



## CHAPTER IV

### TRACKING

#### CAMP FIRE YARN NO. 11

##### OBSERVATION OF "SIGN"

**Noticing "Signs" - Details of People - "Signs" Round a  
Dead Body - Details in the Country  
Use of Eyes, Ears, and Nose by Scouts  
Night Scouting**

"SIGN" is the word used by Scouts to mean any little details, such as footprints, broken twigs, trampled grass, scraps of food, a drop of blood, a hair, and so on—anything that may help as clues in getting the information they are in search of.

Mrs. Walter Smithson, when travelling in Kashmir, was following up, with some native Indian trackers, the "pugs" of a panther which had killed and carried off a young buck. He had crossed a wide bare slab of rock which, of course, gave no mark of his soft feet. The tracker went at once to the far side of the rock where it came to a sharp edge. He wetted his finger, and just passed it along the edge till he found a few buck's hairs sticking to it. This showed him where the panther had passed down off the rock, dragging the buck with him. Those few hairs were what Scouts call "sign".

Mrs. Smithson's tracker also found bears by noticing small "signs". On one occasion he noticed a fresh scratch in the bark of a tree evidently made by a bear's claw, and on the other he found a single black hair sticking to the bark of a tree, which told him that a bear had rubbed against it.

#### **Noticing "Signs"**

One of the most important things that a Scout has to learn, whether he is a war scout or a hunter or peace scout, is to let nothing escape his attention. He must notice small points and signs, and then make out the meaning of them. It takes a good deal of practice before a tenderfoot gets into the habit of really noting everything and letting nothing escape his eye. It can be learnt just as well in a town as in the country.

And in the same way you should notice any strange sound or any peculiar smell and think for yourself what it may mean. Unless you learn to notice "signs" you will have very little of "this and that" to put together, and so you will be of no use as a Scout.

Remember, a Scout always considers it a great disgrace if an outsider discovers a thing before he has seen it for himself, whether that thing is far away in the distance or close by under his feet.

If you go out with a really trained Scout you will see that his eyes are constantly moving, looking out in every direction near and far, noticing everything that is going on.

Once I was walking with one in Hyde Park in London. He presently remarked, "That horse is going a little lame". There was no horse near us, but I found he was looking at one far away across the Serpentine Lake. The next moment he picked up a peculiar button lying by the path. His eyes, you see, were looking both far away and near.

## “Have You Seen a Man?”

In the streets of a strange town a Scout will notice his way by the principal buildings and side-streets, and by what shops he passes and what is in their windows; also what vehicles pass him.

Most especially he will notice people—what their faces are like, their dress, their boots, their way of walking—so that if, for instance, he should be asked by a policeman, “Have you seen a man with dark overhanging eyebrows, dressed in a blue suit, going down this Street?” he should be able to give some such answer as “Yes—he was walking a little lame with the right foot, wore foreign-looking boots, was carrying a parcel in his hand. He turned down Gold Street, the second turning on the left from here, about three minutes ago.”

Information of that kind has often been of the greatest value in tracing out a criminal.

You remember in the story of Kim how Kim was taught observation by means of a game in which he had to describe from memory a trayful of small objects shown to him for a minute and then covered over.

We use this “Kim’s Game”, because it is excellent practice for Scouts.

There was a revolutionary society in Italy called the Camorra, that used to train its boys to be quick at noticing and remembering things. When walking through the street of the city, the Camorrist would suddenly stop and ask his boy:

“How was the woman dressed who sat at the door of the fourth house on the right in the last street?” or, “What were the two men talking about at the corner three streets back?” or, “Where was the cab ordered to drive to, and what was its number?” or, “What is the height of that house and what is the width of its upper-floor window?” and so on. Or the boy was given a minute to look in a shop window, and then describe all that was in it.

A Scout must also have his eyes on the ground, especially along the edge of the pavement against the houses of the gutter. I have often found valuable trinkets that have been dropped, and which have been walked over by numbers of people, and kicked to one side without being noticed.

