

**THE BOY SCOUTS  
ON THE TRAIL**

**By**

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**They sent the message quickly, accurately.**

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**CHAPTER XXI**

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# CHAPTER I

## PLANS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

"Where are you going to spend the holidays, Frank?"

The speaker was Henri Martin, a French boy of the new type that has sprung up in France since games like football and tennis began to be generally encouraged. He asked the question of his schoolmate, Frank Barnes, son of a French mother and an American father. Frank's name was really Francois; his mother had that much to do with his naming. But he was a typical American boy, none the less, and there was a sharp contrast between his sturdy frame and that of the slighter French boy who had become his best chum in the school both were attending near Paris, at St. Denis.

"I don't really know, Harry," said Frank. "Not exactly, that is. My Uncle Dick is coming over a little later, and I think we'll go to Switzerland." His face clouded a little. "I—I haven't any real home to go to, you know. My father and mother—"

"I know—I know, *mon vieux*," said Henri, with the quick sympathy of his race. "But until your uncle comes—what then, *hein*?"

"Why, I'm to wait for him here, at the school," said Frank. "He's a very busy man, you know, and it's hard for him to get away just any time he wants to. He will get here, though, early in August, I think."

"But that won't do at all, Frank!" exclaimed Harry, impulsively. Like many French boys, he spoke English perfectly and with practically no trace of an accent. "To spend a week or two weeks here in the school, all alone! No—I tell you what! I've an idea!"

"What is it?" asked Frank, a little amused at the horror with which his friend heard of the notion of staying in school after the holidays had begun.

"Why, come home with me until your uncle comes!" said Harry. "That's what you must do. I live not so far away—not so very far. At Amiens. You have heard of it? Oh, we will have fine times, you and I. I am to join the Boy Scouts Francais these holidays!"

He called it Boy Scoots, and Frank roared. The word scout had been retained, without translation, when the French adopted the Boy Scout movement from England, just as words like rosbif, football, and le sport had been adopted into the language. But all these words, or nearly all, have been given a French pronunciation, which give them a strange sound in Anglo-Saxon ears.

"Excuse me, Harry," said Frank, in a moment. "I didn't mean to laugh, but it does sound funny."

"Of course it does, Frank," said Henri, generously. "I speak English, so I can see that. But there's nothing funny about the thing, let me tell you. We began by calling the Boy Scouts Eclaireurs Francais, but General Baden-Powell didn't like it, so we made the change. Really, we're a good deal like the English and American scouts. We have the

same oath—we call it serment, of course, and our manual is just a translation of the English one."

"I was going to join in America, too," said Frank. "But then I came over here, and I didn't know there were scouts here. Do you wear the same sort of uniforms?"

"Yes—just like the English," said Harry. "You could join with me, couldn't you? You're going to be here for a whole year more, aren't you?"

"Yes. My mother"—he gulped a little at the word—"wanted me to know all about France, and never to forget that I had French blood in me, you see. My French grandfather was killed by the Germans at Gravelotte—he was a colonel of the line. And my mother, even though my father was an American, was always devoted to France."

"We are like that—we French," said Harry, simply. Into his eyes came the look that even French boys have when they remember the days of 1870. "The Germans—yes, they beat us then. We were not ready—we were badly led. But our time will come—the time of La Revanche. Tell me, Frank, you have seen the Place de la Concorde, in Paris?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Do you remember the statue of Strassburg? How it is always draped in black—with mourning wreaths?"

"Yes."

"The day is coming when the black shall be stripped off! Alsace-Lorraine—they are French at heart, those lost

provinces of ours! They shall be French again in name, too. Strassburg shall guard the Rhine for us again—Metz shall be a French fortress once more. We shall fight again—and next time we shall be ready! We shall win!"

"I hope so—if war comes again," said Frank, soberly. "But—"

"*If* war comes?" said Harry, surprised. "Don't you know it must come? France knows that—France makes ready. We shall not seek the war. But it is not enough for us to desire peace. The Prussians are afraid of us. They will never rest content while we are strong. They thought they had crushed us forever in 1870—but France was too great for them to crush! They made us pay a thousand million francs—they thought we should take years and years to pay, and that meanwhile they would keep their soldiers on our land, in our fortresses! But no! France paid, and quickly. And ever since we have prepared for the time when they would try to finish their work."

"If war comes, I am for France," said Frank, still soberly. "But war is a dreadful thing, Henri."

"We know that—we in France," said Harry. "But there are things that are worse than war, Frank. A peace that is without honor is among them. We do not want to fight, but we are not afraid. When the time comes, as it is sure to come, we shall be ready. But enough of that. There will be no war this year or next. We have not settled about your coming home with me. You will come?"



"I'd love to," said Frank. "If the head master says I can, I will most gladly. But will your people want me?"

