

Every Scoutmaster his own Handbook

Two simple yet powerful aids to boy training towards happy citizenship exist ready to hand in --

1. The glowing enthusiasm inherent in the boy himself.
2. The trainer's own experiences of life.

One Scoutmaster tells me that he takes my weekly remarks in the Scout as his text for his week's work with his boys.

His conclusion after reading a good many of these weekly paragraphs is that he believes that I "want to make the boy happy."

Well, I am glad that he has realised this, because it is really the aim of our training. We want to show the boys how to be happy, how to enjoy life, both (1) in the present, and (2) in the future.

We are not a Cadet Corps or a Council School; with all respect to these institutions, their methods are not exactly ours; we want to make the boys happy for ultimate good citizenship. It is true that incidentally in doing so we give them the benefits that can be got from these other societies, for Scouting does develop Discipline and Health and Knowledge, but at the same time it directly aims to make them better citizens through HAPPINESS AND SERVICE, which is outside the sphere of the others. The *smile* and the *good turn* are our speciality. The want of these in the average citizen is at the root of much of our social trouble to-day.

In helping the boy to be happy in the present we do so by utilising and encouraging his impulses and activities, and edging them into the right direction and control.

In preparing him for happiness ultimately in his life we can each of us do much by looking at our own experiences and steering him clear of rocks on which we in our time have very nearly come to grief ourselves.

For instance (if you will forgive a very domestic expose), in my own case, I can look back and recognise that I have had not merely a happy life, but an extremely happy life.

I think that much of this has been attributable to the fact that I never happened to run against the rock of unhealthy personal ambition. By good luck, rather than by good management, promotion came to me very rapidly, and yet every step -- except that it brought me accession of salary (and, goodness knows, I needed it!) -- as regretted by me.

I didn't want to become a Captain because it put me out of the fun and irresponsibility of being a subaltern; I regretted being promoted to Colonel because it put me away from personal contact with my men. On one occasion I was prematurely promoted to General, and was only too thankful when a few days later it was found that I was under age for the job.

In a word, *I was content with what I had.*

I cannot remember any period of my life when I had time to be idle or to be without some object in my hobbies or activities.

It is true, for one thing, that I went in a good deal for theatricals; this sounds like wasting time, but never did I take part in or organise a performance without some real reason behind it, such, for instance, as heartening the men during prevalence of cholera or sickness, or to counteract temptation in a bad locality.

When I rose to the position of commanding instead of obeying, I endeavoured to carry out a human instead of an official system of control. It gave one more trouble to organise, but it gave one greater satisfaction in the end.

(Excuse these personal reminiscences and theories. I am merely quoting them with the object of suggesting how every Scoutmaster can in a similar way draw upon his own experiences of life and use them as his guide for training his boys.)

So far as my experience goes the passing of happiness to others is the real key to happiness for oneself.

By encouraging, in a healthy, cheery, and not in a sanctimonious and looking-for-reward spirit, your Scouts to do good turns as a first step, and to do service for the community as a development, you can do more for them even than by encouraging their proficiency or their discipline or their knowledge, because you are teaching them not how to get a living so much as how to live.

February, 1920.

Automatic Internationality

IT has possibly hardly struck many a Scoutmaster that in his work with his Troop the results are extending far beyond his comparatively limited area, that his efforts are being watched, results noted, and his example followed by others in countries across the sea. But so it is; and out of such beginnings an international sympathy and understanding is growing up.

Many excellent movements have been thought of and urged upon the world for all they were worth -- but in spite of the pressing they have not appealed so widely as their promoters had hoped and have ended in smoke. Other movements have sprung up almost of their own accord to meet some need, and have grown and flourished exceedingly. You and I know of one, at any rate, that has done so. Again it is a case of the natural as opposed to the artificial. It is this natural automatic growth of a movement that speaks to its vitality and its possibilities. Nations differ in their characteristics to a marvellous degree considering their relationship in the human family, and although modern communication with its interchange of literature, manufactures, personal visits, etc., ought to have made a vast difference by now, it hasn't done so. We are still very much strangers to each other.

