bankers back home, they had never taken the trouble to read the most elementary books on camp life and sanitation. A day's hard reading would have taught them enough to save hundreds of lives. We lost more men by disease than the Spaniards were able to kill at El Caney and San Juan. And it was all needless."

"I'm detached from my regiment for this camp," said Colonel Roberts, earnestly, "but I'm going to get hold of Major Jones as soon as I get to Guernsey, and ask him to have you inspect the Fourteenth and criticize it. Don't hesitate, please, Captain! Just pitch in and tell us what's wrong, and we'll all be eternally grateful to you. And I wish you'd give me a list of those books you were talking about, will you?"

"Gladly," said Durland. "All right, Colonel. I'll have the Troop on hand for that train."

The Scouts enjoyed the trip mightily. Durland took occasion to impress on them some of the differences between a regular Boy Scout encampment and the strict military camp of which, for the next week, they were to form a part.

"Remember to stick close to your own camp," he said. "After taps don't go out of your own company street. There's no need of it, and I don't want any visiting around

among the other troops. In a place like this camp, boys and men don't mix very well, and you'd better stick by yourselves. We won't be there very long, anyway, because we'll probably be detached from headquarters Monday. The army will break up, too, because this is really only a concentration camp, where the army will be mobilized."

"When does the war begin?" asked Dick Crawford.

"War is supposed to be declared at noon to-morrow," said Durland. "It is regarded as inevitable already, however, and General Harkness can begin throwing out his troops as soon as he has them ready, though not a shot can be fired before noon. Neither can a single Red or Blue soldier cross the State line before that time. However, I suspect that the line will be pretty well patrolled before the actual declaration, so as to prevent General Bliss from throwing any considerable force across the line before we are ready to meet it. If he could get between Guernsey and the State capital in any force, the chances are that we'd be beaten before we ever began to fight at all."

"That wouldn't do," said Dick Crawford. "Will we have any fortifications to defend at all, sir?"

"Not unless we're driven back pretty well toward the capital. Of course there are no real fortifications there, but imaginary lines have been established there. However, if we were forced to take to those the moral victory would be with the Blues, even though they couldn't actually compel the surrender of the city within the time limit. If I were General Harkness, I think I would try at once to deceive the

enemy by presenting a show of strength on his front and carry the war into his own territory by a concealed flanking movement, and if that were properly covered I think we could get between him and his base and cut him off from his supplies."

"You mean you'd really take the offensive as the best means of defense?"

"That's been the principle upon which the best generals always have worked, from Hannibal to Kuroki," said Durland, his eyes lighting up. "Look at the Japanese in their war with Russia. They didn't wait for the Russians to advance through Manchuria. They crossed the border at once, though nine critics out of every ten who had studied the situation expected them to wait for the Russians to cross the Yalu and make Korea the great theater of the war. Instead of that they advanced themselves, beat a small Russian army at the Yalu, and pressed on. They met the Russians, who were pouring into Manchuria over their great Trans-Siberian railway, and drove them back, from Liao Yiang to Mukden. They'd have kept on, too, if they hadn't been stopped by peace."

"Could they have kept on, though? I always had an idea that they needed the peace even more than the Russians did."

"Well, you may be right. That's something that no one can tell. They had the confidence of practically unceasing victory from the very beginning of the war. They were safe from invasion, because their fleet absolutely controlled the

Yellow Sea after the battle of Tsushima, and there weren't any more Russian battleships to bother them. They had bottled up the Russian force in Port Arthur, and they were in the position of having everything to gain and very little to lose. Their line of communication was perfectly safe."

"They must have weakened themselves greatly, though, in that series of battles."

"Yes, they did. And, of course, there is the record of Russia to be considered. Russia has always been beaten at the start of a war. It has taken months of defeat to stiffen the Russians to a real fight. Napoleon marched to Moscow fairly easily, though he did have some hard fights, like the one at Borodino, on the way. But he had a dreadful time getting back, and that was what destroyed him. After that Leipzig and Waterloo were inevitable. It was the Russians who really won the fight against Napoleon, though it remained for Blucher and Wellington to strike the death blows."

"Well, after all, what might have happened doesn't count for so much. It's what did really happen that stands in history, and the Japanese won. It was by their daring in taking the offensive and striking quickly that they did that, you think?"

"It certainly seems so to me! And look at the Germans in the war with France. Von Moltke decided that the thing to do was to strike at the very heart and soul of France—Paris. So he swept on, leaving great, uncaptured fortresses like Metz and Sedan behind him, which was against every rule

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