



"A man leaned out from the bridge holding a megaphone."



## SMILING VALLEY.

BY HAROLD BINDLOSS.

IT was a dirty night, and Tom Dawson felt anxious as he sat in the low cabin of the Winthrop sloop, listening to the wind, while his comrade, Jake, studied a chart. The little boat lay behind a reef in the Straits of Georgia, which run between the Pacific coast of Canada and Vancouver Island; and the hoarse rumble of the surf indicated that the sea was getting up. She rolled and plunged violently, the halyards slapped against the mast, and every now and then the cable rang as it jarred across the stem.

'It's pretty fierce to-night,' Jake remarked. 'Worst is, we can't pull out until low water. The tide-rip would swamp us if we tried to get round the point while she's running ebb.'

Dawson nodded. He did not want to pull out, but they had been away for some days on a voyage up the Straits, and Mr. Winthrop would be getting anxious about them; besides, Dawson doubted if they could ride out the threatened gale where they were when the flood tide rose about the reef. The little cabin was warm and bright, with the stove that burned bark glowing beside the bulkhead, and the swinging lamp lighted. Outside a bitter wind swept the angry tideway, and now and then a shower of snow blew across the water. They would have a wild run home, but the sloop was staunch, and Dawson was bigger and stronger than when he left England, four years before.

'We'll get open water and a fair wind when we're round the Halibut reefs,' Jake resumed, and then moved his finger north across the chart. 'That's the way to Smiling Valley. I often think about the time we camped there. It's curious nobody has homesteaded the valley yet, but I reckon somebody will before we're ready to put in our stakes.'

Dawson mused. Beautiful valleys are numerous in British Columbia, but he had seen none like the spot Jake talked about. They had found it, so to speak, by accident, when they sailed up the Straits with Mr. Winthrop to buy some sheep, and left him at the coast while they made an exploring trip. The mouth of the vale was narrow, but wide enough for the warm Chinook wind from the Pacific to blow in. A snowy range sheltered it on the north, the sunshine lingered on the gentle slopes to the west and south; there was a clear river and a placid lake. Maples grew among the firs, and maples like rich soil.

They called it Smiling Valley, and wondered that nobody had settled there, since the land belonged to the Government, and any British subject could buy a fixed quantity at a moderate price. Both boys were ambitious, and meant to have a ranch of their own. Mr. Winthrop paid them wages, and they sometimes earned a good sum by taking a contract for cutting telegraph-poles and logs for bridges. Still, they had not enough money to start ranching yet. Perhaps, in a year or two, if they were lucky. . . . Then Dawson pulled himself up. There was no use in thinking about it; somebody else would stake off the best land in Smiling Valley before they could hope to file their claim.

'I dream about the spot now and then, but I'm afraid it's not for us,' he said. 'Perhaps we had better get supper, and then, if the tide's running slack, we'll start.'

They boiled the kettle and ate a good meal, for there was wet and cold to be borne, and it would be a wild

run. By-and-by they crawled out reluctantly, and shortened cable, while the stinging spray blew about them and the sloop plunged her bows in the short seas. The next thing was to tie three reefs in the mainsail to cut down its size, and break out the anchor, after which Dawson hoisted the storm jib, while Jake went to the helm. She started, with two planks on her lee deck buried in rushing foam, and green water swept her cabin roof as she drove round the reef. It was a beam wind afterwards, but big curling seas rolled out of the dark, hove her up, and vanished with a roar to leeward while she sank into the trough. Jake, by a quick pull at the tiller, dodged the worst, letting her fall off before the breaking crests.

The Halibut Reef was not far off when they saw a reeling light, and then, as dim moonlight pierced a cloud, the indistinct shape of a small steamer. It looked as if somebody on board saw them, for the whistle screamed and a red light flared on the slanted bridge. The streaming blaze showed a man in black slickers clinging to the rails and a wall of wet plates that rolled up out of the foam.

'They want us,' Dawson shouted. 'Do you think you can dodge her to windward and get under the steamer's lee?'

'I'll try,' Jake answered doubtfully; and when Dawson, straining hard, hauled the mainsheet in, the little sloop staggered, close-hauled, towards the lights.

Sinking to the mast, she plunged into the white combers, and when she lifted, cataracts of icy brine poured across the coamings of the well, but they held on until the steamer broke the sea, when they hove her to. The red light had burned out, but the moon was brighter, and when Dawson got up on deck, a man leaned out from the bridge holding a megaphone. The sloop rolled and tumbled about in partial shelter.

