

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambroch Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow
Lüns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving
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Boy Scouts on Motorcycles With the Flying Squadron

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CHAPTER I

BOY SCOUTS IN A STRANGE LAND

"Fine country, this — to get out of!"

"What's the difficulty, kid?"

Jimmie McGraw, the first speaker, turned back to the interior of the apartment in which he stood with a look of intense disgust on freckled face.

"Oh, nothin' much," he replied, wrinkling his nose comically, "only Broadway an' the Bowery are too far away from this town to ever amount to anythin'. Say, how would you fellers like a chair in front of the grate in the little old Black Bear Patrol clubroom, in the village of N. Y.? What?"

The three boys lying, half covered with empty burlap bags, on the bare earth at the back of the apartment chuckled softly as Jimmie's face brightened at the small picture he drew verbally, of the luxurious Boy Scout clubroom in the City of New York.

"New York is a barren island as compared with this place," one of the boys, Jack Bosworth by name, declared. "Just think of the odor of the Orient all around us!"

Jimmie wrinkled his nose in disdain and turned back to the window out of which he had been looking. The other boys, Ned Nestor, of the Wolf Patrol, and Jack Bosworth and Frank Shaw, of the Black Bear Patrol, all of New York, pulled their coarse covering closer under their chins and grinned at the impatient Jimmie, who was of the Wolf Patrol, and who was just then on guard.

It wasn't much of a window that the boy looked out of, just an irregular hole in a bare wall, innocent alike of sash and glass. Away to the east rolled the restless waters of the Gulf of Pechili, which is little more than a round bay swinging west from the mystical Yellow Sea.

To the south ran the swift current of the Peiho river, on the opposite bank of which lay the twin of Taku, Chinese town where Jimmie stood guard. Tungku, as the twin village is named, looked every bit as forlorn and disreputable as Taku, where the boys had waited four days for important information which had been promised by the Secret Service department at Washington.

The gulf of Pechili and the Peiho river glistened under the October sun, which seemed to bring little warmth to the atmosphere. Junks of all sizes and kinds were moving slowly through the waves, and farther out larger vessels lay at anchor, as if holding surveillance over the mouth of the stream which led to Tientsin, that famous city of the great Chinese nation.

"Look at it! Just look at it!"

Jimmie pointed out of the opening, his hand swinging about to include the river and the gulf, the slowly moving boats and the picturesque streets.

"'Tis a heathen land!" the boy went on. "They wear their shirts outside of their trousers an' do their trucking on their shoulders. Say, Ned," he added, "why can't we cut it out? I'm sick of it!"

"Cut it out?" laughed Jack Bosworth, "why, kid, we've just got to the land of promise!"

"Most all promise!" replied Jimmie. "We've got nothin' but promises since we've been here. Where's that Secret Service feller that was goin' to set the pace for us?"

"Perhaps he's lost in the jungle," laughed Frank Shaw. "He certainly ought to have been here three days ago. What about it, Gulf of Pechili and the Peiho river Ned?" he added, turning to a youth who lay at his side, almost shivering in spite of his shaggy burlap covering.

Ned Nestor yawned and threw aside his alleged protection from the growing chill of the October day. The boys, fresh from a submarine in which they had searched an ocean floor for important documents as well as millions of dollars in gold, had arrived at Taku five days before this autumn afternoon.

After concluding the mission on the submarine, Ned had been invited to undertake a difficult errand to Peking, in the interest of the United States Secret Service. Even after landing at Taku, he had confessed to his chums his utter ignorance of the work he was to do.

He had been requested by the Secret Service man who had engaged him for the duty to wait for instructions at the old house on the water front which, in company with Frank, Jack, and Jimmie, he now occupied. The house was old and dilapidated, seemingly having been unoccupied for years, so the lads were really "camping out" there.

Their provisions were brought to them regularly by a Chinaman who did not seem to understand a word of English, and, as the boys' knowledge of the Chinese tongue was exceedingly limited, no information had been gained from him. The Secret Service man had not appeared, and Ned was becoming uneasy, especially as the curiosity of his neighbors was becoming annoying.