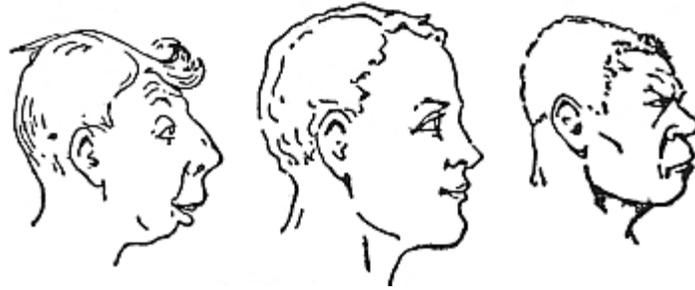
Every town Scout should know, as a matter of course, where the nearest chemist’s shop or drug store is (in case of accidents), and the nearest police “fixed point”, police station, doctor, hospital, fire alarm, telephone, ambulance station, etc.

## Details of People

When you are travelling by train or bus, always notice every little thing about your fellow-travellers. Notice their faces, dress, way of talking, and so on, so that you could describe them each pretty accurately afterwards. And try to make out from their appearance and behaviour whether they are rich or poor (which you can generally tell from their boots), and what is their probable business, whether they are happy, ill, or in need of help.



It is easy enough to disguise yourself with simple means, if you know how. How many things did this man change to alter his appearance? Notice that the thing that makes the main difference is his changed posture.



Notice the faces of people so that you will be able to recognize them.

But in doing this you must not let them see you are watching them, else it puts them on their guard. Remember the shepherd-boy I told you about in Yarn No. 2, who noticed the gipsy's boots, but did not look at him, and so did not make the gipsy suspicious of him.

Close observation of people and ability to read their character and their thoughts are of immense value in trade and commerce, especially for a shop-assistant or salesman in persuading people to buy goods, or in detecting would-be swindlers.

It is said that you can tell a man's character from the way he wears his hat. If it is slightly on one side, the wearer is supposed to be good-natured; if it is worn very much on one side, he is a swaggerer; if on the back of his head, he is bad at paying his debts; if worn straight on the top, he is probably honest but very dull.

The way a man (or a woman) walks is often a good guide to his character—witness the fussy, swaggering little man paddling along with short steps with much arm action; the nervous man's hurried, jerky stride; the slow slouch of the loafer; the smooth, quick, and silent step of the Scout, and so on.



Can you tell their characters by the way they wear their hats?

### **Practise Observation**

With a little practice in observation, you can tell pretty accurately a man's character from his dress.

The boots are very generally the best test of all the details of clothing.

Sometime ago, I was with a lady in the country, and a young lady was walking just in front of us.

"I wonder who she is?" said my friend.

"Well", I said, "Maybe you will know if you know whose maid she is."

The girl was very well dressed, but when I saw her shoes I guessed that the dress had belonged to someone else, had been given to her and refitted by herself—but that as regards shoes she felt more comfortable in her own. She went up to the house at which we were staying—to the servants' entrance—and we found that she was one of the maids.

I once was able to be of service to a lady who was in poor circumstances. I had guessed it from noticing, while walking behind her, that though she was well dressed the soles of her shoes were in the last stage of disrepair. I don't suppose she ever knew how I guessed that she needed help.

It is an amusing practice, when you are in a railway carriage or omnibus with other people, to look only at their feet and guess, without looking any higher, what sort of people they are, old or young, well-to-do or poor, fat or thin, and so on, and then look up and see how near you have been to the truth.

I was speaking with a detective not long ago about a gentleman we had both been talking to, and we were trying to make out his character.



I remarked, "Well, at any rate, he is a fisherman".

My companion could not see why—but then he was not a fisherman himself.

I had noticed a lot of little tufts of cloth sticking up on the left cuff of his coat. A good many fishermen, when they take their flies off the line, stick them into their cap to dry; others stick them into their sleeve. When dry they pull them out, which often tears a thread or two of the cloth.

TOMMY THE TENDERFOOT No. 7  
TOMMY THE PATHFINDER

Remember how Sherlock Holmes met a stranger and noticed that he was looking fairly well-to-do, in new clothes with a mourning band on his sleeve, with a soldierly bearing, and a sailor's way of walking, sunburnt, with tattoo marks on his hand. What should you have supposed that man to be? Well, Sherlock Holmes guessed, correctly, that he had lately retired from the Royal Marines as a Sergeant, his wife had died, and he had some small children at home.

"Which way to turn me I cannot divine.  
Of friend or of foeman I can't see a sign."