'What do you want? Are you in trouble?' Dawson shouted.

'Hit a rock,' the man answered through the megaphone. 'Stripped some blades off the propeller. Can't keep her on her course.'

Then the steamer rolled down, until her rail was level with the foam, and masts and funnel hung over the sloop. Jake let the boat fall off to avoid a collision, and looked at Dawson, for they understood the skipper's anxiety. The steamer was small, and loaded light. Her side, rising high above the water, caught the wind, and, since her screw was damaged, she would drift to leeward fast. This would not have mattered much had she had room, but there was a steep, rocky coast not far to lee.

When she steadied, Jake edged the sloop in again, and shouted, 'Where are you bound?'

'Vancouver,' said the captain. 'Can you make any place where you can wire for a tug to meet us?'

Jake thought quickly. There was a telephone at one settlement and a telegraph at another, but he did not see how they could reach either in time for a message to bring a tug before the morning, and that would be too late. He imagined the vessel would drive ashore soon after daybreak.

'No,' he shouted; 'Vancouver's the only place one could get help in time.'

'Can you make it?' the captain asked.

Jake beckoned Dawson, and while they crouched behind the coaming ledge out of the wind, briefly explained the situation, which was daunting. They were



not very far from home, and would soon have the wind astern, when the sloop would run comfortably before the sea. If they tried to reach Vancouver, they must beat round a group of reefs, and Jake doubted if the boat had power enough. Beating to windward and running were very different things. They must reckon on two risks: the little boat might swamp, or drive on the rocks and go to pieces. If no help came, the steamer would certainly drift ashore and be badly damaged, although Jake thought the sea was not heavy enough to wreck her and drown her crew.

When he finished his explanation he looked at Dawson, who nodded. Neither had talked about it, but they knew their help was valuable, and remembered the Smiling Valley.

Jake jumped on deck and waved his arm. 'We'll try it,' he shouted. 'If we get through, you ought to see the tug's smoke at sun-up.'

(Continued on page 406.)

### A YEAR IN A GARDEN.

XL—NOVEMBER.

WHEN Billy and Babe began to grow vegetables that were really useful, and that appeared on the dinner-table, they felt they were truly helping to increase England's food supplies. All the summer there had been a scarcity of ordinary vegetables in spite of what they had done the previous year, and so they determined they would grow still more in 1918. For this purpose they chose a special plot of ground in their own garden, and for a week or two they dug and weeded, and forked and hoed, to get the soil into proper condition for seed-sowing in the spring. Here they would grow extra crops of carrots, parsnips, spinach, beetroot, onions, and salad plants, besides peas and beans. All the summer this plot had been filled with big clumps of perennials, and the pulling up of their roots loosened the soil splendidly. Half of the large border was made up of fine light soil that Billy, with his gardening book behind him, declared would be just the thing for carrots and parsnips, with a border of lettuce and radishes. Along the back was a strong fence that would serve a double purpose: it would keep off the north winds, and it would form a good support for peas or beans. Along the top of this fence two-inch nails were hammered in ready to hold the string up which the beans would climb next summer. At either end of the bed, parsley would probably grow well, and other useful herbs would find a suitable home in a sunny sheltered spot under the fence. It was a time of really hard work, both in making plans and preparing the soil. Long ago the children had found that the interest of a vegetable garden is quite different from that of a flower garden, but it is none the less enjoyable; there is quite as much opportunity for artistic and good work in one as in the other. It happened that this large bed that they had prepared for vegetables was in full view of the dining-room windows, across a wide stretch of grass; and it was partly for this reason, and partly because the east winds came from that direction, that the children decided to make a screen of raspberry bushes. These, however, were not got in till December, for bad weather came along, and made the soil so heavy that planting was impossible.

Through all their work in the garden this winter, a

faithful little robin was their constant companion; he rarely sang, rarely even chirped; but he always followed them at a distance of a yard or two, taking a keen interest in their work, especially when they turned up any worms for him. No other birds were singing now; the garden was silent, except on one or two occasions when the robin had violent disputes with other members of his family, who wanted their share of the garden and the children's friendship. But the only time when he would at all tolerate their presence was in the morning, at the birds' food-table on the lawn.

### THE BEE.

A BEE upon a bramble bush  
Was thinking might and main.  
Said he: 'To-day  
I mustn't play,  
The fact is very plain.

But I must seek the roses out,  
And other flowers as well,  
Or how shall I  
The honey spy  
For storing in the cell?