"I guess this is a stall," Jimmie grumbled, as Ned arose and stood at his side. "You know how the Moores, father an' son, tried to get us on the submarine? Well, I'll bet they've got loose, an' that we're bein' kept here until they can do us up proper without attractin' the attention of the European population."

Ned laughed at the boy's fears. He had no doubt that the man who had promised to meet him there had been delayed in some unaccountable manner, and that the information he was awaiting would be supplied before another day had passed.

"Anyway," Jimmie insisted, "I don't like the looks of things hereabouts!

There's always some pigtailed Chink watchin' this house from the street.

I woke up last night an' saw a snaky-eyed Celestial peering in at this window. I guess they've got rid of the man we are waitin' for."

"If we only knew exactly what we were to do in Peking," Frank said, approaching the little group by the window, "we might jog along and report to the American legation. I'm like Jimmie. I don't fancy this long wait here — not a little bit!"

"As I have told you before," Ned replied, "I don't know the first thing about the work cut out for us by the United States Secret Service people. There was some talk about following a brace of conspirators to Peking, the conspirators who tried to discredit the United States in the matter of the gold shipment but that was only incidental, and I was ordered to come here and await instructions. So I'm going to wait— until the moon drops out of the sky, if necessary."

"Oh, we'll stick around!" Frank put in. "Don't think, for a minute, that any of us thought of quitting the game. Still, I'd just like to know how much longer we have to remain here, and just what we are to do when we get to Peking, if we ever do."

"Of course we'll stick!" Jimmie exclaimed. "All I'm kickin' on is the delay. We might have remained on board the submarine, where we had cozy quarters an' somethin' to eat besides this Chink stuff."

"Whenever you want to bump Jimmie good and plenty," laughed Jack, "all you need to do is to tamper with his rations. What's the matter with this rice, kid, and this meat pie?" he added, as the man who had served their food since their occupancy of the old house approached with a large, covered basket on his arm.

Jimmie wrinkled his freckled nose again and laid a hand on his stomach, as if in sympathy with that organ for the unutterable Chinese concoctions it had been called upon to assimilate of late.

"Rat pie!" he said, in a tone of disgust.

"I'll bet a dollar to a rap on the nose that it's rat pie! I can hear the rats squeal nights when I'm tryin' to sleep an' can't."

"Say, Chink," Jack said, seizing the Chinaman by the shoulder and facing him about so that a good look into his slanty eyes might be had, "what do you know about this chuck?"

"No chuck! Pie!"

"Of course it's pie!" answered Jack. "It would be pie if it was made of old shoes, if it had a crust on. What I want to know is, where did you catch him, and who pays you to bring it to us, and who pays him to pay you to feed it to us? Where does he live, and is he black,

white, or red? Come on, old top. You know a lot if you could only think of it."

The Chinaman, an evil-looking old fellow with a long cicatrice across his left cheekbone, shook his head and regarded his questioner craftily.

"No spik English!" he said.

"You spoke it then," Jack retorted. "I'll bet a pan of pickles that you know what we were saying when you came in here."

"Let him alone," Frank advised. "That head of his is solid bone. He would think his foot hurt if he had the toothache."

"What a filthy, yellow, toothless, wicked old devil it is!" Jack went on. "Some day when he comes here with that basket of rats I'm going to cut his pigtail off close behind his ears."

"I think he's the foulest old geezer I've ever met," Frank went on. "If I had a dog with a mug like that I'd hire him out to the man who manufactures nightmares."

The Chinaman stood looking stupidly about for a minute before placing his basket on the floor, then dropped it with a jar which rattled the few dishes within and scuffled out of the door. Jimmie followed to see that he did not loiter around the house listening, and came back with a mischievous grin on his face.

Long before the appearance of the Chinaman the boys had planned to use such uncomplimentary language in his presence as would be likely to excite his anger, if he understood what was being said. They did not believe he was as ignorant of the English language as he pretended to be.

"Well," Jimmie asked, of Ned, "did he tumble? What did you see?"

"I saw as evil a look as ever burned out of a human eye," Ned replied.

"Looked to me like he would enjoy feeding Jack and Frank to the rats."

"Then he understood, all right?"

"Of course he did," Jack, answered. "I could see that with one eye. He's been coming here with his grub for four days, and picking up a word here and there every time. We ought to have had sense enough to have been on guard against such treachery."

