

Bates Gordon

**The Khaki Boys at Camp  
Sterling; Or, Training for the  
Big Fight in France**



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# Содержание

CHAPTER I	4
CHAPTER II	12
CHAPTER III	18
CHAPTER IV	28
CHAPTER V	38
CHAPTER VI	48
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	49

# Josephine Chase

## The Khaki Boys at Camp Sterling / Training for the Big Fight in France

### CHAPTER I

#### THE GLORY ROAD TO FRANCE

“You, over there in the crowd, and *you* and *you*, why don’t you get busy and help Uncle Sam? What are you hanging back for? Now’s your chance to show that you’re a real American, and ready to fight for your country. What’s the use of waiting for the draft to get you? You’re just wasting time! The sooner you enlist, the sooner you’ll be ready to do your bit in France. It’s up to good old Uncle Sam to jump into the big war and win it. But he can’t do it alone. It needs a lot of brave, husky fellows to lick the Boches off the map. Are you going to be one of ’em? Every little bit helps, you know!

“Now we’re going to sing you one more song. While we’re singing it, get on the job and think hard. We want to take a bunch of you back with us to the recruiting station. All right, boys. Give ’em ‘The Glory Road to France!’”

Standing in the middle of a big recruiting wagon, lavishly decorated in red, white and blue, the orator, a good-looking young soldier of perhaps twenty years, bawled out, "Let 'er go!"

From one end of the wagon rose the strains of a lively air, enthusiastically hammered out on a small, portable piano by another khaki-clad youngster, seated on a stool before it. Gathered about him, half a dozen clean-cut soldier boys immediately took it up. The sheer catchiness of the melody, tunefully shouted out by the singers, had its effect on the crowd. The sturdy quality of the words, too, brought a flash of newly aroused patriotism to more than one pair of eyes belonging to the throng of persons closely packed about the big wagon. It appeared to deepen with the lustily given chorus:

"Take the Glory Road for France,  
Hike along to join the fray,  
With the Sammies take a chance  
'Neath the Stars and Stripes to-day.  
At the front brave men are falling,  
Now's your time to do and dare.  
Don't you hear your Uncle calling,  
'Boys, I need you "Over There"!"

At the extreme edge of the crowd, a gaily painted roadster had come to a full stop, its progress temporarily checked by the mass of persons about the wagon. It was a four-cylinder car, built low, with one gasoline tank behind the seat and still another behind

it, a small reserve. The body of the roadster, painted a bright green, stood out sharply by reason of the red wire wheels. The doorless entrance at one side formed a neat "U," while the extra tires, also mounted on red wire wheels, strapped on at the rear, gave it a last additional touch. Plainly it was built for speed and had a mischievous, runaway air about it that accorded curiously with its driver, a gray-eyed, sunny-haired young man of perhaps eighteen, whose clean-cut features bore an expression of reckless good humor that immediately stamped him as one of those wide-awake, restless lads in whom the love of mischief is ingrained.

Forced to slow down and halt his car by the ever-waving arm of a traffic policeman, he now leaned forward over the wheel, his attention fixed on the singers. He had come upon the scene at the moment when the youthful orator had commenced his harangue. Further, he had been one of those whom the latter had addressed as "you." From a good-humored grin, his boyish mouth had gradually grown grave as he listened. First sight of the recruiting wagon had recalled to Jimmy Blaise a matter which had been troubling him ever since the United States had declared war against Germany. The only son of an intensely patriotic father and mother, despite his love of fun Jimmy had done some serious thinking about the big war.

At the last ringing line of appeal, "Boys, I need you 'Over There,'" involuntarily Jimmy spoke his mind aloud. "I guess that's right," he agreed, with a vigorous wag of his head.

A boy standing close to the roadster caught the remark and

glanced levelly at the speaker. In his dark blue eyes there was an answering flash which the other lad caught and read aright. For an instant the two stared at each other in silence.

“How about it?” demanded Jimmy genially.

“I guess Uncle Sam needs us all right enough,” the blue-eyed boy replied, his sober face lighting into a singularly sunny smile. “I’ve thought a lot about it. I’d like to go.”

“Put her there!” The youth in the car leaned down and shot out a friendly hand. “I’ve been thinking about it myself. I can go tomorrow, that is, if I get accepted. I asked my folks the other night what they’d do if I enlisted. I’m not twenty-one, you see. Quite a long way from it. Won’t be nineteen until next November.”

“What did they say?” questioned the other eagerly.

“They both said it was up to me. They’re not slackers. I can just tell you that. Of course, my mother looked kind of sad for a minute; then she braced up and said she’d be proud to have a soldier son. My father said if he was young enough he’d enlist himself. That shows pretty plainly what sort of stuff they’re made of.”

“I should say so,” emphasized the blue-eyed boy. “I was nineteen last month. My father and mother are both dead. I take care of myself. So you see there isn’t anyone to care – ”

“Gee whiz, that’s tough,” sympathized Jimmy. “Say, I like you. You’re all right. What do you say? Let’s enlist. Yes? No ride in that recruiting wagon for me, though. Look! They’ve got four fellows already! That Glory Road song waked ’em up, I guess.

Tell you what you do. Jump into my roadster and we'll get away from here and be at the station ahead of those fellows. This car can certainly go some. I call it 'Old Speedy.' If we were out in the country on a good smooth road I'd give you a fast ride, all right. Course I have to go easy in the city. But climb in and let's beat it. Those Sammies in the wagon are getting ready to move on. What's the matter? You're not going to back out, are you?" Quick to note a trace of hesitation in his new acquaintance's manner, the gray-eyed boy's straight brows drew together in a disappointed frown.

"Back out? Well, I *guess* not." With this the other boy hopped nimbly up to a seat beside the driver. "It's fine of you to do this," he burst forth impulsively. "Why, you don't even know my name or –"

"Oh, can it," grinned Jimmy. "I took a good look at you. That's enough. I always know when I first see a fellow whether I'm going to like him or not. I don't change my mind about him, either. Now I'm going to back out of here in a hurry. I'll turn around up the street, then cut down a side street and hit it up for the recruiting station."

With this Jimmy busied himself with his car and soon had it backed far enough to make the turn. As it glided into the side street, his companion glanced over one shoulder at the crowd they had left behind. "It looks as if they were going to start," he commented.

"Let 'em start. We'll beat 'em to it," predicted Jimmy. "I'll run

as fast as I dare. Say,” he continued, as they spun along over the smooth pavement, “as long as we enlist together, we’ll probably be sent to the same training camp. Then we’ll be pals. How’s that? My name’s James Sumner Blaise. My folks call me Jimmy and the fellows call me Jimmy Blazes.”