I wonder where I ought to go  
To find the richest bloom?  
By yonder rill  
That skirts the hill,  
Or through the woodland gloom?

Perhaps that garden over there,  
Behind the palings tall,  
With shady bowers  
And beds of flowers,  
Would suit me best of all.

And yet it might be far from wise  
To go in there to-day,  
And sad, you see,  
'Twould surely be  
To throw the time away.

In fact I don't know which is best:  
The garden, wood, or hill—  
And while I think,  
The sun will sink,  
And leave me sitting still.'

And so it did. The darkness came  
And covered all the sky,  
And hope, that day,  
Was swept away  
Because he feared to try.

### AN ENEMY OF THE RED CROSS.

MANY strange encounters have taken place, during the great war, between new inventions and old fashions. Perhaps it is unfair to speak of lions as 'old fashions,' for they are still a serious nuisance in many parts of East Africa. But they would fare ill if they took much part in modern warfare. Recently a lion had a new experience. Stalking through the bush one night he saw two fiery eyes approaching him almost silently, along a roughly made track. He stood in defiant wonder, until the strange beast, whatever it was,





"The lion saw two fiery eyes approaching him."

uttered a hoot, the like of which he had never heard before. Then he turned tail and fled—happily for the Red Cross ambulance car, which was serving our gallant troops in the conquest of German East Africa.

B.P.

#### FRUITS FROM ACROSS THE SEAS.

##### VI.—THE DATE PALM AND THE BREAD FRUIT.

THE Date Palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*) is, another palm which is much esteemed. This tree, in appearance, is so similar to the Cocoa-nut Palm that



I will not give a sketch, as you have already seen one of the cocoa-nut palm (page 380). The main difference is that the leaf-stalk scars on the trunk, instead of being ring-like, as on the Cocoa-nut, are in series, and shaped like horseshoes. The fruits, which we know so well, are carried in great clusters, often weighing as much as twenty-five to thirty pounds. They are oblong yellow fruits much like a small plum. There may be anything up to two hundred in a single cluster! The flowers (which are sometimes white and sometimes yellow) are of two kinds, one having only pistils and the other only stamens. Now, you know that pollen from a stamen must travel somehow to a pistil before there can be a fruit. When Date Palms grow wild, fertilisation (as the passing of pollen from a stamen to a pistil is called) takes place unassisted by man, but under cultivation man does assist as follows: As a tree which only carries stamens never has fruit, naturally cultivators do not want many of those! They therefore plant one stamen-carrying tree to every thirty or forty pistil-carrying trees. Then when the flowers are fully in bloom, the cultivator cuts the branches which are in bloom from the stamen-carrying trees, and carefully hangs them over the trees which have only pistils. Then no doubt the pollen from the stamens gets carried to the pistils by visiting insects as well as by the wind, and the trick is done. I have done this sort of thing myself in the similar case of the *Aucuba Laurel*. Every year I bring sprays of stamen-carrying flowers from a neighbouring garden, and hang them in my pistil-carrying bushes, with the result that I have lovely red berries on my bushes every year!

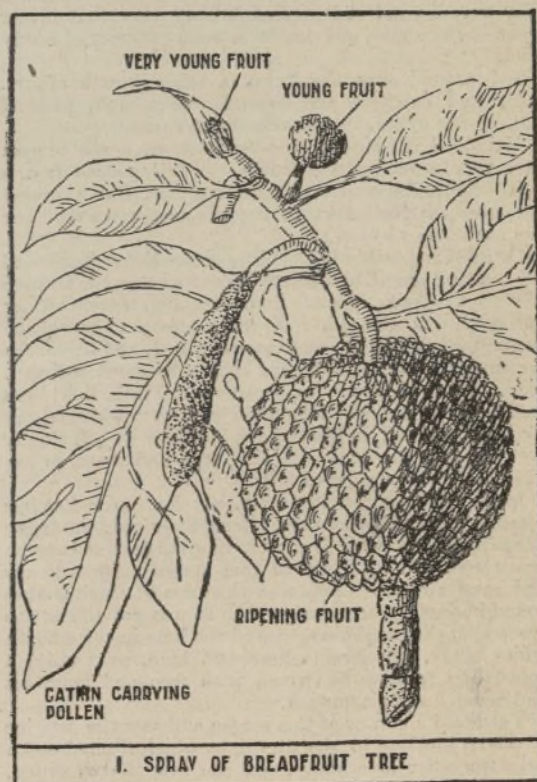
The Date Palm is propagated by off-shoots from the roots, not from seeds. It was a native of Africa and Asia; it has been introduced into the warmer parts of Europe, but will not develop fruits there. There are many varieties, and some grow to be over a hundred feet high; they also live to be a great age.