"My friends are their friends," said Harry. "My mother says always, 'Bring a friend with you, Henri.' Oh, there will be plenty for us to do, too. We shall take long walks and play tennis and ride and shoot. Let us settle it to-day. Come now to the office with me. We will ask the head master."

They went forthwith to speak to Monsieur Donnet, the head of the school, who received them in his office. The school was a small one but it numbered among its pupils several English and American boys, whose parents wanted them for one reason or another to acquire a thorough knowledge of French. He heard their request, which was put by Henri, pleasantly.

"Yes, that will be very well," he said. "I have been thinking of you, Barnes. Your uncle has written to me that he will be here about the tenth or fifteenth of August, and asked permission for you to stay here until then. But—"

They waited, while M. Donnet thought for a moment.

"Yes, this will be much better," he said. "I—I have been a little troubled about you, Barnes. If all were well, you might stay here very well. But—" Again he paused.

"These are strange times," he said. "Boys, have you read in the newspapers of the trouble between Austria and Servia?"

They looked startled.

"A little, sir," said Frank. "There's always trouble, isn't there, in those parts?"

"Yes, but this may—who knows?—be different. I do not say there is more danger than usual but I have heard things, from friends, that have made me thoughtful. I am a colonel of the reserve!"

Henri's eyes gleamed suddenly, as they had a few minutes before when he had talked of how France was ready for what might be in store for her.

"Do you mean that there may be war, sir?" he asked, leaning forward eagerly.

"No one knows," said the master. "But there are strange tales. Aeroplanes that no one recognizes have flown above the border in the Vosges. There are tales of fresh troops that the Germans are sending to Metz, to Düsseldorf, to Neu Breisach." He struck his hand suddenly on his desk. "But this I feel—that when war comes it will be like the stroke of lightning from a clear sky! When there is much talk, there is never war. When it comes it will be because the diplomats will not have time, they and the men with money, the Rothschilds and the others, to stop it. And if there should be trouble, not a man would be left in this school. So, Barnes, I should be easier if you were with Martin. I approve. That is well, boys."

Both boys were excited as they left the office.

"He talks as if he knew something, or felt something, that is still a secret!" said Frank, excitedly. "I wonder—"

"Of no use to wonder," said Henri. Really, he was calmer than his companion. "What is to come must come. But you are coming home with me, Frank. We know that much. And that is good—that is the best news we could have, isn't it?"

"It's certainly good news for me," said Frank, happily. "Oh, Harry, I get so tired of living in school or in hotels all the time! It will seem good to be in a home again, even if it isn't my own home!"

## CHAPTER II

### TO THE COLORS

In those days late in July, France, less than almost any country in Europe, certainly far less than either England or America, was able to realize the possibilities of trouble. As a matter of fact, not for years had the peace of Europe been so assured, apparently. President Poincaré of France had gone to visit the Czar of Russia, and the two rulers had exchanged compliments. The alliance of France and Russia, they told one another, made war impossible, or nearly so. The Emperor of Germany was on a yachting cruise; even the old Austrian Kaiser, though required to watch affairs because of the death of his heir, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, murdered by a Serb fanatic at Sarajevo, had left Vienna.

Even when the storm cloud began to gather the French government did all it could to suppress the news. The readiness of France was not in question. France was always ready, as Henri Martin had said. Since the grim and terrible lesson of 1870 she had made up her mind never again to give the traditional enemy beyond the Rhine—and, alas, now on this side of the Rhine as well!—a chance to catch her unprepared.

What the government wanted was to prevent the possibility that an excited populace, especially in Paris, might force its hand. If war came it meant that Germany should provoke

it—if possible, begin it. It was willing to sacrifice some things for that. And this was because, in the years of peace, France had won a great diplomatic victory, the fruits of which the country must preserve. In 1870 France had had to face Germany alone. She had counted upon help from Austria, now Germany's firm friend and ally, but then still smarting under the blow of the defeat four years before. She had hoped for help, perhaps, from Roumania and from Russia.

But all that Germany, by skillful trickery, had rendered vain. She had made France seem to be the aggressor, and France had forfeited the sympathy of England and of Austria as a result. Alone she had been no match for Germany. And alone she would be as little a match for Germany in 1914 as in 1870. But she had prepared herself. Now Russia, no matter what the reason for war, would be with her. And, if France was attacked, England was almost sure to join her. Everything would depend on that. With the great English navy to bottle up the German fleet, to blockade the German coasts, France felt that she was secure. And so the government was resolved that nothing should happen to make possible the loss of England's friendship; nothing that should give England even the shadow of an excuse for remaining neutral.