His companion smiled at this funny nickname. He was already under the spell of Jimmy’s careless, happy-go-lucky manner.

“I’d like to be pals,” came his hearty response. “My name’s Roger Barlow. I’ve been working in a munitions plant ever since the war in Europe began. I used to be in the shipping room of a big hardware place. I didn’t make very good wages, so I left it for munitions. This is the first Saturday afternoon I’ve had off for three months. I’ve earned quite a lot of money and I’ve got almost a hundred dollars saved up,” he added confidentially.

“I haven’t a hundred cents,” confessed Jimmy cheerfully. “My father gives me an allowance on the first of every month. I’m always broke before the tenth. I just came home from Langley – that’s a prep school – in June. I’d be in Harvard next fall if this hadn’t happened. Maybe I will be anyhow. Hope not. I’d hate to be turned down. I don’t believe I will be, though. I’m pretty husky. I’ve never taken a drink of anything stronger than ginger ale, and I hardly ever smoke. I’ve never been sick, either, since I had the measles. That was long ago. I played quarterback on the football team at Langley, and I hold the record there for the hundred-yard dash.”

“My, you’ve done a lot of things, haven’t you?” admired

Roger. "I've always wanted to play football, but never had a chance to learn how. I'm good and strong, though. Hard work's made me so."

"When we get to camp, maybe we'll meet some nice fellows that want to organize a football team. Then you'll get a chance to play. It's a great old game, all right."

"That would be fine," glowed Roger.

The two lads whom Chance had so curiously thrown together were beginning already to plan as if their enlistment were an assured fact. Judging from outward appearances, Uncle Sam would be only too glad to number them among the khaki-clad host of young patriots, so soon to receive in a foreign land their baptism of fire and steel. Of almost the same height, about five feet ten inches, their clear eyes, healthfully tinted cheeks and straight, spare boyish figures showed the admirable result of clean living.

"Here we are." Jimmy had brought his roadster to a full stop before a tall, rather dingy brick building. The huge plate-glass front of the ground floor was filled with large placards of soldiers, resplendent in the becoming uniform of the United States Army. Straight across the top of it a white banner stretched from one side to the other. It bore in large black letters the pertinent legend, "Do Your Bit for Your Country: Enlist NOW!"

"That's us." Jimmy leaped from his car and nodded jovially at the sign. Roger landed on the sidewalk only a second behind him. "Forward march and mind your step, Roger, old pal! We're

going to do our bit, all right, if Uncle Sam'll take us.”

Side by side, their boyish faces illuminated by the light of patriotism, the two swung up the short flight of steps, splendid examples of sturdy, buoyant young American manhood. Yes, there was little doubt that Uncle Sam would take them.

## CHAPTER II

# OFF TO CAMP STERLING

One o'clock of a sunshiny September afternoon saw a company of young men marching by twos down a long wooden platform, on each side of which rose waiting trains. Though still in civilian clothing, their careers as soldiers had fairly begun. Through the iron gates of the station streamed after them another procession of a somewhat different order. Though it numbered a few men, it consisted chiefly of anxious-faced women both young and elderly, who had come out that afternoon to wish the newly enlisted soldiers Godspeed before their start for Camp Sterling.

Well toward the end of the little double line were Jimmy Blaise and Roger Barlow. A little over a week had passed since that eventful Saturday afternoon when the two boys had driven to the recruiting station in Jimmy's car. Uncle Sam had indeed been willing to number them among his daily growing host of young patriots. They had passed through the ordeal of a rigid examination with flying colors. Having gone thus far in the process of enlistment, they had since been impatiently waiting for the summons that would call them to a training camp, there to undergo a final test, take the oath of allegiance and begin soldiering in earnest. Both were distinctly elated at having thus

easily passed the first test. With one accord they had decided on the infantry as the most desirable branch of the service for them. Infantry promised plenty of excitement.

Having already obtained the sanction of his parents to enlist, it had but remained to light-hearted Jimmy to go home and inform them that the great deed was done. With Roger there had been no one to consult, other than notifying the employment office of the munitions plant of his new move. This he proposed to do on the following Monday morning. Rather reluctantly he had given in to his friend's persuasions that he should accompany Jimmy to his home that Saturday afternoon and meet the latter's parents. The Blaises lived in one of the most beautiful suburbs of the great city, and the very sight of the stately stone house which the lucky Jimmy called home, set well back on a wide, tree-dotted lawn, had filled Roger with secret dismay. As the roadster had rolled up the broad drive that wound its way through the grounds to the garage, situated well behind the house, he had been stirred with a strong desire to jump out of it and hurry away. He wondered whether Jimmy's folks would approve of him.

Later, when he had met the Blaises and found them delightfully friendly and hospitable, he had been glad that he had not yielded to his first panicky impulse to flee. Thoroughly accustomed to their son's whirlwind tactics, Mr. and Mrs. Blaise had not only accepted Jimmy's new friend at his face value, but had also privately approved Roger's quiet, resolute manner and direct, courteous speech.

During the brief time that had elapsed between the enlistment of the two lads until the morning of farewell, he had been a frequent guest of easy-going Jimmy. The prophesy of friendship that the latter had made on the afternoon of their first meeting had become an actual fact.

Jimmy not only grew daily fonder of Roger on account of his sturdy manliness. He also respected the other boy for what he knew. Considering the fact that Roger had left high school to go to work at the close of his second year there, what he had gained by both work and study at night amounted to a good deal. On the other hand, Roger had never before encountered a boy quite so likable as Jimmy. Opposites by nature, each hailed the other's good qualities with boyish enthusiasm. The very sincerity of their liking for each other was to carry them triumphantly through many strenuous days that lay ahead of them.

Now bound for Camp Sterling together, they were two very excited and almost happy boys, as in company with fifty other youths they marched down the platform that afternoon, there to say their last words of farewell to Mrs. and Mr. Blaise before boarding the fateful train. Of the two, Jimmy was scarcely more concerned at saying good-bye to his parents than was Roger at taking leave of these kind friends. For a brief season he had once again known something of the joy of a real home. It would be very hard to say farewell to Jimmy's parents, he thought. They had taken the kindest interest in him. Already Mrs. Blaise had more than once smilingly called him her foster-son. Looking

gratefully back to the Saturday afternoon of his first meeting with Jimmy, he had wondered how it had all come about.