A League of Nations is to be formed to make us better friends through force of law. I hope it may. But there is another league of nations very much in embryo at present but growing up *automatically*, and that is in the brotherhood of the Boy Scouts. And since its growth is entirely natural and not forced in any way, there is immense promise about it.

At the Jamboree we shall, I hope, get the first general expression. Representatives of twenty-six foreign nations will be among us, and I need not go further than suggest what tremendous ulterior importance may attach to the occasion.

A very real responsibility attaches to each one of us because it is on what we do, what we say, and almost what we think that these different countries will fashion the future line of their Scout work. I think the meeting for interchange of ideas comes just at the right moment.

Although we British Scouts are not yet by any means at the highest attainable standard, we are sufficiently well grounded to give the right impression; and the foreign Scouts, while fairly well started, are not as yet so matured that they cannot alter and adapt their methods where they may have gone a little off the line.

So that even if the Jamboree did nothing towards enthusing the boys, towards educating the public, or towards bringing help to the Scoutmasters, yet it would be worth while if through bringing together the representatives of foreign countries in the one ideal of good

citizenship, it should have promoted that spirit of fraternity and mutual goodwill without which the formal league of nations can only be an empty shell.

June, 1920.

What is Scouting?

NOT one in a hundred of our own people knows this.

Scouting is not a thing that can be taught by wording it in public speeches, nor by defining it in print. Its successful application depends entirely on the grasp of the Scout spirit by both trainer and trainee. What this spirit is can only be understood by outsiders when they see it ruling, as it already does to a vast extent, the thoughts and the actions of each member of our brotherhood.

Thus every Scoutmaster and every Commissioner will be an apostle to them, not merely through what he says but through what he imparts by impression and through what he does himself in his own personality.

For this he must, as a first point, be imbued with a real understanding knowledge of the Scout ideals, the methods we use to gain them, and the reasons that underlie them.

Among them he realises, for instance:

That the need is urgent of a great social rise out of the present slough of squalor; That the State education system has its limitations for developing the character, the health, the technical skill, and the communal Christianity that are necessary;

That Scouting can help by attracting the boy or girl, or by helping him or her to acquire these qualities;

That this cannot be done by the imposition of artificial instruction from without but by the encouragement of the natural impulses from within;

That this is imparted by personal leadership and example on the part of the Scoutmaster himself, and not by his mere instruction;

That the intelligent application of Nature lore and woodcraft largely supplies the means and the incentive, while the Promise and the Scout Law give the direction;

That the growth of the Movement both at home and in every civilised foreign country is phenomenal, not merely for its numbers but because it is entirely natural from within and has not been artificially forced from without;

That it is *brotherhood* -- scheme which, in practice, disregards differences of class, creed, country and colour, through the undefinable spirit that pervades it -- the spirit of God's gentleman.

Now these, you will say, are things that you know already, and don't need to be told. Yes, that is so. But what I want is that you should pass them on to those who don't know them.

July, 1920.

Woodcraft is not Wampum

I SEE that I have been quoted as advocating woodcraft as

"the key activity for true Scouting."

That is correct. But, then, the term "woodcraft" has been explained as meaning to dress up like Red Indians, and that, therefore, I advocate the adoption of "scalp locks and wampum, teepees and feathers." This is not correct.

I know a little about the Red Indian, and he is not (and was not in his prime) all he is pictured by some who write about him only on his sunny side.

Still, I am not hostile to him. If we pick the plums out of the pudding, we find his romantic story, picturesque dress and customs appeal, in some cases, to the boy, and he can thus be useful to us.

So can his African brother, the Zulu, the Haussa, the Somali and the Arab -- all of whom I know. Nor would I omit the Maori, the Australian black, the South Sea Islander, the Gurkha, the Burman, the Sikh, etc. All may have their bad points, but certainly all have something that we can learn from them.

But woodcraft goes a great deal deeper than the surface attraction or imitation of one or other of the more primitive tribes of men.