## Signs Round a Dead Body

It may happen to some of you that one day you will be the first to find the body of a dead man. In such a case the smallest signs that are to be seen on and near the body must be examined and noted down, before the body is moved or the ground disturbed and trampled down. Besides noticing the exact position of the body (which should, if possible, be photographed exactly as found) the ground all round should be very carefully examined—without treading on it yourself more than is absolutely necessary, for fear of spoiling existing tracks. If you can also draw a little map of how the body lay and where the signs round it were, it might be of value.

I know of two cases where bodies have been found which were at first supposed to be of people who had hanged themselves. But close examination of the ground round them—in one case some torn twigs and trampled grass, and in the other a crumpled carpet—showed that murder had been committed, and that the bodies had been hanged after death to make it appear as though the people had committed suicide.

## **Finger-Prints**

Finger-prints are some of the first things the police look for on all likely articles. If they do not correspond to those of the murdered man they may be those of his murderer, who could then be identified by comparing the impression with his fingers.

There was the case of a learned old gentleman who was found dead in his bedroom with a wound in his forehead and another in his left temple.

Very often after a murder, the murderer, with his hands bloody from the deed and running away, may catch hold of the door, or a jug of water to wash his hands.

In the present case a newspaper lying on the table had the marks of three blood-stained fingers on it.

The son of the dead man was suspected and was arrested by the police.

But careful examination of the room and the prints of the finger-marks showed that the old gentleman had become ill in the night. He had got out of bed to get some medicine, but near the table a new spasm seized him and he fell, striking his head violently against the corner of the table, and made the wound on his temple, which just fitted the corner. In trying to get up he had caught hold of the table and had made the bloody finger-marks on the newspaper lying on it. Then he had fallen again, cutting his head a second time on the foot of the bed.

The finger-prints were compared with the dead man's fingers and were found to be exactly the same. Well, you don't find two men in 64,000,000,000,000 with the same pattern on the skin of their fingers. So it was evident there had been no murder, and the dead man's son was released as innocent.

## **Other Marks**

In a Russian city a banker was found murdered. Near the body was discovered a cigar-holder with an amber mouthpiece. This mouthpiece was of peculiar shape and could only be held in the mouth in one position, and it had two teeth marks in it. The marks showed that the two teeth were of different lengths.

The teeth of the murdered man were quite regular, so the cigar-holder was evidently not his. But his nephew had teeth which corresponded to the marks on the mouthpiece. He was arrested, and then further proof came up and showed that he was the murderer.

There is a similar story in Sherlock Holmes' Memoirs called "The Resident Patient". Here a man was found hanging and was considered to be a suicide till Sherlock Holmes came in and showed by various signs—such as cigar ends bitten by different teeth, footprints—that three men had been in the room with the man for some time previous to his death and had hanged him.

## **Details in the Country**

If you are in the country you should notice landmarks, that is, objects which help you to find your way or prevent you getting lost, such as distant hills, church towers, and nearer objects such as peculiar buildings, trees, gates, rocks, etc.

And remember, in noticing such landmarks, that you may want to use your knowledge of them some day for telling someone else how to find his way, so you must notice them pretty closely to be able to describe them unmistakably and in their proper order. You must notice and remember every by-road and foot-path.

Then you must also notice smaller signs, such as birds getting up and flying hurriedly, which means somebody or some animal is there. Rising dust shows animals, men, or vehicles moving.

Of course, when in the country, you should notice just as much as in town, all passers-by very carefully—how they are dressed, what their faces are like, their way of walking—and examine their footmarks and

jot down sketches of them in your notebook, so that you would know the footmarks again if you found them somewhere else, as the shepherd boy did in the story at the beginning of this book.



A great deal of dust does not always mean many people. Here is a ruse that was used to draw the attention of the enemy: Branches of trees were towed along a dusty road, to imitate moving cavalry.

Also notice tracks of animals, birds, wheels, etc., for from these you can read valuable information. Track reading is of such importance that I shall give you a yarn on that subject by itself.

### **Using Your Eyes**

Let nothing be too small for your notice. A button, a match, the ash from a cigar, a feather, or a leaf, might be of great importance.

A Scout must not only look to his front, but also to either side and behind him; he must have “eyes at the back of his head”, as the saying is.

Often, by suddenly looking back, you will see an enemy’s scout or a thief showing himself in a way that he would not have done had he thought you would look round.