“There’s Mother, over yonder, and Father, too,” muttered Jimmy in Roger’s ear. Paused beside the train that was to bear them away, the company of prospective Khaki Boys had begun seeking their own among the throng of civilians for a last word. “I almost wish they hadn’t come. It hurts to say good-bye. Anyway, we’ll see them again before long, if we behave,” he added with a faint grin. “No behavee, no furloughs.”

With this he made his way to the waiting couple, who had already spied him, Roger at his heels. Since his enlistment in the Regular Army this was the one shadow that had clouded Jimmy’s enthusiasm in his new patriotic venture. He had resolutely shoved into the background all thought of saying good-bye. Now that the dread moment had come, he looked exceedingly solemn.

“Good-bye, Roger.” Mrs. Blaise extended her hand. Obeying a motherly impulse she bent forward and kissed his cheek. “Be a good soldier boy. I know you’ll be a good friend to Jimmy.” Her blue eyes wandered affectionately to her son, who was gravely shaking hands with his father, his merry features grown momentarily sad.

“Don’t you worry about me, Mother.” Jimmy’s voice sounded a trifle husky. “I can take care of myself and Roger, too.”

Not ashamed to show his affection for his mother in public, Jimmy wrapped his strong young arms about her in a loving hug. “I’m going to be a regular angel Sammy,” he whispered. “I’m

going to make you proud of me. Maybe by the time I come home for Thanksgiving I'll be a general or something. I guess it'll be 'or something,'" he added with a half-hearted attempt at humor. "If I can get a pass to come and see you before then, you know I'll do it. It's only a few hours' ride in the train from here to Camp Sterling. So cheer up, best Mother. I'll be back driving Old Speedy around town again before you know it."

For a little the two boys lingered there, then with the sound of fond, final farewells in their ears they climbed the steps of the rear car and were lost for an instant to view. Almost immediately a window on the side next the platform went up and two heads emerged therefrom. Far down the track the engine was already sending forth premonitory warnings. They were followed by the creaking jar of ponderous iron wheels about to be set to their work of separating the Khaki Boys from home.

By this time every window casing of the car framed boyish faces, peering eagerly out for a last exchange of looks and words with the home folks. As the train began to show signs of moving, a pretty girl, laden with a bouquet of long-stemmed red roses, now flung it straight toward a rear window of the car from which a soldier boy leaned far out, his eyes fixed upon her. His right arm shot out in a wild attempt to catch it. It fell short of his extended fingers by a bare inch or so and dropped. Quick as lightning a uniformed figure on the lowest step of the train's rear platform sprang for it, fairly snatching it up as it was about to roll under the slowly revolving iron wheels. Pausing only to raise

his cap to the thrower, the officer who had retrieved the flowers from destruction swung aboard the train and disappeared into the car. The next second the soldier for whom the bouquet had been intended was triumphantly waving it out the window.

The hearty cheering which had begun with the first shudder of the train increased to wild applause of the little act of gallantry. Inside the car the young volunteers were also voicing noisy appreciation. It was merely an incident, and yet it served to impress on those left behind the belief that the welfare of their boys was in good hands.

As the train continued to move slowly out of the long shed the cheering was kept up. This time it was for the Khaki Boys themselves. It met with an equally fervent response on their part, accompanied by a frantic waving of hands, hats and handkerchiefs. The Khaki Boys were started at last on the first stretch of the Glory Road.

# CHAPTER III

## THE BEGINNING OF COMRADESHIP

“Did you see the way that officer grabbed those roses from under the wheels?” demanded Jimmy excitedly, as he and Roger settled back in their seats. The train had now left the shed behind and was steadily gathering momentum. “Pretty clever in him, wasn’t it?”

Roger nodded. “It showed that he was interested in us even if we are just rookies. I wonder how long it will take us to look as well in our uniforms as he does in his? What did you do with your Infantry Manual? We ought to be studying up a little while we’re on the way.”

Roger referred to the little blue books he and Jimmy had purchased at a department store soon after their enlistment. As he spoke he reached into a pocket of his coat and drew his own forth.

“Mine’s kicking around in my suitcase somewhere,” grinned Jimmy rather sheepishly. “I’ve been intending to study it, but I’ve had so many other things to do. Put it back. Don’t go to studying now. I want to talk to you. Time enough for us to get busy when we hit Camp Sterling. Maybe I didn’t hate to leave Old Speedy behind, though. Next to the folks comes Speedy and after that

Buster, my brindle bull pup. That dog certainly knew I was going away for keeps when I said good-bye to him. But he won't be neglected. Buster has lots of friends. Everybody on our street knows him. Next to me he likes Mother. She'll take good care of him. But poor Old Speedy'll have a lonesome time shut up in the garage. It's such a giddy-looking machine you couldn't hire the folks to ride half a block in it. But you can't have everything, so what's the use of worrying?"

His active mind leaping from the subject of his car back to the officer whose recent kindly act he had so sturdily commended, he continued irrelevantly: "Say, an officer that would do a thing like that ought to be good to his men. Don't you think so? I've heard a lot of stuff about officers being regular cranks and jumping all over their men just for spite. Do you suppose it's true?"

"No, I don't," Roger made emphatic return. "I don't believe that part of it is much different in the Army from what it is in a shop or factory or an office. Only, of course, there has to be stricter discipline in the Army. I've worked in a good many different places and I've found out that the way you're treated most always depends on the way you do your work. Of course, wherever you go you're sure to meet some people you won't like and who won't like you. If you mind your own business and let 'em alone, generally they'll let you alone."

"But suppose they don't? What then?"

"Well," Roger looked reflective, "I never had that happen to me but once. It was when I worked in that shipping department.

There was a boy about my size or maybe a little bigger who wouldn't let me alone. He'd make mistakes and then lay them to me. At last I got sick of it and gave him a good licking. He let me alone after that. You couldn't do that with an Army officer, though. You'd have to stand it and say nothing. Anyway, I don't believe you'd find one officer in a thousand that wouldn't treat you fairly. It's just as much to them to have the respect of their men as it is to the men to have the good will of their officers."

Unconsciously Roger had voiced the opinion that prevails from coast to coast among both commissioned and non-commissioned officers in the United States Service. The mistaken impression that those who have been placed in commands in the National Army are a brow-beating, bullying lot is fast passing. The Army officer of to-day respects himself too much to abuse his authority. He also values the good will of his men too greatly to abuse them. All this, however, the Khaki Boys were presently to learn for themselves.