It is rather the power that is common to all these people of reading from the book of Nature, and their lines of education are through natural if somewhat primitive methods, which, with us, have been swamped out under the application of artificial steps.

In observation and deduction, in camp skill, in self-support, in communal discipline, in physical self-development (including quickness of eye) and endurance, in simple pleasures and power of enjoyment, there is a good deal that we may, with advantage, learn from the so-called savage.

This same education, as we see it, applied to the civilised man in the case of the explorer, the backwoodsman, and the frontiersman makes him an individual more efficient, more manly and broader in mind and body than the average school-educated member of the crowd in a city.

July, 1920.

Woodcraft Indians

I HAVE been asked by two different Scoutmasters whether I approve of the "Red Indian or Woodcraft Movement" in the Scouts.

Well, this is, to begin with, a mix-up of terms. There need be, and is, no special "movement" to that end that I know of, though there used to be one in America which was eventually merged in the Boy Scouts.

Woodcraft is, as I have often pointed out, the key activity in Scouting. For this frequent camping, boating, and hiking are essential, coupled with their accessories of pioneering, Nature lore, and backwoodsmanship generally.

Where these are not so easily accessible Red Indian activities can in many cases be a valuable help.

But it does not need a separate movement in our Brotherhood, and, such a step would, for more than one reason, be a bad one.

Personally, I like Red Indian Craft. I was brought up on Catlin and Red Indian stories. It is true that when I came to know the Red Skin personally he was no longer all that history and romance had painted him; so-called civilisation had played havoc with him morally and physically.

At the same time, the picturesque achievements, ritual, and dress of these braves have a strong appeal for boys -- aye, and even for men in some cases.

One is told that it is ridiculous for a town-dweller to assume some woodcraft name, and to add a sign drawing of it after his signature in imitation of the Indian way. Well, that is

true, but I can assure you that when I was given the title of "The Lone Pine on the Sky-line" by the Red Indian Boy Scouts of America in Olympia the other day, I felt just as thrilled and pleased as when the real Maoris presented me with one of their most treasured war tokens for service in South Africa, or when the Matabele warriors hailed me with the title of "Impeesa" for work done in the field.

So, although it may be merely make-believe, yet, as a variation to the ordinary Scout training. Red Indianism can take hold, and can well be applied, *for a period*, in a Scout Troop.

But the Scoutmaster should remember that its appeal must not always be relied upon to be a lasting one, and boys are apt to tire of it, or to be ridiculed out of it. Moreover, the Indian training ceases to appeal so strongly when the boy begins to become the young man, and therefore more sensitive to the ridiculous.

Whether its practice is a success or not in the Troop depends very much on the sympathy of the Scoutmaster himself. If he can enjoy Indian Lore and enter into the make-believe, and knows the backwoods and their craft, he will make a big thing of it; but boys are critical beggars, and quickly see through the man who does not believe or who has not "been there."

October, 1920.

The Hang of the Thing

A SCOUT officer came to me the other day with a scheme for organising the Movement on a better footing than heretofore. It involved a certain amount of expense in offices, whole-time secretaries, etc. But there was a plan to meet this with an adequate contribution of funds from Local Associations.

An integral part of the idea was the formation of a fully representative committee by general election to manage the whole organisation; the advantage was that it could eliminate the present sporadic and uneven arrangement of Local Associations running their shows on different lines of their own. In this more centralised and ordered system a far more accurate record could be kept of the development, a more regular standard of efficiency among the Troops could be set up, and a better general supervision maintained.

He was going on to describe further advantages of the scheme when I felt bound to save him the trouble, and I burst in on him with the remark, "My dear chap! But you have not got the hang of Scouting. For one thing the Movement extends considerably beyond the United Kingdom. Your elected committee would have to represent all parts of the Empire. How could election supply the expert heads required for the different departments at Headquarters? Local Associations would enjoy subscribing funds to run the office -- I don't think. These are some of the minor material objections. But there is another and far greater consideration that upsets the whole caboodle. WE ARE A MOVEMENT, NOT AN ORGANISATION."