As a food the date is very nourishing, and is used in many ways. Arabs dry them and grind them up to make a kind of meal. Cattle, dogs, camels, and horses all like dates. They show their good taste!

The leaves of the Date Palm were the 'palms' which were bound together with myrtle and citron to form the badge of desert life. These bunches were shaken at the Feast of Tabernacles, and afterwards preserved in the homes. At the time of the triumphal entrance into Jerusalem of our Lord, these were the 'palm branches' which the people brought out and carried in the procession. The leaves of the Date Palm are still used in many religious ceremonies, and just before Palm Sunday there are quite a lot of leaves of date palms in the markets. In the south of France the date palm is often grown just for this purpose.

There is just one more over-seas fruit I must mention, and that is the true Bread Fruit (*Artocarpus incisa*). This is another most useful fruit, for in many parts it is one of the staple foods. In fig. 1, I show you a sketch of a branch which I obtained at the Natural History Museum, London. This is on quite a small scale, for a fully ripe fruit might weigh twenty or thirty pounds! This sketch shows you a ripening fruit, a young fruit, and a pollen-carrying catkin. The leaves are large and shiny, something like those of a castor-oil plant, or a fig. The fruits are as much like a pine-apple as anything in structure. They are a mass of bracts and fruits which,

by expansion, have become joined into a fleshy body. The plant is a native of Java and Amboyna. When I was reading that fascinating book, *The Malay Archipelago*, by A. Russel Wallace, I found there much useful information about it. He says he first tasted it in Amboyna, and found it very good. The natives baked it in embers, and then you scooped out the inside with a spoon, when it tasted like Yorkshire pudding or mashed potatoes with milk! He speaks of it as being about the size of a melon—a little fibrous near the middle, but smooth otherwise. It is used in several ways, but is best baked. Dr. Wallace



says it is delicious as a vegetable with meat. It has a delicate but characteristic flavour, and one never tires of it.

This I think covers all the chief over-seas fruits of which we hear much in England; but of course there are very many others which are more or less popular in their homes. There is the Durian for instance (*Durio Ziberhenus*), an oval fruit some eight or nine inches long in a hard prickly shell. The pulp has a delicious flavour, but a most disagreeable scent. Then, there is the Bread Nut, which tastes something like a hazel, and is used as bread in the West Indies. And so I could go on with a number of others, but I do not think you would be very interested in fruits you may not be very likely to see, and so I will not tell of any more.

E. M. BARLOW.



## WANDERERS IN THE WAR.

By A. A. METHLEY.

(Continued from page 387.)

THE prospect of fresh air and sunshine was very tempting after the long, dull days in the pokey little room upstairs, and, as Val was terribly afraid of being sent back to bed again, she kept out of the woman's sight and tiptoed softly across the stone floor and out of the house. Bob was very good, and did not even bark when a fierce-looking dog snarled at him from within a ramshackle tub-kennel. In a very few moments they were beyond the littered, muddy yard that lay in front of the house, and out on a sunny stretch of sandy road.

All around was the forest (a thick growth of firs, oaks, and beeches), and beyond rose a high, pointed hill, with a white, leafless tree on its summit.

Val stood motionless, her head raised, her blue eyes narrowed into a puzzled frown. A hill, a dead tree, a lonely inn, and a man with a scarred face. She wrinkled her brows in the effort to capture and piece together her scattered memories.

Could this possibly be the place where Roger had heard the buzzing sound, and where Jules had seen the strange wires? Val was a brave little girl, and, moreover, her curiosity was aroused. If there was a mystery, she determined to find out what it was about, and there was no time like the present, for at any moment Fräulein might appear and order her back to bed. 'Bob, Bob!' she called softly, and when the dog bounded to her side, she twisted one hand in his tangled hair and set off, slowly it is true, for her foot was still stiff and weak, in the direction of the dead-tree hill.

It seemed a long, tiring walk, but Val arrived at her destination at last, and then, after a little rest, she began her investigations. There were no strange sounds to be heard to-day, and the dead tree looked quite ordinary and harmless—but there was the mass of thick bushes round it, just as Jules had said. It was not difficult to creep into the tangle, nor to find the hole in the smooth white trunk, a hole some four feet high, over which a concealing framework twined with fern and brambles had been cleverly arranged.