"I guess your head's level," conceded Jimmy. "I'm glad you licked that shipping-room dub. I hate a *sneak!*"

The explosive utterance caused the heads of two young men in the seat in front of their own to turn simultaneously in Jimmy's direction. One of them, a dark, thin-faced lad with twinkling black eyes and a wide, pleasant mouth, spoke. "Hope you didn't mean me," he offered good-humoredly. The other, stockily-built, his pale, stolid features bearing the unmistakable cast of the foreigner, stared at Jimmy out of round, china-blue eyes, with

the unblinking gaze of an owl.

“Course not,” apologized Jimmy, reddening. “Why should I mean you?”

“I don’t know, I’m sure.” The smiling lips widened to a broad grin. “You said it pretty loudly. It almost made me jump.”

“Well, I meant it,” maintained Jimmy stoutly, “but not for you. I meant it for any fellow, though, who isn’t square and above-board.”

“Shake.” The black-eyed youth half-raised himself in his seat and offered Jimmy his hand. His companion continued to stare dumbly, as though dazed by the suddenness of the whole thing.

“I saw you at the recruiting station the other day,” observed Roger, addressing the boy who had offered his hand. “You were just coming out of the place as I was going in.”

“I saw you, too,” nodded the other. “That used to be my business; just seeing people and things and writing ’em up afterward. I was a cub reporter on the *Chronicle*. Then I got the enlisting habit and here I am.”

“Every morning I read him, that paper,” announced a solemn voice. The dumb had come into speech. “*You* write him?” The questioning round blue eyes looked awe upon his seatmate.

“Ha, ha! That’s a good one,” shouted the ex-reporter gleefully. “Say, Oscar, what do you take me for?”

“That is no my name. It is Ignace; so. Ignace Pulinski,” was the calm correction. “I am one, a Pole.”

“Well, ‘Ignace So Pulinski, one, a Pole,’ you’ve got another

think coming. I used to write about this much of the *Chronicle*. See.” The boyish news-gatherer indicated a space of about three inches between his thumb and first finger.

“That is no much.” Ignace relapsed into disappointed silence. Nor did he offer a word when his energetic companions proposed turning their seat so as to face Jimmy and Roger. He lumbered awkwardly to his feet and sat stolidly down again as though moved by invisible strings.

“I was lucky to get that some days.” Now seated opposite his new acquaintances the reporter resumed the subject of his recent occupation. Noting Roger’s and Jimmy’s patent amusement, their friendly *vis-a-vis* winked roguishly at them and continued, “Well, no more of it for me. What branch of the service did you fellows enlist in?”

“Infantry,” came the concerted answer. “We thought we’d like to be sure of a front place in the big fight.”

“You’ll get it,” was the grim assurance. “This war’s going to last long after we’ve hit the trenches in France and done our bit. We’re lucky to be going to Sterling. It’s one of the best camps in the country. It was one of the first to be laid out. I was sent up there by my paper to get a story about it when it was just starting. It was nothing but a lot of cornfields then. I was up there again about three weeks ago and maybe there wasn’t a difference, though! Ground all cleared, company streets laid out and barracks going up fast. It’s a dandy place for a camp. Good and dry with no swamps. There shouldn’t be many men on sick

list.”

“How large is it?” inquired Roger interestedly.

“Covers about eight square miles, I should say; maybe a little more than that. I hadn’t thought of enlisting until after the second trip to it. Then I just had to step in line. I wasn’t going to hang back until the draft got me, like a lot of fellows I know. I figured it out this way. If I went into the Army and came out alive at the end of the war, I’d have had all the fun and a barrel of experience. If I got to France and then went West – that’s what they call it when you cash in your checks – I’d have a lot of fun anyhow while I lasted. I’d like to get a whack at the Fritzie, so why lose a chance at it? Infantry for mine, though, every time.”

“I hope we are put in the same barrack.” This new acquaintance was one strictly after impetuous Jimmy’s own heart.

“So do I.” A flash of approval sprang to the young reporter’s face. His mental appraisal of Roger and Jimmy had been “all to the good.”

“I go by you, an’ you, an’ you, mebbe, huh?” Ignace again came to life, accompanying each “you” with a rigid pointing of a stubby forefinger.

“Mebbe, huh,” agreed Jimmy solemnly. “Later on you might be sorry for it, too. Didn’t you ever hear about appearances being deceitful?”

A slow grin overspread the Pole’s stolid face. “I take the chance,” he declared, thereby proving that he was not so stupid

as he seemed.

“You’re a real sport, Iggy.” His seatmate playfully slapped him on the shoulder. “I guess if you can stand us we can stand you.”

“You are no ver’ strong.” Ignace was evidently more impressed by the lack of force that had attended the light blow than by the compliment. “My father ver’ strong man,” he added with a reminiscent frown.

“Well, I hadn’t expected to knock your head off,” conceded the other satirically. “That was only a friendly tap.” Struck by a sudden thought he asked curiously, “How’d you happen to enlist, Iggy? Are you twenty-one?”

“Y-e-a. Twenty-one an’ two weeks. So” – the china-blue eyes took on a defiant glint – “run ’way. My father, he no like this war. He say I no go ’cause no American. I say, ‘go anyhow.’ Better I think be solder an’ get kill once than my father most kill when he hit me much. I work by one mill, but he get all moneys I make. This is no right, I say many time, and always get the black eye or the bloody nose. So go quiet by place an’ say to man there, ‘I can be the solder? I like fight for this country.’ Then I don’t go home more. Stay by a frien’ an’ my father don’t know nothin’ till too late.”

Once started on a recital of his own troubles, Ignace had hardly stopped for breath. There were no smiles on the faces of his listeners when he had finished. The lack of excitement in his voice as he droned forth the story of his own patriotic awakening and his final revolt, brought a sympathetic gleam into three pairs

of eyes.

“I guess it’s time to shake with you, Iggy.” Jimmy suited the action to the word by grabbing the Polish boy’s rough hand.

“Here, too,” called out the reporter. “Let’s all shake and tell our right names. Mine’s Robert Dalton. Either Bob or Dal’ll do.”

“Mine’s Jimmy Blazes, James Blaise when we have company. This old sobersides is Roger Barlow. He’s got to have a shorter name than that, though.”

“Call him Ruddy and let it go at that,” suggested Dalton. “I used to know a fellow named Roger. We called him Ruddy or Rodge.”

“Either’ll suit me.” Roger was secretly pleased with his new names.

“Ahem! We have with us this afternoon, Iggy and Jimmy and Bob and Rodge.” Dalton stood up, threw out his chest, thrusting his left hand pompously inside his coat. “We’re here because we’re here. Gentlemen, on us depends the safety of the great American commonwealth. Until we entered this stupendous conflict, all was lost. But you can’t lose us. We’re Four Dauntless Dubs Devoted to Daring Deeds. How’s that?” Dalton beamed patronizingly on the trio, then sat down.