We work through "love and legislation." That is where we differ from so many other systems; it may be wrong of us, but that is our way, and, in spite of it, we have somehow managed to do something in the twelve years of our existence.

I have just got back from a pretty big tour of Scouting in other parts of the world, and what I have seen there only confirms me in the conviction that in working through love for the boy, loyalty to the Movement, and comradeship one with another -- that is, through the SPIRIT OF SCOUTING -- we are on the right line.

It is true that many have not -- like my friend -- as yet got the hang of that spirit, but, on the other hand, many have, and many more are getting it. The spread of the officers' training (eighteen authorised camps in the United Kingdom this summer) is helping its development very materially. Our form of administration is one that has its foundations on a very high principle.

A Scout officer (he's dead now, so I can say it quite openly) once asked me for a tangible reward for the work which, as he put it, he had done for me in his capacity as a Scout official.

I had to explain to him a point which he confessed had never struck him before, and that was that he was working for the boy and not for me.

The suggestion of Scouting has merely been given for the use of those who have the interest of their country and of their kind at heart. The men who have taken it up are not a force of masters and servants, officers and soldiers, but are a team of patriots bound by a common ideal as a Brotherhood, and that ideal is the betterment of the boy.

July, 1921.

Standardisation of Badges

IN view of a very elaborate curriculum that was recently drawn up by one authority for standardising the tests for badges, I was obliged to criticise it in this sense:

"I hope that the compilers are not losing sight of the aim and spirit of the Movement by making it into a training school of efficiency through curricula, marks, and standards.

"Our aim is merely to help the boys, especially the least scholarly ones, to become personally enthused in subjects that appeal to them individually, and that will be helpful to them.

"We do this through the fun and jollity of Scouting; by progressive stages they can then be led on, naturally and unconsciously, to develop for themselves their knowledge.

"But if once we make it into a formal scheme of serious instruction for efficiency, we miss the whole point and value of the Scout training, and we trench on the work of the schools without the trained experts for carrying it out.

"We have to remember that the Scoutmasters are voluntary play leaders in the game of Scouting, and not qualified school teachers, and that to give them a hard-and-fast syllabus is to check their ardour and their originality in dealing with their boys according to local conditions.

"I could quite imagine it frightening away many Scoutmasters of the right sort.

"The syllabus as suggested seems to go a good deal beyond what is prescribed as our dose in *Scouting for Boys*; and if the proportions of the ingredients given in a prescription are not adhered to you cannot well blame the doctor if the medicine doesn't work.

"Our standard for badge earning -- as I have frequently said -- is not the attainment of a certain level of quality of work (as in the school), but the AMOUNT OF EFFORT EXERCISED BY THE INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATE. This brings the most hopeless case on to a footing of equal possibility with his more brilliant or better-off brother.

"We want to get them ALL along through cheery self-development from within and not through the imposition of formal instruction from without."

November, 1921.

Listen

A FURTHER way of discovering activities that will appeal to the boys is for the Scoutmaster to save his brains by using his ears.

When in war-time a soldier-scout is out at night and wants to gain information of the enemy's moves, he does so to a large extent by listening. Similarly, when a Scoutmaster is in the dark as to what is the inclination or the character of his boys, he can, to a great extent, get it by listening.

Scouting, the journal of the Boy Scouts of America, in its February issue, gives a delightful article on the value to Scoutmasters of listening. Under the suggestive heading "When a hike stubs its toe," the author urges a Scoutmaster, who is on a hike with his boys and who is cudgelling his brains what to say to them on the subject of observation of nature, to listen to what his boys are talking about and to keep his own mouth shut.

They may be arguing together about a prize fight or something equally remote from the study of trees, but, in listening, he will gain a close insight into the character of each boy and a realisation of the way in which he can best be interested.

So, too, in the Court of Honour debates and Camp Fire talks; if you make listening and observation your particular occupation, you will gain much more information from your boys than you can put into them by your own talk.

Also, when visiting the parents, don't go with the idea of impressing on them the value of Scouting so much as to glean from them what are their ideas of training their boys and what they expect of Scouting or where they find it deficient.