"What's the answer now?" asked Jimmie, turning to Ned.

"I'm afraid we're in a bad predicament," Ned replied. "This shows me new light. The messenger we are expecting should have been here long ago, and I'm now sure that we've just got to do something. I'm getting afraid to eat the food they bring us, and I lie awake at night, listening for hostile footsteps."

"That sounds a little more like Manhattan!" Jack cried. "Sounds like action! We're off in a heathen land, surrounded by enemies, and not likely to get anything like a fighting chance, but I'm for doing something right now. I'm not going to lie still here and be poisoned, like a rat in a sewer!"

"I'm for going on to Peking," Frank said. "We can report to the American ambassador there, and, at least, get something to eat besides rat pie and something better than a bare floor to sleep on. If we only had the Black Bear, the motor boat we cruised with on the Columbia river, we wouldn't be long on the way."

"Huh!" Jimmie observed, taking out a minute memorandum book, "it is seventy miles by the river from Taku to Tientsin, and only twenty-seven by the road."

"And how far to Peking by the road?" asked Jack.

"It is seventy-nine Miles from Tientsin to Peking," was the reply, "and the roads ought to be good."

"That's more than can be said of the natives!" Jack said.

"The allied armies marched over the road to Peking in 1900," Frank explained, "and I rather think the inhabitants of strip of country have a wholesome respect for foreigners. With our high-power motorcycles, ought to make Peking before daylight, if we start right after dark."

"And don't run across any cutthroats on the way," added Jimmie.

"Let's see," grinned Frank, "we were to have a flying squadron of marines with us? What? I reckon they're flying so high that they are out of sight!"

"Suppose we see if the horses are in good shape," Ned said, going to an adjoining apartment.

He made his appearance again in a minute trundling a magnificent motorcycle. It was been built expressly for army use, with a long, powerful stroke 10 h. p. motor. It was as indestructible and as auto machine as could well be designed. With a perfect muffler, automatic carburetor and lubrication, it was a machine to cover miles silently and with little danger of delay.

The open door behind Ned revealed three machines arranged along the wall, and the boys rushed to the examination of them. In second all were in the room, bending over their steel pets.

"Say!" Jimmie cried, presently, "we'll get Peking to-night—not! This machine has been tampered with, and some parts are missing."

"Yes, I reckon the Yellow Peril is on deck!" said Frank.

CHAPTER II

A DISQUIETING DISCOVERY

The four boys regarded each other in silence for a moment. Jack was the first to speak.

"How badly are the machines damaged?" he asked.

"Mine is all right," Jimmie reported, after a careful examination of his steel steed, "except that a couple of burrs are missing."

"And mine," Frank hastened to say, "is all right except that the oil feed is blocked and the electric battery is shut off—that is, it is so arranged that the machine will spark for a short distance and then buck. Great doings!"

"And yours, Jack?" asked Ned.

"Just a few burrs gone."

"And mine is o.k.," Ned went on, "except that the carburetor has been tampered with. I think we'll get off for Peking before long."

"How?" demanded Jimmie. "We can't make burrs out of wood, or patch up with rat pie, which seems to be about the only thing we have plenty of. I don't suppose we can get repairs in this yellow hole."

Ned took a handbag from under the burlap. "I am carrying my own repair shop with me," he said, taking out a box of burrs and a pair of pincers. "I've got all the small parts right here in duplicate, and some of the larger ones are in the big suitcase."

"You're a wonder!" Jimmie cried, dancing about his chum and wrinkling his nose until it looked like that of a comedian in a motion picture. "I wonder if you haven't got a hunk of Washington pie in that keyster!"

The lads fell to work on their machines, and in a very short time all were ready for the road. Then Ned put away his handbag and began an examination of the large suitcase, which contained the larger repairs for the motorcycles. It had not been molested.

"There's one thing certain," he said, "and that is that the Chinese who are watching us expect us to make a dash for Peking. They took the pains to leave our machines in such shape that their tampering with them would not be suspected. I'd like to know just when this mischief was accomplished."

"Yes," Frank observed, "they wanted us to get out of Taku and break down on the road to Tientsin. They would have us at their mercy out there— or they figured it out that way."