“Not so bad. We’re sure enough dubs when it comes to soldiering!” smiled Roger. “I expect we’ll feel we’re less than that if we get into the awkward squad for being slow for drill. I’m not going to stay in the dub class, though.” His boyish mouth set in determined lines. “I’m not going to get into the awkward squad

if I can possibly help it.”

“Some ambitious rookie,” teased Bob. “Well, it’s a great life if you don’t weaken. I’m not saying where I’m going to land. Just so I land on both feet every time. When I used to write in my copy book, ‘Obedience is the first and last duty of a soldier,’ I never thought that it was going to come home to me like this. That’s the whole game in a nutshell, though. Speak when you’re spoken to, etc. Throw out your chest and look happy when you get a call-down. ‘Love your country and can up the Fritzies before they can you,’ is going to be my motto. How any husky fellow with good red blood in his veins can read about what’s going on ‘Over There,’ and never blink an eyelash, is more than I can see.” Bob had grown serious. “All I hope is that it won’t be long until our turn comes to go over. I might have enlisted a good while ago. Wish I had. I haven’t a relative in the world to worry over except an uncle who’s a pacifist, and I’m not worrying much about him. Too bad he’s too old for the draft. I’d like to hear him spouting peace to a line of charging Boches. This is about the way he’d do it!”

Bob drew down his face, and proceeded to give an imitation of his peace-loving relative that made even solemn Ignace laugh.

“It is good I come sit here,” congratulated the Pole. “You are fonny, but you have the kind heart. You make of me the fon, I no care. I no make the fon of you. Somebody hit you. I hit him. I am the fren’.”

“Much obliged, old man.” Bob looked surprised and touched

at this sudden tribute of loyalty. "I can take care of myself, though. I'm strong, even if you don't think so."

"I am no the old man," corrected Ignace with dignity. "Anyhow, I take care you!"

"I certainly seem to be popular with some people," murmured Bob. "All right, Iggy, you can go as far as you like. Maybe I do need a keeper. If you and I land side by side in the same barrack we'll be bunkies, like Jimmy and Roger. I know a good thing when I meet it."

"Brothers all!" Ignace raised a hand as though pronouncing a benediction.

In the days to come the Polish boy's declamation was to be fulfilled to the letter. From that chance meeting in the train was to spring a comradeship between the four young men, all from such different walks in life, that would do much toward helping them over the hard ruts in the Glory Road.

## CHAPTER IV

# ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK

“Camp Sterling! Camp Sterling!” The stentorian call thrilled the hearts of the embryo soldiers. Long before the train had come to a creaking, puffing stop, fifty boys were on the *qui vive* to be out of it for a first satisfactory look at the camp, of which they had obtained only tantalizing glimpses from the car windows. Emerging with alacrity from the train, they made brief halt on the station platform, while the officer of the bouquet incident called the roll.

Met at the station by two sergeants from the camp, the little detachment of future defenders did their level best to obey promptly the order, “Company attention! Forward march!” Accompanied by the sergeants, who had come down to the station to receive them, they were soon marching away from it and through the wide gateway that admitted them to the camp itself.

Far ahead of them they could see scattered groups of long, low buildings, which they immediately knew to be barracks. As they proceeded straight forward along an almost level and extremely dusty road, they could make out more plainly the first outlying group of barracks, to which they were momentarily drawing nearer. Of new, unpainted wood, two-storied and many-

windowed, these buildings looked rather cheerless at first view. Here and there at the side or front of one stood small, sturdy trees, the dark green of their foliage relieving the prevailing monotonous yellow cast that predominated.

For over a mile they tramped steadily along. By this time they had long since passed the outlying groups of barracks, and had had the chance of viewing numbers of them at close range. Ordered at last to halt before one of them, their conductors marched them up a flight of four wooden steps, and through an open door into a long, bare room, the chief furnishing of which consisted of two rows of narrow canvas cots. Placed fairly close together, these cots ranged the length of the room on both sides, leaving a wide aisle in the middle.

Here they were taken in hand by still another sergeant, who informed them that they were now in a receiving barracks, where they would sleep that night prior to being re-examined at a regimental hospital the next morning. Crisply assigned to cots, they were allowed only time enough to stow their suitcases and scant luggage underneath these cots, then were conducted to the quartermaster to draw mess kits, blankets, haversacks, and such equipment as is issued to each man as soon as possible after arrival at a training camp.

They were ordered to check carefully each article of the Government's property as it was issued to them, and obliged to sign for it. This done, they were conducted back to the receiving barracks, where they spent the brief interval before mess in neatly

arranging their personal and issued property under the cots which they would use only temporarily.

The bugle call to mess found them again falling in for their first trip to a mess hall. Arrived there, they entered and were marched, single file, the length of the long room to a counter at one end, where each in turn received a goodly portion in his mess kit of the various eatables that went to make up the meal that night. These were served to them by the soldiers detailed for kitchen work, much in the same fashion that food is served in the city cafétarias.

The furnishings of the mess hall consisted of the counter, two large kitchen ranges, a furnace in the middle of the room, many tables and rows of uncomfortably hard wooden benches. Once they had received their portions of food, the new arrivals were permitted to choose their own places at table.

All in all it was the plainest fare that the majority of the young soldiers had sat down to for many a day, perhaps the first of its kind for a few of them who had come from homes of affluence. It may be said to their credit that whatever may have been their mental attitude toward regulation Army fare, they showed no visible signs of discontent, but fell to and ate hungrily.

Mess over, it but remained to cleanse their mess-kits at sinks provided for that purpose. Then they were taken back to the barrack where they were to sleep that night, and where they spent the remaining hours, until Tattoo sounded, in going over their effects and quietly visiting with one another. Call to quarters

sounded at 9:45, to be followed by the ten o'clock call of Taps.

Awakened the next morning by the clear notes of a bugle blowing first call, the fifty recruits lost little time in scrambling from their cots and getting hastily into their uniforms before Reveille sounded. Lined up outside the barrack, a sergeant called the roll. This done, the Khaki Boys were allowed a brief twenty minutes before breakfast in which to make up their cots and perform their morning ablutions at the barrack sinks. Breakfast at the same mess hall where they had eaten the previous evening came next, then a return to barracks, followed by the call of "Assembly" at a few minutes past seven.