A few months ago I put forward a small suggestion in the same direction, namely, when short of ideas don't impose on your Scouts activities which you think they ought to like; but find out from them by listening or by questioning which activities appeal most to them, and then see how far you can get these going -- that is, if they are likely to be beneficial to the boys.

So, too, in giving instruction it is better by far to get your boys to debate a point or to ask you questions than to preach information to them. There's a lot to be got by listening and observing.

The joke about new Scout activities is that they are just like the new toy that daddy brings home for the kiddies: daddy is the first to take to playing with the toy himself.

Well, that is just what it should be in Scouting.

April, 1922.

The Game of Scouting

IN the Headquarters Report of one of our Oversea branches it is stated that a large percentage of decrease in numbers of Scouts occurs in about the third month of their service in the Movement, and Scoutmasters are warned to look into their method of handling Scouting to make sure that it meets the expectation of the lads.

I don't know how far such defection goes on among our Scouts in Britain, but I do know that very much the same thing happened in the army some years ago, when a considerable proportion of the recruits took to deserting after about three months of service.

In my own regiment I looked into the matter from the young soldier's point of view, and I realised that he had figured to himself all the romance and swagger of their soldier's life

before he enlisted, and afterwards found that he was condemned to a long period of drill and discipline in recruit's clothing and practically imprisoned within the barrack walls.

It was at that time that I tried the experiment of Scouting among young soldiers, and I got them to learn their soldiering for themselves through interest instead of having it dinned into them by interminable drill and routine.

In a very short while desertion ceased and the men became efficient in half the time. They found that soldiering was, after all, a game instead of an infernal affliction.

June, 1922.

Shaving-paper Notes

SOME dear old lady, not being up in the modern developments of patent razors, etc., sent me a birthday present of a little book of shaving papers.

And I find it most valuable because, instead of hanging idle on my dressing-table, it hangs there to a useful purpose. I believe it is generally allowed that great thoughts occur either when one is in one's bath or shaving. At any rate, personally, at these times I find myself positively brilliant -- though dull and uninspired at all other times!

So I have a pencil attached to my shaving-paper book, and I jot down in it the thoughts as they occur when I am lathered.

Here are some of them:

1. *What is the object of an inspection?*

Not so much to criticise as to suck the brains of Scoutmasters and find out new dodges for Scouting.

2. *What is going to be the most popular stunt among boys?*

Watch radio work and its developments.

3. *Why is a boy's psychology like a violin-string?*

Because it needs tuning to the right pitch and can then give forth real music. It may or may not have been wrongly handled before coming into the Scoutmaster's hands, but it is up to him to try its tone and to wind it to the right key, and then to play upon it with understanding and discretion.

4. *The futility of abuse.*

I had wondered often at the violent line taken by critics when there was nothing to get excited about.

I see now that Fabre, in writing on glow-worms, points to it being a natural trait. He says: "Ignorance is always abusive. A man who does not know is always full of violent affirmations and maligned interpretations."

That is something to know. Won't I hurl it at my next critic!

5. *The test of success in education.*

This is not what a boy knows after examination on leaving school, but what he is doing ten years later.

The test of the amount of spirit in the Movement is the percentage of old Scouts among new Officers.

6. *Pot-hunting.*

There was a competition lately between teams of Scouters, and the winning lot were finally photographed grouped round a challenge trophy.

The trophy was a common or garden cabbage.

An excellent remonstrance against the pot-hunting and medal-snatching tendency of the age.

Let's have clean sport for sport's sake.

7. Bands.

One who signs himself "Disgusted" wrote recently in a newspaper: "Is it necessary for Boy Scouts to bang drums and play trumpets like tribes of young Yahoos when out marching or drilling or whatever they do? How can babies go to sleep when such a racket is going on outside?"

Fortunately bands and bugles are dying out in the Movement as they are found to be out of place in camp and a nuisance in towns. So that I hope within a short time there will be few people who can sign themselves "disgusted" with the Scouts.

August, 1922.