Val lifted a corner of this screen and saw the interior of the hollow tree in the dim light which filtered down from the other hole above, and she saw the wires too, although she could not make out what they were any more than Jules had done. Then just as she had decided to give up the search for the time, as she had had no breakfast and was beginning to feel rather hungry, the sound of Bob's deep growl fell on her ears. She pushed her way back, dusty and covered with scraps of leaf and twigs, and emerging once more into the open, found Fräulein Heinz standing behind her. The German was pale and almost speechless with fury, her hands were clenched and her eyes seemed to be starting out of her head. She stamped her feet on the hard mossy ground as Val scrambled from among the bushes, and would have seized and shaken her if Bob had not growled again.

'What are you doing here, you hateful little wretch? How dare you leave the house without my permission? Don't you know that you are my prisoner?' 'Your prisoner?' Val echoed the word in a dazed whisper.

'And this is the way you reward me for all my

kindness.' Fräulein's voice rose to a shrill scream. 'You come here and spy. But I will punish you for this. You shall be whipped. You shall be shut up. You shall have nothing to eat but bread and water.'

Val drew herself up, a straight boyish little figure in her peasant clothes, and faced her antagonist with unflinching eyes. 'Why are you here, you and your brother, Fräulein?' she asked. 'You are Germans: what are you doing in France? I want to know.'

Fräulein shrugged her shoulders, and then a new expression came into her eyes, a fierce, eager light, that seemed to give a certain dignity to her ruddy face and stout, thick-set figure.

'I serve my country,' she said, 'and you can call me a spy if you like. I am not ashamed. We have done our work well, I and the others. Germany will rule Europe; she will rule the world. We have waited for years, but the Day has come at last.'

Val shrank back, her hand still on Bob's shoulder, her eyes gazing awestruck at Fräulein's flushed, enthusiastic face.

And then the loud blast of a motor-horn was heard from the road below and Fräulein's face changed again. 'Come,' she cried, and disregarding Bob, she seized Val's hand and dragged her towards the narrow path that led down the hill.

There was a grey motor-car at the door of the inn, and a man dressed as a chauffeur stood by it with a letter in his hand. Fräulein snatched it from him, tore it open and read it through eagerly. It was evident that the tidings were satisfactory, for the woman's face lit up and exclamations of joy burst from her lips.

At last she turned to Val, waving the paper in her hand. 'There is news,' she cried. 'Great news! Splendid news! My brother has sent me a message. Our armies have been victorious everywhere. They are at the gates of Paris. And we are going to Paris. We shall see the German soldiers march through the city in triumph.'

Val did not answer, for the loud voice and boastful words dazed her completely, and then Fräulein dragged her into the house, and there followed an hour of bustle and hurried preparations for departure. Fräulein Heinz seemed to have forgotten her anger in this new excitement, and it appeared that Val was to go to Paris with her instead of being left behind at the inn.

By ten o'clock they were off, Val packed into the back of the car with the inseparable Bob at her side, and then for hour after hour they sped westward, through woods, across rivers, and along straight, tree-bordered roads.

Several times during the journey the car was stopped and papers demanded, but these were always forthcoming, and there were no great difficulties or long delays. Towards evening, however, when they reached a large town, the position of affairs did not seem to be quite so satisfactory from the Germans' point of view, and it became apparent that they were not to go on to Paris for the present, after all.

The car stopped outside a tall house in a narrow street, and the chauffeur, who seemed to be able to speak French like a native—although he and Fräulein talked German together—went in to make inquiries. When he came out his face was very grave, and, leaning over the side of the car, he spoke to Fräulein in a low, anxious voice.

Val, who knew very little German, could not catch a word of what he said, but Fräulein frowned, and her good-humour disappeared completely.



'We are to stay here the night,' she said, crossly, and then Val followed her into the house and upstairs to a large, rather stuffy room with a gold clock on the mantelpiece and thick curtains over the closed windows.

Fräulein had expected her brother to meet her, but he did not appear, and all through that evening and the next day she waited impatiently for news of him. They did not go downstairs to meals, but had them brought up to the stuffy room, and hour by hour, as her anxiety increased, the German woman grew more and more irritable.

On the second morning, when they were just finishing breakfast, and Fräulein Heinz had already been down stairs four times to inquire for news, letters, or telegrams, there came a knock at the door, and when it was opened, the French-speaking chauffeur appeared on the threshold. He seemed to be in a great hurry, and there was a paper in his hand.

Fräulein, with a furtive glance at Val, who was feeding Bob with bread and honey, went out to speak to the man, and his gruff voice, mingled with shrill exclamations of dismay and horror, were heard from the other side of the closed door.