Directly afterward they were escorted to the hospital for the final examination that was to prove beyond a doubt their physical fitness to become soldiers in the National Army of the Republic. Out of the fifty who went to hospital that morning only three failed to measure up to the standard, which meant that for them all hope of a military career in the great war was ended.

None of the four "Brothers," however, were among this unlucky trio. Bob Dalton, Jimmy Blaise, Roger Barlow and Ignace Pulinski were pronounced physically fit in every respect. For them, the Glory Road was open so far as being acceptable specimens of young American manhood went. Their examinations ended by eleven o'clock that morning. They were then regularly sworn into the Army and shortly afterward drew their uniforms. First attempts at donning them were attended with considerable difficulty. All four had trouble in smoothly

adjusting the canvas leggings. Ignace in particular groaned and grumbled at the task until Jimmy mercifully went to his assistance. When fully dressed none of them were without a feeling of awkwardness. It would take time for them to grow accustomed to their new attire.

Late afternoon of the same day saw them established at last as members of Company E, 509th Infantry, in one of the barracks assigned to that regiment. It had, indeed, been a busy day for the four Khaki Boys. The barracks in which they were now quartered was a considerable distance from the one in which they had passed their first night in camp. It had, therefore, taken some little time to remove their effects to it, not to mention a further visit to the quartermaster to obtain a number of necessary articles which they still lacked.

Mess over that night, the tired quartette were glad of a chance to lounge in their new quarters, there to discuss among themselves the, to them, unusual events of that long day. Greatly to their satisfaction they had not been separated, but occupied four cots together in a row, with Roger and Jimmy in the middle and Ignace and Bob on either side of the two.

“To-morrow our real military life begins,” exulted Roger. “I wonder how long we’ll be taken out for drill, and whether we’ll be in the same squad or not?”

“Hope we don’t land in the awkward squad the very first shot,” commented Bob. “The drill sergeant’s supposed to go easy with rookies for the first day or two. An enlisted man I know, who’s

been in the Army for the past three years, once told me that it depends a whole lot on the officer who does the drilling. If he's an old-timer who's seen service he's more apt to be patient with a rookie than if he's just won his chevrons. A newly made drill sergeant is more likely to get peppery and bawl a rookie out before the whole squad."

"I used to know a little bit about this drill game. The last year I was in grammar school some of us kids got the soldier fever and organized a company of our own," reminisced Jimmy. "The brother of one of the fellows belonged to the National Guards and he used to drill us. There were about twenty of us, and we drilled in our garret once a week for a whole winter. We'd planned to go camping together the next summer and sleep in tents and all that, like real soldiers. Then some of the fellows got to scrapping and our company broke up. We had uniforms something like those the Boy Scouts wear and wooden guns. Hope I haven't forgotten what little I learned. Maybe it'll help me now."

"Shouldn't be surprised if it would." Bob regarded Jimmy with interest. "You'll probably be quicker at catching the swing and rhythm of things than the rest of us. Being familiar with the commands ought to help some."

"I am the dumb," broke in Ignace, who had been gloomily listening to the conversation of the trio. "If this day I no brother help me what I do? Yet must I be the good solder. I have said an' so am I, som' day."

"You've done the best you could, old man," comforted Bob.

“You’ll learn. So don’t cry about it!”

“Never I cry the tear,” was the somewhat reproachful retort to Bob’s kindly chaffing. “Only the littles an’ the ’ooman cry. I am the man. I no cry my father hit me, I no cry now. So is it.”

It had been anything but a red-letter day for the Pole. Bewildered by the rapidity with which things happened in Camp Sterling, Ignace had been hustled here and there like a sheep to slaughter. Only the kindly proddings and promptings of his three self-adopted Brothers had saved him from being set down as intolerably stupid in the minds of the efficient officers and men with whom he had already come in contact.

In reality Ignace was not as stupid as he appeared. Years of unremitting, slavish toil had undoubtedly made him slow and clumsy of movement. He had not the quick faculty of adapting himself to new conditions, which is one of the most striking characteristics of the American the world over. He was also likely to come to grief frequently through his imperfect knowledge of English. In spite of all these handicaps, his will to become a good soldier was so paramount that his three friends were of the opinion that somehow he would plod along to that end. Moreover, they had privately agreed among themselves to do all in their power to help him.

“That’s the talk,” commended Jimmy. “Never say die till you’re dead.”

“Then can I no say,” supplemented Ignace so positively as to create a general snicker. It dawned upon him that he had

provoked it, and a slow grin overspread his usually immobile face. He was beginning to understand the vernacular of his "Brothers."

"We've got a lot to learn," sighed Roger. "All I can see to do is to get busy and learn it. I've been trying to look as much like a first-class private as I could since I drew my uniform. Jimmy has us all beaten when it comes to that, though. His uniform blouse looks as though it grew on him."

Jimmy appeared radiantly pleased at Bob's candid praise. Unconsciously he drew himself up with a proud little air that was vastly becoming to him. "Oh, I'm not so much," he demurred.

"Don't let it go to your head and swell it, Blazes," teased Bob. "Look at me and think what you might have been. To-night you see before you a simple, hopeful rookie. To-morrow at drill you'll see a sore and hopeless dub. I expect to get mine; but not forever. Live and learn. If you can't learn you've got a right to live, anyhow. A few gentle reminders from a drill sergeant that you're a dummy won't put you in the family vault. A little mild abuse'll seem like home to me. I'll think I'm back on the *Chronicle* listening to the city editor. It takes a newspaper man to read the riot act to a cub reporter. Nothing left out and several clauses added."

Bob's untroubled attitude toward what lay in wait for him on the morrow had a cheering effect on Jimmy and Roger. Ignace, however, sat humped up on his cot a veritable statue of melancholy. Decidedly round-shouldered, his stocky figure

showed at a glaring disadvantage in the trim olive-drab Army-blouse.

Jimmy's glance coming to rest on the dejected one, he counseled warningly: "You'd better practice holding back your shoulders, Iggy. They need it."

Ignace obediently straightened up. "Too much mill," he explained. "All time so." He illustrated by bending far forward. "Mebbe better soon. Huh?"

"You'll have to keep on the job all the while, then," was Jimmy's blunt assertion.

"So will I." Ignace sighed, then braced himself upon the edge of his cot to a position of ramrod stiffness that was laughable, yet somehow pathetic. Occupied with the ordeal, he took small part in the low-toned talk that continued among his Brothers, but sat blinking at them, now and then slumping briefly and recovering himself with a jerk. Shortly before the 9:45 call to quarters sounded, he dropped over on his cot and went fast asleep. Sound of the bugle brought him to his feet with a wild leap and a snort that nearly convulsed his comrades, and brought the eyes of a dozen or more of rookies to bear upon him. Among them was a tall, freckle-faced, pale-eyed youth with a sneering mouth, who bunked directly across the aisle from the four Khaki Boys.

