



How Scouting Began

Sir Robert Baden-Powell

How did I begin Scouting? That is what your Editor asks me.

Well, it was this way – only don't for goodness sake, tell your schoolmasters.

I really began it sort of half out of bounds at school. Our playing fields were on the plateau top of a hill whose steep sides were clothed with a regular jungle of brushwood & copse.

And there I used to sniggle away & set snares for rabbits. If & when I caught one – which was not always – I skinned him (I didn't merely cut off his fur with scissors like the tenderfoot), & cooked him & ate him – & survived. But to do this successfully, I learned, through many failures, to creep silently, to know my way by landmarks, to note tracks & read their meaning, to use dry dead wood off the trees, & not off the ground, for my fire, to make a tiny non-smoky fire such as would not give me away

to prying masters; & if these came along, I had my sod ready to extinguish the fire & hide the spot, while I shinned up some ivy-clad tree where I could nestle unobserved above the line of sight on the average searcher. You who have learnt Greek know that a man is called in that language **anthropos**, or the animal that can look upwards. When you have scouted a bit you very soon realize that though he can look upwards a man seldom does so, & that if you lie along a branch or the top of a wall, or stand up against the tree trunk, & "freeze" – that is, don't move — the chances are that you will not be observed. As a Scout, of course, you will look upward just as much as downward or afar &, especially, behind you. I can tell you a yarn about this – but, no, if once I begin, I shall wander off the line altogether: my job is to tell you how Scouting, i.e. Boy Scouts' work, began.

Well, I got these early notions of creeping

about, observing "sign" & reading its meaning, in the woods, when I was at school. Later on when I got into the Army I found their value.

How I tracked & recovered a valuable horse that had strayed; how I got Kudos for my squadron at manoeuvres by creeping through the enemy's outposts at night; how I made maps of the tracks & "sign", which gave the complete story of the battle at Maiwand; how I found a short cut for our force – these & other small but important acts are all told in my book "Indian Memories". But they were steps which finally brought me to teach young soldiers in my regiment the art of scouting as a preparation for their work or service.

To such men as qualified & proved themselves good at the work I gave a little badge to wear on the arm. It was a fleur-de-lys, or arrowhead as given on the compass card or on a map, to show the north point. After a

esting to them. So I told Sir William Smith, their founder & Commandant, how popular scouting was with young soldiers in the Army, & that possibly some adaptation of it might be helpful for his boys. He suggested that I should myself adapt it for boys, so I set to work to change what was an art for men making war into an art for boys making peace. A bit of a change round, wasn't it? But it seemed to promise all right when I tackled it & in its new form scouting had nothing to do with soldiering.

Then I got together a troop of about forty boys of all sorts to come into camp with me & try out the experiment. Among them were "dukes' sons, cooks' sons, and sons of belted ears" & they got on splendidly together in our camp on Brownsea Island in Dorsetshire. That was in September, 1907. At the camp we practised as much as we could of the work of frontiersmen—that is, the work of explorers, backwoodsmen, seamen,

time the War Office approved it as the badge of the trained scout for all the branches of the service. But besides teaching men how to look out for an enemy, scouting taught them many other things. To be any good at it a man had to be able to find his way by night as well as by day across strange country, with possibly only the stars to guide him; he had to be able to cook his own grub, to swim rivers, to hide successfully; in other words, he had to learn pluck & nerve, self-reliance, handiness, endurance & self-sacrifice from a sense of duty & service for his country.

So by learning scouting, you see, these young recruits became real men & good soldiers. And what was more, they enjoyed their soldiering instead of becoming bored by the discipline and routine.

Later on I was invited to inspect the Boys' Brigade at Glasgow, & I felt that, although their numbers were fairly large, these should be much larger if their work was really inter-

hunters, trackers, & other generally known under the term of "scouts."

In January, 1908, I brought out the book "Scouting for Boys" in fortnightly parts, & before many parts had appeared troops of Scouts began to spring up in different parts of the country—many, if not most of them, started by boys themselves.

In a very short while we found there were not merely hundreds, but thousands of boys bitten with the Scouting fever, so much so that two years later we called a rally at the Crystal Palace, & taking count of the boys as they marched past we found that 11,000 had turned up—by far the biggest assemblage of boys that had so far been held in England.

And so it has gone on, growing bigger & bigger, & the boys becoming more & more efficient every year. Other countries followed suit, & started their Scouts on exactly the same lines & with the same ideals as

ours. Till to-day there is scarcely a civilized country without its Scouts, & there are nearly two millions of Boy Scouts about the world.

They are not merely an organized society; they are more than this—they are a great friendly brotherhood, all dressed alike, and all having, as I say, the same aim, namely, to make themselves, through the Scout training, into healthy, happy, helpful citizens of their country & friendly towards all others.

So any fellow who joins this jolly fraternity knows that in doing so he is not only going to have a good time & enjoy the fun of camping & life in the out-of-doors in good comradeship, but also he will be doing his bit in helping other people & in serving his King & country in the cause of peace & goodwill.

Sir Robert Baden-Powell