Development of the Patrol System

FROM different sources I have had interesting reports of very satisfactory results of developing the Patrol system. The sum of the whole thing amounts to this -- every individual in the Patrol is made responsible, both in den and in camp, for his definite share in the successful working of the whole.

This incidentally enhances the Leader's position and responsibilities, and develops the individual interest and civic capability of each member, while it builds a stronger *esprit de corps* for the group.

The Patrol constitutes itself a Council:

Patrol Leader responsible as Chairman.

Second	„	„	„	Vice-Chairman and Quartermaster in charge of Stores, etc.
No. 1 Scout	„	„	„	Scribe.
No. 2 Scout	„	„	„	Treasurer.
No. 3 Scout	„	„	„	Keeper of the Den.
No. 4 Scout	„	„	„	Games Manager.
No. 5 Scout	„	„	„	Librarian.

The Council considers such subjects as, for instance, which badges the Patrol should specially go in for, where to camp or hike, etc., football and cricket matches, athletic sports and displays, and suggests questions to be considered and ruled upon by the Troop Court of Honour.

The Scribe keeps the Minutes of this Council as record, which are read out at the following meeting as usual to be corrected previous to their signature by the Chairman (the Patrol Leader).

The Scribe also has the duty of keeping a Patrol log in which are recorded each week, briefly, the doings of the Patrol at home or in the field.

The existence of these Patrol Councils, when conducted with proper procedure, at once raises the status of the Troop Court of Honour. If carried out with the correct routine and ceremonial of a business meeting, the Court of Honour becomes a sort of Upper Chamber of considerable importance in the eyes of the boys, as they take a close interest in its findings; and the whole thing becomes a valuable and practical education to them in "civics."

Then, in camp, a similar delegation of duties to the individual members of the Patrol has an excellent effect both on the success of the outing and in educating the boys.

For instance, the distribution of work may be made on some such lines as these:

- Patrol Leader . In supreme charge, responsible for assigning duties and seeing that they are carried out.
- Second Leader . Quartermaster in charge of supplies of food and equipment and first aid.
- No. 1 Scout . Cook, preparing meals.
- No. 2 Scout . Scribe, keeping accounts of moneys and stores, keeps log of the camp or hike.
- No. 3 Scout . Pioneer, making drains, bridges, latrines.
- No. 4 Scout . Sanitation; keeping camp clean, incinerator.
- No. 5 Scout . Axeman; supplying firewood. Fireman and waterman, has charge of cooking or camp fire and of water supply.

August, 1922.

Indoors

IN our blessed climate in the British Isles we have to Be Prepared as much for wet days and long dark evenings as for fine bright ones. Therefore we cannot limit our activities to the out of doors, though naturally this is a special aim for our efforts.

The courts and alleys of the slums of our cities are a depressing sight at the best of times, with their swarms of boys and girls eager and full of life but uncontrolled, unled; where the stronger impose their will and the weaker go to the wall.

Is it to be wondered that, growing up among these drab, squalid surroundings, the youngsters become an unhealthy, selfish, discontented, indisciplined mob in our midst?

This nursery of discontent, as I have said, is bad enough at the best of times, but how far worse when the sleet and rain are driving the children into their crowded homes, on the long winter evenings, among over-worked irritable grown-ups, with nothing to do but to grouse and quarrel among themselves.

We all of us know how a wet day is bad enough for the children even in our own homes, and we can to some extent realise what it must be in these poorer dwellings.

Here indeed lies a land of adventure for us in the Scout Movement, for pioneers who care to enter it. Here can we supply hobbies and home work for badge earning that will calm and satisfy many a young life.

An idea seems to have got abroad that at Gilwell we don't approve generally of badge work. This misunderstanding has probably arisen because in the short time available for our courses we have had to stress the outdoor activities rather than those of indoors. But it should not be inferred from this that we do not recognise the value of badge work. On the contrary, though it may be said by our critics that it is immoral to appeal to the vanity of the boy, nevertheless this has its uses. They may call it immoral but at the same time it would be equally true if they termed it a very usual appeal to human nature.