Viewing Ignace with a grin of malicious amusement, he addressed a remark to his nearest neighbors that caused them to burst into jeering laughter. Quick to catch its scornful import, Jimmy shot an angry glance across the room. Beyond

an occasional cursory survey of his rookie companions of the barrack, he had paid them small attention. Now in his usual impetuous fashion he conceived an instant dislike for the freckle-faced soldier, which he never had reason to change. For a second the two stared steadily at each other. Across the narrow space sped a silent declaration of war to the knife. Had Jimmy been gifted with the ability to read the future, he would have been considerably amazed to learn what the outcome of that mute declaration was destined to be.

# CHAPTER V

## THE BEAUTY OF GOOD ADVICE

During the first three days in camp the four Khaki Boys could not get over the awkward feeling of having been suddenly set down in the midst of a strange and confused world. Taken out for drill on the second morning after their arrival at Camp Sterling, their first encounter with a drill sergeant did not tend to make them feel strictly at home in the Army. It served, instead, to bring out sharply to them a deep conviction of their own imperfections.

Greatly to their secret disappointment, they were not all assigned to the same squad. Bob and Roger were placed in one squad, Ignace and Jimmy in another. Of the four, Jimmy Blaise acquitted himself with the most credit. Blessed with a naturally fine carriage, lithe of movement and quick of perception, he showed every promise of becoming a success as a soldier. Undoubtedly his previous, though amateur training, now stood him in good stead. Added to that was a genuine enthusiasm for things military.

Schooled in the work-a-day world, Roger and Bob were also of excellent material. Both had learned to move quickly and obey promptly. Roger's chief assets were earnestness of purpose and absolute dependability. Less earnest and more inclined to whimsicality, Bob was possessed of an alertness of brain that

enabled him to comprehend instantly whatever was required of him. So the two were fairly well-matched and needed practice only in order to develop and bring out their latent soldierly qualities.

Poor Ignace alone seemed determined to cover himself with confusion. Drilled in the same squad with Jimmy, he was from the start a severe trial to the efficient, but hot-headed young sergeant in charge. Slow to think and slower to act, he immediately became a mark for criticism. His awkward carriage and shuffling walk were an eye-sore to that trim, capable officer.

During the first day's drilling of the squad to which Ignace belonged, the sergeant showed becoming patience with the clumsy Pole's painful efforts to obey orders. Two trying sessions with Ignace on the next day sent his scanty stock of forbearance to the winds. At the morning drill the sergeant had, with difficulty, mastered his growing irritation. Ordered out for drill again that afternoon, Ignace received the rebuke that had been hovering behind the sergeant's lips since first he had set eyes on the unfortunate Pole.

"See here, you," rapped out the disgusted "non-com," after a particularly aggravated display of awkwardness had aroused his pent-up ire. "Where do you think you are, anyway? This is no boiler-factory. You're in the Army now! Lift up your feet! You're not stubbing along to work. Pick up your head! First thing you know you'll be stepping on your neck. That's a little more like it. Now hold it for two minutes, if you can. If you can't – into the

awkward squad you go to-morrow. Pay attention and do as you're told *when* you're told. Every time you make a move you make it just in time to queer your squad. Now this is the last time I'm going to tell you. I've got something better to do than splitting my throat yelling at you."

This scathing bawling-out of unlucky Ignace occurring just before the drill ended, he escaped, for that day at least, the humiliation of being bundled into the dreaded awkward squad. But to-morrow was yet to be reckoned with. In consequence, he looked a shade more melancholy than usual when, the drill period over, he dejectedly moped along toward the barracks with Jimmy.

A short distance from it, they encountered Bob and Roger, who were also returning from a period of, to them, strenuous drill. As recruits, it would be some little time before they would be ready to adhere to the regular daily program of infantry drill.

"Hello, fellows!" greeted Bob. "Hike along with us and let's hear the latest. How goes drill?"

"Oh, pretty fair." Jimmy shrugged his shoulders. Ignace, however, shuffled along beside Jimmy in gloomy silence.

"Cheer up, Iggy." Guessing the reason for the Pole's dejection, Bob gave him a friendly slap between his again sagging shoulders. "For goodness' sake, *brace* up! When you hump over like that your coat fits you, *not*. You'd better shove a stick under your arms and across your shoulders, and spend your time until Retreat hiking around camp that way. It'll be as good as shoulder braces."

“So will I.” A gleam of purpose, which Bob failed to note, shot into the Pole’s china-blue eyes, as, with a deep sigh, he threw back his shoulders.

“You’d better stop shuffling your feet, too.” Now on the subject, Bob decided to call his disconsolate “Brother’s” attention to this unsoldierlike habit. “Pick ’em up like this.” Bob took a few extravagantly high steps in a purely waggish spirit.

“So will I,” came the resolute repetition. “Soon learn I. It is the yet hard. An’ the words; the words never I un’erstan’.” Ignace’s voice held a note of active distress. It called for sympathy.

“What words?” asked Roger. “Oh, I know. Do you mean that you don’t understand the commands the sergeant gives you?”

“Som’time, yes; som’time, no. When yes, I do, but too late.”

“I understand.” Roger nodded sympathetically. “You ought to take my manual and study it. You can learn all the different commands from it. Then you’ll know them when you hear them and can follow them more easily.”

“Never un’erstan’ I that book. I have read him, but he is no for me,” came the dispirited objection.

“Ha! I’ve an idea.” Bob began to laugh. “I’ll fix you up, Iggy. You come around to me after mess to-night, and I’ll have a grand surprise for you. Don’t you bother me till then, either, or you won’t get it. Savvy?”

“Y-e-a.” Ignace looked drearily hopeful.

“Now what have you got up your sleeve?” asked Jimmy curiously. Bob was chuckling as though over something

extremely funny.

“Wait and see. What I said to Iggy means you fellows, too. Run along and take a walk around Camp Sterling. Sight-seers are always welcome, you know. Here’s where I fade away and disappear.” With a wave of his hand, Bob started on a run for Company E’s barrack, to which they had now come almost opposite.

“Let’s do as he says. We’ll take a walk around, and see if we can’t find a few officers to try a salute on. I’ve got to practice that. I almost bumped into one yesterday. He looked so prim and starchy I pretty nearly forgot to salute him.” Jimmy looked briefly rueful.

“All right. I guess I need a little saluting practice, too,” agreed Roger.