There is an interesting story by Fenimore Cooper called *The Pathfinder*, in which the action of a Red Indian scout is well described. He had “eyes at the back of his head”, and, after passing some bushes, caught sight of a withered leaf or two among the fresh ones. This made him suspect that somebody had put the leaves there to make a better hiding-place, and so he discovered some hidden fugitives.

### **Night Scouting**

A Scout has to be able to notice small details by night as well as by day.

At night he has to do it chiefly by listening, occasionally by feeling or smelling.

In the stillness of the night, sounds carry farther than by day. If you put your ear to the ground or place it against a stick, or especially against a drum, which is touching the ground, you will hear the shake of horses’ hoofs or the thud of a man’s footfall a long way off.

Another way is to open a knife with a blade at each end; stick one blade into the ground, hold the other carefully between your teeth and you will hear all the better.

The human voice, even though talking low, carries to a great distance, and is not likely to be mistaken for any other sound.

I have often passed through outposts at night after having found where the pickets were posted by hearing the low talking of the men or the snoring of those asleep.

## **PATROL PRACTICES IN OBSERVATION**

IN TOWN: Teach your boys first, in walking down a street, to notice the different kinds of shops they pass and to remember them in their proper order. Then to notice and remember the names on the shops. Then to notice and remember the contents of a shop window after two minutes' gaze. Finally to notice the contents of several shop windows in succession with half a minute at each.

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Make the boys notice prominent buildings as landmarks, the number of turnings off the street they are using, names of other streets, details of cars passing by, and especially, details of people as to dress, features and way of walking. Take them out the first time to show them how to do it. After that send them out and question them on their return.

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Make the Scouts learn for themselves to notice and remember the whereabouts of all fire alarms, police points, hospitals, etc.

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IN THE COUNTRY: Take the Patrol out for a walk and teach the boys to notice distant prominent features as landmarks, such as hills, church steeples, and the like, and as nearer landmarks such things as peculiar buildings, trees, rocks, gates, etc. Also have them notice by-roads or paths, different kinds of trees, birds, animals, tracks, and also people and vehicles.

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Send the boys out on a walk. On their return examine them one by one, or have them all in and let them write their answers on, say, six questions which you give them with reference to certain points which they should have noticed. It adds to the value of the practice if you make certain small marks in the ground beforehand, or leave buttons or matches, etc., for the boys to notice or to pick up and bring in, as a means of making them examine the ground close to them, as well as distant objects.

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At Troop meeting, arrange for an "incident" to take place without warning, such as this: A man rushes in, "knocks down" the Scoutmaster, and escapes. Then each Patrol writes a report of what happened, a description of the man, etc.

## **GAMES IN OBSERVATION**

### **Thimble Finding (Indoors)**

Send the Patrol out of the room.

Take a thimble, ring, coin, bit of paper, or any small article, and place it where it is perfectly visible, but in a spot where it is not likely to be noticed. Let the Patrol come in and look for it. When one of the Scout sees it, he should go and quietly sit down without indicating to the others where it is.

After a fair time he should be told to point it out to those who have not succeeded in finding it.

**Far and Near**  
**(For town or country)**

Umpire goes along a given road or line of country with a Patrol in patrolling formation. He carries a scoring card with the name of each Scout on it.

Each Scout looks out for the details required, and, directly he notices one, he runs to the umpire and informs him or hands in the article, if it is an article he finds. The umpire enters a mark accordingly against his name. The Scout who gains most marks in the walk wins.

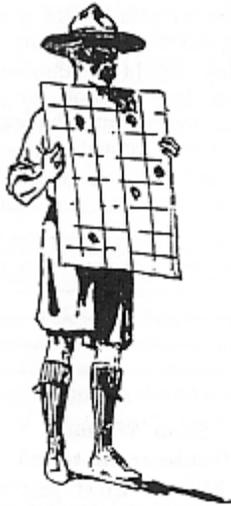
Details like the following should be chosen, to develop the Scout's observation and to encourage him to look far and near, up and down. The details should be varied every time the game is played; and about eight or ten should be given at a time.