Through badge work, where applied with discrimination, we can offer to the dullest and most backward boy a handicap that gives him a fair chance with his better-off or more brilliant comrade, and we can put into him ambition and hope, and the sense of achievement which will carry him on to greater ventures.

October, 1923.

Service

IF service were made the first aim of our education in place of self, it would command at least equal interest on the part of the pupils, and the result would be a very different world in which to live. The other day I was speaking with an official of the League of Nations, and I asked him,

"How is the old League getting on?" His reply was,

"All right, but it can never function fully until the time arrives when its members are men who have been trained as Boy Scouts."

This answer rather took me aback, and I said, "Do you mean that they should go into camp and cook their own grub?" He said, "No, not that; but the only school I know of that teaches service as a first rule of life is the Boy Scout Movement."

"The League should not be a mere committee of representatives of different countries, each watching the interests of his own particular nation, but rather a 'combine' of experts in consultation to bring about the good of mankind."

So here we have another tribute that should inspire our work, since it indicates that we are already on the right track.

Our teaching is mainly through example, and our Scouters give exactly the right lead in their patriotic dedication of self to the service of the boy, solely for the joy of doing it, and without thought of material reward.

The boys are taught, beginning with the elementary good turn to mother on the part of the Wolf Cub, through the daily good turn and preparedness to save life on the part of the Scout, up to the regular practice of public service for others on the part of the Rover. The teaching of service is not merely a matter of teaching in theory, but the development of two distinct phases -- viz., the inculcation of the spirit of goodwill; and the provision of opportunity for its expression in practice.

January, 1924.

Village Troops

I HAVE often heard it suggested that village Troops are more difficult to keep going than those in towns. In some respects no doubt this is so -- especially if they adhere strictly to the same programme of work as do the town Troops.

But living as I do in the country I find there are many possibilities lying open to village Troops which town Troops cannot command. And I believe that many of these possibilities will not only give healthful and educative activities to the boys, but will also be of real advantage to their villages.

For instance, *Village Signs*. In a previous issue of *The Scouter* I gave a description of the village sign which we have put in my own particular village as largely the work of the Boy Scouts and their supporters. This has had a very satisfactory success. It has taught the villagers, old and young, a lot of history of the place, and has drawn the attention of tourists and travellers to the interest that the place holds for them. It has established a certain civic pride in their village among the inhabitants, which goes to build up an *esprit de corps* and closer comradeship among them. Well, I wonder how many troops have so far put up village signs in their neighbourhood? But there's the idea. It can be done, for it has been done -- and with good results.

Then there is *nature observation*, keeping record of the early building and blooming of trees and wild flowers, the migration of birds, the visits of otters, rats, and foxes, etc.

The *completion of local maps* with latest buildings, etc. The following up of *by-paths* and *rights-of-way* to see that they are still kept open to the public. The seeking out of *ancient remains*, of roadways, camps, wells, fossils, etc. The making of an exhibition, or, if possible, *a museum* of bygone implements, carvings, pictures, pillories and stocks, etc. The keeping up of old *local industries*, legends, dances, plays, songs, customs, and dishes or drinks. Tracing back the *family descent* of the older inhabitants. The care of the *War Memorial* and garden round it, etc. etc.

These and many other matters of local interest can be made objectives for the activity of the boys if the Scoutmaster suggests them (one only at a time, of course), attaching sufficient romance to them to bring about their enthusiastic pursuit. The results can be not only *good* but *very good*.

There are tons of history lying buried in every village if only we would dig for it; and there are antiquarian and field societies in every county only too ready to provide capable and enthusiastic helpers.

A little over a century ago villages had their system of paying visits to each other, carrying their totem pole and headed by their band of instruments or singers. This made for a healthy spirit of neighbourliness and courtesy while inculcating a certain pride and *esprit de corps* in their own village. Something of this kind might well be revived by Scout Troops and would be no small boon to the country.

March, 1924.

Fundamental Ethics

IN the Scout and Guide Movements we merely lay before the boys and girls the simplest fundamental ethics of religion, and then get them to put these into practice. So simple and fundamental are these that to the superficial critic Scouting appears to be "without religion." Yet the student and the user of Scouting know otherwise.