“I can no go. I have the work to do,” demurred Ignace. “Goo-bye. You again see som’time.” Without further explanation, the Pole turned and scuttled off down the company street in the direction from which they had come.

The two he had so unceremoniously deserted stopped to watch him. Somewhat to their surprise they saw him suddenly leave the street and set off across a stretch of open ground sloping a little above the camp.

“What’s he up to now, I wonder?” mused Jimmy.

“Hard to tell. Those Poles are queer. He’s a splendid fellow, though, not a bit of a coward. Too bad he has so much trouble about the drill, isn’t it?” Roger felt extreme sympathy toward

blundering Ignace.

“Yes. He got his from the drill sergeant this afternoon. I was afraid he would. Say, do you know it’s funny about him. He’s the last fellow I’d have ever thought of getting chummy with. At home, I couldn’t have stood him for a minute. Yet here, somehow, I kind of like him. He’s so sure that we’re his brothers and all that, I feel as if I ought to be good to him.”

Bob smiled. He quite understood Jimmy’s attitude. Born of the classes, fortunate Jimmy had never had much occasion to consider the masses, particularly the very humblest of the great army of bread-winners.

“That’s one thing I like about the Army,” he said. “It’s the Service that counts; not just you or I. A private’s just a private here, even if he is a millionaire’s son back in civil life. By the time this war is over, a lot of fellows will have found that out, the same as you have. It’s different with me. Iggy seems sort of my brother, after all, because I’ve been a worker, too. He’s a good, honest fellow and I like him. That’s enough for me.”

“He’s square,” emphasized Jimmy. “When a fellow’s square, he’s pretty nearly O. K. Iggy’s clean and neat, too. That’s more than I can say of some of those rookies in our barrack. Say, did you know that the guy who bunks next to that fresh Bixton is a German-American? Schnitzel’s his name. Wonder how he happened to enlist. He’s a queer stick. Never says a word. Just watches the fellows as if they were a bunch of wild Indians. Do you know what that Bixton has been handing around the

barrack?" Jimmy scowled as he mentioned the man whom he so strongly detested.

"No." A faint pucker appeared between Roger's own brows. He had not forgotten Bixton's unnecessary jeering at Ignace. He also disapproved of the freckle-faced rookie as having too much to say.

"Well," continued Jimmy, "I heard he said that this man Schnitzel acted more like a German spy, sent here by the Fritzie, than a Sammy. Can you beat that?" Jimmy's question fully conveyed his disgust.

Roger's lips tightened. "Bixton ought to have more sense," was his curt reply. "That's a pretty serious story to start about an American soldier. Are you sure he said it? Did you get it straight?"

"Yep. I told the fellow that told me to can it. Catch me getting into a mix-up over a yarn like that. I guess you know how much love I have for Bixton. Bob's down on him. Even Iggy says, 'Too much speak for nothin'.'"

Both boys laughed at the Pole's blunt criticism.

"I don't like him, either," returned Roger decidedly. "We'd better all steer clear of him. Too bad he's in your squad. He'll probably try to make fun of poor old Iggy."

"Just let him start something. Great Scott!" Jimmy's hand went up like lightning. His quest of an officer to salute had been granted with a despatch that almost proved fatal to him. "Pretty near missed it again," he muttered, as soon as the passing officer,

a second lieutenant, was out of earshot.

“I saw him about a fourth of a second before you,” laughed Roger. “I didn’t have time to warn you. That’s what we get for gossiping. We must keep our eyes open and our hands ready from now on.”

Determined not to be caught napping again, the two bunkies strolled along, eyes alertly trained on all passers-by. Following the company street for almost a mile they retraced their steps, talking confidentially as they went. A brief stop at the barrack saw them issue from it with sparkling eyes. The home folks had stolen a march on them in the matter of letters. Jimmy was the proud recipient of three, while Roger had been made happy with a kindly note from Mrs. Blaise.

“Let’s go up there to those woods and sit on that stump fence to read ’em,” proposed Jimmy. “No use going back to barracks. Old Bob will have a fit if we butt in on his great stunt, whatever that is.”

Roger acquiescing, the two left the street, unconsciously taking almost the same route which Ignace had traveled. It was not more than a quarter of a mile to the irregular stump fence that skirted the bit of woodland.

“Gee, it looks great up among those trees. Come on.” Clearing the fence at a bound, Jimmy forgot his newly-acquired dignity and raced along through the woods with the joyous friskiness of a small boy, Roger close behind him.

A little way back among the trees they came to a good-sized

flat rock and on this the two sat down to read the news from home. Roger read Mrs. Blaise's note in happy silence. Jimmy, however, broke into speech about every five seconds. "Just listen to this!" or "What do you know about that?" was his continual cry, followed by the reading of a line or a paragraph. One letter alone he declined to share with Roger. "This is from my girl," was his sheepish apology. "She used to live next door to us, but now she lives in Buffalo. This letter came to our house after I'd gone, so Mother sent it on to me. 'Course, Margaret, that's her name, couldn't come down to the train to see me off; so she wrote, thinking I'd get it that day. We're just good friends, you know. None of the love stuff. She's a fine little girl, though, and pretty as a picture."

"I am sure she must be." Roger's eyes twinkled. Jimmy's candid confession amused him not a little. Silent while Jimmy read the letter, he became aware of a far-off crackle of brush. "Someone's coming," he announced.

"Huh? Uh-huh," returned Jimmy, still deep in his letter.

But no one appeared in sight, although the faint snapping of twigs under human feet was still to be heard.

"Someone is walking around on the other side of that little hill," Roger asserted, proud of his ability to locate the sound. For this is a most necessary requisite of a soldier.

"Let 'em walk." Jimmy declined to be interested.

"Just for curiosity, I'm going to see who it is." Roger rose and strolled quietly toward the crest of the hill. Three minutes later

he was back, his usually serious face all smiles. “Come here,” he called in an undertone. “Want to see something funny? Go cat-footed, though. Let him hear you and the show will be over!”

# **CHAPTER VI**

## **THE BEGINNING OF TROUBLE**

Hastily tucking his letter into its envelope, Jim noiselessly trailed Roger to the top of the hill. Looking down, they beheld a most remarkable sight. Back and forth in the hollow, for a distance of about twenty feet, marched, or rather pranced, Ignace. His shoulders rigidly forced back by means of a long stick, thrust under his arms, he was giving an exhibition of high stepping that would have filled Bob with joy. Lifting first one foot, then the other, to a height of at least two feet, he traversed the hollow with the airy steps of a circus pony.

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