"The work on the machines must have been done sometime during the day— or last night," Ned replied. "Possibly while we were dozing."

"I don't believe it!" Jimmie insisted. "I've had me eyes open every minute to-day."

"Well," Ned went on, laughing, "we had a high wind yesterday, didn't we? A wind that tumbled the dust of the streets in upon us? Well," pointing to a portion of his machine frame which he had been careful not to touch, "here is some of the dust which fell upon the motorcycle then. The person who did the job brushed a lot of the dust away, so, you see, he must have worked since the dust fell."

"Did he brush it all away?" asked Jimmie.

"No," Ned replied, pointing, "here is a brace which he touched with his hands but did not wipe off. In a short time I'll tell you just what sort of a chap it was that did the trick."

The boy got his camera out of the suitcase and took a picture of the spot on the machine frame where the print of human fingers showed. The motorcycle owned by, or in charge of, Jimmie also showed a similar mark, and this, too, was photographed.

This completed, Ned laid the films aside for a time while he made a circuit of the old house, walking slowly as if out for chest exercise, but really seeing every square inch of the earth's surface where he

walked. Once he dropped a pocketknife which he carried in his hand and stooped over to pick it up.

The boys thought he was a long time in securing the knife, although it was plainly in sight. When he stood up again and continued his circuit of the house there was a strange, inscrutable smile on his face.

"What is it?" asked Jack, the instant Ned entered the house.

"We've been blind and deaf since we have boon here," Ned answered. "Hostile influences have been operating all around us. Now," he continued, as Frank opened his lips to ask a question, "we'll see what sort of a tale the camera has to tell."

As he looked at the films his face hardened and his eyes snapped. In a moment he put the telltale sheets away.

"European fingerprints," he said, quietly, "and European footprints out there. It is not Chinamen that we have to look out for."

"What the Old Harry —"

Jimmie checked himself as a figure darkened the doorway. Ned stepped forward to greet the newcomer.

The visitor was a youngish man with black hair, growing well down on a narrow forehead, small black eyes, a straight-lipped mouth, and hard lines about his deep-set eyes. His manner and carriage was that of a man trained to military service.

"You are Mr. Nestor?" he asked, extending his hand as Ned approached him. "I have come a long distance to meet you," he added, before Ned could answer the question.

"From Washington?" asked Ned.

The visitor nodded; glanced sharply about the apartment, where the motorcycles were still lying, and then squatted on one of the burlap bags. Jimmie shook his fist behind the newcomer's back. It was evident that the boy did not like his appearance.

"I am Lieutenant Rae, of the Secret Service," he said, in a moment. "I have been delayed on my way here. You were about to start on without your final instructions?" he asked, lifting a pair of eyebrows

which seemed to make his little black eyes smaller and more inscrutable than ever.

Ned looked at the man, now lolling back on the burlap, and for a moment made no reply. Then he lied deliberately — in the interest of Uncle Sam and human life, as he afterwards explained!

"No," he said, "we were merely overhauling the machines. We are in no haste to be away."

"I see," grinned the other. "You are taking life easily? Well, that is not so bad. However, you are to start on your journey early tomorrow morning."

"I shall be ready," Ned replied. "You have just landed?"

For just a second Lieutenant Rae's eyes sought the ground, then he lifted them boldly. Ned was watching his every movement.

"No," he said, then, "I came in three days ago, but I was obliged to await the movements of others before reporting to you."

Jimmie caught Frank by the arm and drew him out of the house. Out in the deserted garden — which was only a yard or two of hard-packed earth — he whispered:

"That feller's a liar!"

"What makes you think so?" Frank asked.

"He's no Englishman," Jimmie insisted. "He's a Jap. You bet your last round iron man that's the truth. Now, what do you think he's doin' here?"

"Well," Frank replied, "I think you are right. He's not an Englishman.

The nerve of him to put that up to us!"

"Perhaps he's the gazabo that monkeyed with our machines," suggested

Jimmie. "Wish I'd 'a' caught him at it!"

"But Ned says that was an European," Frank said.

"Then they're thick around us," Jimmie went on, "and we're up to our necks in trouble. I wonder what instructions this Rae person will give Ned?"