I have said we adhere to simple and fundamental ethics; this is partly because these can be the more readily digested by the children (and digestion is essential if food is to do any good), and partly because being at the base of all denominational forms these ethics offend none of the various beliefs with whose members we have to deal.

We put them as Christ taught them in their two simple forms:

"Love thy God with all thy heart;

And the second is like unto it?

Love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

But it is not enough for children to learn texts merely in the abstract and to repeat them parrot-like on occasion; that would soon pall and would have little effect on their character or their life.

So we put the two commandments into active form.

Love for God. -- For inducing a better realisation and love for God we do it to a great extent through investigation of His works. This, it must be remembered, is a step and not a substitute; and the story of David Livingstone tells how valuable a step it can be in laying the right foundation in a young mind.

Nature craft, or the study of Nature in her numerous forms, and the appreciation of all her wonders and beauties, appeals to almost every child. The camp or the outdoor hike brings girls and boys into close touch with the plants, the animals, the birds, the rocks, and their other comrades as God's great family.

The mystery of the sea and the heavens, and the fascination of the colouring of the scene, and the modelling of the scenery can all be brought within their ken where formerly they were blind. The door of the young soul is thus opened for the understanding teacher.

Even where the out-of-doors observation is difficult, there are new wonders to be investigated in every inch of our own anatomy, the knowledge of which (again at the hands of an understanding teacher) can be of infinite value to both in showing the Creator's marvellous work, in developing a deeper reverence for this body that has been lent to us, and in showing how it should be cared for and developed and reproduced as a part of the performance of one's duty to God.

Love for Neighbour. -- In promoting the second commandment, love for one's neighbour, we urge our Scouts and Guides to express this in active form by doing, even in an elementary way, good service for others.

The daily good turn, without desire for reward, which grows by progressive stages till it becomes a habit of conduct, goes on till it involves sacrifices in time or money or pleasures, even to the extent of involving danger to the life of the performer.

We teach the boy that a gift is not his till he has expressed his gratitude for it. His attitude to God is, therefore, thankfulness for benefits received; and his method for expressing this is through service, in behalf of God, to his fellow-men.

This repression of self and development of that love, which means God within, brings a total change of heart to the individual and with it the glow of true Heaven. It makes a different being of him. The question becomes for him not what can I *get*, but what can I *give* in life.

No matter what may be the ultimate form of religion that he takes up, the lad *will have grasped for himself* its fundamentals, and knowing these through practising them he becomes a true Christian with a widened outlook of kindness and sympathy for his brother men.

Otherwise, we know too well that there are dangers in ignoring the psychological side and overstressing the theological and spiritual with children.

We may gain the few but we may lose the many. We may bore them while under our hand so that the moment they are free they abjure religion altogether. We may be manufacturing prigs and humbugs; we may be promoting superstition rather than faith.

But on the foundation prepared as I have described, the subsequent building of religion in its approved form is comparatively easy; indeed, it follows almost automatically where well directed.

When we have a leaven of citizens of that mark in our nation, bringing the Christian practice into their daily occupation, there will be less of the narrow class and sectional differences and more of the wide-hearted kindly brotherhood, so that even national patriotism will not be the highest point of a man's aim, but active goodwill for, and co-operation with, his fellow-men about the world as being all children of the one Father.

From this should ensue the reign of peace upon earth.

July, 1924.

Hang the Right People

I WAS invited the other day to contribute to a discussion on the pros and cons of capital punishment, and in my remarks I suggested that I could support the death penalty with great heartiness were more discrimination exercised in its infliction, so as to ensure the noose going on to the right neck. The average murderer was born into this world with the propensities and abilities of the average child. The people who in my opinion deserve to be hanged were the parents who neglected their responsibility to give him a right and healthy mind in a healthy body, the teacher who gave him instruction in the three R's in place of education in character and self-control, the minister who omitted to implant in him the *practice* of his religion, and the newspaper editor who developed his morbid and salacious tastes by pandering to them.

October, 1924.