Every match found.....	1 point
Every button found.....	1 point
Bird's tracks.....	2 points
Grey horse seen.....	2 points
Pigeon flying.....	2 points
Sparrow sitting.....	1 point
Ash tree.....	2 points
Broken window.....	1 point

(And so on)

**Shop Window**  
**(Outdoors in town)**

Umpire takes a Patrol down a street past six shops and gives them half a minute at each shop. Then, after moving them off to some distance, he gives each boy a pencil and card, and tells him to write from memory what he noticed in, say, the third and fifth shops. The Scout who sets down most articles correctly wins. It is useful practice to match one boy against another in heats—the losers competing again, till you arrive at the worst. This gives the worst Scouts the most practice.



“Old Spotty-Face” is a good game for practising observation. It also helps to sharpen the eye sight.

**Room Observation**  
**(Indoors)**

Send each Scout in turn into a room for half a minute. When he comes out, take down a list of furniture and articles which he has noticed. The boy who notices most wins.

The simplest way of scoring is to make a list of the articles in the room on your scoring paper, with a column against them for marks for each Scout. The marks can then easily be totalled up.

**Old Spotty-face**

Prepare squares of cardboard divided into about a dozen or more small squares. Each Scout should take one, and should have a pencil and go off a few hundred yards.

The leader then takes a large sheet of cardboard, with the same number of squares ruled on it of about three inch sides. The leader has a number of black paper discs, half an inch in diameter, and pins ready, and sticks about half a dozen on to his card, dotted about where he likes. He holds up his card so that it can be seen by the

Scouts. They then gradually approach, and as they get within sight they mark their cards with the same pattern of spots. The one who does so at the farthest distance from the leader wins.

Give five points for every spot correctly shown, deduct one point for every two inches nearer than the furthest man.

### Smugglers over the Border

The “border” is a certain line of country about four hundred yards long, preferably a road or wide path or bit of sand, on which foot-tracks can easily be seen. One Patrol watches the border with sentries posted along this road; with a reserve posted farther inland, about half-way between the “border” and the “town”. The “town” would be a base marked by a tree, building, or flags, about half a mile distant from the border. A hostile Patrol of smugglers assembles about half a mile on the other side of the border. They will all cross the border, in any formation they please, either singly or together or scattered, and make for the town, either walking or running, or at Scout Pace. Only one among them is supposed to be smuggling, and he wears tracking irons. The sentries walk up and down their beat (they may not run till after the “alarm”), waiting for the tracks of the smuggler. Directly a sentry sees the track, he gives the alarm signal to the reserve and starts himself to follow up the track as fast as he can. The reserve thereupon co-operates with him and they all try to catch the smuggler before he can reach the town. Once within the boundary of the town he is safe and wins the game.

### Kim’s Game

Place about twenty or thirty small articles on a tray, or on the table or floor, such as two or three different kinds of buttons, pencils, corks, rags, nuts, stones, knives, string, photos—anything you can find—and cover them over with a cloth or coat.

Make a list of these, and make a column opposite the list for each boy’s replies. Like this:

<i>List</i>	<i>Jones</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Smith</i>	<i>Atkins</i>	<i>Green</i>
<i>Walnut</i>					
<i>Black button</i>					
<i>Red rag</i>					
<i>Pocket knife</i>					
<i>Yellow pencil</i>					
<i>Cork</i>					
<i>String</i>					
<i>Stamp</i>					

Then uncover the articles for one minute by your watch, or while you count slowly to sixty. Then cover them again.

Take each boy separately and let him whisper to you each of the articles that he can remember—or have him write a list of them—and mark them off on your scoring sheet.

The boy who remembers the greatest number wins the game.

### Fugitives

Each Scout in the Patrol has a round disc of white cardboard with a number printed plainly upon it, pinned on to the back of his shirt.

One member of the Patrol is then chosen as the “fugitive”, while the rest act as hunters.

The “fugitive”, who wears tracking-irons, or leaves some kind of trail behind him, is given, say, ten minutes’ start. The rest of the Patrol then start out and endeavour to track him down.

As soon as a “hunter” can get near enough to the “fugitive”, without being seen, to take down his number, the latter is caught. But if the “fugitive” can, by any means, turn the tables and get any of his pursuers’ numbers, the latter are out of action.

As soon as a number is taken down, the Scout who takes it must call it out, to let his captive know he is out of action.

This game necessitates some careful stalking. A sharp Scout in the Patrol should be chosen for the “fugitive”, as he has not only to elude perhaps six or seven pursuers, but he must also endeavour to “capture” them, unless he wishes to get killed himself.