So what the newspapers printed of the threats that Austria was making against Serbia was carefully censored. There was nothing to show that Austria was assuming a warlike attitude, and that Russia, the friend of the little Slav countries in the Balkans, was getting ready to take the part of Serbia. There was nothing to show what the French

government and every newspaper editor in Paris knew must be a fact—that Austria must have had assurance of German support, since she could not hope to make a winning fight, unaided, against the huge might of Russia.

That was why all over France life proceeded in the regular way, calm, peaceful, without event. Some there were who knew that Europe was closer to a general war than since the end of Napoleon's dream of conquest. But the masses of the people did not know it. All over France the soldiers were active; the new recruits, reporting for the beginning of their three years of military service, were pouring into the depots, the headquarters of the army corps, to be assigned to their regiments. But that was something that happened every year. In a country where every man, if he is not a cripple or diseased, has to be a soldier for three years, the sight of a uniform, even of a long column of marching troops, means nothing.

And then, with the most startling abruptness, there came a change. Nothing official, as yet. But suddenly the government allowed the real news, or most of it, to be printed. Austria had made demands of Servia that no country could meet! Russia had protested! Russia and Austria were mobilizing! Germany had sent an ultimatum to Russia, demanding that she stop massing her troops in Poland and on the borders of East Prussia.

"It means war," said Henri Martin to Frank. Gone was the exultation of his voice. Frank had noticed that, since the first appearance of the really ominous news, the excitability of his French schoolmates had disappeared. They were

quiet; far quieter than American boys would have been in the same case, he thought.

"But this is not France's quarrel," said Frank. "She cares nothing for Servia."

"Servia? Bah! No one cares for Servia—except Austria and Russia! Servia is only an excuse. Austria wants to get some ports and Russia wants them, too, or wants a friendly country to have them. But I will tell you why it means war, Frank, my friend. It is because Guillaume, their Kaiser, thinks it is the chance to crush France!"

"Why now more than at any other time, Harry?"

"Lieutenant Marcel told me what he thinks. It is that England is having much trouble. In Ireland there is rebellion, almost, over the home rule. The Germans think England will be afraid to fight, that she will have to think of her own troubles. He does not know those English, that Kaiser! They have their quarrels among themselves. But if anyone else interferes—pouf! The quarrel is over—until the one who interferes is beaten."

"Yes, I believe that. We're like that in America, too. Why, right after the Civil War, we nearly had to fight about Mexico. And the men in the South, who had just been fighting the northern army, were all ready to volunteer and fight for the country."

"Well, that is one reason, then. And, for another, France is getting stronger, and Russia too. For a few years after the war with the Japanese, Russia was weak. But now she is

getting strong again, and Austria is getting weaker. If Germany and Austria can ever win it is now—that is what the Kaiser believes. And why must France fight? Even if she is not attacked she must help Russia because of the treaty."

"But she didn't fight with Russia against Japan."

"Because only one country was at war against her. If England had joined Japan, we should have had to fight with Russia against her," Henri explained.

It was during the morning recess that they held this conversation. Now the bell called them back to school. The class to which they went was one that was being taught by M. Donnet himself, the head master. He was at his place by his desk, and the boys had taken their seats. Suddenly, just as the master was about to speak, a servant appeared with a telegram in his hand. He took it to the master. M. Donnet tore it open and read it, while a serious, grave look came into his eyes. Then he stood up.

"Mes enfants," he said, his whole manner somehow changed from the one they knew, "I am called away from you." He stood very straight now; Frank had no difficulty, as he had had before, in imagining the schoolmaster as a soldier. "France needs me—our France. I go to Luneville, to be prepared to receive the brave men who will fight under my command if—"

He stopped.



"If war shall come!" he finished the interrupted sentence. "I leave you. No man knows what the next few hours may bring forth. The order of 'mobilisation generale' has not yet been issued. Only superior officers are called for as yet. Perhaps I may return. If not, I shall exhort all of you who are sons of La Patrie to do your duty. You are too young to fight, but you are none of you too young to be brave and loyal, to help your parents, and your mothers if your fathers are needed by the fatherland for active service.

"You are not too young to show courage, no matter what may come. You are not too young to keep alive the spirit of the sons of France—the spirit that won at Austerlitz and Jena, that rose, like the phoenix from its ashes, after Gravelotte and Sedan, when the foe believed that France lay crushed for evermore! Perhaps you, like all who are French, may be called upon to make sacrifices, sometimes to go hungry. But remember always that it is not only those who face the foe on the battle line who can serve the fatherland!"

He drew himself up again.

"Farewell, then, mes enfants!" he said. "I go to meet again those other children I am to lead! Vive la France!"

For a moment, as he moved to the door, there was silence.

And it was Frank Barnes, only half French, who jumped to the top of a desk and raised his voice in the most stirring of all patriotic airs—the Marseillaise.

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