"Suppose we go inside and see," Frank answered.

When the lads reached the interior of the house again Ned and Rae were bending over a road map of the country between Taku and Peking. The visitor was indicating a route with his pencil.

"Very well," Ned said, as if fully convinced of the honesty of the other, "now about the private orders. You understand, of course, that I know little concerning the work cut out for me."

"You are to receive final instructions at Peking."

Ned smiled, but there was something about the smile which told the boys that he was of their way of thinking.

"He's on!" Jimmie whispered in Frank's ear.

"You bet he is," was the reply.

"I'll come here in the morning," the visitor said, looking at his watch, "and go out with you. The chances are that we'll have to make a quick run. Machines in good order?" with a glance at the motorcycles lying against the wall.

"We haven't as yet looked them over carefully," Ned lied again, "but presume they are in good shape. As a matter of fact," he continued, hardly able to suppress a smile as Jimmie looked reprovingly at him, "as a matter of fact, we know little about the machines. This is new business for us."

Lieutenant Rae bowed himself out of the door, and the boys gathered in an inner room to discuss the situation.

"We may as well face the truth," Ned said, calmly. "The man who was to meet us here has fallen into the hands of our enemies. We are alone in China without instructions and surrounded by foes. Now, what shall we do? We may be able to reach the water front and get off to one of the British ships in sight."

"And go back?" demanded Jimmie. "Not for me! I'm goin' to stay an' see this thing out."

"That's me!" Frank said, and Jack echoed his words.

"Well, then," Ned went on, with a smile of satisfaction at the attitude of the lads, "if we are going on, we've got to get to Peking without delay. I'll tell you what I think. The conspirators are aware that we are trying to run them down. If they can stop us before we fully identify them, their part in the plot against Uncle Sam will never be known." Rest assured, then, that they will stop us if they can."

"Then it's us for the road to-night!" said Jimmie. "That is fine."

In referring to conspirators, Ned indicated the men who had been involved in a plot to get the United States into trouble with a foreign government over a shipment of gold to China. This shipment had gone to the bottom of the Pacific.

It had been claimed that the gold shipment, which was marked for the Chinese government, had really been intended for the revolutionary party, now becoming very strong. It was now insisted that the revolutionists had been posted as to the shipment, and that it was on the books for them to seize it the moment it left the protection of the American flag.

These claims having been made, and believed, in the state department of a foreign government, none too friendly to the government of the United States. A ship had been sent out to watch the transfer of the gold. At least, that was what had been claimed, but this ship, so sent out, had, by an "accident," rammed and sunk the treasure boat. If the Chinese government did not get the gold, neither did the leaders of the revolutionary party.

It had been claimed at Washington that the whole thing was a plot to discredit the United States government in the eyes of the nations of Europe, and Ned Nestor and his chums had been sent out to search the wreck for papers which would disprove the statements made. The papers had been secured.

The point now was to connect the foreign statesmen who had burned their fingers in the plot with the affair. Ned knew that the papers would establish the falsity of the charges, but he wanted to place the blame for the whole matter where it belonged. He wanted to track the man who had conferred with known conspirators back

to his home. He wanted to be able to point out the treacherous government which had so sought to belittle the United States in the eyes of the world.

The boy had no doubt that this was actually the mission upon which he had been sent when ordered by the Secret Service department to report at Taku and there await instructions before proceeding to Peking. He did not understand why he had been instructed to make the trip to Peking on a motorcycle when there were easier ways, but he was quick to obey orders. Later on he learned just why this order had been given.

"Yes," Ned replied to Jimmie's remark, "I think we may as well set out for Peking to-night. If we wait until morning, we may not be at liberty to start out."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Jack.

"Study it out," smiled Ned, "and you may be able to find an answer."

While the boy was speaking, he bent over and looked keenly at a footprint on the earthen floor of the room. It was not such a print as the foot-covering of a Chinese man would leave. It had been made by the long heel of an European shoe.

When Ned looked closer, he saw that the ground was stained a deep red, that there were dark crimson spots on the window casing. Then he saw that a struggle must have taken place in the room, for the few things it held were in disorder.

"Boys," he said, "perhaps our Secret Service man got here before we did."