When Fräulein reappeared, she was wringing her hands, and her eyes were red. She began at once to gather her possessions together, but she would not answer any questions, and looked as if she could have bitten Val's head off, when the little girl innocently asked whether they were going to start for Paris at last.

When everything was ready, and the car was at the door, Fräulein Heinz turned her attention to Val. A large travelling-cloak was produced, and the little girl realised with a sinking heart that she was once more to be carried away as a prisoner of war.

At the last moment, however, the German seemed to change her mind, and after some moments of anxious hesitation, she unwrapped the cloak which had already been folded round the child's shoulders.

'Val,' she said, 'how would you like me to leave you behind? The people here will take care of you, and before long your brother is certain to find you.'

Val clasped her hands, and a little cry of joy broke from her lips. The prospect of staying alone in the cheerless, stuffy room was not a tempting one, but, at least, there would be a chance of finding Roger again.

'Oh, Fräulein, thank you so much,' she began. But Fräulein interrupted her; there was still something to be said, and the chauffeur who had come for her bag was waiting impatiently at the door.

'There is one thing that you must promise me, Val. I shall not see your brother now, and he has my letter. You must ask him for it, do you understand, directly, and then you must get away somewhere by yourself and burn it. Here are matches. Put them into your pocket, so that you will be ready. Now promise me you will burn that letter. If you will do that, you shall stay here—I will set you free.'

Val promised readily enough, for she had hardly thought of the letter during the past week, and had certainly never connected it in any way with Fräulein's work as a German spy. The woman picked up her travelling bag then with a sigh of relief, and hurried away, but at the door of the room she paused once more.

'Good-bye, little one, good-bye,' she said. Then she was gone, and that was the last that Val saw of Fräulein Heinz.

## CHAPTER XX.

ROGER stood quite still for a moment, when he caught sight of the man with the scarred face among the French villagers, for he could hardly believe the evidence of his own eyes, and he rubbed them, as if to drive away some strange delusion. But it was no mistake.

The French cavalry were riding down the narrow street, and it was impossible for Roger to get to the other side until they had passed. When the way was clear again, Heinz had disappeared completely.

The boy hurried across the road then, and searched everywhere, down narrow lanes and pathways, in the orchards and gardens, between the rows of cabbages and thick-growing beans, behind stacks and wood-piles, even in the cottages themselves; for this man knew where Val was; he had been in the motor-car which had carried the little girl away, and if he were not found, perhaps the clue would be lost for ever.

He must find the man, that was his only thought, and the slightest loss of time might be fatal. He reached the western outskirts of the village at last, and stood there, shading his eyes against the sun-glare, and staring at the wide stretch of white road that lay before him.

At first it seemed as if the whole country-side in that direction were empty and deserted, but after a time Roger saw—or thought that he saw—a figure in the distance. He leaned forward eagerly. Yes, there certainly was a patch of blue moving along beneath the tall poplar-trees that bordered the road. It vanished, but soon appeared again further on. The boy did not hesitate, but started off at a run, taking a short cut across a field, so that he might reach the road near the place where he had last caught a glimpse of the disguised German.

It was a very hot, sultry afternoon, and as he plodded on and on through the thick, clogging dust that made swift progress quite impossible, Roger had time to think over everything that had happened, and he wondered uneasily what could be the meaning of the German's disguise, and why he should have risked his life by remaining behind in the French village.

It was a long walk under the blazing afternoon sun, and Roger was hot, tired, footsore, hungry and thirsty, when at last the road swerved northward and reached a large river. He stopped, threw himself down on a bank under a tree, and wondered what had better be done next.

A bridge crossed the river at this point, and it had evidently been damaged and repaired quite lately. Roger, primed with his new military knowledge, had little difficulty in understanding what had happened.

The French, in their hurried retreat, had attempted to destroy the bridge, but little injury had been done. Roger could see the gap and the wooden structure with which the German engineers had spanned it, and beyond, on the opposite bank, he could see the road running northward round the spur of a wooded hill.

The south shore of the river was also thickly wooded, and among the trees was a house which had been burnt by the Germans in their advance. The charred timbers and blackened, broken walls looked strangely desolate, and there was no other sign of human life to be seen. The German spy seemed to have vanished into space. It was impossible to tell in what direction he had gone, or whether he were lurking among the trees and bushes near at hand.

(Continued on page 402.)





"Val found Fräulein Heinz standing behind her."